

LEADING LADIES

"ABIGAIL: TAKING THE HIGH ROAD"

1 SAMUEL 25:1-44

We could all use more self-control. If you're like me, you don't have to engage your long-term memory to recall a situation in which you reacted hastily by saying something or doing something that you either regretted or had second thoughts about later. It seems, some people know how to "push our buttons" and never tire of doing it! Nabal pushed David's. After exercising self-control repeatedly in his dealings with Saul, David wasn't about to endure that "fool's" churlish behavior—that is, until Abigail talked some sense into him.

This Week's Core Competency

Self-Control – I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Self-control is all about doing the right thing and not doing the wrong thing. The dictionary defines the word self-control this way: "to exercise restraint over one's own impulses, emotions, or desires." From a biblical point of view, Christians with self-control bring their beliefs, practices, and values into conformity with the standard set by God's word-external pressures and internal inclinations notwithstanding. Biblical writers express this idea in a variety of ways. Paul speaks of self-control in terms of choosing to live

Violence breeds violence, whereas restraint makes way for a peaceful solution.

– Joyce G. Baldwin

according to the Spirit rather than the sinful nature. In Galatians 5:16-18 he points out that it takes discipline to do this. He says, "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want."

Whereas Peter says, "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1Pe 1:14, 15). In his other canonical letter he tells his readers to add self-control to their faith. "Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:5-8).

David had a problem with self-control that didn't become evident until his encounter with Nabal (1Sa 25). Although he had refrained from violence against Saul (1Sa 24), his first impulse in this encounter was to eliminate Nabal. That violent impulse had to be curbed. It's a trait that's troublesome in anyone but disastrous in a king. Fortunately, Abigail intervened and from her David learned self-control and reliance upon God.

1 Samuel 25:1-44

1 Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Paran.

2 A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel. 3 His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite.

4 While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. 5 So he sent ten young men and said to them, "Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name. 6 Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!'"

7 "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 Carmel nothing of theirs was missing. 8 Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them."

9 When David's men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited.

10 Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. 11 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?"

12 David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word. 13 David said to his men, "Each of you strap on your sword!" So they did, and David strapped his on as well. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.

14 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. 15 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. 16 Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them. 17 Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."

18 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. 19 Then she told her servants, "Go on ahead; I'll follow you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

20 As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and she met them. 21 David had just 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. 22 May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!"

23 When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. 24 She fell at his feet and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. 25 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. 26 And now, my lord, as surely as the LORD your God lives and as you live, since the LORD has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal. 27 And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you.

28 "Please forgive your servant's presumption. The LORD your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the LORD's battles, and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live. 29 Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the LORD your God, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. 30 When the LORD has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel, 31 my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the LORD your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant."

32 David said to Abigail, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. 33 May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. 34 Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, 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."

35 Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, "Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request."

36 When Abigail went to Nabal, he was in the house holding a banquet like that of a king. He was in high spirits and very drunk. So she told him nothing at all until daybreak. 37 Then in the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things, and his heart failed him and he became like a stone. 38 About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died.

39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Praise be to the LORD, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal's wrongdoing down on his own head."

Then David sent word to Abigail, asking her to become

his wife. 40 His servants went to Carmel and said to Abigail, "David has sent us to you to take you to become his wife."

41 She bowed down with her face to the ground and said, "I am your servant and am ready to serve you and wash the feet of my lord's servants." 42 Abigail quickly got on a donkey and, attended by her five female servants, went with David's messengers and became his wife. 43 David had also married Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they both were his wives. 44 But Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Paltiel son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "Now" in v. 1.
- * Underline "very wealthy" in v. 2.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* vv. 3, 14.
- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* v. 8.
- * Bracket Nabal's rhetorical questions in vv. 10, 11.
- * Circle Nabal's "I" and "my" references to himself in v. 11.
- * Highlight what David said in vv. 21, 22.
- * Draw a line from "Nabal" to "Fool" in v. 25.
- * Highlight what Abigail said in vv. 28-32.
- * Circle "lasting dynasty" in v. 28.
- * Bracket v. 33.
- * In the margin next to v. 38 write, "Cf. v. 29."

day **2** **EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. When it comes to marriage, they say opposites attract. How so with Nabal and Abigail?
2. David sounds like a common thug demanding protection money. What do you think?
3. Nabal talks like he doesn't know who David is (vv. 10, 11). Do you suppose he does or doesn't? Explain.
4. Are you surprised by Nabal's response to David's request? Explain.
5. Various commentators observe that Nabal resembles Saul in some respects. How so?

6. Is this the same man? *Contrast* David's response to Saul in the previous chapter with his response to Nabal in this one.
7. In her speech to David, Abigail explains why he should forgive her offense (vv. 28-31). Why?
8. What did David say he learned from Abigail?
9. How did Nabal's untimely death confirm Abigail's words to David?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about what do you find most admirable in Abigail?

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

One author summarizes this episode in David's life this way, "After the brief reference to Samuel's death, this text relates the conflict between Nabal and David, in which Nabal's noble wife intercedes to prevent a violent conclusion. In the end, however, God himself intercedes to vindicate David's actions and to confirm in David the lesson he has learned from the episode: Patience and restraint are the path to Yahweh's best plan" (Bill T. Arnold, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Samuel*, 341). Following the reference to Samuel's death (v. 1a), the plot unfolds in three scenes. The first (vv. 1b-13) tells of David's request and Nabal's reply. Very wealthy but boorish Nabal lived with his very beautiful and intelligent wife, Abigail, in Moan. While David was in the desert on the lam from Saul, Nabal's men with their flocks looked to David's men for protection from marauding Philistine looters. In the words of Nabal's men, "Night and day they were a wall around us all the time we were herding our sheep near them" (v. 16). So Nabal owed David big time for protecting his sizable herds. Naturally when the time came for Nabal to shear the sheep David had protected, David asked him to share his good fortune with him and his men, thinking Nabal would pay him back good for good. But foolish Nabal neither recognized that David was the LORD's anointed nor appreciated what David had done for him. Instead, he hurled insults at him, arrogantly asking, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? 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?" (vv. 10, 11). David was infuriated, and his first impulse was "Put on your swords."

The second (vv. 14-35) tells of Abigail's wise intervention. Once she was told by Nabal's men of their master's foolish reply to David, she "lost no time" taking decisive action. She gathered food for David's men, then went out to meet him. And "in a speech full of subtleties and polite innuendo, she flatters and cajoles in order to prevent David from bringing bloodguilt on himself" (344). She politely argued (1) that the LORD would make a lasting dynasty for him, implying that he need not become engaged in a wrongful battle (v. 28), (2) that the LORD would protect him from any enemies in hot pursuit by hurling them away (v. 29), and (3) that the LORD would do everything he promised by making him the leader over Israel (v. 30). In a nutshell, she reminded David of who he was and stayed his hand from unnecessary violence by teaching him an important lesson that he would need in the future. As the legitimate anointed one, he must continue to live by faith and wait patiently on the LORD to make him king. David said it all when he 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" (v. 33).

The third (vv. 36-43) tells of Nabal's untimely death and Abigail's remarriage to David. Here again God turns a negative into a positive. Not only does Nabal's death confirm David's actions, but it clears the way for the remarkable Abigail to become his

wife. When Abigail went to tell her husband what had happened, he was too drunk from reveling to hear about it, so she told him the next morning. Upon hearing the news, he apparently had a stroke then died ten days later. To say he overreacted overlooks a fact made perfectly clear by the narrator. "The LORD struck Nabal and he died" (v. 38) in fulfillment of Abigail's words to David, "your enemies haven't got a chance" (v. 29 paraphrased). By following Abigail's wise advice to resist the impulse to avenge himself, David preserved his integrity and got a beautiful wife to boot.

The *upper story* is about the preparation of the LORD's anointed to rule over Israel. Once Saul confessed that David would be king (24:20), Samuel could rest in peace. Saul was unfit to be king, as the resemblances between him and Nabal show. Although the story is about him, "there may be ways in which Nabal resembles Saul, whom we are perhaps meant to see reflected in Nabal" (Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, TOTC, 147), but David wasn't ready to be king yet, so God used

Abigail to teach him a lesson he needed to learn. When David was wronged by Nabal his first impulse was to kill the man and all the men who belonged to him. He wasn't willing to cut Nabal the same slack he was willing to cut for Saul, but Saul was the LORD's anointed. Nabal was just a "fool." Israel's future king needed to learn restraint and to trust in Yahweh.

The *lower story* is about Abigail and the lesson she taught, a lesson we all need to learn. She believed that God would not only make David king; he would make a lasting dynasty for him. That being the case, she believed that David didn't have to fight his own battles. The LORD would fight them for him, leaving him free to fight the LORD's battles. The last thing he needed to do was take matters into his own hands, do wrong, and "have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed" (v. 31). David needed to live by faith in his God, not by following his impulses. The LORD would see to the rest.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Learn a lesson fit for a king from a wise woman: live by faith in your God, not by following your impulses, and you'll never regret your actions.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

Describe the type of person Nabal reminds you of in your world.

Describe the type of person Abigail reminds you of in your world.

Describe the type of person David reminds you of in your world.

Which of the three are you most like?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **Maon** "And David arose and went down to the Wilderness of Paran" (NASB, NKJV). "Exactly which desert he [David] moved to is disputed; the Hebrew text states it was Paran, normally understood to be in the central portion of the Sinai peninsula, extending up to Kadesh Barnea. The NIV, following the LXX [the Greek translation of the OT called the Septuagint] and the logic of geographic proximity, states it was the 'Desert of Maon,' one of David's favored lairs (cf. 23:24-25)" (Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, NAC, 243).

v. 1 **Samuel** Once Samuel died, David put some distance between himself and Saul. Samuel delivered the LORD's verdict against Saul, "You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel" (15:26), and Saul finally accepted that verdict, "I know that you [David] will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands" (24:20). But Samuel was now dead and who could know what Saul might do next.

v. 4 **Nabal** "Nabal" means "foolish" in Hebrew, and clearly this man lived up, or better yet down, to his name, prompting one author to speculate, "an unlikely name for a mother to give her son, and probably a popular distortion of his real name. Nabal fulfils to the letter the biblical meaning of the word (e.g. Ps. 14:1; Pr. 18:2, 7); *the man was churlish* (Heb. *qaseh* 'hard'; cf. Mt. 25:24) and ill-behaved (lit. 'evil in his doings', AV, RV)" (Baldwin, 147). "His name says it all. He is a fool (*nabal*). He is not bad but stupid. He has come to think of himself as an autonomous man, believing that 'there is no God' (cf. Ps 14:1), no neighbor, and no social reality. He would indeed do as he pleases. He neither fears nor respects any other, nor does he care for any other" (Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, Interpretation, 175). "The name and description of the man form a kind of bracket round details of his attractive wife, Abigail, whose name means 'my father is joy[ous]', and whose beauty is more than skin deep. While he is evil (Heb *ra'*), she is of good (Heb *tob*) understanding. The contrast is such that the pair are totally mismatched" (Baldwin, 147).

v. 8 **therefore** "David had used his men to act as a security force for this relative's servants and animals (v. 16). Now during the present festive time of taking profit from the animals that David and his men had protected, David 'sent ten young men' bearing a treaty-like personal statement to his wealthy kinsman. This statement included the pronouncement of a blessing on Nabal and his servants, a review of the history of the relationship between David's group and Nabal's group, and a request for due compensation" (Bergen, 246). David's request may sound like a Mafia-style racket promising protection in return for payment, but it wasn't. Nabal's men had taken advantage David's men earlier when they were together near Carmel by looking to them for protection from Philistine looters (vv. 7, 16, 21; cf. 23:1-6). David was simply asking Nabal to return the favor. Instead, he paid David back evil for good (v. 21).

v. 23 **Abigail** "Abigail is the 'ideal woman,' whose rhetorical genius' prevents David from killing her husband" (Arnold, 344). "In the longest speech by a woman in the Old Testament (153 Hebrew words), Abigail did three remarkable things: (1) she successfully interceded in behalf of her husband, (2) she prophetically revealed David's destiny as the founder of a dynasty and vanquisher of enemies, and (3) she prevented David from bringing judgment down on himself through an egregious violation of the Torah" (Bergen, 249).

v. 28 **lasting dynasty** "In verse 28 we arrive at one of the pivotal statements in the entire narrative of David's rise. We have seen how David's coming rule is acknowledged by character after character, until finally in 24:20 even Saul has conceded. Now, in 25:28, even the acknowledgment of Saul is topped by this shrewd and discerning woman, who seems to understand everything. Her acknowledgment of David's future goes beyond that of Saul in using the formula 'sure house,' which parallels the dynastic formula of II Samuel 7:16. Here the royal formula is almost like an official declaration in the mouth of this wise one" (Brueggemann, 178).

v. 29 **sling** "Abigail's brilliant use of the sling metaphor no doubt brought to David's mind a sling the Lord once used to dispense with an enemy much more imposing than Nabal (cf. 17:47-50)" (Bergen, 250).

v. 33 **keeping me from** "David recognizes for the first time how his vengefulness would have put his own future at risk. Notice the parallel situation and the different resolution with Uriah and Bathsheba (II Sam 11-12). In that latter narrative there is no Abigail to intervene. David acts by what is 'right in his own eyes' (11:25) and brings an abiding sword into his house (12:10). But not here. Abigail has made the difference" (Brueggemann, 180).

v. 40 **wife** "As usual, God turns a negative into a positive. Not only does Nabal's death suddenly confirm David's actions, but it makes the way clear for this remarkable woman, Abigail, to become David's wife. Her wisdom and strong character make her a suitable partner for David, and she is in many respects his equal" (Arnold, 345).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Making mistakes really stinks, especially when it involves your children. I recently made a pretty monumental mistake with my oldest son and gave him the wrong departure time for his district tennis tournament. The bummer of the situation is that he had the correct time and I overmanaged him. Consequently, he missed the bus making him ineligible for play. Thus, his doubles partner was ineligible to play. The whole team was hoping for them to do well and potentially progress to regionals. I had to apologize not only to my son, but coaches, his doubles partner and family, and team mates. I had to humble myself for making a ridiculous but innocent mistake and ask their forgiveness. And then came the hard part: I had to forgive myself. There was a lot of prayer lifted up that morning! I can tell you honestly that everyone, including my amazing son, were incredibly gracious and forgiving. As parents, my husband and I have worked hard to teach and train that we all need the forgiveness Jesus offers on a daily basis so we can extend that to others. This isn't something that comes naturally. It's difficult to model humility, but it's the right thing to do. Would you consider yourself more like Nabal or Abigail? How do you handle mistakes in your life? Do you seek your child's forgiveness when you mess up? I'm praying for an extra measure of grace in your family this week as you model humility and forgiveness!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read 1Sa 25

1. Who was David? Nabal? Abigail?
2. Why was David mad at Nabal?
3. How did Abigail correct the situation?

What Do You Think

Why do you think Abigail apologized for Nabal?

What R U Going To Do

If there's someone you've hurt in the last few weeks, take the time to show you're sorry with an apology note.

Core Comp

Self Control – I can take charge of myself with Jesus' help.

Memory Verse

Micah 6:8 – *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

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Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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