



LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LADIES

Beauty and the Beast: Abigail: Lesson 8

This week we will meet Abigail, a shining example of a beauty, both inside and out. The beast is portrayed by Nabal, her husband. The third character in our story is David, a man after God's own heart. Not a perfect man by any means, as we'll see in this lesson. But God's man, nonetheless. I LOVE the story of Abigail. I thought I was well acquainted with her life, having taught about her numerous times. But as I studied her this time, oh my heavens, did I learn some new things. I was overwhelmed by who she was, what she did, and how she did it. I pray that as we take a peek into this amazing example of a godly woman, you, too, will be challenged to navigate the difficult situations you are going through in a more Biblical and Godly way, knowing that you can trust God for His wisdom and His grace in handling them. Seriously, I'm so excited about her I can hardly stand it! But I am also deeply convicted by her example. Thank you, Lord, for writing down this woman's testimony and preserving it throughout the ages so we might learn how grace and meekness can literally save the day. Have fun, ladies!

First Day

Abigail's story begins in 1 Samuel 25. The author of 1 and 2 Samuel is anonymous, but many believe the author was Samuel himself, at least until the part where he dies in 1 Samuel 25:1. Perhaps the rest was a collection of the writings of the prophets at the time. These books ended in the last days of David, so they must have been compiled after 971 B.C. 1 Samuel covers a period of 94 years, from the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul.

Before we jump into Abigail's story, we need to take a brief look at what's going on at the time so we understand how her story fits into history and the culture. Today's lesson will be doing just that, offering some context to our story. (I always love studying about David, don't you?) 1 Samuel 25:1 tells us that David was in the wilderness of Paran. Why was he there? Let's find out.

1. Who was the king at the time? Read 1 Samuel 10:17-27, 11:15.

2. Saul made a foolish mistake in 1 Samuel 13:5-12. What was promised to happen as a result in verses 13-14?
3. Please read 1 Samuel 15 and describe another "mistake" Saul was guilty of.
4. The Lord chose for Himself another king to rule His people. Who did He choose, according to 1 Samuel 16:1-13? What was He looking for?

Although David was anointed by the prophet Samuel to be the King of Israel, he wasn't supposed to take the throne right away. He had to wait for God's timing to remove Saul and place him in authority. It must have been so hard to know you are going to be king, yet wait in humble submission until that time comes to pass. Saul saw the writing on the wall and knew his time was short. He despised David and tried to have him killed many times. Even King Saul's son Jonathan knew that David was to be the next king, rather than himself, which, by birthright, should have been his to claim. David and Jonathan soon became besties (1 Samuel 18:1-4), and Jonathan wanted to protect David from his father. Israel began to elevate David over Saul, which caused him to be filled with anger, rage, and jealousy. (Hmmm, another beast in the story ...) At one point, Saul sent his messengers to David's house to kill him. He heard of the evil plan and escaped before they got there. His wife Michal, who was also one of Saul's daughters, lied and said David had threatened to kill her if she talked. (1 Samuel 19:11-24) Saul then commanded his son Jonathan to bring David to him so he could kill him, once and for all. (That was a very quick summary of some really important points of Biblical history. Read more if you can!)

5. Take some time and read 1 Samuel 18, 19 and 20. These three chapters are a beautiful picture of the relationship between David and Jonathan, and show us the reason that David ultimately fled from his home, finding himself in the wilderness. Briefly summarize the story. Also write your thoughts, questions, or the points that spoke to your heart. What can we learn from Saul's life?

4. How do his neighbors describe him in verses 14-17?

5. How does our text describe Abigail? How else would you describe her from observing her words and actions?

The name "Abigail" means "Father of Joy" or "Cause of Joy." No genealogy of Abigail is given anywhere in Scripture, but it appears that she had a religious upbringing, knew Jewish history, and was given a name that was appropriate. She was either a cause of joy to others, or perhaps her father was. What a contrast to Nabal, whose name means "Fool" and is from the house of Caleb, which means "Dog." Ha! That's perfect as well! A vicious and nasty dog unlike my sweet little Lady Girl, of course. 😊 (That's my cocker spaniel.)

6. Why did David ask for food and supplies for him and his men?

7. How did Nabal respond? What did he say about David? Why do you think he responded this way?

Why did David believe he deserved to receive food from Nabal? David and his men were playing a Robin Hood-type role in the wilderness. As they ran from Saul, they moved from place to place, avoiding the soldiers who were after them. They eventually settled there in the desert of Paran. He and his men protected the farmers and the shepherds from thieves, Bedouins, and the like. Israel had no police force or patrolling system at that time, so this was a typical thing to do in the wilderness. They were so effective as they guarded his sheep that one of Nabal's shepherds even remarked how good of a job they did (1 Samuel 25:16). After the harvest, when the sheep are sheared and the hay is gathered, it's time to celebrate. Max Lucado writes, "It's time to take a break from the furrows and flocks and enjoy the fruit of the labor, and Nabal's men are doing just that. David hears of the gala and thinks his men deserve an invitation. After all, they've protected the man's crops and sheep, patrolled the hills, and

secured the valleys. They deserve a bit of the bounty. But Nabal is very selfish, even pretending he's never heard of David, lumping him in with runaway slaves and vagabonds."

8. We've already established that Nabal is prideful, greedy, and hot-tempered, but how would you describe David's response? Does he honor God? (Proverbs 24:29) Write your thoughts.

9. David was constantly threatened by Saul, but rather than fight back or seek revenge, always made the decision to trust in God. He knew the Lord was the only good in a world, as Lucado would say, that is poisoned by pride and power by men like Nabal. The more Saul chased, the more David pressed into God. **So why do you think David snaps?**

10. What kind of temper do you have? What makes you "snap"?

11. Read and summarize the following verses on anger and wrath. Which one hits home?
 - a. James 1:19-21
 - b. Ephesians 4:30-32
 - c. Proverbs 15:1-2
 - d. Proverbs 14:29

12. When we respond to situations in anger, what are some of the possible consequences?

13. Read Psalm 103:8. How does David describe God's anger?

Aren't you happy the Lord used Abigail to stop David in his tracks? The consequences of what David wanted to do would have been disastrous! I pray that we will bring our tempers to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to help us to be slow to anger, as He is!

Third Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Let's read 1 Samuel 25:1-44 again. We ended yesterday's lesson by looking at anger and the consequences that can happen as a result. What could have been some of the consequences if David had fulfilled his angry desires?

I love what Max Lucado calls what's happening in verses 13-22 "The Wild West in the Ancient East"! David and his band of misfits strap on their guns (not really), saddle their horses and ride like the wind in search of Nabal the fool. "The road rumbles as David grumbles, 'May God do His worst to me if Nabal and everyone in his household isn't dead meat by morning!'" We know this isn't a great example of leadership for David's men! All 400 of them are on their way to teach Nabal a lesson. But then, beauty appears, out of nowhere.

2. When Abigail hears how her husband responds to David, what does she do? (vs 18)
3. How does she approach David? Summarize her response in verses 23-31. Would you consider her response wise or unwise?

Abigail appeals to David's conscience as well as his upcoming responsibility of soon-to-become king. She doesn't disagree with David's assessment of Nabal, begs for forgiveness, and accepts blame for something she didn't do. She brings him gifts and urges him to forget about Nabal and allow the Lord to deal with him. She also advises him to avoid the guilt and remorse that will surely follow if he moves forward with his plans.

4. What words would you say describe Abigail at this point? (Humble, for instance)

Herbert Lockyer wrote, "As a Hebrew woman was restricted by the customs of her time to give counsel only in an emergency and in the hour of greatest need, Abigail, who had risked the displeasure of her husband whose life was threatened, did not act impulsively in going to David to plead for mercy. She followed the dictates of her disciplined will, and speaking at the opportune moment, her beautiful appeal from her lips captivated the heart of David."

5. Abigail feared the Lord more than she feared Nabal, David, or his merry men. Read Deuteronomy 10:12-13, Proverbs 1:7, and Matthew 10:28. What does it mean to "fear the Lord"?

6. Lucado wrote, "Fearing the Lord minimizes our fear of those who have the potential to harm us." How does that fact encourage or minister to you today?

7. How does fearing the Lord allow us to have peace, which enables us to act wisely? (Philippians 4:7)

8. What can you personally learn from Abigail's response concerning your own life?

9. Let's speculate a bit. What might Abigail's marriage have been like? Did it keep her from remaining godly and noble herself?

10. Consider her example in light of a difficult situation you may presently be facing, whether it be a difficult marriage, a friendship, or something else. How does her example speak to you in how you're handling it?

Abigail is a great example of the Proverbs 31 woman, isn't she? She is definitely a wife of noble character and is worth far more than rubies! (Prov. 31:10) Nabal was a lucky guy and he didn't even know it or appreciate her, I don't think! Can't wait to continue our story tomorrow!

Fourth Day

What's your memory verse?

1. Let's pick up our story in 1 Samuel 25:32-44. How does David respond to Abigail in verses 32-35? Does he receive it? What "could" have happened?
2. After David accepts her gifts, what did she do, in verses 36-38? How did she, again, show wisdom?
3. What kind of effect did her words have on David?

Marjorie Kimbrough wrote, "Abigail had a calming effect on David. She had assured him about who he was, and what he was to become." She became a peacemaker, that's for sure. Kathy Collard Miller writes, "Abigail can be viewed from two distinct viewpoints: either as a wise and resourceful woman, or as an enabler who rescues her husband behind his back. But the Bible doesn't consider her as an enabler. Scripture describes her as intelligent, and God rewards her with marriage to David. A person who enables another person to continue a destructive lifestyle is never thanked. Instead, the enabler will have to

9. Nabal falls dead in verse 38. Interesting turn of events, right? What does David do when he hears about it, in verses 39-42?
10. How do you think Abigail felt when David proposed? What emotion do you imagine she was feeling? Remember, she knew that David was literally on the run at that time, with no place to call his own. Does that seem to make a difference in her response?

Abigail became one of David's 8 wives and bore him a son named Chileab (2 Samuel 3:3). She helped him out at a critical moment in his life, and I assume he was forever grateful. In 1 Samuel 30:5-18, she and his wife Ahinoam were captured by the Amalekites and rescued by David. I think she and David must have been a beautiful couple, both being described as handsome and beautiful (1 Samuel 17:42). But more than outward beauty, both possessed an inner beauty of character that was far beyond anything physical.

11. To end today's lesson, read Proverbs 31:30. What truly makes a woman beautiful?

See you all tomorrow. Although our story about Abigail ends, there's one more important point we need to look at, perhaps the most important part of the story. She represents something even bigger than simply a Godly woman making wise choices!

Fifth Day

Write out your verse by memory.

Abigail is often seen as a picture of God's grace and how it changes lives. I'd like to walk you through the events of our story and point out some things I learned that were truly beautiful. I see the story of Abigail now through a different lens.

1. Our memory verse tells us that Jesus is the one Mediator between God and mankind. How did Abigail play the role of a mediator between Nabal and David?

I want to end our lesson with a few “general” questions we learn from the story of Abigail.

7. Are you willing to be used as an instrument of reconciliation between others?

8. How can showing grace to someone change the outcome of an entire situation?

9. How can humility disarm pride?

10. Read 1 Peter 3:1-6. How is Abigail an example of a meek and quiet spirit? How did “meekness” save the day?

11. Would you say you have a meek and quiet spirit? Why or why not? How can one be cultivated and grown?

12. What’s the biggest lesson you learned from the character of Abigail? What do you intend to do with it, and how can you apply it?

Bless you, my friends! See you next week! Jesus Christ is our Mediator!

That's a *REASON TO REJOICE!*