

# 1st Samuel

## Lesson 51

David is not happy with the report and decides to go to Nabal and take from him what David needs to feed his men. Does David think that he deserves the gift he is asking for? Possibly. Here is why. David was of the tribe of Judah. Nabal was of the tribe of Judah. They were not direct family with each other, but they were of the same tribe; they were kinsmen. At the end of verse eight, David's instruction to the ten young men to be given to Nabal was, "*Please give whatever you find at hand to your servants and to your son David.*" David was respectful in his request, but he also appealed to Nabal as a father figure. No doubt Nabal was much older than David, probably old enough to be David's father. So, David appeals to Nabal as a son would appeal to a father.

We should not jump to a conclusion with this limited amount of information so far. David's instruction for four hundred of his men to acquire their swords and get ready to move out would have been a natural instruction when traveling any distance at that time. After all, there were still non-Israelites in the land who were enemies of Israel and, therefore, enemies of David. His men needed to be prepared for war at all times. In addition, once again, we see that this journey was not a move of the camp because the baggage was left behind, with one-third of David's army standing guard over the possessions of the men. David was a wise leader, and he looked out for his men and protected them. He and his men were headed to Nabal for a face-to-face meeting, and surely David had the intention of asking for help again from Nabal.

### c) Abigail Learns of Her Husband's Rejection of David (25:14-17)

Our writer tells us how Abigail learns of her husband's rejection of David. Verse 14.

*'But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, 'Behold, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, and he scorned them.'<sup>15</sup> Yet the men were very good to us, and we were not insulted, nor did we miss anything as long as we went about with them, while we were in the fields.<sup>16</sup> They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the time we were with them tending the sheep.<sup>17</sup> Now therefore, know and consider what you should do, for evil is plotted against our master and against all his household; and he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him.'* (25:14-17)

The place we must look at is when the man said to Abigail, "*for evil is plotted against our master and against all his household; and he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him.*" Our question is, "Who is plotting evil against the man's master and his household?" Did the man see David's order as an evil plan to plot harm against Nabal? Or is the man concerned that Nabal was afflicted by the evil of his own making because the man goes on to say that Nabal "*is such a worthless man.*" The Hebrew for this phrase would be better translated as it is in other English versions, "*a son of Belial*" with "*Belial*" meaning "*wicked.*" In the New Testament, the phrase is associated with the name of Satan, the personification of "*wickedness.*" While many scholars read verse 17 to mean that David had plotted evil against Nabal, I disagree. I read verse 17 to indicate that the man understands that Nabal, being a "*worthless man,*" "*a son of Belial,*" had displayed the epitome against David, and Nabal's attitude and demeanor would bring evil against all of Nabal's household if he continued to be that way. In the next passage, we will hear how even David thought that Nabal had expressed evil against him. We must ask the question, "*Who is speaking?*" It is a man who is an employee of Nabal but was living with David and had been sent by David to ask Nabal for help with supplies. This passage does not indicate that the man was speaking for the LORD, for David, or anyone else. He was just expressing his thoughts to Abigail. Yet, his thoughts are near correct, but David will

express in the next passage something similar but not because David plotted evil against Nabal, but Nabal had plotted evil against David and had become David's enemy.

### (1) Abigail Send David the Items He Requested (25:18-22)

The writer tells us that Abigail responded to the man's warning. We see Abigail send David the items he requested. Verse 18.

*"Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves of bread and two jugs of wine and five sheep already prepared and five measures of roasted grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys. <sup>19</sup> She said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. <sup>20</sup> It came about as she was riding on her donkey and coming down by the hidden part of the mountain, that behold, David and his men were coming down toward her; so she met them. <sup>21</sup> Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have guarded all that this man has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good. <sup>22</sup> May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave as much as one male of any who belong to him." (25:18-22)*

If our previous estimates are correct, the list of provisions Abigail provided David and his men were enough food for about two days, maybe three. But, she did it without permission from her husband. This might be a problem. Furthermore, Abigail had already heard that David had said, "Surely in vain I have guarded all that this man has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good. May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave as much as one male of any who belong to him." As has been the case with this writer's style, all of the important points are not in order of importance. The man who spoke to Abigail must have heard David's words. It is here that we learn that David felt that Nabal was evil to David when David had gone overboard in protecting the same flock that was being sheared in Carmel. We must admit that David intended to bring vengeance against Nabal for his evil against David. This point is interesting. David knew better. David had not sought revenge against Saul but was willing to allow the LORD to revenge him and his men for Nabal's sin. Abigail's food supplies thwarted David's intent. As we will see, the LORD will take revenge for David, and David will not have to do it for himself.

### d) Abigail Meets David on the Road (25:23-24)

David was coming up the hill according to the last passage. Here, Abigail meets David on the road. Verse 23.

*"When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from her donkey, and fell on her face before David and bowed herself to the ground. <sup>24</sup> She fell at his feet and said, "On me alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let your maid servant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maid servant." (25:23-24)*

Abigail, whose name means joy, immediately took the blame for her husband's evil. She respectfully asked David if she could speak. This point is very important. In the custom of the day, women did not approach men to speak to them without some sort of invitation or introduction. Further, married women did not open a conversation with married men. Abigail was married; David was married. In much of the eastern world, especially the middle east, where Israel sits, this custom still exists. If David had rejected her, she had no recourse.

### (1) Abigail Pleads for Nabal's Worthlessness (25:25)

David agreed to hear Abigail. We hear where Abigail pleads for Nabal's worthlessness. Verse 25.

*"Please do not let my lord pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him; but I your maid servant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent." (25:25)*

Abigail admits that Nabal acted like an evil fool, as his name means. When she says, "I, your maid servant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent," Abigail was taking the blame for all her husband's evil, yet, she was not there at the time and did not see Nabal's evil against the ten men.

### (2) Abigail Gives David the Gifts (25:26-27)

And so, Abigail gives David the gifts that she had gathered without Nabal's permission. Verse 26.

*"Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, since the LORD has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal.<sup>27</sup> Now let this gift which your maid servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who accompany my lord."* (25:26-27)

In Abigail's words, she presents the idea that her encounter with David on the road was a divine meeting, established by the LORD, prepared by the LORD, and directed by the LORD. She admits that the LORD is the One who stops David from avenging the evil Nabal committed against David. Then, she asks David to accept her gifts.

### (3) Abigail Asks for David's Forgiveness (25:27-31)

To sum it up, Abigail asks for David's forgiveness. Verse 27.

*"Please forgive the transgression of your maid servant; for the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil will not be found in you all your days.<sup>29</sup> Should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, then the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; but the lives of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling.<sup>30</sup> And when the LORD does for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and appoints you ruler over Israel,<sup>31</sup> this will not cause grief or a troubled heart to my lord, both by having shed blood without cause and by my lord having avenged himself. When the LORD deals well with my lord, then remember your maid servant."* (25:27-31)

First, notice that Abigail is well aware that David will be the next king of Israel. This point leads us to the conclusion that Samuel's anointing of David to be the next king was widespread by this time and well accepted in the tribe of Judah. Because we know how the change in kingship will play out, we can safely say that the eleven tribes of Israel, not including Judah, may have known about Samuel's anointing but may not have been totally supportive of making David king, as we will see when, at Saul's death, David becomes the king of Judah, and Ish-boseth, Saul's son, becomes the king of the other eleven tribes. We will cover that when we reach 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel. Be that as it may, Abigail acknowledges David as the next king and pleads for forgiveness.

Second, Abigail takes the blame for the second time for Nabal's evil against David and asks forgiveness. She also admits that David has done no evil and will do no evil in his life. How she knows this is purely her speculation. We know that her statement will not ring true in David's life. He will do an evil thing with Uriah and Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. Here, we must take Abigail's words at face value. She is simply trying to encourage David and, in some ways, a little flattery, but at the same time, promises David total support as a subject in his kingdom to come. How soon will it come? At this point in the story, David, Abigail, and Saul have no idea. We know that it will be in fewer than two years because of the rest of the story in the book.

Third, Abigail acknowledges the sin of her husband Nabal and encourages David to allow the LORD to avenge the wrong he did to David. She points out that David does not need the blood of Nabal on his hands, a fellow Judite. She is correct in her theology. David should not avenge the wrong committed on him by Nabal because the LORD will place others in Nabal's way to revenge the wrong, or the LORD will avenge the wrong with His ultimate punishment – death.

Fifth, for all she has said and offered to David, Abigail asks David to remember her when he becomes king. Such a request would not and should not seem odd. It was simply a gracious way to show her support to David and that she would be willing to help in his kingdom if she was needed.

### (4) David Forgives Abigail (25:32-35)

David was taken by his meeting with Abigail. He notices some important things about her, and David forgives Abigail. Verse 32.

*“Then David said to Abigail, ‘Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me,<sup>33</sup> and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light as much as one male.’<sup>35</sup> So David received from her hand what she had brought him and said to her, ‘Go up to your house in peace. See, I have listened to you and granted your request.’” (25:32-35)*

What did David notice about Abigail? Her discernment. In the few words she said to David, she reached deep into his heart, soul, and mind and changed his direction. David intended to avenge himself, and Abigail convinced him to allow the LORD to do the avenging. Because of her discernment, David forgave Abigail.

#### **(5) Abigail Told Nabal What She Did (25:36-38)**

With Abigail showing her discernment with David, we understand why she did what she did next. Abigail told Nabal what she did. Verse 36.

*“Then Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; so she did not tell him anything at all until the morning light.<sup>37</sup> But in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him so that he became as a stone.<sup>38</sup> About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died.” (25:36-38)*

Arriving back home in Maon, Abigail found Nabal involved in a full-blown feast. You might ask, why did Nabal not wonder where Abigail was and why she was not expected to be at the feast. There is a reason. In those days, in the middle east, feasts were primarily attended by men only. Wives and children did not attend. That is not to say that women were not there – for women were part of such feasts as dancers and entertainers who would perform before the drunken men. This point is not to say that the LORD approved of the behavior at these feasts; He did not. But, as with Nabal, most of the men who attended such events were, according to Abigail, “worthless,” meaning “the sons of Belial.” You may have heard that phrase spoken today as “the spawn of Satan.” Certainly, the terms are appropriate.

Coming home to discover the festival, Abigail discovered her husband drunk. She knew better than to inform him of her actions with him in that state. She waited till morning and told him. His heart could not take the news. Much has been said by commentators about what happened to Nabal that day. Much of what has been recorded by the most famous scholars was long before the advent of modern medicines. Much of what they have said was pure speculation. With only the writer’s words in this passage, today, most physicians would conclude that Nabal had a massive stroke that rendered him lifeless. Yet, breath lingered in him for ten days before he died.

It was not too long ago that I found a person in such a lifeless state. I quickly did the Heimlich maneuver to clear the throat, but nothing came out but air. I got the person on the floor and checked every possible place for a pulse, but there was none. No breath, no pulse. The ears, the ends of the fingers, and toes were beginning to turn bluish-grey. A stone-cold stare was in the eyes. I started CPR while instinctively calling her name and telling her to breathe. For about six minutes, there was nothing. Finally, I felt a faint pulse one time in her wrist. Then, about fifteen seconds later, there was another pulse, and it was followed by more. Then, there was a small breath. Then a larger breath, and finally, the pulse was strong, and the breaths were normal. Then, the light in the eyes came back. About that time, the EMS arrived, and off to the hospital she went. Now for the purpose of this story. About two weeks later, the person told a caregiver that the whole time she heard me talking to her. In an interesting twist, she also told the caregiver that she said to herself, “I better help him by taking a breath, or I am going to die.” I have always heard medical people say that hearing is the last to go when a person is dying. I think this testimony is proof of just that. The heart was not beating, the lungs were not breathing, but the ears were still hearing.

With Nabal's condition, be it a stroke or other condition that rendered him like a stone, no doubt, he could hear all that was going on for ten days until the LORD said, you have heard enough. Then the LORD struck Nabal dead in vengeance for what he had done to David. Abigail was right. David did not need to avenge himself; the LORD would do it for him. This same concept is found in Matthew chapter 18, beginning in verse 15, where the LORD tells us to avenge the wrongs when we see someone sin against another person. But in verse 21, the LORD tells us that if someone sins against us, we are to forgive seven times seventy. In other words, we are not to avenge ourselves. Either the LORD will avenge, or He will assign someone else to avenge wrongs against us.

#### e) David Proposes to Abigail (25:39)

About a week and a half after Abigail gifted all the food supplies to David, Nabal died. Because David and the men were in the area, and at least ten of the men living with David were employees of Nabal, David surely heard of Nabal's death within just a few days. David sent a letter of condolences. Listen to David's message to Abigail. Verse 39.

*"When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, 'Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal and has kept back His servant from evil. The LORD has also returned the evil doing of Nabal on his own head.' Then David sent a proposal to Abigail, to take her as his wife."* (25:39)

In the message, he also thanked Abigail for her discernment and suggestion. But then, in a strange conclusion, he asked Abigail to be his wife. David was about twenty-eight years old at the time and was still married to Saul's daughter, Michal; however, he was also married to Ahinoam, which has not yet been revealed in the storyline.