

The Wisdom of Abigail

“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.”

I Samuel 25:3

Introduction:

1. The Bible strictly and plainly teaches wives to submit to their husbands (Gen 3:16; I Cor 11:9; Eph 5:22-24).
2. But it limits that submission short of “amazement,” which is mental stupefaction, bewilderment, perplexity, and consternation to the extent that a woman is confused about obeying God or her husband (I Pet 3:1-6).
3. As with all authority, when there is a conflict, we ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 4:19; 5:29).
4. Abigail provides a splendid example and illustration of this principle – she disobeys her husband to do right.
5. Every girl and woman should learn how to live a holy life and not let fear of father or husband dismay her.
6. Every girl and woman should learn how to approach an angry father or husband to obtain his full approval.
7. Abigail did both, perfectly! She disobeyed her husband, changed David’s enflamed mind, and won his heart!
8. Here is one of the most precious dramas in one chapter found in the Bible. Hollywood can eat their heart out.
9. Here is one of the most eloquent speeches ever delivered, as she turns a passionate man from his intentions.
10. Every girl and woman should aspire to have the combination of wisdom and understanding and looks as she.
11. There is more wisdom in the Word of God than all the books and manuals of man combined and squared!
12. There is a love story and marital advice in this drama, which excels any romance novel or marital counselor.

The SETTING (1-3)

- 25:1 David went to the wilderness in south Judah after Samuel’s funeral, for prudent mistrust of Saul.
- 25:2 Maon and Carmel are places in south Judah near Paran (Joshua 15:55; I Sam 23:24; I Sam 26:1).
There was a very rich man, with 3000 sheep, 1000 goats, and a substantial estate, in Maon.
It was the time of shearing sheep, which is the annual event bringing in the revenue for the year.
It was a time of great celebration, for it was the one great payday for the year (II Sam 13:23-28)!
- 25:3 The rich man’s name was Nabal, which means fool; and he deserved the name for his character.
He was churlish, which is “intentionally boorish or rude in behavior; hard, harsh, ‘brutal’, surly, ungracious. It includes “sordid, niggardly, stingy, grudging.” See Isaiah 32:5,7 about a churl.
He was an evil man, as his actions and the testimony of his wife show; he was a son of Belial.
Belial is a word personifying evil and often used for the devil; he was like a son of the devil.
He was properly of Judah, having descended from the noble house of Caleb. What a disgrace!
His wife was Abigail, who was a woman of good understanding – wise, who was also beautiful.
Not all marriages are made in heaven! Abigail was sacrificed, likely for money, to an evil pig.
She obeyed him, as God requires: the worse the husband, the greater the blessing (I Pet 2:18-20)!

The REQUEST (4-9)

- 25:4 David, hiding in the wilderness to maintain his security, is informed that Nabal is shearing sheep.
Nabal should be feeling prosperous and have much food in the field for celebrating with his men.
- 25:5 David sent messengers to greet Nabal in his own name, which was well known (I Samuel 18:30).
David was the hero who killed Goliath; he was not an unknown vagabond looking for a handout.
- 25:6 They were to greet Nabal and make reference to his comfortable and secure life in prosperity.
David sent his blessings of peace on him personally, on his family, and to all that Nabal owned.
- 25:7 David openly admits his knowledge of the sheep shearing; he deals in a straightforward manner.
He then informs and/or reminds Nabal of the honest care he had shown his shepherds and sheep.
- 25:8 Having been totally honest, David knows the men of Nabal will be able to confirm his integrity.
He reminds Nabal he is having his most lucrative day of the year, and he asks for some supplies.
He calls his men the servants of Nabal for their past service, and he reverences him as his father.
- 25:9 The ten young men David sent did exactly as he requested, then they waited for Nabal’s answer.

The INSULT (10-13)

- 25:10 Nabal, perversely, odiously, and evilly insulted the name of David and his father with ridicule. He called David a servant, though anointed king; and he charged him with rebellion against Saul. These are “fighting words,” as natural men and the world think. And David for once does also.
- 25:11 Nabal ridiculed taking food from his workers and giving it to bums he had no knowledge of.
- 25:12 The young men brought Nabal’s insulting response to David, a man of war and anointed king.
- 25:13 David responded as royalty should and would in such cases, and takes his tough men with him. These were some of the hardest and toughest men in Israel, whom he controlled (I Sam 22:1-2). Consider the wonderful character of David in controlling and leading such a group of men. Hopefully we do not need to hear the Hebrew word for “stuff” to assist our understanding!

The CHOICE (14-20)

- 25:14 One of Nabal’s servants told Abigail how rudely Nabal had treated the messengers from David.
- 25:15 The young man told Abigail the good and honest treatment they had received from David’s men.
- 25:16 The young man further described the security and protection they felt and received from the men.
- 25:17 He then exhorted Abigail to do something, for he was sure there would be revenge for the insult. He witnessed the content and spirit of Nabal’s insults; he was sure David would seek revenge. He confessed he did not go to Nabal to confirm David, because of Nabal’s obnoxious character. A son of Belial is a man so wicked he is called a son of the devil, or Belial, as evil personified.
- 25:18 Abigail packs a nice lunch for a large group of men and has it put on asses to carry it to David. She reacts quickly. She is of “good understanding” (25:3); she didn’t have to think long about it. In dealing with an angry person, speed is of the essence (Ps 119:60; Prov 6:1-6; Matt 5:23-26). Strife can easily grow with time, as bitterness tends to grow and spread (Heb 12:15; II Tim 2:17). Gifts do work to soften the anger of an adversary for most offences (Pr 17:8; 18:16; 19:6; 21:14). Practical and utilitarian gifts are not good for love and romance! Get creative past parched corn!
- 25:19 She told her servants to take off with the present for David, as she intended to follow behind. It was customary, and very wise, to send a gift in advance to turn away anger (Pr 18:16; 21:14). Jacob used this method to great success in preparing the heart of Esau for him (Gen 32:13-21). Note and remember the last sentence of this verse, for here is our illustration of I Peter 3:6. Nabal was wrong, and his error was going to cost his life and those of others. She was right! She did not tell her husband, for she was going against his thoughts, actions, and authority. Had she told him, he would have stopped her. She saved her family, Nabal, and David from evil.
- 25:20 By the providence of God, she was able to meet David before he could recognize and avoid her. In your dealings with strained relationships, including spouses, trust God for the circumstances.

The PETITION (21-31)

- 25:21 David, true to his passionate nature, was very angry for the rudeness he received for kindness. Such rash anger was not characteristic of the sweet psalmist of Israel, but there were exigencies. Though anointed king of Israel, he was not so yet; therefore, his angry plot is excessive and sin. If he had carried out his intentions, he would have been guilty of murder and self-revenge. In order to understand the man she was confronting, please grasp the full anger of David (25:13). David was a man of war, a stranger to Abigail, and furious, with justifiable wrath against Nabal.
- 25:22 The narrator, God the Holy Spirit, wants us to grasp the full import of David’s raging passion. He swears in the name of the LORD against Nabal, which shows the seriousness of his rage. A sinful oath is no more binding on a man than the sin; repentance includes the sin and the oath. His oath says, “If I leave a single man of this place alive, let God spare the lives of my enemies.” He intends in great rage to make Nabal and his house an example to those who would insult him. Those that piss against the wall are men, a figure of speech for that day, as women cannot do it.

- 25:23 When Abigail sees David, she enters into the most forceful and eloquent appeal ever recorded! She quickly gets down physically all the way to the ground in bowing reverence to honor David. Remember, this woman was beautiful, very intelligent, and very rich. Yet she knew to get down! Much marital strife and bitterness could be saved, if wives would get down off their high horse! There was no regard for dignity or gracefulness to make an impression. There was total humility!
- 25:24 She took full responsibility for the transgression and accepted any consequences he might give. Calling herself a handmaid (servant) twice, she begs that the condemned might speak to him. She begins addressing him as lord, though he is neither her king nor her husband, but a soldier. When dealing with a strained relationship, call the matter what it is – sin. Don't whitewash it. Use gentle words; beg, plead, pray, beseech; he is not your partner or brother to rebuke boldly. Ask for permission to speak rather than presuming on it, which shows humility and reverence.
- 25:25 Again she calls him lord, while begging him to ignore her husband, whom she relates to Belial! She took her husband's name and expounded it as meaning folly, which she ascribed to him! When dealing with an offended party, ridicule your error and show your contempt of yourself. She professed that things would have been different, if she had encountered the messengers.
- 25:26 She swore in the name of the LORD that it was by His providence that she had met him first. She detailed two sins the LORD kept him from – murder (Ex 20:13) and revenge (Lev 19:18). She continued to call him lord and raised him in a subordinate position to God in her oath. She used God's providence to turn his wrath from insignificant Nabal to all his real enemies.
- 25:27 At this point in her petition, Abigail identified the much food as her personal gift to David, which he could give to the men with him in lieu of their original request to Nabal. Observe that she continued to address him reverently with "my lord" over and over again.
- 25:28 Abigail took up her guilt again and begged for David to forgive his lowly handmaid her trespass! In settling personal conflicts, after confessing your faults, ask for forgiveness to shift the burden. She reminded him of the certain blessing of God upon him and his house to minimize the insult. She praised him nobly for fighting the Lord's battles, and she praised him for his virtuous soul!
- 25:29 She then turned his attention to his real enemy – Saul – who had tried to take his life, not Nabal! With glorious eloquence, she described David as bound tightly by love from the LORD his God! And she condemned David's enemies as being hurled away by the same LORD, as out of a sling.
- 25:30 She reminded David that God would certainly bless him, as He had promised, and Israel knew. Again, calling David her lord, she reminded him that God would make him the ruler over Israel.
- 25:31 Abigail, bringing a conclusion, beseeched her lord to consider the preservation of his innocence. She had already praised the LORD for keeping David from sinning, now she considered his soul. Unnecessary murder and personal revenge would have grieved and offended David's pure heart. Get the final words! "When the LORD makes my lord a glorious king, please remember me." There is no way any man but the most wicked would stay his course and not fall in love with her.

The RESPONSE (32-35)

- 25:32 David praised the LORD for sending such a wise, helpful, (and beautiful) messenger to stop him! Stop, reader! Remember and consider this passionate man was in a rage just minutes before this!
- 25:33 David praised her and her advice for keeping him from sinning in murder and personal revenge. A man as great as David, and very angry to boot, quickly accepted both Abigail and her advice. These are the guaranteed results of approaching offended authority with the wisdom of Abigail.
- 25:34 He praised Abigail that her quick response had saved her and her household from certain harm. Again, for the value of the lesson, we are reminded how angry David was when met by Abigail.
- 25:35 David took the present she had brought, which he needed, and gave it to the men with him. He told Abigail she could go to her house in peace and safety, for he would not do her any harm. He told Abigail she had convinced him of his foolish rage, and he had accepted her as well. Wise women approaching their husbands in the same reverent spirit will also be accepted!

The JUDGMENT (36-38)

- 25:36 When Abigail returned home, she found Nabal seriously drunk and carousing like a rich king. He could not spare any food for God's anointed man, but he could eat and drink like a glutton! She still did not tell him anything of her "trip to town," for she would wait until he was sober.
- 25:37 In the morning, when he was sober, Abigail told him all she had done the day before with David. His heart died within him – though living, he was dead – he lost all hope of peace and prosperity. He became inconsolable in fear, grief, envy, and worry. He was senseless to life around him. How close had he come to a quick death? His few sheepshearers could not match David's men! How could he be sure that David would not yet come? For men do not reverse passion so easily! How could he be sure that David would not come for Abigail? Now David knew his best asset! How could he be at peace knowing his wife had shown her superiority before his whole house! How could he have peace knowing that upon his demise his wife and estate would be David's!
- 25:38 Ten days later the LORD did intervene supernaturally and kill Nabal, to leave Abigail a widow! Wisdom leaves vengeance to the LORD. He will repay! He does not take as long as some think.

The PROPOSAL (39-40)

- 25:39 David praised the LORD at the report, for he understood that God had taken vengeance Himself! David rejoiced at the judgment of his enemy, knowing it was divine judgment and for plain sin. Not wasting any time after a fantastic first date, David corresponded with Abigail for marriage!
- 25:40 David sent his servants back to Carmel to tell Abigail that he would marry her and comfort her. While times were different than our liberated generation, Abigail had already encouraged him.

The ACCEPTANCE (41-42)

- 25:41 Consider the continued humility and meekness of this wonderful woman as she gladly accepted! Speaking to merely David's servants, Abigail offered to settle for washing their feet as a servant. David did not even come personally, but she treated his servants as she would have treated him. Abigail is an intelligent, beautiful, rich widow! But she shows not one degree of haughtiness! This woman showed more humility and reverence than women today can even imagine!
- 25:42 She did not waste any time. David had called. She took her five servants and went to meet him! She didn't seek extensive courting or dating; she became his wife; praise the wisdom of Abigail! She had a rich estate with a large household; he was hiding in the wilderness; she went anyway!

The CONCLUSION (43-44)

- 25:43 David added to his stable of wives, Ahinoam from Jezreel. He was now a polygamous man.
- 25:44 David's first wife, Michael, was given by her father, Saul, to another man, in David's absence.

Conclusion:

1. Wives should obey their husbands, for this is the ordinance of God; but it is limited short of sin (I Peter 3:6).
2. Disobeying a husband is a serious matter, but it should be done when God's clear commandments are at stake.
3. A man is blessed to have a wife who can remind of his duties to God with the humble reverence of Abigail.
4. Confronting an angry, bitter, or sinning man is a difficult and perplexing matter, but Abigail did it perfectly.
5. Restoring and maximizing a marriage should be a regular goal of godly wives, and Abigail shows it perfectly.
6. If a wife were to apply the humility, reverence, and wisdom of Abigail, she would have a perfect marriage.
7. The vile sins of pride, selfishness, and stubbornness guarantee the perpetual loss and pain of most women.
8. No matter what your marital situation, put your trust in the Lord and do things His way for great blessing!
9. The methods of Abigail appear extreme, bizarre, and dangerous in our perverse generation, but God endorses.
10. For a woman to have a totally adoring and devoted husband, she needs to win his heart as Abigail shows.
11. The spirit and actions of Abigail should pervade the thoughts, words, and conduct of every wife every day.
12. When she fails or senses the marriage slipping, a wife should determine where she erred and start over.
13. Abigail's conduct won the day and saved her household, but the spirit is God's plan for wives every day.