

# *Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant*

## #1 Abigail: A Humble Position Is A Powerful Position

### Background Info:

1. David and his men are fugitives from King Saul. Repeatedly Saul's forces pursue David, but he successfully eludes them in spite of the spies located in various parts of the country.
2. I Sam. 24: David gets close enough to Saul to cut off the edge of his garment without being detected. He refrains from harming Saul and leaves all retribution to God.
3. I Sam. 26: David is able to creep through the enemy camp right up to Saul's head in the dead of night. David refuses to inflict retaliation on Saul and leaves all retribution to God.
4. I Sam. 25: Strategically sandwiched between these 2 events is the account of David's terrible impatience and planned revenge with Nabal.

On this occasion David is in the wilderness of Paran, which was located west of the southern end of the Dead Sea. This vast area proves to be a good area for raising sheep and goats.

A wealthy man named Nabal uses it for his very large flocks.

Though Nabal lives in the town of Maon [28 mi. south of Jerusalem], he owns property at Carmel, a small nearby town. Having 4,000 sheep and goats would necessitate a number of shepherds to provide them with proper care. Besides the work, the shearing time also becomes a time for festivity. Shearing would be similar in importance to harvest for a farmer.

David and his men decided to keep their skills sharp by guarding Nabal's sheep from marauders.

### Note: The Attitudes & Actions Of 3 Different People

1. One spouts inflammatory words without any regard for the potential consequences.
2. One hears the words and, in haste, decides to retaliate in a manner with far-reaching implications.
3. Fortunately, standing between them is a woman who immediately grasps the entire setting. Then she races to bring a peaceful end which, in the long run, will bring special benefit to her.

### A. Nabal & Abigail: I Sam. 25:2-3

And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. <sup>3</sup> Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb.

1. Nabal = wicked, foolish, difficult, severe, cruel, harsh, inflexible, obstinate
  - a. Caleb = a dog = He was like a stubborn vicious animal that nobody could safely approach.
  - a. One of Nabal's servants and his own wife called him, "a son of Belial" - a worthless man. Refers to evil people who deliberately broke the law and despised what was good  
In the NT, it also refers to Satan [II Cor. 6:15]

2. Abigail [Father's joy or source of joy], intelligent and beautiful, was married to a wealthy, but sorry, good-for-nothing man, Nabal. [wealthy but not generous]  
a. Good understanding = Strong's #7922 = intelligence; by implication, success: discretion, knowledge, prudence, and wisdom. Abigail had all of those in abundance

B. David's Request: I Sam. 25:4-9

<sup>4</sup> And David Heard In The Wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep.

David was hoping that Nabal would reward him and his men for their service of protecting Nabal's sheep and goats from the thieves that showed up at shearing time.

It would not be easy to feed 600 men in the wilderness. Nabal could easily spare some animals to feed 600 men who had risked their lives to guard part of his wealth.

David sent 10 men to explain the situation and to ask to be invited to the feast.

<sup>5</sup> And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name:

<sup>6</sup> And thus shall ye say to him that lives in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel.

<sup>8</sup> Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the young men find favor in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. <sup>9</sup>And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased.

I Sam. 23:24ff - During David's previous stay in the wilderness of Maon, his men had been a Wall Of Protection for Nabal's flocks and those who were watching them.

This representative group approaches Nabal with wishes of health and long life for both himself and his household. They point to their treatment of his shepherds and that no animals are missing. This means David and his men did not simply take animals for their personal use like some fugitives would have. It is suggested that Nabal should check the accuracy of their statements with his shepherds. Notice, David makes no specific request other than what Nabal could spare at this celebration time. This isn't a "shakedown" or a blackmail attempt.

C. Nabal's Response: I Sam. 25:10-11 And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse?

there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.

<sup>11</sup> Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?

1. Nabal's harsh dismissal of David's request reveals his true nature.

2. Nabal did not recognize David as God's anointed to be king.

a. Who wouldn't know of the hero who just a few years before brought victory to Israel by defeating Goliath?

- b. How could Nabal even pretend not to know of the one whom the women sang his praises?
3. Despite knowing of David's previous benevolence to his shepherds, Nabal refuses to aid David and his men. No appreciation!
4. Nabal essentially spits in the faces of David's servants.

D. David's Response: I Sam. 25:12-13 So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.

<sup>13</sup> And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff.

- David is furious! He took 400 men and set out to retaliate by destroying Nabal's men.

E. Message To Abigail: I Sam. 25:14-17

But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them.

But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: <sup>16</sup> They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.

Interesting: The view of the incident from one of Nabal's young men.

1. David's men brought an appropriate greeting from David to Nabal.
2. Nabal hurled insults at them.
3. Young man had personally seen and experienced the attitude and care of David and his men. They were a wall shielding them day and night.

Consider: It appears the future of this crisis in the hands of Abigail.

Abigail must have seen the panic in the young man's eyes. He was terrified—and for good reason. Grave danger loomed. Some 400 warriors were on the way, determined to kill off every male in the household of Nabal.

F. Abigail's Wisdom: I Sam. 25:18-20 Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys.

Abigail Had Godly Love For All Of Those Around Her

1. When she heard David was coming with 400 men and swords, she could have fled—take some men and food with her, and headed for the hills to protect herself.

- She did not yield to fear, but acted in WISDOM.

2. But, she had concern for all the males that would be soon killed within hours.
3. She is the embodiment of the resourceful, energetic and "valiant wife" of Prov. 31.
  - a. Loving, patient, disciplined, hardworking and efficiently organized
  - b. Wise and discerning, endowed with a gentle disposition and pleasant speech

c. With no prior notice, she can promptly put together an enormous meal to feed David's army.

d. Practical insight: 3x we are told she "made haste."

Note: Her relationship with God was already in place when the crisis arose!

25:19-20 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you.

But she told not her husband Nabal. <sup>20</sup> And it was so, as she rode on the donkey, that she came down by the covert on the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them. She arrives as David is preparing his revenge.

#### G. David's Intent: I Sam. 25: 21-22

Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me [paid me back] evil for good. <sup>22</sup> May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!

1. All his good deeds to Nabal are worthless!

He has only received the railing insults of a wealthy, self-centered person.

2. He is determined to attack Nabal's camp, kill all the males and take all the needed supplies.

3. Then he meets Abigail face-to-face.

#### H. Abigail's Intercession: I Sam. 25:23-25

When she saw him, she dismounted and bowed her face to the ground. She prostrates herself at David's feet. Listen to an amazing intercession speech of humility, honor and respect.

She asks for the blame to be hers! She offers herself as the culprit!

After she sets the stage, then she asks David to disregard the words and actions of Nabal.

<sup>23</sup>Falling at his feet, she said: Upon me, my lord, Upon Me Let This Iniquity Be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.

<sup>25</sup>Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.

1. Abigail illustrates an attitude of true humility before her enemies.

David had the power to destroy her family members, servants and her life.

2. At great risk to herself, she approaches David, an angry man bent on revenge, and intercedes for her husband, despite his bad behavior.

- Her attitude of humility and honor gave her boldness.

3. Through an attitude of humility, she saved her entire household.

a. She fell on her face before David: Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be...

She took complete responsibility for the cruel decision and actions of her husband.

She sought grace on the behalf of her husband.

She postured herself as a servant to David. "my lord" 14x; his "handmaiden" 6x.

Consider: Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice to save foolish sinners from the consequences of their own actions. He continues to intercede for us.

Hebrews 7:25 Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.

Note: Despite her innocence she was willing to risk her life and accept the blame for her husband's sins to save the lives of others.

Note: Christ's 1<sup>st</sup> Sermon: Matt. 5:43-44 "You have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them [who spitefully] use you, and persecute you; [David, the enemy, is very angry and out for revenge to kill many men.]

Matt. 5:45-48 Why? That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those that love you, what reward have you? do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Don't even the publicans do the same? Be therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Abigail had a Christ-like attitude when she heard the bad news.

Jesus Christ, about 1000 years later:

Mark 10:45a For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

1. Abigail is willing to risk her life because of her concern for others.

Romans 12:1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that [you] present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

I John 3:14-15 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death. Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

I John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

### Abigail Pursues Peace

Ps. 34:14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

Strong's #1377 = pursue = press forward

1. She sought David out with the goal of making peace.

James 3:17-18 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

[Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.]

2. Peoples' lives were saved as a result of her pursuing peace.

- Peace should be a driving force in our lives.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, My Peace I Give Unto You: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

a. To actively pursue peace, we must be led by the Spirit who is working in us.

I. Abigail's Counsel: I Sam. 25:26-31 Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath restrained thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, Be As Nabal.

1. A major shift: Abigail suddenly becomes a messenger of the Lord.
2. The LORD kept him from shedding blood and taking matters into his own hand
3. She shares an understanding of God's purpose and future status of David.

<sup>27</sup> And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.

1. Abigail follows with a blessing on David, which is a condemnation of all enemies in the future. This takes place during David's reign. He defeats the enemies on all sides of Israel. When the kingdom passes to his son Solomon, there is an era of peace.
2. Whom you associate with does make a difference! In this case Abigail wants the blessing for David to spread to the men with him (v. 27). They too have been saved from killing the innocent.

<sup>28</sup> I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.

1. She identifies herself with the actions of her husband as though they were her own.
2. She moves beyond the present situation to assure David he will become Israel's king. The anointing of at least a decade earlier will be fulfilled.
3. Establishment of a "sure house" speaks of a dynasty. The LORD will establish your house.

<sup>29</sup> Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling.

1. The Lord will partner with David and fight his battles. Your life is held securely by the Lord.

<sup>30</sup> And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel;

<sup>31</sup> That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself:

but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

1. She urges David not to engage in vengeful actions which, in the future, would bring considerable grief. David would bear the stain of the blood of innocent victims on his hands.
  2. Thanks to the intervention of Abigail, he can face the future with a clean heart.
- Abigail concludes her words with a request referring to the time when David will have ascended to the throne.

Her appeal flowed out of her strong belief in God's sovereignty and His faithfulness.

David did not have to take matters into his own hands because it was the LORD who would establish his house, protect his life, and do everything He had promised David.

The LORD would make David a leader over Israel.

### Abigail Committed To Do The Right Thing & God Took Care Of Her

Consider: Abigail could have started crying and wringing her hands and sobbing, just dissolving into a pool of misery on the floor.

1. She took action, put herself in danger, pursued peace, and trusted God for the results.
2. See Jesus in the garden the night He was betrayed. He knew what was ahead.

Luke 22:42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me:  
Nevertheless Not My Will, But Thine, Be Done.

a. He committed to going forward. Notice what God did once Jesus committed.

Luke 22:43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, Strengthening Him.

### J. David's Acceptance: I Sam. 25:32-35

And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: <sup>33</sup> And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

<sup>34</sup> For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal!"

1. Immediate positive response from David: instant gratitude to God and to Abigail
2. David recognizes the hand of God in his life.
3. Except for her intervention, Nabal and his household would have been obliterated.
4. She stands in the gap to protect both parties.

Her example points to the Importance Of Words chosen when speaking in tense situations.

- a. Harsh, loud words become the catalyst to an unnecessary explosion.
  - b. Drive one to actions which will be regretted.
2. Calm, carefully calculated words can lead to a peaceful solution.
  3. Her humility silenced her enemy and completely changed his response to the situation.

Prov. 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

<sup>35</sup> So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

### K. Nabal's Death: I Sam. 25:36-38

And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light. <sup>37</sup> But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone.

<sup>38</sup> And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died.

1. While all this was happening, Nabal was at home throwing a party and getting drunk, not realizing this would be his last riotous celebration.
2. The failure of Nabal isn't just rudeness and hoarding. It's his insulting and dismissing the servants of David, who is God's anointed to be the next king of Israel.

Rom. 12:19 We should "leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord." David was prevented from taking revenge, and the Lord Himself took care of the matter in due time.

David and Nabal can be seen as representative of the two responses men have to Christ. Nabal does not repent or acknowledge his sin; neither does he thank Abigail for her willingness to risk her own life on his behalf. On the other hand, David's heart is tender and repentant, and he calls Abigail blessed for her actions.

David is spared the consequences of the sin he had planned, but Nabal dies in his sin.

#### L. Abigail's Future: I Sam. 25:39-42

And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head.

1. David offers praise and thanksgiving for God's intervention.

#### Abigail's Actions Kept Others From Committing Sin

God stepped in and by Abigail's actions, she kept David from shedding innocent blood.

I Tim. 4:12. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

"Be careful how you live, you may be the only Bible some people may every read."

<sup>40</sup> And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife.

<sup>41</sup> And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.

a. God wants more than lip service. He is seeking humble, devoted lives.

II Chron. 16:9a For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.

<sup>42</sup> And Abigail hasted, and arose and rode upon a donkey, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife.

1. From her humble position, Abigail saved her husband, all their servants and their belongings.

2. Because her heart was right before her evil husband, God honored her for the cruelty and abuse she'd endured for so many years.

3. While Abigail lived under the cruel hand of Nabal with its difficult circumstances:

- God was creating in her the attributes of a queen - to be the bride of the King.
- Do not let our circumstances control our lives and RETARD our spiritual growth.

Ponder: Am I allowing The Holy Spirit to create in me the attributes to be the bride of my King?

I Peter 5:5-6 ...all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He May Exalt You In Due Time: