

Refine Women's Ministry

David Lesson 7: Nabal and Abigail, Contrasts in Character-1 Samuel 25

March 21, 2018 by Kim Peelen

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. James 3:17, 18

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing. Proverbs 12:18

David is a man marked for death by King Saul, and must live life on the run, along with an army of 400 to 600 displaced men who are now his responsibility. The group moves about from stronghold to cave to city trying to escape Saul's relentless pursuit. In Samuel 24, David declares his loyalty and innocence before Saul, "*Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.' May the LORD judge between you and me, and may the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you.*" Understandably, Saul is relieved at David's restraint and even asks David, "*So now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me and that you will not destroy my name from my father's household.*" David agrees (leaving God to judge Saul for his wrongs) and departs for the stronghold while Saul returns to Gibeah.

As chapter 25 opens, Samuel dies and all of Israel mourns the man who faithfully exhorted the nation to obey the LORD: "*You must not turn aside, for then you would go after futile things which can not profit or deliver, because they are futile. For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself 1 Samuel 12:21, 22.*" His death ends the transition period from God-appointed judges to the current God-appointed king form of government. After the funeral, David moves his band of merry men to southern part of Judean desert, near Maon and Carmel (different from Elijah's Mt. Carmel), where they protect the extensive flocks of a rich man from the tribe of Caleb.

In the Bond of Peace

This lesson we complete the qualities of a worthy servant of Jesus Christ from our theme verse Ephesians 4:1-3. So far, David is our model to imitate as he fulfills his calling *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* A worthy walk includes the underlying motive to keep the bonds of peace in tact between men, especially believers, even when unjustly offended.

David's Instructions: 1 Samuel 25: 2-9

Though David is an outlaw because of Saul's death warrant, he leads his men to assist his countrymen when needed. When Philistines attack Keilah's threshing floors, his band of warriors repulse the enemy and save their food supply. In the same way, his men assist the shepherds of Nabal's three thousand sheep and a thousand goats against human and animal attacks. So, when shearing season is underway, David sends a contingent of ten young men to Nabal with specific instructions to request some repayment for their services:

Go up to Carmel, visit Nabal and greet him in my name; and thus you shall say, 'Have a long life, peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. Now I have

*heard that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us and we have not insulted them, nor have they missed anything all the days they were in Carmel. Ask your men and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we have come on a festive day. **Please give whatever you find at hand** to your servants and to your son David.” When David’s young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in David’s name.*

David’s servants obey his instructions to deliver his respectful message for provisions. This is a legitimate request, especially at shearing time, which is harvest time for the shepherd, in which the community celebrates God’s provision. Notice David’s well-chosen words - he likely knows of Nabal’s hot temper and harshness and desires to maintain the bond of peace.

Nabal’s Insult: 1 Samuel 25: 2-3, 10-11

*Now the [rich] man’s name was Nabal, and his wife’s name was Abigail. And the woman was intelligent and beautiful in appearance, but the man **was harsh and evil in his dealings**. . . But Nabal answered David’s servants and said, “Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are each breaking away from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men whose origin I do not know?”*

Clearly, Nabal thinks highly of himself and his response is thoroughly insulting to David:

- Questions his significance - David is a national hero for killing Goliath, winning battles, and leading Saul’s army, yet he says he’s never heard of him.
- Questions his ancestry – though he speaks his father’s name, he ‘says’ he does not know David’s pedigree. Nabal’s tribe is Caleb, but he sadly lacks the character of that righteous man.
- Questions his men’s integrity – insinuates David’s men are runaways, or worse
- Questions their worthiness – Nabal will not share HIS party with these low-lives

True to his reputation as a “worthless man” [literally, son of Belial; same description as Eli’s two sons who habitually violated their priestly position], Nabal feigns ignorance of the men’s role in protecting his flocks, avoiding having to pay for their services. His business ‘dealings’ are tainted because he wants something for nothing and, likely boasts it is smart business.

James speaks of a Nabal-like businessmen: *Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter James 5:4, 5.* Proverbs chapters 10 – 15 describe such men who defile the bond of peace!

David’s Intent: 1 Samuel 25:12-14, 21, 22

*So David’s young men retraced their way and went back; and they came and told him according to all these words. David said to his men, “Each of you gird on his sword.” So each man girded on his sword. And David also girded on his sword, and about four hundred men went up behind David while two hundred stayed with the baggage . . . Now David had said, “Surely in vain I have guarded **all** that this man has in the wilderness, so that **nothing** was missed of **all** that belonged*

to him; and he has returned me evil for good. May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave as much as one male of any who belong to him."

David reacts rashly, like Saul in fact, to the men's report. He exchanges humility with arrogance, focusing on the offense done to him, rather than seeing the insult against God and His character. Perhaps knowing Nabal is a harsh, corrupt businessman gives David permission to indulge himself in sinful wrath to the insulting refusal to compensate him for his hard work. Because David has consistently responded righteously to undeserved insults and accusations, it is disappointing when he reacts badly (as most of us do most of the time). He prepares to retaliate by slaughtering Nabal's household. David is impatient, not bearing with another in love, not desiring to maintain peace, and not inquiring of the LORD.

Servant's Information: 1 Samuel 25: 14 - 17

But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Behold, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, and he scorned them. Yet the men were very good to us, and we were not insulted, nor did we miss anything as long as we went about with them, while we were in the fields. They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the time we were with them tending the sheep. Now, therefore, know and consider what you should do, for evil is plotted against our master and against all his household; and he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him.

See how one man's evil impacts others; no sin is isolated. What a horrible testimony against Nabal – his corrupt character is so consistent that his servant does not attempt to inform him that his house is about to be murdered! This young man takes action rather than retreat in fear, and reports the news to his wife Abigail, someone with power to prevent the disaster. This man desires peace, courageously informs his mistress of the impending wrath of David.

Abigail Acts: 1 Samuel 25: 18 - 31

Wasting no time, Abigail hurriedly sends her servants to meet David with his requested festival food: *two hundred loaves of bread and two jugs of wine and five sheep already prepared and five measures of roasted grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs.. . But she did not tell her husband Nabal.* She arrives just after her men and immediately **confesses** to David as she falls at his feet: *"On me alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let your maidservant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant. Please do not let my lord pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him; but I your maidservant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent."*

After she presents her gifts of **restitution** for her husband's insult, she asks **forgiveness**: *"Now let this gift which your maidservant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who accompany my lord. Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant;*

Finally, Abigail **prophetically restates** David's special calling from God: *"for the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil will not be found in you all your days. Should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, then the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living* [wrapped so as to

protect from harm] *with the LORD your God; but the lives of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling. And when the LORD does for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and appoints you ruler over Israel, **this will not cause grief or a troubled heart to my lord, both by having shed blood without cause and by my lord having avenged himself.** When the LORD deals well with my lord, then remember your maidservant."*

Just like Jonathan, Abigail wisely counsels David at the needed moment by admonishing his unruly behavior - David is overstepping his proper rank by planning his own revenge rather than waiting for God. Abigail confronts him with his folly and assures him that God's calling on his life is secure. In the short term, her rebuke appears to break the bond of peace, but in the long term her truthful words restrain David from shattering the peace for his future as king of Israel. Her wise, well-chosen words, though hurtful, are the RIGHT words at the RIGHT time.

David's Confession: 1 Samuel 25: 32-35

Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand. Nevertheless, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light as much as one male."

David regains his godly perspective, and sees Abigail as God's messenger who prevents him from horribly sinning and wickedly exerting his own revenge rather than waiting for God.

God's Judgment of Nabal: 1 Samuel 25: 36-38

Nabal hosts his shearing party, but in the morning Abigail reports what she had to do to prevent David from killing their entire household, *and his heart died within him so that he became as a stone. About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died.*

Scripture attributes Nabal's death, not to alcohol abuse, but to the LORD, it is his sin against God that condemns him.

David's Thanksgiving: 1 Samuel 25: 39 - 44

*When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, **Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal and has kept back His servant from evil. The LORD has also returned the evildoing of Nabal on his own head.***

David understands how close he came to abandoning the wise, godly path in order to pursue his murderous revenge of Nabal. David praises God his narrow escape from foolishness by using Abigail to restrain him. The LORD repays Nabal for his wicked insult and stinginess towards David and his men by killing him. As chapter 25 closes, David proposes to Abigail, and she becomes his wife. *David had also taken Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they both became his wives. Now Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim. Saul inflicts another injury on his enemy.*

In your groups discuss: 1 Thessalonians 5: 13b – 24

13b Live in peace with one another.

14 And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.

15 See that **no one repays another with evil for evil**, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men.

16 Rejoice always;

17 pray without ceasing;

18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

19 Do **not** quench the Spirit;

20 do **not** despise prophetic utterances.

21 But examine everything carefully, hold fast to that which is good,

22 **abstain** from every form of evil.

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ.

24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

1. Read the passage. Examine the underlined commands and discuss how Abigail fulfills these commands of Paul. • **Admonish** is to give a warning based on Scripture.

• **Unruly** is being out of proper rank, as in military, undisciplined, disorganized, not submissive to authority

2. The words in bold are actions we are NOT to do. Discuss how Abigail follows these.

3. Now discuss how David and Nabal obey or disobey these commands.

4. Discuss how Abigail's prophetic words (God will establish an enduring house, make him king, defeat enemies in 1 Sam. 25:28-31) reflects verses 23, 24 above.

5. Upon what truths in verses 23, 24 should the believer in Jesus Christ dwell in order to endure the hardships of life?

6. Reread the passage. What is Paul's main message to these believers as he closes his letter? To you?

7. Select one command that you can begin to fulfill in your life today (perhaps Abigail's example inspires you). Write it out.

Summary:

Though David is described as a man after God's own heart, it does not mean he does not sin or indulge in evil thoughts; however, when confronted with his error, he confesses, repents, and acts righteously. David needed an Abigail to admonish his unruly behavior, but he not only had to hear the words, but obey them. The humility to change direction, and heed the leading of God's Holy Spirit distinguishes his walk, marking him as a worthy follower of Jesus Christ. We are no different; our hearts need constant steering towards glorifying God and part of staying on the right road is the fellowship of the saints – using others to be our encouragers and admonishers. As we close, David's words sum up our journey fittingly:

Psalm 133: A song of Ascents, of David

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard.
Even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes.
It is like the dew of Hermon, coming down upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the LORD commanded the blessing – life forever.*

Selections from Psalm 141, a Psalm of David

*O LORD, I call upon Thee; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to Thee!
Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.
Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, To practice deeds of wickedness
With men who do iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies.
**Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; It is oil upon the head;
Do not let my head refuse it, For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds.**
*For my eyes are toward Thee, O God, the LORD;
In Thee I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless.**

Homework for 1 Samuel 26

1. Reread 1 Samuel 25. Then read Psalm 17, a prayer of David. Reflect on the truths David expresses and connect them to your situation. Pray the psalm with your name in it.
2. Psalms 120 – 136 are called The Great Hallel. While ascending the hill to worship God in Jerusalem, the people of Israel sang these words (Song of Ascents are psalms 120 – 134). Read this group of songs and reflect on their meaning as a worshiper of the True God today.
3. Read 1 Samuel 26 for next time.
4. Rewrite 1 Thessalonians 5: 13b - 24 into a psalm.
5. For further study, read Proverbs 10 -15 which contrasts the wicked and the righteous.