

Abigail Acted Quickly

First Samuel 25:14-35

DIG: How did ADONAI show His mercy to David when he felt angry toward Nabal? Did Abigail do the right thing in interceding for her husband and persuading David not to take revenge? What probably would have happened if she hadn't? What might have happened if she told her husband? What does this tell you about Abigail? How did David receive Abigail's apology and advice? What does this tell you about David?

REFLECT: What makes you angry? How do you usually deal with your anger? When you are angry, can people talk to you? Or does everyone know to stay away from you? What five steps can you use to turn an offended fellow believer from anger? When has the Lord sent someone to rescue you out of a disastrous situation? Did you respond with words of peace, or righteous indignation? What happened afterwards?

1013 BC

The Report of Abigail: Guessing David's reaction to Nabal's rebuff, the servants feared the expected attack. Since it was hopeless to attempt to talk to Nabal, a messenger went to his wife in the hope that she would intervene. One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them, nothing was missing. Night and day they protected us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them. Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is a wicked man" This was a very bold thing to say to a woman about her husband, but somehow he knew she shared his opinion . . . as we will see later. And then he added: No one can talk to him, which is why the servant chose to come to Abigail instead of Nabal (First Samuel 25:14-17). In those days, the parents arranged marriages for their children, so we aren't surprised to see a wise woman married to a foolish man (Alas, it often happens today without the help of parents!).

Questions of motivation lie just below the surface. Is Nabal the only Judean to oppose David, and if so, what does he hope to gain by being so rude? Are Nabal's servants really recalling a genuine favor or merely putting up a good front in the interests of practical survival? Either way, the reader discerns a power struggle between the two men, in which Nabal's servants expect David to gain the upper hand.¹⁴⁶

The Meeting of David and Abigail: The practical Abigail acted quickly. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. Then she told her servants, "Go on ahead; I'll follow you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and they didn't notice her coming because the road by which she descended into the valley was concealed from the view of the descent from the opposite slope. Therefore, the terrain permitted Abigail to hear what David had said before she was seen. He said: "It's been useless - all my watching over this fellow's property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him." He was in no mood to be friendly. But this was a foolish oath. He was threatening to do to Nabal what Sha'ul did to Nob! They met unexpectedly at the moment when David was vowing to take revenge upon Nabal and his house (First Samuel 25:18-22).

We can track Abigail's appeal to David for restraint in five steps that should be followed by all believers when seeking to turn an offended fellow believer from anger.

First, Abigail humbled herself in David's presence: When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground (First Samuel 25:23). Our culture despises one who will abase himself or herself before a foe, but in God's Kingdom this is a mark of special grace. David's army abruptly stopped.

Second, Abigail confessed the guilt of her sin: From her lowly place at David's feet, she said: On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak, and hear the words of your servant (First Samuel 25:24 ESV). We might object that it was Nabal, and not Abigail, who had wronged David. But as his wife, she owned the sin of her husband and acknowledged it before David. This was not some kind of halfhearted confession so commonly heard today, "I'm sorry you feel the way you do," and so on. Abigail was not sorry that David was angered but that her husband had offended him. Here we see her true wisdom, for in this one stroke of genius she confronted David not only with the guilt of her worthless husband, but also with repentance of a woman with a servant's heart. Nabal had sinned against David by withholding what his services had earned (Deuteronomy 24:15), and reconciliation with David required a confession of that sin. So we must also confess our sins that stand between us and others if we want to honor the Lord in godly reconciliation.

Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name - his name means Fool, and folly goes with him. And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my lord sent. She then said all in one breath: And now, my lord, as surely as ADONAI your God lives and as you live, since the LORD has kept you from shedding innocent blood and from avenging yourself with your own hands because vengeance belongs to YHVH, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be as worthless as Nabal (First Samuel 25:25-26).

Third, Abigail offered restitution for the wrong done to David: David has been denied rightful compensation, so Abigail brought food supplies to give to him. She said: And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you. Equally important, whereas David had been publicly reviled by Nabal, Abigail made amends by publicly praising his greatness: Please forgive your servant if I have offended you in any way. And forgiving her would have meant forgiving her husband, which would have prevented the slaughter of the house of Nabal.¹⁴⁷ ADONAI your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the LORD's battles (fighting the Philistines was worthy of his status as king, but fighting Nabal would not be worthy as his status as king), and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live (First Samuel 25:27-28). The B'rit Chadashah makes it clear the confession of sin is to be accompanied by sincere attempts to redress wrongs. It did not occur to Zacchaeus, for example, to confess his sins and proclaim his faith in Yeshua without adding: If I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount (Luke 19:8).

Fourth, Abigail pleaded for forgiveness on David's part: Please forgive your servant if I have offended you in any way (First Samuel 25:28a NLT). It was only after she had humbly approached David, confessed the sin of her house, made a sincere effort to offer restitution and pleaded for forgiveness, that she made her final plea.

Fifth, Abigail appealed to David's sense of godliness: Instead of acting like the godless Nabal, David should act like the servant of the LORD that he was, and especially to exhibit the gracious characteristics of one so favored by ADONAI. Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of living by the LORD your God, but the lives of your enemies He will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling (First Samuel 25:29). Was Abigail so skillful as to mention a sling to remind David of his victory through faith over Goliath? She probably was.¹⁴⁸

Although YHVH had already appointed him ruler over Isra'el, David would not exercise effective rule over Isra'el until after Sha'ul's death. In the meantime, however, Abigail didn't want David to do anything to jeopardize his future or endanger his throne. When

ADONAI has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Isra'el, my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed **that he was thinking about** or of having avenged himself. In other words, David should not begin his kingship with blood on his hands. As Joseph had concluded his conversation with Pharaoh's cupbearer by requesting that he **remember Joseph when all goes well with him (Genesis Jn - So the Chief Cupbearer Told Joseph His Dream)**, so Abigail ends her plea by asking **David remember your servant when ADONAI your God has brought my lord success (First Samuel 25:27-31).**¹⁴⁹

David's Repentance: With her skillful words, Abigail turned David's heart from his murderous rage, so that he accepted her gift and replied with words of peace: **Praise be ADONAI, the God of Isra'el, who has sent you to me today to meet me.**¹⁵⁰ David, about 27 years old at that time, recognized God's intervention because he had not inquired of the Urim and the Thummim (see the commentary on **Exodus Gb - The Urim and Thummim: The Means of Making Decisions**). **May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed that day and avenging myself with my own hands. Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Isra'el lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak (First Samuel 25:32-34).**

Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said: **Go home in shalom.** David's final words must have been like music to her ears: **I have heard your words and granted your request (First Samuel 25:35).** **By her intelligent grasp of the situation, by her prompt action and generous gifts, and by her conciliatory diplomatic address, Abigail more than justifies the Holy Spirit's description of her as a woman of good understanding (First Samuel 25:3).** If we, like David, are willing to receive godly appeals from wise and faithful voices like Abigail's, we will avoid the tragic effects of much folly and will be spared many regrets that would plague us in later life.¹⁵¹