

# DAVID AND ABIGAIL

1 Samuel 25:1-44

Key Verse: 25:28

*Please forgive your servant's offense, for the LORD will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my master, because he fights the LORD's battles. Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live.*

There is a saying, "Don't make permanent decisions on temporary emotions." We should never make a big decision while we are angry. David was about to do something he would regret for the rest of his life. A foolish man provoked him. David was so angry that he wanted to kill a bunch of people. At this critical time, God sent a wise woman to counsel him. Abigail helped David to avoid making a huge mistake that would have become a staggering burden on his conscience all his life.

## I. A PERSONAL CRISIS FOR DAVID (1-13)

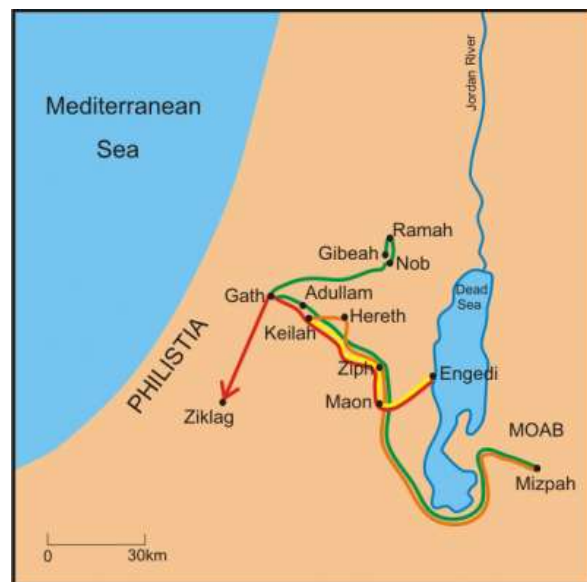
As we learned last week, David spared Saul's life in a cave at En Gedi. The king was moved by David who showed respect for him, calling him "the Lord's anointed." He confessed that David was more righteous than he. They parted amicably, but that did not mean David trusted Saul. David and his men moved down into the Desert of Maon, no doubt with a watchful eye on King Saul and his army.

Chapter 25 begins with a report about Samuel's death. All Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him at his home in Ramah (1). They lost a great spiritual leader. Who would fill the void in the spiritual leadership of their nation? Their king was obsessed with hunting down David to kill him. David, their future leader, was a fugitive. He had to move from one hiding place to another to avoid his capture. In hindsight, God was training David in the wilderness to help him become a shepherd king for his people.

David and his men were in Maon. And there David's life was deeply affected by a couple, Nabal and his wife Abigail.

Nabal was a very wealthy man. He owned 1,000 goats and 3,000 sheep. He raised these animals in a nearby town called Carmel (2). He was the Bill Gates of the sheep and goat industry. He was the largest employer of the town for sure.

Nabal, a Calebite, was not a nice person. He was mean and surly but his wife Abigail was intelligent and beautiful (3). We don't know why Abigail married such a



mean person. Perhaps she was from a very poor family and Nabal offered a large dowry. Rich men tend to marry a pretty wife. They sometimes marry even an intelligent one as well. Such things were common then, as they are today in some parts of the world.

So how did David come in contact with this odd couple? It happened this way. At that time, David and his men were stationed at Carmel near Maon, where Nabal had his properties. Without being asked, they protected the animals from thieves and ferocious animals. They were like a 600-men private security force for Nabal's 4,000 flocks. With their protective watch, none of his animals were harmed or went missing (7). The shrinkage rate (loss due to theft, damages, fraud, error, etc.) for Nabal's business went down from the usual 10% to zero percent. Nabal's profits soared. He noticed this on his quarterly income statement. He knew that his company was doing much better, not because his hired shepherds suddenly became more loyal to him and more efficient in tending the animals, but because of David. If asked, his employees would have testified that it was all due to the protective service rendered by David and his men (8). In fact, that is exactly what one of his servants testified later. He said, "*Night and day they were a wall around us all the time we were herding our sheep near them*" (16).

When the time of shearing sheep arrived, David sent ten young men to Nabal with a gentle and polite request. He told them: "*Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name. Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!'*" (5-6). David probably knew Nabal was a mean man, but he was very polite in his greetings. Then he asked Nabal to provide some food for his men. David had no defense budget for his force. They were running from the king. They had to rely on the generosity of the local people for their provisions. After detailing how his men protected Nabal's properties, David said in his message to Nabal, "*... be favorable toward my young men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them*" (8). David couldn't be more courteous to Nabal than this.

But what was Nabal's response when the ten young men delivered the message in David's name? *Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?"* (10-11) Nabal's answer to David's polite request was much more than a simple no. If he had said no, David would have been disappointed. He would have turned to someone else to ask for help. But Nabal's response was filled with meanness and ill will towards David. "Why should I give my bread and water to men coming from who knows where?" Nabal asked. Not only that, he insinuated that David was doing something evil against King Saul. He characterized David as a servant who broke away from his master in rebellion. Nothing could be further from the truth. David had served the king faithfully. Even when he had an opportunity to hurt the king in the cave at En Gedi, he did not touch him, saying Saul was the Lord's anointed. Nabal probably heard about this. And yet, he hurled insults at David. He said, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse?" Why did he bring up David's father? It was totally uncalled for. Even today, mean people use other people's

mother or father to provoke and insult them. Most of all, Nabal showed no gratitude towards David and his men who had protected his properties faithfully. He knew he had become wealthier because of David, but he refused to return the favor. Instead, he personally attacked David with insults and unfounded accusations.

What was David's reaction when the ten young men returned and reported every word of Nabal? Look at verse 13. *David said to his men, "Put on your swords!" So they put on their swords, and David put on his. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.* He might not have realized it, but this was a spiritual crisis for David. Not long ago, he had acted like a man after God's own heart in En Gedi. Now, a mean, wealthy man provoked him so much that he was about to take other people's lives out of his anger (22). He was about to be unbecoming of a man after God's own heart.

When we are personally attacked or insulted, it is hard for us to stay calm and make a good decision. We tend to make a rash, unwise decision out of our anger, one that we would regret later. May God help us not to make big mistakes out of anger!

## II. GOD SENDS ABIGAIL TO HELP DAVID (14-44)

How did God help David at this critical moment in his life? He sent a wise woman to counsel him. One of the Nabal's servants heard what he told David's messengers. He realized that his master had just made a big, stupid mistake. He could see that a disaster was hanging over the family. But he could not tell Nabal that. He knew that Nabal was such a wicked man that no one could talk to him (17). So what did he do? He went to Nabal's wife Abigail. He knew that Abigail was a wise woman whom he could talk to. What did he say to her? He said: *"David sent messengers from the desert to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. Night and day they were a wall around us all the time we were herding our sheep near them. Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household"* (14-17).

Abigail lost no time (18). She also realized that a crisis was brewing for her family. She took 200 loaves of bread, 2 skins of wine, 5 dressed sheep, 5 seahs of roasted grain, 100 cakes of raisins and 200 cakes of pressed figs, and load them on donkeys. She told her servants, "Go on ahead; I'll follow you." But she did not tell her husband (19). She knew that Nabal would never allow her to give so much food to David or anyone else.



As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her with the intention of killing all males in the family (20,22). *When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. She fell at his feet and said: “My lord, let the blame be on me alone. Please let your servant speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. May my lord pay no attention to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name is Fool, and folly goes with him. But as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my master sent”* (23-25).

Unlike her husband, Abigail did not behave like a filthy rich woman. She showed respect for David, bowing down before him and calling him, “My lord.” She said, “Let the blame be on me alone.” She asked David to give her a chance to speak. She told him to ignore what her husband, a fool, had told him. So what did Abigail say to David? What can we learn from her?

**First, since the Lord has kept you from avenging yourself** (26). Look at verse 26. *“Now since the LORD has kept you, my master, from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, may your enemies and all who intend to harm my master be like Nabal.”* Abigail probably heard about how David had spared Saul’s life in En Gedi. She reminded David that God kept him from bloodshed and from avenging himself with his own hands. It was a great act of faith. This act of faith separated David from his enemies who were stupid like her husband Nabal.

Abigail saw the event in En Gedi from a spiritual point of view. She believed that God helped David by keeping him from bloodshed. She did not see it as David’s political misstep of not eliminating an opponent given the excellent opportunity. She was a woman of spiritual discernment. She had David’s full attention with the remarks.

**Second, please forgive and let no wrongdoing be found in you** (27-31a). Look at verses 27-31a. *And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my master, be given to the men who follow you.*

*Please forgive your servant’s offense, for the LORD will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my master, because he fights the LORD’s battles. Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live. Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my master will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the LORD your God. But the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling.*



*When the LORD has done for my master every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him leader*

*over Israel, my master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself.*

This was the most important point that she tried to make to David. She was aware of God's plan to establish an everlasting kingdom for David. Yes, King Saul was pursuing him at the moment to take his life, but God would certainly protect his life. His life would be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord his God. In his time, God would surely keep his promise by establishing him as leader over Israel. Therefore, David should not avenge himself with his own hands for a worthless fool like Nabal. If he committed bloodshed now, David would have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless blood or of having avenged himself rather than entrusting it to God. In summary, she encouraged David to take the high road rather than giving in to his temporary emotions.

What wise advice this was! How could Abigail have such wisdom? Proverbs 9:10 says: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." We can say that Abigail was a woman of faith who had the fear of the Lord. Somehow we sense that she spent a lot of time studying and meditating on the word of God. She was aware of what God was doing. She was a good student of current events as well. I don't think she spent her days idly, gossiping and caring only about things like her makeup and accessories, like many wealthy women do. When Abigail had the fear of the Lord, God granted her such wonderful wisdom. Her wise words also remind us of Proverbs 31:30: "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."

**Third, remember your servant** (31b). Finally, Abigail said to David, "*And when the LORD has brought my master success, remember your servant.*" Abigail somehow sensed that this wasn't going to be the first and the last meeting between them. She asked for a further relationship with David.

What was David's response to Abigail's advice? Look at verses 32-34. *David said to Abigail, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak."* David praised God for sending a woman of good judgment to help him in a time of spiritual crisis. If Abigail had not acted quickly to come and counsel him, David would have avenged himself with his own hands by killing all males belonging to Nabal that very night. Such action of taking people's lives out of anger would certainly displease the Lord. David would have to live with his guilt conscience for all his life. He was very thankful for Abigail and her wisdom. *Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, "Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request"* (35).

After completing the mission of aborting a big disaster for her family, Abigail returned home. What was her husband doing when she arrived? Nabal was holding a big party in his house. The party was extravagant and resembled a king's banquet. He had refused to give even a loaf of bread or a skin of wine to David and his men who had protected his property. But he had no problem with spending his money on his private party. Wine flowed freely. He was in high spirits and very drunk. Ms. Victor calls him an OT version of the rich fool in Jesus' parable. That's exactly what Nabal was: He was rich and he was a fool. And because of his drunken stupor, Abigail could not even mention how a disaster for the family had been avoided in the nick of time. She had to wait until morning. *Then in the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things, and his heart failed him and he became like a stone. About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died (37-38).* He had a massive heart attack. He was a stingy man who refused to share his wealth with those who had served him. He thought he could enjoy his wealth forever. But God decided that it was his time to go.



*When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Praise be to the LORD, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal's wrongdoing down on his own head" (39).* Then David sent word to Abigail, asking her to become his wife. What was her reply to David's marriage proposal? *She bowed down with her face to the ground and said, "Here is your maidservant, ready to serve you and wash the feet of my master's servants" (41).*

So Abigail became David's wife. David also married Ahinoam of Jezreel (43). So David married a total of three women thus far. But he only had two wives, because King Saul had taken away his first wife Michal and given her to someone else (44).

We learned today God helped David not to make the huge mistake of killing people out of his anger. A wise woman counseled him to see things clearly from a spiritual point of view. May God raise up many women of faith like Abigail among us! May God help us not to make big mistakes even as we make small ones!