

1 Samuel Series Slide

The following story comes from a monk at St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado. (*From Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership- Ruth Haley Barton- pg 55*)

"I saw a monk working alone in the vegetable garden. I squatted down beside him and said, "Brother, what is your dream?" He just looked straight at me.

"I would like to become a monk," he answered.

"But brother, you are a monk, aren't you?"

"I've been here for 25 years, but I still carry a gun." He drew a revolver from the holster under his robe. It looked so strange, a monk carrying a gun.

"And they won't—are you saying they won't let you become a monk until you give up your gun?"

"No, it's not that. Most of them don't even know I have it, but I know."

"Well then, why don't you give it up?"

"I guess I've had it so long. I've been hurt a lot, and I've hurt a lot of others. I don't think I would be comfortable without this gun."

"But you seem pretty uncomfortable with it."

"Yes, pretty uncomfortable, but I have my dream."

"Why don't you give me the gun?" I whispered. I was beginning to tremble.

He did, he gave it to me. His tears ran down to the ground and then he embraced me.

Most of us have a gun...a way of protecting ourselves and making ourselves feel safe. We keep it hidden underneath some external persona of religion or career or some societal status...but you know- its at best holding you back...and probably has great potential to harm you or those close to you.

It can go off unexpectedly at anytime. But it doesn't feel safe to let it go. Maybe for months, or years, you've been carrying it as protection. In an attempt to comfort yourself. But the thing is...all it does is make you incredibly uncomfortable.

Today- through what God shows you in the Bible- I'm praying you listen to Jesus and respond as he whispers to you "Why don't you give me the gun?"

Title Slide- “Why Don’t You Give Me the Gun?: How Forgiveness Saves the Future”- 1 Samuel 25 (pg 364)

If you have ever been wronged...and wanted revenge. There is something deep here for you today.

If you have ever wronged someone...and been too afraid to admit it...There is something deep here for you today.

And if you have ever been caught in the middle of a relationship like that...between a person who has been wronged...and their perpetrator...there is something deeply beautiful for you to see in this text today.

I’m going to lead us to a moment at the end of this message today- that I have been praying will be a spiritual breakthrough for you. That some of your

Before we start reading I’d like to pray for you...because I’m believing that today is the day you take a step toward healing- toward confession and forgiveness and peace.

PRAY

Over the next 2 or three weeks, we are going to finish up the Old Testament book of 1st Samuel. Which we started back in April.

Today, we’ll be in 1 Samuel 25- which is a pretty involved story told over 44 verses. So we’re gonna do this chapter a little differently today. I won’t read the whole thing all at once, instead I’m going to read bits at a time...explaining a little bit here and there as I go.

If you’ve got your Bibles, while I’ll put a lot of this on the screen behind me- today is a good day to have one open in your lap. Especially for my D46 students- your bible has lots of good notes in it that you might learn from- including a big Character profile on Abigail that summarizes this story for you and has some really good take-aways.

It would be a really cool thing to maybe grab your bible before you go to sleep tonight, crawl in your bed and re-read the story or the character profile on pg 365- and maybe jot down in your notebook some things God might be saying to you.

Ok- here we go.

1 Samuel 25:1

Samuel died, and all Israel assembled to mourn for him, and they buried him by his home in Ramah. David then went down to the Wilderness of Paran.

Couple of things to remember here:

First- David is being chased by Saul who is jealous of David and he's trying to murder him. Remember the last time we were in this book together, David had the opportunity to kill Saul, but didn't.

But Saul, continues to chase David.

Also Samuel, who has been the only voice representing God that Israel has heard in many many years...and who has been a mentor and a kind of Father figure to David- just died.

And David is hiding out in a Wilderness- or desert. Meaning food and water is not readily available.

So, fresh off the funeral of a Father figure, hungry, thirsty, tired and always looking over his shoulder for a guy who wants him dead- David is spiritually, physically, and emotionally taxed.

v2-3

A man in Maon had a business in Carmel; he was a very rich man with three thousand sheep and one thousand goats and was shearing his sheep in Carmel. 3 The man's name was Nabal, and his wife's name, Abigail. The woman was intelligent and beautiful, but the man, a Calebite, was harsh and evil in his dealings.

Nabal is very rich, but he's an absolute jerk. Abigail is intelligent and beautiful. This is not a happy marriage.

v 4-8

While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep, 5 so David sent ten young men instructing them, "Go up to Carmel, and when you come to Nabal, greet him in my name. 6 Then say this: 'Long life to you, and peace to you, peace to your family, and peace to all that is yours. 7 I hear that you are shearing. When your shepherds were with us, we did not harass them, and nothing of theirs was missing the whole time they were in Carmel. 8 Ask your young men, and they will tell you. So let my young men find favor with you, for we have come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have on hand to your servants and to your son David.' "

Normal middle eastern hospitality- especially on a feast day, would be to welcome and feed any wanderers that happen to come into your territory. David essentially has his men say to Nabal "Hey- when your shepherds were in my territory, we took care of them. We're kind of tired and hungry out here in your territory...would you guys mind sharing some of what you have with us- on this feast day?"

Its not an entitled request- its a very normal and understandable thing.

v 10-11

Nabal asked them, “Who is David? Who is Jesse’s son? Many slaves these days are running away from their masters. 11 Am I supposed to take my bread, my water, and my meat that I butchered for my shearers and give them to these men? I don’t know where they are from.”

This is an insult. Nabal knows good and well who David is. Remember David is more famous at this point than King Saul- because of slaying Goliath and many battles that he had won with the Philistines.

He’s taking a shot at David. “He’s just a runaway slave. All these rumors about being king....please. He just Saul’s servant running away- hiding in caves. Oh poor baby- He’s just Jesse’s little baby boy who got lucky with a sling shot.”

So not only is Nabal not fulfilling his responsibility to hospitality, not only is he not recognizing and honoring Davids kindness toward him...he’s insulting David while he does it.

Remember- David was the smallest of all of Jesse’s sons. He was overlooked by his own Father. It was Samuel- whose funeral he’s just leaving- that recognized God’s call for Davids life. David- from that moment- has been listening to the Lord, following his lead, and dealt with some pretty nasty mistreatment from Saul— now this NABAL guy is publicly insulting him, playing on his insecurities as the least of Jesse’s sons RIGHT after he’s just lost one of the most important people in his life.

All David has done is the right thing. He took care of Nabal’s men. He didn’t kill Saul when he had the chance...and now THIS! THIS! THIS IS HOW HES REPAYED?!

Can you see where this is going? In this next line you can just HEAR David snap.

v 13

David tells his men “THATS IT GRAB YOUR SWORDS! MEAT’s BACK ON THE MENU, BOYS!” so 400 men saddle up to attack Nabal. And they aren’t just gonna go for Nabal.

Listen to what David says on down in the passage.

v 21-22

“I guarded everything that belonged to this man in the wilderness for nothing. He was not missing anything, yet he paid me back evil for good. 22 May God punish me and do so severely if I let any of his males survive until morning.”

In one chapter, we have gone from David exercising remarkable self-control to not take revenge and kill Saul...to him in a rage ready to murder every one of Nabal’s men for not feeding him...and embarrassing him.

What happened to the guy from chapter 24 that said “I will not take vengeance into my own hands?”

Now- the twist.

Remember Abigail. Nabal's discerning and beautiful wife? She catches wind of this... that Nabal has stiffed David and that David is about to bring a bloodbath to her people...and she kicks it into action.

v 18-19

18 Abigail hurried, taking two hundred loaves of bread, two clay jars of wine, five butchered sheep, a bushel of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. 19 Then she said to her male servants, “Go ahead of me. I will be right behind you.” But she did not tell her husband, Nabal.

Abigail makes up a HUGE gift basket full of sheep parts and fruit cake and an Olive Garden gift card- and sends them ahead to David- hoping to soften him before she meets him. So she rides in on a donkey after the gift baskets...and this is what she says.

1 Samuel 25:24-25

She knelt at his feet and said, “The guilt is mine, my lord, but please let your servant speak to you directly. Listen to the words of your servant. 25 My lord should pay no attention to this worthless fool Nabal, for he lives up to his name: His name means ‘stupid,’ and stupidity is all he knows. I, your servant, didn’t see my lord’s young men whom you sent.

Nabal's name literally means “fool” in Hebrew. I just want to say- maybe Nabal is such a jerk because his parents named him fool. Which is a pretty bad way to start life. Or it could be that this was a nickname Nabal acquired over time as people observed his behavior.

Abigail could have non-ironically worn the T-shirt with the arrow pointing to her left that said “I’m with Stupid”.

Now- this is not exactly a great model for how a person should talk about their spouse- but ease up- because Abigail is trying to prevent a massacre.

My wife can call me stupid all day long if it keeps me from getting filleted. Especially if my name was literally stupid.

You see what she is doing here. She is taking the blame. She says “The guilt is mine. I didn’t see your men. I was looking out for them. Its my fault. I know my husband is a fool and I should have looked for your men.

Now- is that fair? Well- not really. I mean Abigail didn’t do much or maybe anything wrong. But in a case where she is 99.9% innocent- she looks for whatever she can own- and she owns it...without worrying about whether its fair or not.

Next up: more brilliance from the intelligent and beautiful Abigail.

1 Samuel 25:26-28

Now my lord, as surely as the Lord lives and as you yourself live— it is the Lord who kept you from participating in bloodshed and avenging yourself by your own hand—may your enemies and those who intend to harm my lord be like Nabal. 27 Let this gift your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. 28 Please forgive your servant’s offense, for the Lord is certain to make a lasting dynasty for my lord because he fights the Lord’s battles. Throughout your life, may evil not be found in you.

This is David’s “Why don’t you give me the gun?” moment.

Abigail tells him- Its YHWH that kept you killing Saul when you had the chance. Think about it. You now have the food you need to feed your men (unlimited salad and breadsticks)- so the only point in killing Nabal and his men now is revenge. Forgive us. Think about your legacy. Think about the future. Don’t become a fool and tarnish your reputation by killing a fool. Keep trusting YHWH. Let him avenge. Let him fight your battles.

v 29

“Someone is pursuing you and intends to take your life. My lord’s life is tucked safely in the place where the Lord your God protects the living, but he is flinging away your enemies’ lives like stones from a sling

She reminds him of the LORD’s faithfulness in protecting him from Saul. And she says- without you fighting them- God is flinging your enemies away from you like stones in a sling. (Wink, Wink). Get it David. Stones....in a SLING. Ever had a moment where you had to put STONES in a SLING?

Here’s the brilliance of Abigail. She’s saying to David- “Remember how God took down Goliath for you? You had a rock and a sling. You know that wasn’t about your skill or military prowess. That was 100% God going before you...taking out enemies as he saw fit. That rock goes one millimeter the other way...Goliath is smashing you!

Trust God like you did on that day. Trust God like you did when you didn’t kill Saul in the cave. Now is not the time to get off course with God and take revenge...just because now you have the power to. Stop dwelling on how much you’ve been

wronged...and start dwelling on much God has done to put you in this position. Move from vengeance to gratitude.

David...Why don't you give me the gun?

v 30-31

When the Lord does for my lord all the good he promised you and appoints you ruler over Israel, 31 there will not be remorse or a troubled conscience for my lord because of needless bloodshed or my lord's revenge. And when the Lord does good things for my lord, may you remember me your servant."

Now- she moves him from thinking about God's faithfulness in the past- to thinking about the future God has promised.

She says- "One day- you'll be king, just like the Lord promised. Imagine a future where you are sitting there on the throne of Israel— but you can't sleep at night...because the legacy you leave your grandkids- and your people- is about the time some fool ticked you off and you killed a bunch of innocent people in retaliation. Is that the future you want, David? Is that what you want to do with God's faithfulness to you? There's only one way to preserve that future. to Forgive.

David, Why don't you give me the gun?

v 32-34

32 Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you to meet me today! 33 May your discernment be blessed, and may you be blessed. Today you kept me from participating in bloodshed and avenging myself by my own hand.34 Otherwise, as surely as the Lord God of Israel lives, who prevented me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, Nabal wouldn't have had any males left by morning light."

By pointing David to the faithfulness of God in his past- and the hope of God's faithfulness to keep his promises in the future- Abigail convinces David to give her the gun.

v 35

Then David accepted what she had brought him and said, "Go home in peace. See, I have heard what you said and have granted your request."

And in this passage you can see David's eyes clear up. The rage leaves him and he recognizes that for a moment- he had lost himself. He had lost sight of his God...of his mission...of his purpose.

But thanks to Abigail... the weight of revenge comes off of David...and forgiveness comes out of him.

Now let's finish the story.

v 37-38

Then Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was in his house, holding a feast fit for a king. Nabal's heart was cheerful, and he was very drunk, so she didn't say anything to him until morning light.

37 In the morning when Nabal sobered up, his wife told him about these events. His heart died and he became a stone. 38 About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal dead.

Nabal is completely ignorant of the whole thing. Has no idea that he was on the precipice of being the reason that every man in his tribe would be slaughtered because of his foolishness. He's just sitting at the house eating like a king.

Interesting. David is the one who was anointed king. But it's Nabal who believes he is entitled to withhold from the king so he can EAT like he's the king. And notice- he's cheerful. He's drunk.

Can you imagine Abigail coming home...her heart has been beating out of her chest. She has looked death in the eye...and survived. And she comes home to this fool that she married. And doesn't say a word.

What self-control! What discernment! Abigail is incredible.

But Nabal...wakes up...and in response to the story how he almost brought death to his whole clan...has a stroke...and ten days later- he's dead.

Indeed- vengeance is the Lord's.

v 39

When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the Lord who championed my cause against Nabal's insults and restrained his servant from doing evil. The Lord brought Nabal's evil deeds back on his own head."

Then David sent messengers to speak to Abigail about marrying him

The end of this story is bitter sweet. On one hand- David sees that the Lord is still fighting his battles. When he gave up the gun- he entrusted God to sort out who deserves what at what time.

And he recognizes the need to care for Abigail- who is without a husband now- in a time that would leave her very vulnerable to poverty, to being taken advantage of.

v 43

but this started David down a trail of marrying multiple wives. Which is not what God wanted.

In fact, in Deuteronomy 17, YHWH had explicitly warned future Israelite Kings NOT to do this.

But right after this moment of trusting God through the voice of Abigail, he leverages his royal privilege to follow the custom of the day to disobey God's command.

And as your reading this story in the context of the whole scripture- now you've seen David almost completely lose it on a whole clan of innocent men...and now he's into polygamy- you're starting to think- uh-oh. Here we go again. Another Abraham, another Moses, another leader that seemed to be the one we waiting for...but he's failing.

Now- lets talk about some things to learn here.

1) We need the wisdom of the Body of Christ.

In one chapter David went from the one exercising incredible patience and self-control and focus on the LORD...to having an absolutely terrible week...that made him weak.

Self-control is a muscle. It gets tired. And he had used a ton of it just in NOT killing Saul. He's exhausted and he's grieving. But none of his men steps up to tell him, "Bro- we can't just go kill all these people because you're tired, and hangry."

They are just yes men to David. And its almost a disaster.

But Abigail is like the friend that pulls you aside after community group and says, "you seem angry. You seem disconnected from God. Lets go get coffee and talk this over."

If you David doesn't get that from Abigail... its real bad for a lot of people.

In the church- we need Abigails. People who can speak calmly and with clarity into emotionally charged situations. Abigail is a non-anxious presence. She comes humbly, kindly, sacrificially, and doesn't brow beat David defensively or shame him.

She reminds him of who God is...what God has done for David in the past...what God has promised to do for David in the future... and thereby reminds David of who HE IS.

City church...the Body of Christ...we have to be Abigails to one another. And beware when your heart is so hard... so focused on keeping things for yourself...that you can't hear Abigail. Thats where Nabal was.

We need the wisdom of the Body of Christ speaking into our lives. Don't separate yourself from the church.

2) Your circumstances don't have to dictate your behavior.

David- in his weakness...lets the terrible circumstances of the moment tell him what he has to do. Lash out!

But Abigail- who has endured a terrible marriage with a no-good husband for so long... who has once again ticked somebody off and cost her with his foolishness...remains calm and does the right thing. Again...because her mind is trained on the way of the Lord.

A little side note- this is the longest speech by any woman in the Old Testament. Notice- its Abigail, a woman (who i've heard people say that women can't lead because they are too driven by their emotions) but again its the men hear who are captive to their emotions...its Abigail who doesn't allow her circumstances to dictate her behavior...and she leads the future leader of Israel to see the way HIS emotions are out of control.

3) Faith is living now like you'll be glad you did tomorrow.

To wipe out Nabal and his friends would have felt amazing...in a moment. But then David has to wake up the next day...and every day after with the memory of that slaughter. The blood on his hands. Like Lady Macbeth- unable...no matter how much he scrubs... to clean himself up.

Abigail reminds him...in that moment emotional spill over... to think about the future. Think about tomorrow.

Parents- think about how your actions in a moment can effect your kids futures. Think about what can be destroyed in a moment of moral compromise for a few seconds of pleasure.

Self-control doesn't give you the release you want in that moment. But boy does it make a better tomorrow. Live TODAY like you'll be glad you did tomorrow.

4) Strive for justice...but vengeance is the Lord's

There is a difference between justice and vengeance. Justice means making things right.

Its not wrong for a single mother to seek the child support her ex-husband has been keeping from her.

But with vengeance- you aren't interested in what's right- you are interested in shaming, destroying the other person.

We should seek justice. Vengeance is the Lords. The anger of man, James says, does not bring about the righteousness of God.

There are 3 kinds of vengeance that often come out of us.

Straight Vengeance, Sideways Vengeance, and Upward Vengeance

Straight- is just an obsession and anger with one person or group of people who wronged you. Always looking for a way to pay them back. David to Nabal. You could call it Nabal gazing- because you take your eyes off of God and keep them on your enemy.

Sideways- This is what Nabals men would have experienced. In a way...its what Nabal experienced.

David really upset with Saul. But overreacts to Nabal...and it was coming out sideways to all nasals men.

Angry at your boss- but you take it out on your family...because you know you can't on your boss.

Upward- Angry at God. Often this accuses God of not keeping promises that he never really made.

5) Greed blinds you from the spiritual danger you are in.

Nabal had no generosity. He wanted to feast like a king. So when somebody came after his stuff... he shut himself off from the opportunity experience the Lord through generosity. ANd he was so busy enjoying the stuff his money could buy...that he was completely clueless to the danger he was in.

6) Forgiveness unlocks Spiritual Renewal.

When David gives Abigail the gun...his eyes are opened to see God's faithfulness and love again.

In fact- remember how we saw the cracks in David's character here. In this chapter- really for the first time- he stops pointing us to the Messiah- the true King of Israel.

You know how does?

Abigail- She rides in peacefully on a donkey toward her enemy, like Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a Donkey. She takes the blame she didn't deserve- she takes Nabal's guilt on herself.

She generously overflows to David- more than he deserves.

And like christ on the cross said about those who crucified him "Forgive them Father... they know not what they do."

So Abigail said about her ignorant husband "Forgive him...he knows not what he does."

Invitation to follow Jesus.

Will you give him the gun?

Prayer.