

**Portrait of a Godly Woman**  
**1 Samuel 25**  
***Mother's Day 2017***

An elementary school teacher spent an entire day teaching her class of second graders about magnets and what they do. The next day she gave her students a written test. The test had one question. "My full name has six letters. The first one is 'M'. I pick things up. What am I?" When the papers were turned in the teacher was amazed and amused that half of her students had answered with the word "Mother."

We are honoring our mothers as well as all of the women and young ladies here today. This morning we are considering a woman from the Old Testament who is a portrait of feminine beauty, wisdom and godliness. Her name is Abigail. Her story places her between two contrasting men. One is her husband, Nabal, and the other is the then future king of Israel, David.

The historical setting is that Samuel has recently died and been mourned by the nation of Israel. David is on the run from King Saul. The previous chapter records that David had just spared Saul's life in a cave near En Gedi.

❖ **Abigail was married to an ungodly man.**

(3) "The name of the man was Nabal...the man was harsh and evil in his doings. He was of the house of Caleb."

Nabal means "fool." He was foolish both in name and in nature. One of his servants and his wife called him "a scoundrel" (17, 25) which is literally "a son of Belial." This term is applied in scripture to men of the basest sort. Matthew Henry describes him as a "muck worm." Nabal also "was very rich" (2).

➤ **Abigail's description is in contrast to her husband's.**

(3) "...and the name of his wife Abigail. And she was a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance..."

The root word here expresses intelligence or wisdom. She was both intelligent and beautiful. Abigail means "one who causes joy." Marriages at that time were arranged. Even today many an Abigail is married to a Nabal.

➤ **Nabal's selfishness put his family in jeopardy.**

Nabal was "shearing his sheep in Carmel" (2). Sheep shearing was an annual time of festive celebration. It was also a traditional time of hospitality. It was customary for the master to give gifts to his workers and to those who helped to protect his flocks. David sent "ten young men" (5), not his seasoned fighters with instructions to greet Nabal with respect. They were not to demand but to request "Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David" (8). There was nothing unreasonable at all about David's request. (10-11) "Then Nabal answered David's servants, and said, 'Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?'" Nabal refused David's request insulting David and his family. In that culture Nabal's response was both foolish and dangerous.

▪ **Note that godly people can quickly react in ungodly ways.**

(13) “Then David said to his men, ‘Every man gird on his sword.’ So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies.”

David allowed Nabal’s actions to instigate his own reaction. Victory in a way makes us vulnerable to attack. David’s response is shocking in the face of his forbearance with Saul. David has just spared Saul’s life. Verse 17 reveals that Nabal had “reviled” David’s young men. The Hebrew word is used to describe a shrieking bird as it swoops down to tear its prey. The ESV says “he railed at them”. The NIV says he “hurled insults at them”. The NASB says “he scorned them”. This infuriated David who became blinded by his rage. James 1:20, “for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” David’s overreaction was about to cause the deaths of many innocent people. Anger clouds judgment. David was responding out of a wounded ego. David’s pride got the better of him.

❖ **Abigail’s response to Nabal’s folly reveals her godly character.**

(14-15) “Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal’s wife, saying, ‘Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them. But the men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields.’”

➤ **Abigail was the source of wisdom in her household.**

The fact that the servants immediately went to her for help reveals Abigail’s role in the household. It seems likely that this was not the first time Abigail had to intercede in a situation because of Nabal’s actions. Note that the servants looked to Abigail to do something to save them. (17) “Now therefore, know and consider **what you will do**, for harm is determined against our master and against his entire household. For he is such a scoundrel that one cannot speak to him.” Abigail was respected by her servants.

➤ **Abigail was proactive in finding a solution.**

(18) “Then Abigail **made haste** and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys.”

She didn’t go complain to her husband or to the servants. She recognized that it was her duty to protect her husband and her household. She quickly assessed the situation, knew what was to be done and set about getting it done. Abigail is the model of the “virtuous wife” of Proverbs 31. As mistress of the household Abigail had the oversight of these provisions.

➤ **Abigail was respected and trusted by her household.**

(19-20) “And she said to her servants, ‘Go on before me; see, I am coming after you.’ But she did not tell her husband Nabal. So it was, as she rode on the donkey that she went down under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men, coming down toward her, and she met them.” David is angry and is coming with four hundred men intent on killing everyone in Nabal’s household. (21-22) “Now David had said, ‘Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belongs to him. And he has repaid me evil for good. May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light.’”

No doubt Abigail had earned their respect by her character and disposition. Abigail would have fit Peter’s description of a godly woman as “the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit”, 1 Peter 3:4.

➤ **Abigail approached David with genuine humility.**

(23-24) “Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground. 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.”

Abigail displayed great courage in intersecting David in this way. She was willing to put her own life in jeopardy to save her household. She interceded on behalf of her household willingly taking the reproach on herself. She was willing to put herself at risk to intercede for her husband as unworthy as he was. Abigail had a very realistic view of her husband. (25) “Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: 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.” She addressed David as “my lord” 14 times in her speech. She referred to herself as “your maidservant” 6 times.

▪ ***Abigail reveals what true submission looks like.***

Submission is not passive. Silence is not synonymous with submission. Biblical submission has at its heart the best interests of others. **Philippians 2:3**, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” Abigail was not responding out of self-preservation or self-promotion. She could have simply done nothing and watched as Nabal was killed. Instead she acted in the best interests of her husband and her household at personal cost.

➤ **Abigail displayed great insight and wisdom.**

Abigail had amazing spiritual perception focusing upon David’s relationship with the LORD not with Nabal. She continually appealed to David “my lord” on the basis of “the LORD”. This was no hysterical pleading but a reasoned argument.

▪ ***She appealed to David to see God’s hand in her coming to him.***

(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.”

This is an illustration of God’s restraining grace in our lives. Some describe this as the preventative providence of God.

▪ ***She appealed to David to forgive Nabal’s sin because of God’s working in David’s life.***

(28-29) “Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant...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.”

The phrase “bound in the bundle” was an oriental expression. It came from the practice of wrapping up priceless objects to keep them hidden on their person. Abigail was saying that David’s life was being protected by the LORD. She even alluded to his great victory over Goliath “the pocket of a sling.”

▪ ***She appealed to David that he would regret having shed innocent blood.***

(30-31) “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, that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause...”

We never carry regret when we take the high road of forgiveness and compassion. (32-33)

“Then David said to Abigail: ‘Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! And blessed is your advice and blessed are you...’ David turn aside from his vengeance, Nabal died, and Abigail became David’s wife.

Proverbs 31:30, “Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.”

## **Abigail Is a Portrait of a Godly Woman, a Godly Wife and a Godly Mother**