

Session 12 Abigail’s Wisdom Releases Grace To David (1 Sam. 25)

I. DAVID’S LESSON: TO HIM WHO THINKS HE STANDS TAKE HEED LEST YOU FAIL

- A. Three related episodes in David’s life are set forth, one after the other, in 1 Samuel 24-26. David managed his anger when mistreated and refused to take his own vengeance with Saul (1 Sam. 24), but soon afterwards he failed in this with Nabal (1 Sam. 25). He learned from this and responded in a godly way the next time with Saul (1 Sam. 26). Thus, David responded well, then failed to be “alert” to his sinful weakness in his interaction with Nabal. This humbled him, and the redemptive result was that he was alert and equipped to succeed the next time he faced this issue with Saul.

12...let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape... (1 Cor. 10:12-13)

- B. Abigail’s appeal for reconciliation is one of the best examples in Scripture paralleling David’s example in 1 Samuel 24. She was used by the Lord to keep David from a grievous sin.
- C. Abigail with her godly character is a picture of a peacemaker. God used her to show David his error and keep him from doing evil. Because David had a *teachable spirit*, he was able to hear Abigail.

1A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. 2The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness. (Prov. 15:1-2)

- D. Solomon warned about women with beauty who lack discernment (Prov. 11:22). The women in Israel wore earrings and nose rings as jewelry. Solomon used the example of a pig, which was an unclean animal according to the law; a nose ring cannot beautify it. In a similar way, there is no physical adornment that can substitute for lack of discretion or discernment. Outward beauty without godly conduct has no lasting value; it makes a physically beautiful person “morally ugly.”

22As a ring of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion. (Prov. 11:22)

3Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—4rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. 5For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves... (1 Pet. 3:3-5)

II. SAMUEL DIED AND DAVID MOVED TO THE WILDERNESS OF PARAN (1 SAM. 25:1)

- A. The prophet Samuel’s death was a great loss for David as well as Israel (25:1). Samuel’s death undoubtedly brought great pain to David and dashed any hopes of a lasting reconciliation with Saul.

1Then Samuel died; and the Israelites gathered together and lamented for him, and buried him at his home in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the Wilderness of Paran. (1 Sam. 25:1)

- B. Samuel’s death is possibly what caused David to relocate further south, to the wilderness of Paran.

- C. David moved south to the area of Paran or Maon. The Hebrew indicates to Paran, in the central portion of the Sinai Peninsula. The NIV used the LXX, which states it was the Desert of Maon.

III. A DESCRIPTION OF NABAL AND ABIGAIL (1 SAM. 25:2-3)

- A. Nabal was very wealthy man who was foolish, harsh, and evil. His wife Abigail was a woman of good understanding. They lived in Maon, but owned much land and a business with livestock located one mile away in the Judean town of Carmel (this is not the same as Mt. Carmel). Nabal was from the family line of Caleb (an esteemed family in Judah); thus, he was David's kinsmen.

*²Now there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel, and the man was very rich. He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.
³The name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. And she was a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance; but the man was harsh and evil in his doings. He was of the house of Caleb. (1 Sam. 25:2-3)*

- B. *Shearing sheep*: Sheep shearing happened twice a year (spring and fall) and was a time of festivity because of the profits associated with selling the wool (2 Sam. 13:23-24).

IV. NABAL REFUSED DAVID'S REQUEST FOR FOOD AND PROVISIONS (1 SAM. 25:4-11)

- A. David sent men to ask Nabal, his wealthy kinsman, to bless them with food as David's men had served as a security force for his kinsman's animals (25:4-8). The value of this protection was seen when the Philistines attacked nearby Keilah (23:5). David was suggesting that he was entitled to an unspecified but appropriate gift in return for the protection he provided.

⁴When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep, ⁵David sent ten young men...⁶You shall say to him..., 'Peace to your house, and peace to all that you have! ⁷...Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel. ⁸...Let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David.' (1 Sam. 25:4-8)

- B. Nabal responded negatively to David's request (25:9-11) in a way that expressed his harsh and evil character. He insinuated that David and his men were slaves broken "away from their masters."

¹⁰Nabal answered David's servants, and said, "Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. ¹¹Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat...and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?" (1 Sam. 25:9-11)

V. DAVID RESPONDED IN ANGER AND ABIGAIL IN WISDOM (1 SAM. 25:12-35)

- A. David was insulted by Nabal and responded in anger, mobilizing his men to kill Nabal.

¹²David's young men turned on their heels and went back; and they came and told him all these words. ¹³Then David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword." So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies. (1 Sam. 25:12-13)

- B. Abigail was informed of Nabal's bad treatment of David and of the impending disaster (25:14-17). Her servant urged her to respond quickly since Nabal's entire household was in great danger.

¹⁴One of the young men told Abigail...saying, "Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them. ¹⁵But the men were very good to us...¹⁶They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. ¹⁷Now therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his household. For he is such a scoundrel that one cannot speak to him." (1 Sam. 25:14-17)

- C. Abigail sent a message with a generous gift to David (25:18-19). David was about to seriously harm his spiritual life and future calling as king, but the Lord intervened to protect him by stirring Abigail to action at just the right time. Just prior, when David had been mistreated by Saul, he entrusted the situation to God to intervene. This time David needed God's gracious intervention to deliver him.

¹⁸Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs [a bushel] of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys. ¹⁹She said to her servants, "Go on before me; see, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. (1 Sam. 25:18-19)

- D. David and Abigail met the first time in a remote place under the cover of a hill (25:20-23). David's sinful reaction is seen in a conversation that is made known in a parenthetical clause (25:21-22). David was venting his offense and anger towards Nabal as he was journeying to meet Abigail in the mountains. We are surprised to see such hatefulness and bitterness being expressed by David. In anger, David made an oath to kill every male that was related to Nabal (25:22). He gave himself an "out" in this oath by pronouncing a curse on his enemies if the oath was not kept.

²⁰....on the donkey she went down under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men, coming down toward her...²¹David had said, "Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness...and he has repaid me evil for good. ²²May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light." ²³Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey...and bowed down to the ground. (1 Sam. 25:20-23)

- E. Abigail's wise and godly to appeal to David (25:24-31): This is one of the most remarkable appeals in the Bible. Her appeal began with nonverbal actions expressing her humility and respect as "she fell at his feet" with a request for mercy (v. 24). Only after these acts did she begin to speak.

²⁴She fell at his feet and said: “On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be...²⁵I, your maidservant, did not see the young men...whom you sent. ²⁶...the LORD has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand...²⁸For the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the LORD, and evil is not found in you throughout your days. ²⁹Yet a man [Saul] has risen to...seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, as from the pocket of a sling. ³⁰It shall come to pass, when the LORD ...has appointed you ruler over Israel, ³¹that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. But when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, remember your maidservant.” (1 Sam. 25:24-31)

- F. David was both corrected and encouraged by her words. Her humble tone without sarcasm or accusation or anger made her appeal effective. Abigail began with a confession of “sin” (v. 24). Without excusing her husband’s acts, she accepted the blame for David’s mistreatment by her husband.
- G. Abigail was appealing for David to save himself as well as her family. She successfully averted disaster as she spoke of David’s destiny, reminding him of who he was before God. Her wise words and actions saved David from a great sin of *shedding blood*. In killing innocent men, he would break a serious command of God, which would result in judgment coming to him (Ex. 23:7).
- ⁷Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked. (Ex. 23:7)*
- H. David received Abigail’s wise appeal (25:32-35). One of David’s defining characteristics was his teachable spirit, able to receive correction from people. David affirmed her words that the Lord used to prevent him *from entering into bloodguilt* as well as *from doing evil* to Abigail.
- ³²David said to Abigail: “Blessed is the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!
³³And blessed is your advice...because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed...
³⁴For...unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal ³⁵...See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person.”*
(1 Sam. 25:32-35)
- I. Abigail’s actions—assuming responsibility for her husband’s actions, giving money to help his enemies, and speaking encouragement with a prophetic element—saved the day for her family and for David. David accepted her appeal and turned his armed force back, then sent her home in peace.

VI. THE DEATH OF NABAL AND ABIGAIL’S MARRIAGE TO DAVID (1 SAM. 25:36-44)

- A. The death of Nabal after his banquet (25:36-39): When Abigail returned home, her husband Nabal was drunk at his festive meal celebrating the shearing of the sheep. In medical terms, Nabal may have experienced a stroke resulting in a coma. Nabal’s death was more than a medical problem. It came as the direct result of judgment (cf. Acts 12:23).

*³⁶Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house...he was very drunk...
³⁷In the morning...his wife had told him these things...his heart died within him, and he became like a stone. ³⁸Then it happened, after about ten days, that the LORD struck Nabal, and he died. (1 Sam. 25:36-38)*

B. David sent Abigail a proposal through a messenger, and she became David's wife (25:39-44).

*³⁹When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the LORD, who...kept His servant from evil!...David sent and proposed to Abigail, to take her as his wife. ⁴⁰When the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel...saying, "David sent us to ask you to become his wife."
⁴¹Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, "Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." ⁴²So Abigail rose in haste and rode on a donkey... she followed the messengers of David, and became his wife. (1 Sam. 25:39-44)*