

## **Abigail: A Woman of Strength and Wisdom**

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The story of Abigail in 1 Samuel 25 reveals a woman leader who understands her role and acts with decisiveness and integrity.

Abigail lived during the years when David was running from King Saul and shortly after Samuel, the great prophet, had died. David and his band of men had taken refuge in the wilderness of Paran near Carmel—where Nabal, a wealthy man, was pasturing his flocks of sheep and goats. Thanks to David and his men, Nabal's flocks and herds were protected from marauding bands of Ishmaelites. As men on the run in survival mode, David and his men could have met their own needs by taking from the herds or demanding payment for their services. However, under David's leadership, they acted valiantly and with noble character in caring for and protecting the flocks and herds which camped nearby.

During shearing time in Carmel, David sent ten men to request that he and his band of 600 men be included in celebrating Nabal's prosperity—due in large part to the protection that David and his men had provided. This was a reasonable and even customary request. Nabal, whose name literally means "fool," was a man who lived up to his name. He not only refused David's request, but also mocked, ridiculed, and

insulted David—questioning his character and his anointing as future king.

In a fit of rage, David instructed his men to strap on their swords and teach Nabal a lesson. David's infuriation, bruised ego, and lack of good judgment led to a display of one of David's poorest leadership moments. He allowed the insult to fester until he vowed to slaughter every male in Nabal's household by morning.

Abigail's strength and character shined through when one of Nabal's servants approached her for help. The fact that Nabal's servants immediately ran to Abigail for help reveals much about her role in the family. Quite possibly, Abigail had helped get Nabal out of other self-imposed messes in the past. The words the servant used when reporting this incident to Abigail indicates that Nabal's foolishness was no secret.

Abigail understood that her place as wife and mistress of the household was to protect her husband and his property. She wasted no time fretting over what to do. She simply went to work to rectify the situation, which discloses several things about Abigail.

*As an astute woman, she instantly understood the gravity of the situation, the cultural expectations, and potential impact.*

Time was of the essence if she was to save her family. Abigail obviously had her finger on the pulse of her home, her servants, and the people who depended on her husband and home for their livelihood and well-being.

In like manner, a woman in ministry must be aware of the situations and needs in her ministry setting. When a situation arises, she must quickly size up the situation and present a plan of action. Abigail demonstrates **a woman prepared to move into action when the need arises**.

Abigail's actions also demonstrated **resourcefulness**. She likely gave oversight to all the matters pertaining to the household. She was intimately involved the day-to-day operations of her servants. She knew exactly what was available to her and where to obtain it. Women in the twenty-first century have many resources available. Following Abigail's example, whether in the home or ministry setting, every woman should be aware of the resources at her disposal. In so doing, she has the ability to meet the needs as they arise.

**Trustworthiness**, as displayed by Abigail, reveals a genuine Proverbs 31 woman: "Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is more precious than rubies. Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life" (Prov. 31:11-13, NLT). Abigail sought to bring good to her foolish and self-absorbed husband. In addition, the servants obviously trusted her to rectify a horrible situation with her network of support in the home. She gave orders, and they obeyed without hesitation. This speaks of Abigail's proven character, sacrifice, faithfulness, and trustworthiness. Trust in friendship, marriage, and ministry is hard-earned and easily broken. Abigail

demonstrates the power of trust in her relationships with the household servants and even with Nabal.

Abigail acted with **courage** because she understood that her husband's life and the lives of every man in her household were at stake. Fear, a natural reaction in such a situation, could easily have overtaken Abigail, but she faced the oncoming disaster decisively and without apparent fear. Fear paralyzes, but courage moves forward. Identifying what needs to be done and moving ahead regardless of the cost or the consequences is a characteristic desperately needed in leaders today.

Abigail demonstrates **wisdom and great restraint** by waiting for the right moment to inform Nabal of her actions. When Abigail comes home from this intense interaction with David, she finds her husband in full party mode—she very wisely chooses to wait until he is sober to inform him of the events of the day. The Apostle James defines wisdom this way, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness" (James 3:17-18). True wisdom is rare these days, but Abigail demonstrates this kind of wisdom with every word and action.

**Submissiveness** was evidenced in Abigail's demeanor toward David. When she approached David, she honored him, acknowledging his reputation as a great leader, a future king, and one who honored God in everything he did. She offered sincere praise, not flattery. Through her words and actions, she reminded him of his position, his character, and his obligation to lead with integrity. Her humility and courage called David to a higher level of

thinking and action—one more consistent with his own values. Although one of the most misunderstood teachings in the church, the story of Abigail illustrates the important quality of submission.

Some might challenge Abigail's words and actions as being disrespectful to her husband. However, a close examination of this situation and the resulting actions speak otherwise. Abigail knew her husband was a fool. Her confession to David at the start of their interaction is not so much a statement of disrespect about Nabal as a statement of the facts as everyone knew them. Her words showed her submission to a higher authority—God. Abigail's honest words brought David to his senses. Killing Nabal and all the men in the household would cause David to commit the sin of murder.

Submission is not passive. Biblical submission carries with it the intent of looking out for the best interests of others. Philippians 2:3-4 declares, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others." Abigail demonstrates what a true "helper" (Gen. 2:18) looks like because without her help, Nabal and all the men of his household would have died.

When two people row a boat, if the stronger of the two always uses his or her full strength, the boat would only go around in circles, and neither would get to their destination. In the same way, submission requires a give and take. True submission and unity are inseparable characteristics of a good marriage, a great ministry, and a dynamic church.

Abigail acted in the best interest of not only her husband, but of her entire household.

Silence is not synonymous with submission. While technically Abigail was not the one at fault, she took the blame for this cultural faux pas. "My lord, let the blame be on me alone. Please let your servant speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. May my lord pay no attention to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name is Fool, and folly goes with him. But as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my master sent" (1 Sam. 25:24-25). Abigail's soft words turn away David's wrath (Prov. 15:1). Women leaders must learn this important lesson from Abigail.

While most women are neither married to nor work for fools the likes of Nabal, women can easily become critical and bitter, thinking only of themselves. Women must frequently choose between stirring up trouble or **responding with words and actions which promote peace and reconciliation**. Abigail's calm insight promoted peace in David's heart and reminded him of the foolishness of forsaking his destiny over the insults of a fool. Her words reminded David of who God says He is, and his heart turned to praise God because of her.

Abigail paved the way for God to deal with Nabal—which He certainly did! Abigail wisely chose the right moment to inform Nabal of his near-death experience. Once he was sober, Abigail told him the story of her encounter with David—and as a result, Nabal suffered a heart attack! The Bible says his heart failed him and became like a stone. He lingered for ten days; then the Lord struck him, and he died. This serves as a vivid reminder that God is a righteous judge.

Abigail demonstrates an amazing combination of **confidence and humility**—qualities much needed in today's women

leaders. She was calm and purposeful in every decision—never rash or combative. She maintained humility, strength, and wisdom in the midst of a volatile situation.

Abigail’s story continues to teach and inspire women about **true beauty, godliness, wisdom, and intelligence**. She was rewarded for her character and integrity, as David recognized not only her beauty, but her ability as a wise counselor; in the end, David took her to be his wife.

Truly, a woman who fears the Lord and submits to His ways can be sure that God

will exalt her in His way and in His time. Women need not recoil from true submission but rather recognize how God can and will use a submissive spirit for good. James says it best, “Humble yourselves [feeling very insignificant] in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you [He will lift you up and make your lives significant]” (James 4:10, AMP).

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