Your Drama Is Your Trauma: Breaking the Cycle of Wrong Response

Pastor Cohen Rodgers | Sunday Morning

Primary Scripture

1 Samuel 25:10–35, NKJV

Big Idea

What happened to me deserves care. What I do next deserves attention. God's grace can meet me in both.

Introduction

A simple message says, "Can we talk later?" Before the conversation happens, we have already imagined an accusation, prepared a defense, and decided how we will respond. In the sermon's opening illustration, the sender only needs someone to bring a bag of ice.

We prepared a closing argument. They were trying to keep the lemonade cold.

That familiar moment invites a deeper question: **Are we responding to the situation in front of us, or to the meaning we have already given it?** Painful experiences can influence how we interpret people and protect ourselves. Being wounded is not a character flaw, and not every disagreement comes from trauma.

In 1 Samuel 25, Nabal insults David, David prepares to retaliate, and Abigail intervenes. David receives her counsel and changes course. The passage does not diagnose David with trauma. It shows that someone can be wronged and still need correction about what to do next.

This brings Bishop's recent teaching into daily life. Preparation becomes action when we practice teachability and discipline in our conversations, relationships, and decisions.

Key Teaching Points

1. Examine the meaning you have given the moment

David has a real grievance, but his conclusion leads toward harm. The sermon asks us to distinguish what happened from what we decided it meant.

A disagreement can sound like disrespect. A question can feel like distrust. A request to reschedule can feel like rejection. Those interpretations need examination before they become accusations.

In the family dinner illustration, “I’m exhausted” becomes “You don’t like my family.” Soon, a conversation about Saturday includes several holidays and an aunt’s comment from years ago. Asking a clear question gives the present conversation a chance to stay in the present.

“An accurate observation can still be followed by a harmful conclusion.”

Practice: Ask yourself:

- What actually happened?
- What did I decide it meant?
- What do I need to clarify?

Try, **“Help me understand what you meant by that.”**

2. Question what your hurt has given you permission to do

David turns an insult into a plan for retaliation. His experience needs to be acknowledged, and his intended conduct still needs to be challenged.

The bag in the sermon represents rejection, betrayal, embarrassment, and disappointment. When that bag occupies an empty chair, it pictures how old experiences can place extra weight on a present relationship. A late reply may receive a response shaped by many earlier disappointments.

The person in front of us may need to understand our history. They cannot fairly be held responsible for everything other people did.

Having experienced trauma is not a sin. Fear, grief, and involuntary stress responses are not proof of spiritual failure. Deliberate threats, humiliation, and mistreatment need honesty, repentance, and repair.

“I was hurt, and I handled that badly.”

Practice: Name your conduct specifically: “I accused you without asking what happened. I am sorry.” Your apology can address your part even while other concerns still need attention.

3. Consider who will carry the consequences

Abigail asks David to consider the bloodshed and burden his decision would create. His anger toward Nabal would reach others in the household.

The workplace illustration brings this home. A person endures a difficult day, then snaps at a child who asks an ordinary question. The child receives the sharpness of a situation they did not create.

“The child met the anger. The child never met the supervisor.”

Before sending the message, repeating the accusation, or raising your voice, consider who will live with the effects. A firm conversation or necessary boundary can still be approached thoughtfully.

Practice: Ask, **“Will this address the problem, or leave more people hurt?”** If you need time, say so clearly and agree on when to return to the conversation, when it is safe to do so.

4. Receive correction from people who care about your future

Abigail acknowledges Nabal’s wrongdoing while challenging David’s response. Support can include an honest challenge.

In the sermon’s imagined phone calls, each friend offers a little accountability. By the fourth call, the story has been edited until the caller is barely in it. That invites a searching question: **Are we seeking wisdom or approval?**

Teachability means leaving room to discover that we misunderstood or acted wrongly. Wise counsel should respect truth, dignity, and safety. We can test advice against Scripture, consider the facts, and observe the adviser’s character. A title alone does not make every piece of advice wise.

“Someone can believe that you were hurt and still tell you that your response needs to change.”

Practice: Ask a trustworthy person, **“Help me see my part in this. I need you to be honest with me.”**

5. Put the next response into practice

David receives Abigail's counsel and stops the attack. He changes his decision before receiving an apology from Nabal.

The parent in the sermon's illustration announces an unreasonable punishment, then returns to apologize and establish a fair consequence. The responsibility still matters. The parent's willingness to correct a harsh response models accountability.

We can practice that same honesty by asking before assuming, apologizing specifically, and choosing words that build others up. Ephesians 4 connects renewed thinking with changed conduct and forgiveness rooted in God's forgiveness through Christ.

"You do not have to defend a decision simply because you already announced it."

Practice: Complete this sentence:

"When I feel _____, I will _____."

Choose one faithful response you can practice this week.

Supporting Scriptures

- **Proverbs 3:5–7:** Trust God enough to question your first interpretation and seek His direction.
- **Ephesians 4:22–32:** Put renewed thinking into practice through truthfulness, responsible conduct, constructive words, kindness, and forgiveness.
- **James 3:17:** Examine counsel and your own response for the gentleness, mercy, and willingness to yield that characterize wisdom from above.
- **Joshua 3:5–17:** Connect spiritual preparation with obedient action. In this message, that action may begin with a conversation or apology.

Reflection / Discussion Questions

1. What does David's encounter with Abigail teach us about being wronged and still needing correction?

2. Think of a recent misunderstanding. What actually happened, and what meaning did you add to it?

3. Without sharing anything you want to keep private, what kinds of situations tend to bring a stronger response from you? What assumption might be involved?

4. Who else is affected when you respond harshly, withdraw without explanation, or make an accusation? What would a more responsible response sound like?

5. Who can disagree with you and still remain someone you will listen to? What makes that person's counsel trustworthy?

6. How can you take responsibility for your conduct while also acknowledging the care you need or a boundary that should remain in place?

7. What specific response will you practice this week? How does it put Bishop's teaching on preparation, teachability, and discipline into action?

Practical Application

1. Choose one recurring response.
Identify a pattern such as assuming rejection, replying sharply, seeking agreement from several people, or avoiding a necessary conversation.

2. Separate the facts from the interpretation.
Write down what happened, what you felt, and what you assumed. Ask a clarifying question before treating the assumption as a fact.

3. Prepare a sentence you can use.

- "Help me understand what you meant."
- "I need a few minutes, and I want us to return to this."
- "I was upset, and I handled that badly. I'm sorry."

4. Take the next appropriate step.
That may be an apology, a safe conversation, a boundary, a private pastoral conversation, or an appointment with a qualified counselor.

5. Practice and reflect.
Use your chosen response this week. Then consider what helped, what still needs care, and what you can practice again.

Write your response plan:

When I feel _____, I will _____.

Examples:

- When I feel dismissed, I will ask for clarification before accusing.
- When I feel overwhelmed, I will tell my family I need a few minutes.
- When I recognize I was wrong, I will apologize specifically.

Healing may take time. Prayer, patient discipleship, pastoral support, and qualified counseling can all have a place in that process. Making a wise choice today does not mean every painful feeling will disappear today.

Forgiveness does not require renewed access for an unsafe person. Trust and restored closeness require truth, accountability, and consistent change. Abigail's example does not make someone who is being threatened responsible for confronting a dangerous person.

Our hope rests in Jesus, who died for our sins and rose again. We come to Him for forgiveness, new life, and help to walk faithfully as the Holy Spirit continues His work in us.

Closing Prayer

Father, You know what we carry and the places where trust has become difficult. Meet us with Your compassion. Help us recognize what we are feeling, examine what we are assuming, and listen when wise counsel challenges us.

Forgive us for the ways we have harmed others. Give us courage to apologize honestly and repair what we can. Protect those who are still being harmed, and guide them toward safety and trustworthy help.

Lord Jesus, thank You for forgiveness and new life. Help us receive the care we need and practice responses that honor You. Teach us to put Your Word into action in the conversations waiting for us this week. In Jesus' name, amen.