

1 Samuel 25

How does this chapter start out (v. 1)? “*Now Samuel died.*” The death of Samuel brought to a close the period of the judges. The nation had now become a monarchy. David’s descendants would occupy Israel’s throne forever, Christ being the fulfillment of the promise. The deep respect in which Samuel was held is indicated by the grief that swept across the nation when he died.¹

David relocated to the Desert of Maon. Who did he encounter there (vv. 2-3)? Nabal. What do we know about Nabal? He was a very rich man (three thousand sheep and a thousand goats) but was surly and mean in his doings. His name is a possible clue to his character, because the name Nabal, in Hebrew, means *fool*. In the ancient culture of Israel, names were often connected with a person’s character;

What do we know about Nabal’s wife (v. 3)? Her name was Abigail and she was both beautiful and wise. The Bible gives Abigail great praise when it says she was a beautiful woman, because the only other women who have this Hebrew phrase applied to them are Rachel ([Genesis 29:7](#)) and Esther ([Esther 2:7](#)). The rabbis considered Abigail one of seven women in the Old Testament whom the Holy Spirit had graced unusually.²

What was Nabal doing (v. 4)? He was shearing his sheep. This was “harvest time” for a sheep rancher. By ancient traditions, sheep shearing time was a happy time of lavish hospitality towards others (cf. [2 Samuel 13:23-24](#)).

Once David heard Nabal was shearing his sheep, he sent ten of his men to greet him. What request did they make of Nabal (vv. 7-9)? Sometime in the past, David’s armed followers had been patrolling the wilderness of Paran in Judah, where Nabal’s shepherds had been tending his flocks. They had made that area safe from raiding Amalekites, Philistines, and occasional wild animals that might have harassed Nabal’s shepherds. It was only common courtesy that wealthy Nabal would have expressed his appreciation to David by providing some food for David’s men.³ So, appealing to his past protective attitude toward Nabal and his flocks, David asked him for provisions to sustain him and his men in the wilderness.

How would you characterize Nabal’s attitude toward David (vv. 10-11)? An attitude of utter contempt! Nabal was a political loyalist, a supporter of King Saul, who regarded David simply as a rebel. He referred to him as a rebellious servant breaking away from his master (Saul). Perhaps he felt that David was running a protection racket to finance his outlaw way of life. Miserly Nabal simply did not want to part with anything that belonged to him. He failed to admit that David had been a blessing to him. He also refused to acknowledge David as the Lord’s anointed.⁴ In our modern way of speaking, Nabal would say, “*Who does he think he is?*”

How did David react to Nabal’s selfish and rude rebuff (v. 13)? David was enraged! He overreacted. Taking 400 men with him He prepared to attack and kill every male in Nabal’s household that very night (vv. 22, 34).

What do you think of David’s response to the way he was treated by Nabal? This was not a high moment for David. He was prideful. He was not in the man-after-God’s-own-heart mode. He let his emotions rule. He did not pray.

When Abigail learned of the impending doom that her husband’s ill-advised behavior had brought upon them, how did she respond (vv. 18-19)? She knew that time was of the essence. She quickly gathered a large supply of foodstuffs in sufficient abundance to meet David’s requirements and went out to meet him.

As David approached Carmel what was going through his mind (vv. 21-22)? He was rehearsing to himself the good he had shown Nabal and the contempt Nabal had shown him.⁵

When she encountered David on the trail, how would you describe Abigail's appeal to him (vv. 23-31)?

Abigail's approach to David was a model of tact and courage. Visualize this solitary woman, riding a donkey, approaching 400 armed men, who were riding horses and were bent on slaughtering her household. It took immense courage and boldness, and great wisdom for Abigail to take her life in her own hands and do what she did.⁶

In a true act of humility. Abigail immediately took all the blame upon herself for her husband's foolish actions. She asked for permission to speak, instead of taking command of the conversation. Abigail proceeded to help David view his situation from God's perspective. She referred to the Lord as the One who was restraining him from shedding innocent blood (v. 26).

Abigail reminded David of the Lord's promise for his life (.... a lasting dynasty, v. 28). She guided David to look beyond the immediate aggravating circumstances to the bigger promise of God.

Abigail emphasized (v. 31) how much better it would be when he became king if he did not have to look back with regret on a time when he had stretched out his own hand and avenged himself instead of leaving his enemies to the vengeance of the Lord.⁷ This is perhaps the single best thing that Abigail said.

To summarize....Abigail emphasized David's glorious calling and destiny, and the general integrity of his life, and simply asked him to consider if his present course of action was consistent with that destiny and integrity.

How did David respond to Abigail's words of diplomacy (vv. 32-35)? He heard the Lord's voice behind her words. Consequently he blessed the Lord, her discernment, and herself. God had used David's conscience to keep him from killing Saul (24:5), and now He used Abigail's appeal to keep him from killing Nabal. Wise David, who listened to the words of a woman—who was a stranger to him—contrasts with foolish Nabal, who would not listen to the words of his wise wife or his fearful servants.⁸

The Lord knows how to bring the right people into our lives at the right time to direct us and warn us.

What did Abigail discover when she returned home (vv. 36-38)? Her foolish husband was drunk as a result of celebrating. She wisely waited until the next day to tell him what had happened. When he heard the news, he was probably seized with paralysis, a stroke or a heart attack. Ten days later he died, leaving behind all the possessions he had selfishly hoarded to himself.

How did David respond to Nabal's death (vv. 39-40)? David soon sent a proposal of marriage to Abigail, which she accepted with great humility. David had also acquired another wife, Ahinoam, since he had gone into hiding. Meanwhile, Michal, his first wife, had been given to another man.⁹

Because David never really followed God's plan and purpose for a monogamous marriage, his family life was never blessed and peaceful. Family trouble would bring David some of the greatest trials and heartache of his life. Divorce often has a similar impact on the players.

¹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 316.

² Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Samuel 2024 Edition* (published by Sonic Light), 180.

³ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 316.

⁶ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Samuel 2024 Edition* (published by Sonic Light), 183.

⁷ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 317.

⁸ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Samuel 2024 Edition* (published by Sonic Light), 185.

⁹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 317.