

Special Focus Session

August 27, 2023

ABIGAIL: A WOMAN OF WISDOM

1 Samuel 25:14-17, 23-28, 32-35

Most of us can remember that Abigail was one of David's wives. But many of us forget where she came from. She was actually the widow of a fool. Literally! In fact, her husband's name was Nabal, which means "fool." But it proved to be more than just a name (see v. 25ff). Yet David didn't marry her out of pity...he married her out of respect. Verse 3 says she was beautiful and intelligent. But she was so much more. I have always said that knowledge is *what* you know, and wisdom is the ability to *use* what you know. The story of Abigail illustrates wisdom in action.

In a nutshell, David's small army had once camped among Nabal's flocks on Nabal's pastures. In exchange for the hospitality, Nabal received protection for his flocks and shepherds. Who would dare harass the shepherds or steal sheep from a flock with all of those mighty warriors around? At some point later, David was passing through Nabal's region with at least 600 men. He sent messengers to Nabal asking for provision for his men and reminded him of how well-behaved and honest his mighty men had been the last time (vv. 4-8). The request was respectful and certainly appropriate. But Nabal's response was not (vv. 10-11). David was bitterly offended and decided to strap on his sword and lead 400 of his men to Nabal's house to wipe them all out. The story picks up in verse 14.

Wisdom asked (vv. 14-17). The first inkling of wisdom we see is not from Abigail, but from one of the servants. Consider his options: he could have abandoned his job and gotten out of there. He could have gone to David and pled for mercy. He could have gone to Nabal and tried to persuade him to reconsider. But instead, he went to the smartest, most influential person he knew. He went to Abigail and asked for her help! Notice that this servant carefully reviewed the series of events and clearly foresaw the massacre that was about to take place. He was brutally honest about Abigail's idiot husband (v. 17), but obviously didn't want to see him and all of his family slaughtered at the hands of the soon-to-be-king. Notice as well, that the servant did not tell Abigail how to handle it. He did, however, ask her to be discerning: "carefully consider what you must do," was the only bit of advice he offered her. For reflection: *How do you know when to handle things yourself and when to ask for help? Do you think asking for wisdom from someone else is a weakness? Why?*

Wisdom applied (vv. 18-28). Abigail's response was quick and decisive (v. 18). She had provisions (much like what David had requested back in verse 8) prepared and loaded and sent ahead to meet David's army. As she made her way cautiously behind them, she spotted David and went to meet him. Notice her *humility*. She hopped off her mount and fell facedown to the ground at his feet (v. 23-24). Then her *sincerity*: "The guilt is mine..." she said. Then her *boldness*: "Let me speak to you directly" (v. 24). Next, we see her *honesty*. She described her no-good husband and explained how the events unfolded (vv. 24-25). Finally, we see her *compassion*, as she explained her intervention as God's way of preventing disaster for both Nabal and David's future (v. 26). For reflection: *Verse 19 says that Abigail did not tell her*

husband what she was doing! Do you think keeping things from your spouse is a wise thing to do? Why or why not?

Wisdom applauded (vv. 32-35). David's response to Abigail was one of acceptance toward her and repentance toward God. It must have taken courage for David to humble himself before this woman in front of 400 of his heavily armed buddies, but that's exactly what he did, calling both the *message* and the *messenger* "blessed" (v. 33). While David didn't clearly confess his personal vendetta against Nabal as a sin, he certainly alluded to it in verse 33, referring to his actions as vengeance by his own hand (see Rom. 12:17ff). In the end, David was pleased to accept her gifts and bid her peace. For reflection: *Do you think it is wise to claim that your wisdom is actually coming from God? When does that make sense? When might it be presumptive?*