

The Life of David

Topic: David's Encounter with Nabal and Abigail

Scripture: I Samuel 25:1-44

Memory Verse: James 5:20

Lesson 9

David's Encounter with Nabal and Abigail

INTRODUCTION: Several months passed by since David had spared King Saul's life in the cave at Engedi. (I Samuel 24:1-22) Since King Saul knew about David's hiding place at Engedi, David knew that he must find a new hiding place for himself and the men who followed him. This new hiding place would be found in the "*wilderness of Paran.*" (I Samuel 25:1) Paran means "*place of caverns.*" This rugged mountainous area was located several miles south of the Dead Sea along the desert border of the Sinai Peninsula.

Winter had come to the land of Israel, and many shepherds were out in the fields guarding their sheep while their sheep grew their warm winter coats of wool. David and his men noticed a large flock of sheep that they learned belonged to a wealthy man named Nabal. (I Samuel 25:2-3) All winter long, David and his men gladly helped Nabal's shepherds in guarding the sheep from thieves and predators. At long last, spring came to Israel, and David assumed that wealthy Nabal would certainly be grateful for all the help that he and his men had given in helping to guard Nabal's sheep. David thought that surely Nabal would be glad to provide one meal for him and his men as a token of his appreciation for their help all winter. However, when Nabal refused to show even the smallest courtesy to David and his men, and sent his insults instead, David was full of rage. Only the kindness of Nabal's beautiful wife, Abigail, kept David from utterly destroying Nabal and his entire household. This lesson records the story of **DAVID'S ENCOUNTER WITH NABAL AND ABIGAIL.**

I THE INSULTS OF NABAL

I Samuel 25:1-13 (v 10) - ". . . *Who is David?* . . ."

- A. David sent for a small gift of appreciation from Nabal (v 1-9)
David and his men had helped Nabal's shepherds guard their flocks all winter and now only wanted a small gift of food as a token of Nabal's appreciation. It was customary among shepherds at shearing time to give such a gift to those who had gone out of their way to help with a neighbor's flock. For David and his men, it meant that an entire winter of struggling to eat was finally over, and a gift from Nabal would have been a wonderful way to start off the spring. (II Samuel 13:23)

NOTE: The name Nabal means "*fool*" and Nabal certainly lived up to the meaning of his name (I Samuel 25:25). Notice how the Bible portrays this man called Nabal.

- 1) He thought himself to be above others (v 2) - Nabal lived in the town of Maon ("*dwelling*") which was located on a hill seven miles south of Hebron

in the land of Judah. Nabal was truly “*the fool on the hill*” who looked down his nose upon others.

- 2) He was a descendant of Caleb (v 3) - Caleb was a great hero in Israel for he was one of the original twelve spies whom Moses sent to spy out the land of Canaan. Only Caleb and Joshua lived through Israel’s forty years of wandering in the desert. As a result, the house of Caleb became famous in Israel. (Numbers 13:6; 13:30) The fact that Nabal was a descendant of famous Caleb made him feel superior to others.
- 3) He had great possessions (v 36) - Riches can cause a man to proudly think of himself as a “*self-made man*” rather than being thankful to God for His blessings. (Psalm 52:7; 62:10)
- 4) He had a beautiful wife (v 3) - Nabal had a beautiful wife named Abigail which name means “*joy to father*”. It is obvious that Abigail did not marry Nabal out of love for she refers to him as a “*man of Belial*.” (v 25) Nabal was probably several years older than Abigail and may have purchased her from her father to settle a debt, or by a prearranged marriage. No doubt, Nabal loved the fact that other men envied him because he had such a gorgeous wife. Nabal and Abigail’s relationship was truly a case of *Beauty and the Beast*.
- 5) He was “*churlish*” in his actions (v 3) - Churlish means “*hard, mean, and ill-mannered*.” No doubt, Nabal’s arrogant “*better-than-thou*” attitude caused him to be cruel and abusive to all those around him. Nabal was selfish (v 11) - “. . .*my bread*. . .”, he was “*evil in his doings*” (v 3), he drank alcohol (v 36 - “. . .*he was very drunken*”), and was “. . .*a son of Beliah*. . .”) (v 17). Belial means “*worthlessness; wickedness; of the devil*.” (Judges 20:13)

- B. Nabal sent insults back to David rather than a gift (v 10-13)
Nabal not only refused to send a gift of appreciation to David and his men, but even insulted David by calling him a servant who had broken away from his master. When David heard Nabal’s insults, he was furious. David had refused to harm King Saul for Saul was God’s anointed king, however, Nabal would have had no such protected position. To destroy Nabal and his household would have been a crime that would have grieved David’s heart in years to come. Thus, the Lord set things in motion to keep David from seeking revenge upon Nabal. (I Corinthians 10:13; II Peter 2:9)

II THE INTERCESSION OF ABIGAIL

Intercession - “*the act of pleading for someone else*”

I Samuel 25:14-35 (v 24) - “. . .*upon me let this iniquity be*. . .”

- A. Abigail volunteered to take the blame for Nabal’s insults (v 14-31)
Nabal’s servants knew that the entire household was in danger due to the insults given to David from Nabal. They also knew the quality of Abigail’s life, and knew

they could trust her to act wisely in the emergency which was upon them. Abigail knew it was useless to argue the matter with her foolish husband, so she gathered sufficient goods together to give to David to appease his anger. Her speech before David is full of feminine charm, wisdom and grace:

- 1) She was willing to take the blame herself for Nabal's rudeness (v 24)
- 2) She made restitution to David giving him a gift of appreciation (v 27)
- 3) She recognized David's right to be king of Israel (v 28-30)
- 4) She asked David to remember her when he finally became king (v 31)

- B. David accepted the gift from Abigail and turned from his wrath (v 32-35)
David was quick to acknowledge the wisdom of Abigail's words. He accepted her gift of appreciation and allowed her to return home in peace. Abigail had been used by God to keep David from committing a crime that he would have regretted for the rest of his life. (James 5:20)

III THE INVITATION OF DAVID

I Samuel 25:36-44 (v 39) - “. . .*David sent and communed with Abigail. . .*”

- A. The Lord sent His judgment upon Nabal and he died (v 36-38)
When Abigail told Nabal that David and his men had come to destroy their entire household, Nabal went into shock or perhaps had some type of stroke, and “*he became as a stone.*” (v 37) Ten days later, the Lord “*smote Nabal, that he died.*” (v 38) Nabal's life is truly like the parable of “*the rich fool.*” (Luke 12:16-21)
- B. David invited Abigail to join him in marriage as his wife (v 39-44)
David's first wife, Michal, had been given by King Saul to be the wife of a man named Phalti. (v 44) Thus, David proposed to recently widowed Abigail, who immediately accepted his proposal, and became his wife. (v 42) Some time later, David also married Ahinoam whose name means “*my brother is pleasantness.*” These wives were the beginning of David's royal harem of wives which action was in direct violation of God's Word. (Deuteronomy 17:17; II Samuel 3:2-5)

TEACHERS' TIP: When you get something for nothing, remember that somebody else wound up with nothing for something.

Next Memory Verse: I Samuel 26:9

Study Guide Sheet

Lesson 9

1. David found a new hiding place in the wilderness of _____.
2. David and his men spent the winter helping some shepherds guard the flock which belonged to _____.
3. It was customary in the spring for the sheep's owner to give a gift of _____ to those who helped tend the sheep.
4. When Nabal refused to even give a meal to David's men, David's anger would have caused him to commit a crime he would have later regretted had it not been for the wisdom of Nabal's wife, _____.
5. Nabal's name means _____.
6. Nabal thought himself better than others for several reasons, one being that he was a descendant of _____.
7. Abigail recognized David's right to be _____ of Israel.
8. Abigail did the right thing and made _____ to David giving him a gift of appreciation.
9. God sent judgment upon _____.
10. When Abigail told Nabal of David's intentions, he went into shock and became as _____.
11. _____ days passed and God smote Nabal and he died.
12. Just recently widowed, Abigail was proposed to by _____ and became his wife.

Study Guide Sheet

Lesson 9

1. David found a new hiding place in the wilderness of Paran.
2. David and his men spent the winter helping some shepherds guard the flock which belonged to Nabal.
3. It was customary in the spring for the sheep's owner to give a gift of Appreciation to those who helped tend the sheep.
4. When Nabal refused to even give a meal to David's men, David's anger would have caused him to commit a crime he would have later regretted had it not been for the wisdom of Nabal's wife, Abigail.
5. Nabal's name means "Fool".
6. Nabal thought himself better than others for several reasons, one being that he was a descendant of Caleb.
7. Abigail recognized David's right to be King of Israel.
8. Abigail did the right thing and made Restitution to David giving him a gift of appreciation.
9. God sent judgment upon Nabal.
10. When Abigail told Nabal of David's intentions, he went into shock and became as Stone.
11. Ten days passed and God smote Nabal and he died.
12. Just recently widowed, Abigail was proposed to by David and became his wife.