The Study of Abigail: Woman of Widsom

A Study on the Life of Abigail | by Jade Lee

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Focus Scripture:

1 Samuel 25:3

(King James Version)

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. The Introduction

Read 1 Samuel Chapter 25:1-35

It is the year 1011 B.C. This year marks the date of Samuel's death. One of the greatest prophets that would ever grace this earth had transitioned on into eternity, leaving behind a nation of Israel. In a chapter before, David was given the opportunity to take the life of King Saul, but falling under the conviction of the LORD repented for even daring to tear the king's robe. Instead, he respectfully allowed Saul to live. Saul was overwhelmed with gratitude to the point of tears. He was so happy for the humility, honor and love shown forth in David's life. Saul then spoke the following words, "And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house." (1 Samuel 24:20-21, KJV) David then made a promise to Saul and got up to go to the next location.

Have you ever experienced the death of a loved one who was really respected and well known by the community or his/her family, like a dignitary, a famous man of GOD or a patriarchal figure? There is a clear sense of history leaving this earth while a legacy, like a mantle--is being dropped down from heaven for the next generation to pick up with purpose. There is a clear sense that if I don't do it, who will? Someone must pick up the great weight and assignment he or she was carrying so faithfully.

1 Samuel 25 begins with the death of a great man, the prophet Samuel. Samuel was feared by every person alive during his time. Whole towns would question why he was in their area when he showed up, out of fear that they may fall under the judgment of GOD through the hands of Samuel (1 Samuel 16:4). Samuel even killed an evil king that Saul failed to kill through disobedience, hacking him into pieces. What an extravagant demonstration of GOD's love for righteousness and indignation towards sin. Samuel advised the very first king of Israel, even rebuking him when he went astray from GOD's will.

But now Samuel's time had come to an end. A great shifting was occurring on multiple levels. Not only was Samuel deceased, but David was rising to the throne of the kingdom of Israel. GOD had been preparing David for years; now was his time to lead the people.

Much akin to great men like President Nelson Mandela, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and President Abraham Lincoln, men who not only served their role, but changed history—all of the nation of Israel was gathered together to mourn Samuel's death and bury him.

At this point, David goes to a city called Maon and a town in Maon entitled Carmel.

There David finds a rich business man named Nabal whom the Bible describes as "very great" in reference to his wealth and possessions. But it is also important to note that Nabal's name, meaning "fool", is specifically referenced. He is further described as a harsh, mean business man with a lack of integrity. The way he conducted business is described as "evil".

Nabal was a descendant of Caleb, whose name literally means "dog." Needless to say, this was probably about to be a very interesting experience for David and his men.

But before moving forward, there is another very interesting fact brought to our attention. Nabal's wife's name is also mentioned. Her name is Abigail, which literally means "my father is joy." Abigail is described as an "intelligent and beautiful" woman. Already she appears to be from a different breed and degree than Nabal. The differences are set in stone and the story begins to unfold. What will happen to David and his men when they meet Nabal and his family?

II. The Meeting

David gets word that Nabal shears sheep so he sends 10 young men to Carmel to find Nabal an give him pleasant greetings from David. He sends them to bless Nabal. He also asks Nabal for help whereas it was a feast day and David had already helped Nabal's men when he met them in the wilderness.

David simply wanted Nabal to provide whatever he could spare for him and his men. David even respectfully addressed himself as Nabal's son.

But Nabal's response was alarming. He told the young men David sent to him the following:

"Who is this fellow David?" Nabal sneered to the young men. "Who does this son of Jesse think he is? There are lots of servants these days who run away from their masters. (1 Samuel 25:10, NLT)

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the town Carmel was also the same location that Saul set up a monument for himself after disobeying GOD?

Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal." (1 Samuel 15:2, KJV)

Carmel was a major place of disobedience in reference to Saul's life and Samuel's judgment.

Now, Nabal whose name literally means "fool" was found doing business in the same location.

Do you notice the irony of it all?

The same spirit of judgment would soon be released on Nabal's life in the same location where Saul formerly tried to operate in self exultation.

Both of their actions would prove to be foolish and have life threatening consequences.

After dismissing David, which was very foolish whereas he had no idea who David was or where he was from (David could have been a king or a very rich man with an army), Nabal further ranted on, "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 Samuel 25:11, KJV)

He was absolutely prideful and full of evil; he refused to help in any way shape or form, even after hearing how David had helped his own people!

When David found this out, he responded by having every single one of his men arm their selves with a sword, including David. He took about 400 men to go after Nabal. He was angry and he was ready for war.

Once again, Nabal had no idea who he was disrespecting. He asked "Who is David?" "Who does he think he is?" And now he was about to find out exactly who David was first hand! It would be very evident upon seeing 400 men ready to fight you with swords approaching your local business.

Fortunately, a young man told Abigail about Nabal's encounter with David's messengers and how Nabal went off on the men for no sensible reason. He also told Abigail how kind David was to Nabal's men and how David took care of them when they met them in the fields. He told how David protected them while they were keeping the sheep.

It was all on Abigail now to help fix this situation. How would she, one woman, stop an angry, insulted man with a 400 member army? This was not looking very promising.

And it was all Nabal's fault.

His servant told Abigail that Nabal was such a worthless, good for nothing man that no one could even have a conversation with Nabal.

It was now time for Abigail to go into action, she had to save the day. She had to clean up her husband's mess before it was too late and she did just that- she used what she had in her hand to fix the current problem.

Abigail had possessions, wisdom, intelligence and beauty. This should be enough to fix the current problem if used correctly.

So Abigail collected 200 loaves of bread, two bottles of wine, five butchered and prepared sheep, a bushel of roasted grain, 100 bunches of raisins, 200 dry fig cakes, and she loaded them onto donkeys. Now her servants were being sent towards David while David was on his way with his army!

The first step was to give David exactly what he wanted and asked for- food. Humorously speaking, as the saying goes, "The way to a man's heart is through his belly." Abigail took this saying to heart and began to go into action. Abigail was smart enough to distill anger with an act of kindness. She could see the heart behind David's anger- "*How could this man mistreat me after all I did for him and his people. I blessed him and now he says these rude, ignorant words to me, disrespecting me in front of my servants."*

The first step was to find a way to calm David down. Give him what he wanted and what was fair. But that would only be enough to bring him to a level mindset. More would be needed to calm a man this angry, obviously on a mission to seek and destroy anyone or thing connected to Nabal, the object of his anger.

The second step was discretion. This would also be the second attribute worth noticing in Abigail's life. She **did not** disclose unnecessary information to Nabal. In fact, she purposely did not tell her husband about her actions or plan. Could you imagine Nabal's response? An angry mean man? He'd probably blame her, mistreat her and then try to go after David- all out of pride and a mean heart.

Instead, Abigail went about her business, riding on a donkey to meet David. She went after sending her servants to him with all the food from her household. This was surely a terrifying sight to behold. David and his men coming against her with swords. But she did not come against them; instead, the Bible says she 'met' them- even in her heart she did not come against them to fight back or have an ounce of threatening in her spirit. She met them. This was the meeting.

David was angry. Abigail was a peacemaker.

David was ready to kill everything that "pisseth against the wall" by the next morning!

As soon as Abigail saw David she literally jumped off the donkey and threw herself on the ground in front of him. What a dramatic moment- a beautiful woman in front of a handsome soldier and an army of 400 men! What an act of bold love for her people. She was courageous.

Here she was laying at the feet of David, resembling the future bride of Christ throwing herself at the mercy feet of Jesus, even in the midst of a sinful nation or generation. David had all the reason to fight Nabal, but would Abigail's heroic act be enough to stop his anger?

Laying there at David's 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." (1 Samuel 25:24, KJV).

Abigail was willing to put herself in the place of her husband Nabal. She was willing to take all the blame for his iniquity (known sin). She was Nabal's intercessor before David, the future king of Israel. Her act of humility was so beautiful and wise.

She then asked David, "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."

Fortunately Abigail was wise enough to acknowledge the foolishness of Nabal's actions and how he was a fool not to help David or treat David kindly. David would now be able to see that Abigail was on his side; someone understood how he was feeling. Someone was reaffirming the disrespect and hurt going on inside of David's heart. Abigail was speaking his heart language and relating to him.

After this dramatic display of urgent repentance and acknowledgement, Abigail asked David not to kill anyone because the LORD would establish David's household. She asked for his forgiveness and spoke words of blessing over his future. Abigail already knew who David was; she began to speak about how there was a man chasing David and trying to kill him, but David's soul would be protected by the LORD. And the LORD would sling out the souls of David's enemies like a rock in a sling!

She then said that the LORD would make him king over all of Israel and he would not have to worry about the blood he shed on that day, but his heart would be at peace because he allowed the LORD to fight his battles.

Abigail was at the feet of a future king in this moment; she was not only doing what was right for herself and her family, but she was doing what was right for David.

These were Abigail's bold and loving words of advice for David; within her heart she held a word of wisdom. What would happen next?

Life Reflections:

A. Take note of the meaning of both Abigail and Nabal's names. Although they were married they couldn't have been more opposite. What can you learn about the differences of their character from the meanings of their names?

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B. Nabal's name meant "fool" and his father Caleb's name meant "dog." How did Nabal live up to the meaning of his name and how did this affect the people in Nabal's environment?

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C. What can you learn as a woman from Abigail's example? How can you practically behave in a wiser manner in your current relationships this week?

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III. The Miracle

Read 1 Samuel Chapter 25:36-44

Upon going back home to her husband, Abigail found herself once again in a position of great challenge. She would have to use her common sense, intelligence and discretion to overcome the obstacle before her now; her husband was at home having a feast, partying and drunk. He didn't even have a clue that David and his men were on their way to kill him and all males connected to him! Instead of praying, creating a peace treaty or even being concerned, Nabal was having a good time, seemingly enjoying his life.

This was a very foolish mistake and move on Nabal's part. He was absolutely not discerning the time he was in; instead, he was only aware of his small world. He didn't even recognize who David was, the next King of all of Israel.

Nabal was not even smart enough to do research on who he was mistreating. The consequences of offending a man with an army behind him as opposed to an average civilian are quite different. But this did not even cross Nabal's mind. Instead, he reacted out of disrespect and non-sensical foolishness.

When Abigail returned home from pleading with David for mercy, this is how she found her husband Nabal. Nabal's "heart was merry within him" but Abigail did not say a word to him about David nor her encounter with David's army (1 Sam 25:36). Instead, she waited until the next morning when he was sober. She told him what happened the next morning and Nabal's heart "died within him, and he became like a stone" (1 Sam 25:37). Ten days later, Nabal was struck dead by the LORD Himself.

Suddenly, surely Abigail's words rang back into her head:

> "Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant. For the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the LORD, and evil is not found in you throughout your days. Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your GOD; **and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, as from the pocket of a sling.** And it shall come to pass, when the LORD has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. But when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant." (1 Samuel 25:28-31, NKJV)

The very next day, Abigail's very words became prophetically true about her husband. His heart became dead. Then ten days later, he was struck dead by the LORD Himself and now Abigail was a widow.

But the story does not end there; Abigail would continue to see the hand of the LORD fighting on her behalf due to her wisdom and goodness.

As soon as David received word that Abigail's husband was dead, he said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil! For the LORD has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head." (1 Sam 25:39, NKJV)

David was entirely grateful for the wise words of Abigail a little over a week before; he was now clear of heart, had not committed a rash act of murder and was ready to return Abigail's favor.

David sent for Abigail and took it a step further. He proposed to Abigail on the spot and took her as his wife.

Abigail's response reflected yet another beautiful attribute of her heart; she bowed down to the ground saying, "Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord" (1 Samuel 25:41, NKJV).

Abigail was willing to serve the servants of David. This was literally the exact opposite of Nabal's heart towards David. Instead, when Nabal was asked a favor from David, his response was, "Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master." (1 Samuel 25:10, NKJV)

Where Nabal gave David disrespect and refused to serve, Abigail was more than willing to serve, displaying great levels of honor and respect.

Abigail was highly respected by David and his men because she was highly respectful to David and his men. She assumed the best, honored, spoke kindly, was knowledgeable, selfless, sensible and wise. Nabal, on the other hand, assumed the worst, was dishonoring, rude, spoke rudely, ignorant, selfish, non-sensible and unwise.

Both Abigail and Nabal reaped what they sowed into David's ground.

Nabal's fruit was death whereas Abigail's fruit was a blessed marriage. She was now going to be a king's wife!

Once again she would ride a donkey to her king, but this time it would not be to beg for mercy, it would be to marry a king seeking her hand in marriage.

She would not be going to meet the messengers of David; she would be following them to her new husband and life.

Abigail's wise words, discretion, humility and great use of self-control paid off in the end, as it will in all of our lives as we take heed to the story of Abigail and Nabal.

Choose today to be a king's wife in attitude and demeanor.

RESPECT VS. DISRESPECT

RESPECT:

- Assumes the best
- Honors
- Is Kind
- Speaks Kindly
- Is Knowledgeable
- Is Selfless
- Is Sensible
- Is Wise

DISRESPECT

- Assumes the worst
- Dishonors
- Is Rude
- Speaks Rudely
- Is Ignorant
- Is Selfish
- Is Non-Sensible
- Is Unwise

Life Reflections:

A. Abigail's actions revealed the quality of her character. Write down 7 major attributes displayed in Abigail's life, in 1 Samuel 25.

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B. What can you personally learn about the need for respect for authority figures when reading this account of Abigail's relationship with King David and how it paid off in the end?

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C. Do you want to be a wife one day? Or maybe you are already married. How can you begin to develop the 7 major attributes written in the question above?

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