

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Supportive Spouses: Abigail

Good morning and welcome to *Truth for Today*. The title of our current series is "Supportive Spouses". Today we will study Abigail and next week we will study Joseph. If you are interested in hearing the recent two talks about Sarah and Zipporah, you can find the talk and the transcripts on our website, the address is www.truthfortoday.org.uk. All of the characters we are studying are really known more for whom they are married to rather than for themselves. Each of these lesser known characters supported their spouses in various ways, sometimes under great hardship and cost to themselves.

If you have a Bible please turn to 1 Samuel 25. This chapter is where we read the story of Abigail, who was Nabal's wife, but she is probably best known as David's wife, as she later became. We don't really have time to read the whole chapter but I would encourage you to read it through after the talk today. It's a really interesting chapter! Abigail was a remarkable woman in her own right who was living with a very difficult husband. Nabal was a very rich man but he was foolish, awkward, selfish and also a drunkard. I am sure that not every marriage today is a happy supportive one, and you may be listening this morning and feeling that this is very much how your relationship is. If this is the case, I trust that God will help you as we look into His word, that you may be given the grace and wisdom to cope with the situation that you find yourself in.

The background behind this story is that David and his loyal band of about six hundred men were being pursued by Saul in the wilderness of En-gedi (1 Samuel 24:1). David and his followers were hiding in a cave, and Saul comes into the cave (1 Samuel 24:3). David could easily kill Saul but he spares his life because of his respect for the fact that Saul was "God's anointed one". David makes sure that Saul knows that his life has been spared by cutting a piece of cloth from his coat (1 Samuel 24:4). Saul acknowledges that David had rewarded him with good for evil and that David was much more righteous than he. Saul admits that David would be king of Israel and asks for mercy for his family ((1 Samuel 24:17-21). Samuel the High Priest of Israel dies and is buried in Ramah (1 Samuel 25:1). David then leaves Ramah and goes down into the wilderness of Paran (1 Samuel 25:1). David and his men were really outlaws living in various hideouts because of Saul's hatred towards him. David was a man of God and he was righteous in his dealings with others and he expected no less in return.

David heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep nearby so he sent ten young men out to Carmel to speak to Nabal (1 Samuel 25:2-5). David explained to his men that they should first greet Nabal in David's name then extend greetings to him, his family and his possessions (1 Samuel 25:5-6). The men were to point out that David knew he was shearing his sheep, and that when Nabal's shepherds were near David's men in the past they never ever hurt them, or took anything from them (1 Samuel 25:7-8). In fact the testimony of Nabal's men (1 Samuel 25:15-16) tells us that David's men were like a wall or shield to them; they often protected them from others. Then the ten young men were to ask for some food and drink which Nabal had in abundance.

Nabal was a very rich man; he was a rancher with lots of livestock. He was rough man, evil in his deeds and he was mean. Nabal was a Calebite so he would probably favour Saul rather than David. In 1 Samuel 25:11 we see Nabal's selfishness and foolishness when he talks about "*my bread, my water and my flesh.*" Nabal's name actually means 'fool'! This reminds me of the rich young farmer in Luke 12:16-21 who God called a fool. He too was also only interested in himself. It was all about what he was going to do; he was going to pull down his barns and build bigger ones; he was going to retire and enjoy his goods (Luke 12:16-19). But God had other plans for his life. He was going to die and would have to leave all of his earthly riches (Luke 12:20). Nabal, too, was just about to press the self-destruct button on his life. In 1 Samuel 25:9-12 we see that David's men are refused any provisions and they are turned away. What a mistake by Nabal! Did he really know whom he was dealing with? His greed had once and for all got the better of him.

David's men reported back to David all that Nabal had said (1 Samuel 25:12). David was furious and immediately ordered his men to take up arms, about four hundred of them (1 Samuel 25:13). Two hundred were left to look after the stuff (their goods). David was going to make Nabal pay for his refusal to share any provisions with him. David would quite easily have killed every person connected to Nabal, destroyed his house and taken all his goods. David was at this point out of touch with the LORD. This is probably why he had this knee jerk reaction. David would normally bring his problems to the LORD in prayer and wait for His guidance. But David was just like we are sometimes, very

impatient and too ready to act on our natural feelings. It was a good job that the LORD graciously steps in and keeps David from sinning. He uses Abigail to save David from doing the wrong thing.

Abigail was a beautiful woman; she was intelligent, clever, wise, and humble. She was also one who listened to others and she was a woman of action. Abigail obviously was trusted by Nabal's servants, because we read in 1 Samuel 25:14 that one of the young men who had witnessed Nabal's attitude toward David tells her that David's men had been very good to them and protected them as they were looking after the sheep in the wilderness. The servant asks Abigail to think it over and see what she could do to help the situation (1 Samuel 25:17). The servant was aware and fearful of what David would do to Nabal and all of his household. He also knew that he could never reason with his master, Nabal, because he would listen to nobody!

It seems that it did not take Abigail long to make a decision. She knew that her husband had done wrong, in fact failed miserably in his dealings with David. She was a woman of action and she reacted to the situation very quickly with thought and care. She knew the exact quantity of food that would be needed to feed David and his men. It is interesting to note that this quantity of food was already prepared! (see 1 Samuel 25:18-19). Some of the dried goods were probably in store but the five dressed sheep and the two hundred loaves would need to be prepared as required. Maybe it was all prepared for the feast that Nabal had planned? Abigail loads the food on the donkeys and instructs the servants to go on before her and she would follow (1 Samuel 25:18-20). You will notice that she wisely did not tell her husband, Nabal, anything about what was going on! (see 1 Samuel 25:19). He would probably have been enraged if he found out what his wife was up to!! Abigail was acting as a peacemaker, trying to save her husband's household. She did not want all the good people of his household to have to suffer because of her husband's actions.

Abigail was a woman with heavenly intelligence, self-control, calmness, common sense and intellect. Nabal did not know how fortunate he was having a wife like this! Nabal really did not deserve a wife like this. Abigail's marriage to Nabal was probably a fixed marriage. Would she have chosen a man like Nabal? I don't think so! This would again testify to the wonderful woman that Abigail was. She never sought to leave her godless husband's side, and she stayed within the married relationship. Although it must be difficult if we are in a situation like this or something similar, we must be careful that we don't take things into our own hands rather than waiting on God's time. Isaiah 55:8-9 comes to mind: *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."* It is also interesting to note later that there was no tears of regret from Abigail after God had stepped in to free her from this bondage.

So here we have the scene; David's men on their way to kill Nabal and his men and take everything that he owned. And we have Abigail, who I believe was sent from God for David's sake, coming out with a peace offering to ask for forgiveness on Nabal's behalf. David really felt that Nabal had repaid him back evil for the good he had done watching over Nabal's property in the desert. So David felt that his actions were right and he was going to carry out his own form of justice. David's words in 1 Samuel 25:21 have been a challenge to me recently as to how I react when someone has wronged me: *"Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good."* I have had to stop my natural feelings from taking control and most certainly take it to the Lord in prayer. As a Christian it is not right to repay someone evil for evil; we should always repay evil for good (see Romans 12:17-21). It's not easy I know! Take a lead from God, it is good that He repaid good for evil or we would be eternally lost, dead in trespasses and sins. With David in this frame of mind, it is interesting to see the reactions of both David and Abigail when they meet. I suppose we could say that Abigail had great courage and faith as she goes to meet this mighty man.

1 Samuel 25:23 tells us a lot about the attitude of Abigail. When she saw David she quickly got down from her donkey and fell down at his feet, taking the lowly place to show her humility and inferiority toward him. Remember Abigail had done nothing wrong, it was Nabal who had done wrong. But here we have Abigail taking the blame for the situation and she asks David for permission to speak (1 Samuel 25:24). Hebrew women were restricted by the customs of her time to give counsel and usually only in an emergency or a real time of need. Abigail was very honest about her husband in 1 Samuel 25:25, not trying to make any excuse for his actions. Notice the lovely way she addresses David, *"my lord"*; she really gave him his place. Abigail then points out to David that the LORD had prevented him from shedding blood in vengeance (1 Samuel 25:26). She then brings the gifts that she had brought to David for his hungry men (1 Samuel 25:27).

1 Samuel 25:28-31 are very interesting because they show us that Abigail knew the LORD. She was aware of who David was and what he had done (he had fought many battles for the LORD and won great victories). She knew that David was hated by Saul and that Saul was trying to kill him. She also knew that David was a man of God and righteous in his ways and that David would soon be the king of Israel (1 Samuel 25:30). Abigail also was fully aware that God would deal directly with her husband because of his wrong doings. Abigail confesses her sins to David by owning up to her wrong doing (although it was Nabal's wrong doing). She prays to David for forgiveness for herself and asks to be remembered by him when the LORD makes him ruler over all Israel (1 Samuel 25:31). Abigail's plea

reminds me of Joseph in Genesis 40:14 when he asks the butler to remember him when he was restored to his position of favour. It also reminds me of the thief on the cross in Luke 23:42 when he says to the Lord, *“Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”* In Joseph we have a picture of one who is in prison having done no wrong and in the thief one who is guilty asking the Lord for forgiveness.

1 Samuel 25:32-35 are David's reply to Abigail. David had good judgement and recognised that it was the LORD who had sent Abigail to him. He thanked her for her advice and acknowledged that she had kept him from doing something that was wrong. David tells her that if she had not hurried and come to meet him he would have killed Nabal and all his men by the next morning. David accepted the food and drink that Abigail had brought and assured her that she would have peace. He had heard what she had to say and he promised that he would grant her her request. I notice here that there was no mention by David of her beauty although I am sure he saw this! David, I believe, looked on Abigail in a completely different way to when he looked at Bathsheba! He had come face to face with a woman with many great characteristics. Abigail had captivated David's heart !

The intervention of Abigail in the nick of time teaches us that when we have wisdom to impart, faith to share or help to offer, we must not hesitate but act on it without delay.

In 1 Samuel 25:36-38 we see Abigail's faithfulness to Nabal and God's dealing with Nabal. Abigail was a faithful wife so she went to explain to Nabal what she had done. Nabal was hosting a feast at the time, a feast that a king would be proud of. This feast reminds me of the great feast of King Belshazzar's in Daniel's day when God tells King Belshazzar in a remarkable way that he was going to die that night (Daniel 5). He was another man who displayed natural desires rather than godly desires.

Abigail finds Nabal drunk; it seems that he was often drunk (1 Samuel 25:36). Abigail was well used to him in a drunken state and she was wise enough not to talk to him until he was sober the next morning. Abigail tells Nabal the whole story. I have no doubt she did it in a careful, gracious manner with a meek and quiet spirit. I don't think she would be the type that would shout and accuse her husband; it was not in her nature to do this. She would be very truthful to him but would still show him respect. When Nabal heard all that Abigail had told him, his heart could not take it (1 Samuel 25:37). He had a heart attack and he died ten days later (1 Samuel 25:38). We clearly see here that God comes in and deals directly with Nabal. We are not told of Abigail's reaction to her husband's death; we don't read of tears and mourning. But we do know that she was now free from living in such an unhappy relationship. Over the years of marriage, I am sure that the LORD was her source of joy in her miserable home life.

When David hears of Nabal's death he sends his servants for Abigail just as he had promised her (1 Samuel 25:39). The servants come to Carmel and tell Abigail that David had sent them because he wanted to marry her (1 Samuel 25:40). Once again we see the wonderful character of Abigail. She got up and bowed down to the servants of David in the same way she had bowed down to David earlier (1 Samuel 25:41). There was no change of attitude because she was going to be David's wife. She took the servant's place and got down on her knees and washed the feet of David's servants (1 Samuel 25:41). She could have acted much differently now that she was going to be a queen! What a lesson is here for us in our attitude towards others when sometimes we have high thoughts of ourselves. The Lord Jesus is of course the perfect example of the willing servant in John 13:1-17 as He washes His disciple's feet just before He goes to the cross of Calvary. What grace, what humility! What Abigail did also shows that she was an attentive woman caring for those who came to her house. Abigail hurried and got up, got onto her donkey and went out to meet David with her five maids following her (1 Samuel 25:42). She then became one of David's wives (1 Samuel 25:43). David and Abigail would have made a great couple, both seemingly good looking, wise, intelligent and so on. David and Abigail went on to have a son called Daniel which means God is my judge, a name given to him in commemoration of the death of Nabal. How fitting!

It is interesting to note that Abigail is mentioned only a further five times in the Bible, and very briefly outside of 1 Samuel 25. Four times she is referred to as *“Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite”* (1 Samuel 27:3, 1 Samuel 30:5, 2 Samuel 2:2, 2 Samuel 3:3) and once just as *“Abigail the Carmelitess”* (1 Chronicles 3:1). She is never ever referred to just as David's wife! I wonder why? Maybe it is because God never ever approves of any man having more than one wife.

Just in closing I would like to point out some other teaching from this remarkable story. You may or may not be aware of “typical teaching”. What is meant by this phrase is that as we look at something in the Old Testament we can see it as a picture of something in the New Testament. The best example of this is probably in Genesis 22:1-19 where Abraham in obedience to God is prepared to offer up his only son, Isaac, as a burnt offering. This undoubtedly points forward to when the Lord Jesus offered Himself up as an offering for sin at the cross of Calvary. Nabal is a type of the natural man, someone who is not a Christian. Nabal rejects David's message of peace and kindness. There are many people in this world today who are only interested in natural things and not spiritual things. There are many who are rejecting God's offer of salvation through faith in His son the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who came with a wonderful

message of peace for mankind. Abigail, on the other hand is a type of a true believer in Christ. She has a new nature, she understands spiritual things and grace is a characteristic of her life.

I have really enjoyed studying this chapter and I hope you will take time to study it further.

May God bless you and speak to you through this message today. Amen

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