

# Abigail's Choice

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[1 Sam 25:23-35] Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground. 24 So she fell at his feet and said: "On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant. 25 Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: [h]Nabal is his name, and folly is with him! But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. 26 Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, since the Lord has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand, now then, let your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be as Nabal. 27 And now this present which your maidservant has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord. 28 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.** 29 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. 30 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, 31 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."

32 Then David said to Abigail: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! 33 And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. 34 For indeed, as the Lord God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal!" 35 So David received from her hand what she had brought him, and said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person."

## 1. The Situation

The urgency of the situation came to Abigail, the beautiful wife of a foolish rich man, Nabal (meaning, "foolish"), who was having a great day of shearing his flock of sheep. A sheep shearing day to a rancher is like a harvest day to a farmer. It was a day of joyous gathering of a bountiful volume of sheep wool that would bring in hefty income to the flock's owner. David and his men had been protecting Nabal's flock and its shepherds in the rough hills of Jordan, but Nabal was unappreciative of this kindness and had no respect for the young general of Israel who had killed Goliath and was anointed of God. When David sent his men to Nabal seeking a share of the festive occasion, Nabal treated the men harshly with reviling comments toward David. This angered David and he prepared to destroy Nabal and his household. The news of a sure impending violence against her household had been told to Abigail by one of Nabal's servants without Nabal's awareness.

## 2. Abigail's Choice

Abigail, being fully familiar with her husband's arrogance of wealth and foolishness of despising people who lacked fortunes, understood the situation quickly and surmised the urgent need to take action to prevent and avert the impending disaster. Fortunately, she understood who David was and the situation he was in, living in a harsh environment in the rough mountains of southern Judea. David had six hundred men and their families to care for while trying to dodge the death threat of Saul, who was determined to kill David out of jealousy. God was protecting David, but he needed all the resources he could gather from the people who supported David's clan in clandestine ways for fear of Saul's retribution.

Abigail had two choices. The first course of action as an obedient Israeli wife of a rich rancher was to do nothing and respect the choice of her husband. Although she had known of the arrogance and foolishness of Nabal, he was her husband after all, coming from the respected clan of Caleb, the brave leader of Israel who traversed the wilderness for 40 years and took part in the occupation war of Palestine and secured land for his household.

The second option was to appease the anger of David, the godly and highly respected young general who would someday be the king of Israel, to avert the coming destruction of her household. And Abigail knew she

had no time to discuss the matter with Nabal nor was it wise, in her mind, to do so because he was too drunk and had no sanity to engage in the discussion with her wise wife. So, Abigail began giving orders, to prepare bundles of food items that would surely provide sustenance to David's clan in the mountains. Most certainly David's men, women, and children were living with meager substance in the craggy hills of the barren wilderness of southern Judea. Some 200 loaves of bread, 2 bags of wine, 5 dressed sheep, 5 bags of roasted grain, 100 bundles of raisins, and 200 cakes of figs were loaded on donkeys as a gift to David to appease his anger. She sent the loaded donkeys ahead of her to where David was camped in the hills.

When she came near David, she dismounted from her donkey and bowed before him in humility, quite unbecoming of the wife of a rich rancher. I love how Abigail spoke to appease David's anger. Her statement can be summarized in the following three ways:

**a. She sought forgiveness for Nabal's reviling of David.**

Abigail humbled herself before David and admitted that her husband's behavior was totally out of line and highly wrong, that he reviled David's name and honor with total disregard for his past achievements for the kingdom and his honor before King Saul. She took the blame on herself and sought David's forgiveness by imploring, "Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant [v. 28]," thus lowering herself as his maidservant. This is the right attitude when we come to God and ask His forgiveness for our sins. Abigail exemplified the right spirit. Because Abigail had a wholesome fear of God, she was led by God's wisdom and demonstrated true humility before David, who would be the king of Israel.

*[Proverbs 15: 33] The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility.*

**b. She recognized David's honor.**

Next, Abigail expressed her confidence in David's honor before God, so well expressed in verse 28. To David, who was being harassed by Saul and the hostile betrayers in the tribe of Juda, his own people, Abigail's words must have been very comforting to him. David would have felt that this beautiful woman who had so much trust in his honor could be his partner.

*[1 Sam 25:28] 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.*

When Mary of Bethany came to Jesus only a few days before his passion and poured a jar of precious ointment on him, this beautiful act of praise and adoration was appreciated by Lord Jesus, just as David must have appreciated the words of confidence and trust by Abigail.

*[John 12:7] But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial.*

**c. She expressed her faith in David under God's protection.**

I love the way Abigail so beautifully expressed her confidence that God would protect David and honor him by "slinging out his enemies" just as David killed the enemy giant Goliath a few years ago with a slingshot.

*[1 Sam 25: 29] 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.*

When David faced the giant Philistine warrior who was immensely bigger and tougher looking than himself, David had great faith that God would deliver him to his hand.

*[1 Sam 17: 45-47] Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47 Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands."*

Now, Abigail is reminding David of the day of his victory some years ago in the Valley of Elah when he confronted the giant man of the Philistine army because of his indignation that this enemy was reviling the name of Jehovah God. She is telling David that, as God gave him victory on this day, He would preserve and lift him at the right time. Until then, keep on fighting the warfare because your life is “kept in the bundle of life in God’s care.” What words of encouragement this must have been to David. I am sure his heart was lifted because of the words of Abigail. No wonder David proposed to Abigail when he heard that God struck and took Nabal’s life about ten days later.

**d. Finally, Abigail advised David to avoid the bloodshed.**

Lastly, Abigail advised David that this bloodshed in his mind could be something that he might regret later when he becomes king of Israel. She took upon a hat of David’s advisor by now as the conversation flowed and she is now telling him, “This bloodshed, no matter how justified it might be, will come and haunt you later. I know you will be king over Israel when Saul is removed by God. Then the bloodshed against my pleading is not something you will be proud of but rather a hindrance that will keep you from sleeping well. Please remove it from your heart and find peace and rest in God’s protection.”

What a wise woman Abigail was! Can we become such a peacemaker in this broken world today—encouraging troubled leaders to lay aside plans for wars and conflicts and rest in God’s awesome plan?

### **3. David’s Response**

David accepted the bounteous gift that Abigail had brought and followed her advice to not execute the plan of vengeance against Nabal. He blessed Abigail for her advice to keep him from the bloodshed.

*[25:32-33] Then David said to Abigail: “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! 33 And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand.*

In the end, it was far better to leave the vengeance to God’s hand when taking it upon his own hand and avenging himself with his own hand. David showed restraint and grace to Abigail and, Nabal indirectly, although he did not deserve David’s grace. On this day, Abigail entered the king’s grace because of her faith in God, just as Christians have access to God’s grace through our faith in Jesus Christ.

*[Romans 5:1-2] Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

### **4. God’s Intervention**

God sees the hearts of men and women. Since David had been anointed by God’s servant Samuel to be the next king of Israel, the livelihood and welfare of David were of importance to God. David was acutely aware of God’s care and protection through this difficult period of King Saul’s animosity toward him.

*[Psalm 23: 4] Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.*

*For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

He did not know, however, that his planned vengeance against Nabal, now forsaken thanks to Abigail’s advice, had been placed in God’s hand. The just God, who had watched the motives of both Nabal and Abigail, struck Nabal and took his life away about ten days after Abigail met with David.

*[1 Sam 25: 37-38] So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became like a stone. 38 Then it happened, after about ten days, that the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.*

Nabal’s death opened an opportunity for David to ask Abigail to be his wife. Abigail accepted David’s proposition and joined his camp gladly. Abigail’s wealth could now be used as a strong source of sustenance

for David and the party until Saul's death. It was God's way of providing for David during his difficult time of refuge. God provided a table for David before his enemies.

*[Psalm 23: 5-7] You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*

*You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.*

*6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life.*

*And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

## **5. Application**

Abigail wisely chose to take action to avert a terrible disaster that was sure to fall on her family due to her husband, Nabal's foolish action of reviling David. Her timely action to come to David and plead for his mercy prompted him to refrain from avenging Nabal. Abigail's action, however, opened the door for God not only to provide a wise wife for him but also to provide a key channel of sustenance for David during his time of refuge from Saul's pursuit of animosity after David's life.

When a child of God acts out of his/her will to make peace for others, such an action can open a door for God to a far greater channel of blessing for faithful people of God. Abigail's spirit was of high praise by God, just as Christ praised the sacrifice of Mary of Bethany for anointing Jesus before His passion.

As we read the rest of 1 Samuel, we come to see that Abigail, although she had great possessions in the Carmel area where there was water and pasture for her huge flocks of thousands of sheep and goats, she accompanied David through his roaming journeys, which involved only temporary stays in unfamiliar villages in hostile regions. One would wonder why a wealthy woman like Abigail would choose to suffer the discomfort and danger of being with David, the king-to-be when she could enjoy the richness of her lot after her husband's death.

*[Phil 3:7-9] But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*

Just as the apostle Paul chose to suffer losses because he valued highly the knowledge of Christ above all benefits of life, Abigail chose to follow and be with David, now her honorable husband, because she valued being with him much more than all benefits of her richness. It is a remarkable example for all rich people to follow in the present day.