

### **Abigail: Wisdom in a time of crisis - 1 Samuel 25**

**“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” Proverbs 31: 30**

- **Abigail is a woman of great energy and resourcefulness, but more importantly, a woman of great wisdom of character, used by God to bring peace and resolve conflict at a time of crisis in her personal situation (“disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household” Abigail is told in v17) and in the life of God’s future King – David. Through Abigail’s actions, David is restrained from evil and the disaster is averted from her household. In God’s providence too, we can see that she is also ultimately used to strengthen his kingdom. There is so much for us to learn from Abigail as we aim to live wisely for God in the situations God has placed us.**
- **Maybe you have found yourself having to take on the role of peacemaker – each of you will be able to call various situations to mind I am sure! There are many times we might find ourselves in a place of conflict at home, work or in relationships and it’s good to reflect on what Abigail might teach us here. But we need wisdom for all sorts of challenges in life and this passage is so helpful in its general principles for godly living.**

**1 Samuel 25 begins by introducing us to 3 main characters of the chapter and the confrontation that arises between 2 of them – David, who has been anointed by God to succeed Saul as king (1 Samuel 16:1,12-13) and Nabal, a wealthy farmer, who was foolish (v25) as his name implied, rude and bad-tempered (v3), and appeared to lack spiritual judgement (v10) “wicked” and too arrogant to listen to advice (v17) and enjoyed worldly pleasures to excess (v36). Nabal is immediately contrasted with his wife Abigail, who is “intelligent and beautiful” (v3) and blessed with “good judgement” (v33).**

**The story is... David is on the run from Saul, accompanied by his band of loyal followers, and needing to find supplies. At a time of sheep-shearing, a traditional time of abundance of food and feasting for the shearers (v11) David sent some of his men with what he considered a reasonable request for provisions from Nabal. David’s confidence, based on his generosity and protection to Nabal’s shepherds (v7, confirmed later by Nabal’s servant v15-16), and his pride are delivered a huge blow by Nabal’s rude and aggressive refusal (v10,14). David, clearly insulted, immediately makes rash plans to retaliate in violence. Thankfully, we read now of Abigail’s swift and wise intervention...**

**It’s helpful to reflect on the characteristics of Abigail’s wise actions in 3 ways (though these are not definitive) and how they reveal a godly life – which we’ll see is ultimately the fruit of true wisdom.**

## 1. Her wisdom is practical

- Abigail was clear-thinking, calm and decisive, in a crisis created by 2 men who were hot-headed and impetuous. (On 2 other occasions she is described as acting “quickly” v23, v42) There was no time to waste (v18) and immediate action was necessary and – we don’t read that she prayed but we don’t know that she didn’t! An “arrow prayer” is just as effective when an hour for quiet reflection and prayer is not available! She was quick but not impetuous or thoughtless. We will find out that Abigail is a godly lady who had real spiritual discernment.

- She is resourceful and organized (v18) – she made fulfilling David’ initial request her first priority, easily resolved given the prosperous household but she clearly had a well-organized team of servants who respected her (v17 – they knew better to approach Abigail rather than Nabal). She deliberately sends these provisions ahead of her to appease and stall David and his men in their plans. *(NB We all run our homes differently and have different resources but how flexible, able and willing am I to help out practically in an emergency?)*

## 2. Her wisdom shows in her character and behaviour

- She is shrewd and discerning in her relationships (v19, 36), deciding against telling Nabal of her plans – we may question her secrecy but she knew Nabal wasn’t a man who would listen, and couldn’t be trusted to respond well (especially when drunk) and may well have ruined this diplomatic mission.

- She is seriously brave! V20 describes the risk of “David and his men descending towards her” and describes their violent intent (v21) but states simply “she met them”! No doubt Abigail’s beauty and the unexpected sight of this lady appearing on a donkey behind the vast supply of food would have caught them off guard – but her reasoning and insight that follows as she speaks would have far greater effect – a true example of Proverbs 31:30.

- She is humble, (v23) bowing to him (perhaps and early acknowledgement of him as the Lord’s anointed as she will later refer to), and taking full responsibility for the situation (v24). While declaring her own innocence, and implying things would have been different had she seen David’s men first, she admits the offence that has been caused (v25) and makes no defence of Nabal’s “wicked” actions. (It’s a master-class in conflict resolution!) Her acceptance of David’s marriage proposal in v41 is remarkable in its’ humility! *(NB How much do I let pride”/blame shifting” get in the way of resolving conflict?)*

Abigail will need all these qualities for the future when she will share a household with David’s other wife Ahinoam (v43!).

But Abigail can clearly also see beyond the immediate situation, her own problems, to God's bigger picture, and we discover what truly motivates her ...

### 3. Her wisdom is godly

- Abigail shows great spiritual discernment and faith as she affirms David as the Lord's anointed, to whom he will grant the throne over his people (v28,30), unlike her husband, who either deliberately or ignorantly dismisses David's credentials (v10). She is confident that the Lord will protect him and deal with his enemies (v29) – already anticipating Nabal's demise (v26). It's amazing that she is used by God to give encouragement and assurance to David!

- She is places great value on godly character, especially in one given such responsibility by the Lord. She's concerned about the evil David's planned and exhorts him to do what is right (v28) and spare him the guilt he will carry otherwise (v31). By referring to the Lord repeatedly, she reminds David to whom he is ultimately accountable and what is really at stake (and far more important than his reputation in this scrap with Nabal). She urges him to avoid the "wrongdoing" he's planned and appeals to his better nature, making the assumption that he'll make the right choice saying "the Lord has kept you, my master, from bloodshed".

- She has concern for God's kingdom and his people. She predicts (v31) the burden on his conscience for "needless bloodshed" would be "staggering" for him as king – in other words would cause him to be unstable in his rule, maybe causing him to doubt his competence and moral qualification as king. She wants to spare God's people a weak and potentially unstable leader.

- David is persuaded and appreciates her good judgement and wise intervention (v32-35), which have been used by God to keep him from his brutal plans. (Nabal nevertheless meets his end at God's hands later -v38- the offence to his anointed king is avenged by the Lord)

#### In summary:

- Abigail's godly wisdom showed itself in her concern for God's greater plans and in turn gave her the conviction of purpose, confidence, courage, humility and decisiveness in all she did. It was what made her the woman she was. A godly life is the fruit of true wisdom.
- She demonstrates that the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" Proverbs 1:7. Her wisdom came from a reverence and desire to honour God above everything else.

**As one commentator put it: *“Fearing the Lord is what lasts and what really matters in life – because true fear of the Lord makes us seek his grace and mercy in Jesus, through whom we receive forgiveness and eternal life”*. The life of wisdom begins by trusting God’s son the Lord Jesus Christ for that forgiveness and then seeking his will daily.**

**- If we, like Abigail, fear the Lord and seek his kingdom we will gain his eternal perspective on our lives and see his greater purposes in our immediate situations - for us and for others. It humbles us, enables us to look to the interests of others, and acknowledge his perfect will.**

**Abigail’s wisdom in this story did not come to her in an instant, but had developed over time as she looked to God. We too grow in wisdom as we walk with the Lord day by day, step by step, trusting Him, resting on His promises and bringing all our needs to him in prayer. We can trust above all that “ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” 2 Peter 1:3.**

**- Some questions to thinking it all through practically...**

**1. Which of Abigail’s qualities or actions stand out to you most?**

**- Are these qualities you would want to seek for yourself? Where do you need them most at the moment?**

**2. What could have stopped Abigail from taking action to prevent David from sinning? What stops us caring for one another in this way (see James 5:19-20)**

**- What can we learn in our own relationships from the different way in which Abigail deals with David and Nabal?**

**3. Abigail saw the situation from God’s perspective. What does she teach us when we find ourselves in a complicated or conflict situation?**

**- How does her example challenge the things that might shape our response and decisions at these times?**

**- What sort of things can get in the way of a wise response? (Think about Nabal and David!)**