

David, Nabal and Abigail

1 Samuel 25:1-44



bible verse

Committing to memory



January 23, 2011

Proverbs 18:7

The mouths of fools are their ruin;
their lips get them into trouble.



story lesson

Bible story



In the last lesson, Saul was acting like a 'fool.' He was chasing after David to kill him, then would recant when David had an opportunity each time to kill him, but then did not really recant. The story of Nabal and Abigail, when read in the middle of the two times where David spares Saul's life, is interesting. We will see the actions of David compared with that of Saul, and we will see Saul being compared with the 'foolishness' of Nabal.

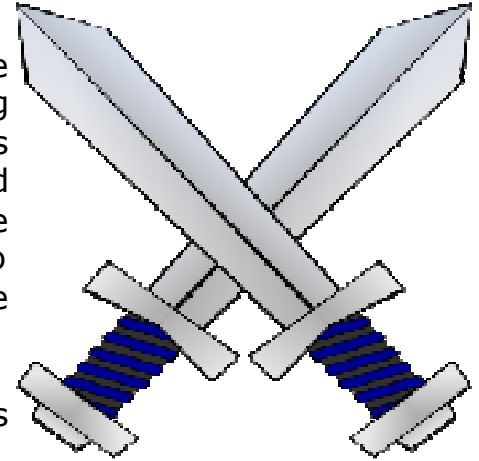
Samuel dies. Yep, that's the way this story begins. All of Israel gathers and mourns for him, and Samuel is buried in Ramah. Meanwhile, David is in the desert near a certain man named, Nabal, who was very wealthy and "surly and mean in his dealings" (1 Samuel 25:3), and his wife, Abigail, who was an "intelligent and beautiful woman" (1 Samuel 25:3). Nabal began to shear his sheep. When David heard of this he sent ten of his young men and said to them:

"Go up to Nabal at Camel 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! Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Camel nothing of theirs was missing. Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore 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'" (1 Samuel 25:5-8).

So David's men arrive and delivered the message to Nabal.

Nabal answered David's servants harshly: "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?" (1 Samuel 25:10-11). David's men went back to David and reported Nabal's answer.

Needless to say, David was upset! "Put on your swords!" he said (1 Samuel 25:13). "It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the desert so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave one male of all who belong to him!" (1 Samuel 25:21-22). So David and his men, some 200 of them, started toward the place where Nabal was.



Meanwhile, Nabal's wife, Abigail caught wind of what was happening from one of her servants:

"David... sent messengers... Nabal hurled insults... yet David was very good to us... did not mistreat... nothing was missing... they were like a wall around us the whole time we were herding sheep... We need to do something... disaster is hanging over our master... he is such a wicked man... no one can talk to him" (1 Samuel 25:14-17).

Abigail thought quickly. She sent tons of stuff to David and then Abigail herself went out to meet David, but she did not tell her husband, Nabal.



When she saw David she got off her donkey and bowed before David with her face to the ground. She pleaded with David not to harm their household. She asked that the blame fall on her. She told him that her husband was a wicked man, "he is just like his name—his name is Fool, and folly goes with him" (1 Samuel 25:25). She begged for forgiveness for the offense, "for the Lord will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my master, because he fights the Lord's battles" (1 Samuel 25:28). Abigail commented that "even though someone [King Saul] is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my master [David] will be bound securely in the bundle by the Lord your God" (1 Samuel 25:29). She further told David not to have any unnecessary bloodshed on his hands or having to avenge himself. This was incredible wisdom from an intelligent, beautiful and humble woman.

"Praise be to God," David said. "May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands" (1 Samuel 25:32-33). David said that he would have followed through on killing every male in the household of Nabal if she had not come to him. "Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request" (1 Samuel 25:35).

Abigail returned to the house of her husband, only to find he was holding a banquet in which he was drunk and in high spirits. She waited to tell him the following morning, and when she did "his heart failed him and he became like a stone...about ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died" (1 Samuel 25:37-38). When David heard the news, he praised God for keeping his own hand free of taking his life and instead let the Lord uphold his cause. David then sent word to Abigail with a request to become his wife. She gladly accepted and married David.

During the written story of David's second sparing of Saul's life, the author records Saul's words:

"I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have erred greatly" (1 Samuel 26:21).

The author is blatantly comparing Saul's actions with that of Nabal, 'foolish.' Saul's attempts to take the life of David were constantly weird. Saul would say one thing and do the next. As the text says in the story of Nabal: "[he] was surly and mean in his dealings" (1 Samuel 25:3), so was Saul in the way he dealt with David.

Abigail reminds David of the meaning of Nabal in order to stop David from following through on his threat to kill all the males. Perhaps under the surface, the author is poignantly referring to the way in which David has held back from killing God's anointed—Saul. Saul's blood would be on David's hands if he killed him and did not let the Lord uphold his cause.

The story of David, Nabal and Abigail, although entirely true, serves as a metaphor or a parallel to what is happening between King Saul and soon-to-be King David. It also serves to foreshadow the future tragic fate of King Saul and his son Jonathan. Nabal dies by the hand of the Lord to uphold the cause of David. So, in like manner will the Lord uphold the cause of David in regard to Saul, the 'fool.'





life application

Making it real

Making Deadly Decisions

Upon hearing the harsh words of Nabal to the young men, David became very angry and vowed to kill every male in Nabal's house. Wow! Killing all the men because he did not give you any food? You should probably try talking to that person again before you go to the death sentencing part of things. Decisions carry the weight of finality. You usually cannot go back on a decision that is followed through. Wisdom should dictate patience and time *before* making important, life-altering decisions.

Keeping the Peace

Abigail is a statement of grace, beauty and wisdom. She diffused a rather tense situation with quick thinking and action. Abigail prevented unwarranted bloodshed and helped save lives. Jesus also advocated peace rather than bloodshed. Let the kingdom of God handle any warring that needs to be done. Maybe the world would look a little different if members of the kingdom of heaven were spokespeople for peace.

Thou Shalt Not Murder

It is interesting to note that in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) Jesus talks about the commandment not to murder. Christ goes deeper to the issue than just not killing someone. He says being angry with your brother and/or holding something against your brother is the same as murdering in your heart. With any adversary that you may have, you are to settle matters quickly or be in danger of being judged. Murder is not just the act of taking a life, but also killing someone in heart and having no more compassion and love for them. Now that is serious.





questions

remembering

- 1. What does the name Nabal mean?** Fool
- 2. Why was David so mad at Nabal?** Because Nabal had been benefiting from David's protection for a while, and Nabal wouldn't help out David and his men when they needed food and provisions
- 3. Who stopped David and made peace?** Abigail
- 4. What happened to Nabal after Abigail told him what she had done?** his heart failed him and he became like a stone...about ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died
- 5. What person in the stories you've heard the last couple of weeks has been acting foolish like Nabal?** King Saul
- 6. What kind of character does God want us (his special people) to have?**



coloring sheet

On the next page

SORRY, NABAL, BUT DAVID'S SOLDIERS
REALLY NEED THIS FOOD!



David, Nabal & Abigail