

# I Samuel

## “The Words of a Wise Woman”

### I Samuel 25

I'm going to tell you that we're going to study all of first Samuel chapter 25. Today I'm going to read about 30 verses. This is a story of David's encounter with two people, Nabal, an evil surly man, and Abigail, his wise and beautiful wife. I will tell you right now that one of the things I have in common with Harry Reeder is that we both thought, we talked about this once, that it was a terrific idea to name our daughters after wise and beautiful Abigail. This is her story of a godly woman in the pages of Scripture. Listen to God's Word. I'm picking it up at I Samuel 25:18. Earlier in the chapter, Samuel has died. It's sheep shearing, a festival in Israel. And a man in the bar has yelled, reviled, shouted at David's men and David is furious.

*18 Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs<sup>[a]</sup> of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys. 19 And she said to her young men, “Go on before me; behold, I come after you.” But she did not tell her husband Nabal. 20 And as she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain, behold, David and his men came down toward her, and she met them. 21 Now David had said, “Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him, and he has returned me evil for good. 22 God do so to the enemies of David<sup>[b]</sup> and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him.”*

*23 When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground. 24 She fell at his feet and said, “On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. 25 Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal<sup>[c]</sup> is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent. 26 Now then, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, because the LORD has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal. 27 And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. 28 Please forgive the trespass of your servant. For the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live. 29 If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the LORD your God. And the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling. 30 And when the LORD has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince<sup>[d]</sup> over Israel, 31 my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my*

*lord working salvation himself. And when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant."*

*<sup>32</sup> And David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! <sup>33</sup> Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand! <sup>34</sup> For as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male." <sup>35</sup> Then David received from her hand what she had brought him. And he said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice, and I have granted your petition."*

Let's pray for a moment. Lord, I pray that you would give us delight in this story. It's a rich, long, complicated story. And may we learn what it means to be a good and godly woman, a good and godly man, to know that you are the judge. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Perhaps you would agree with me that revenge, the desire for revenge, is a powerful force. Historians say that Fox News was started by Rupert Murdoch because he got mad at Ted Turner, who had once been his friend, and he owned CNN, which he had started a few years earlier, and he decided to start another network with the goal of overtaking and humiliating Ted Turner. That's the origin story of Fox News.

Well, the desire for revenge can be a powerful thing, and we can have an irrational interest in vengeance and unfortunately, the life of David shows the same thing when a surly man named the ball is described as mean and surly, and all his doings. His name is Nabal. Nabal means fool, a fool who's mean and surly tossed a gratuitous insult at David in a time of need, and David goes ballistic and decides not only to kill Nabal, but to kill every member of his household.

It's a story of anger and escalating emotions and vengeance averted, David says at the end, blessed be the Lord. Praise be to God for sending this woman, this wise woman, Abigail, to stop me from saving myself and from murdering with his own hand because he remembered that God is the judge, God is the protector. And the story goes like this in first Samuel chapter 25, verses 1 to 3, we learn that Samuel has just died.

Samuel is the mentor, the caregiver, the prophet who summoned anointed David. It's surely a moment of sadness. And all of Israel mourned the death of Samuel. Surely David as much as anyone. And after that was over, he returned to southern Judah, where he was living at the edge of the desert, in an area that was far away from Saul, who was trying to kill him.

We studied that weeks ago. In the nearby towns are my own and Carmel, and 25 miles away is Bethlehem, where David had lived. There's a rich herdsman who lives in that area. He has thousands of sheep, 3000 sheep. The passage says, and a thousand goats and riches aplenty. And his name is Nabal. You have to wonder how somebody who's that rich gets a name Nabal.

Surely no one would name their child fool. He's wealthy. He's got many men working for him. So we have to assume that somehow it's become a nickname, as we sometimes give people nicknames. But what a nickname it is. And from the tribe of Caleb. And we see immediately, almost immediately, if you look into the details a little bit, how unkind he was.

Because in the passage before what I read to you, he accuses David of being a runaway slave and says, I don't know where this man came from, but actually, they're from the same region and they have almost surely membership in the same broad clan. He has to know who David is. And at this period, this moment, this moment, Nabal is having a sheep shearing festival.

A sheep shearing was kind of like July 4th and, Memorial Day and Labor Day wrapped into one. It was a time of great celebration. People came from all around, and the leaders of a town would lead the celebration by giving from their wealth, food and drink and sharing generously from it. And David, who's been living in that region, sends about ten of his young men and says, it's sheep shearing time.

It's time of plenty. Now, please. We have been your neighbors and we have guarded your flocks at night. It's a rough region. There are marauders in the area. Nothing has gone missing during the last number of months, while we've been living far away from Saul and exile. And so please share a little something with us. The team bears this out.

They say night and day. They have been like a wall around us all the time. When we were herding sheep, they protected our flock. And so it is right by way of custom and right by way of justice, for Nabal to share something with David and his men. But out of the heart and its abundance the mouth speaks.

And Nabal, as I said before, is called a mean and churlish and foolish man. And so he speaks like it, and he says, who is this David? As if he never heard of the rogue. David's one of the most famous men in Israel. Everybody knows about David. Everybody knows he killed Goliath. Everybody knows he stopped the Philistines. And he lives again just 25 miles away. Who is this David? There are many men who are running away. Many servants are running away from their master's, many runaway slaves. That's what David is a runaway slave. And why should I give him anything? The text reads this way, and I'm going to emphasize the pronoun just a little bit.

His last words are these shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed? And shall I give it to the men that I don't even know? Hear the word I, me and my seven times? The point, of course, is not what your words. The point is, your words spring from the abundance of your heart.

He's churlish and he's mean, and he's selfish. And the word gets back to David in verses 14 to 17 and he says, men, he summons 400 of them men, I want you to put on your swords. We're going for a ride to see Nabal. Now, David has been a paragon of restraint in previous days. You

remember that in chapter 24 and 26, which we studied a few weeks ago in chapters 24 and 26, David had not one but two opportunities to kill Saul, a man who was trying to kill him for no other reason other than the fact that God had blessed him.

And Saul was devoting all of his energy to killing David, whom he decided to regard as a rival even though he was a steadfast, loyal servant. Two opportunities to kill him, and neither one, neither one led David to do anything. This is sandwiched between the two of them and shows us how far a good man can fall.

Let's go down and kill Nabal because he won't share food with us. What would we say? David loses it. What can we blame it on? Was he sleep deprived? Had he gone hungry for too long? Was the stress too much? Had he not had enough to eat, to drink? We don't know what happened. We do know that things like this can happen to us.

I have to tell you, in preparing this sermon, actually reviewing it tonight, I was reminded of a time when I was physically exhausted, just exhausted, and I had to go into a multi-hour meeting after receiving two pieces of personal, very difficult news. The last thing I wanted to do in this world was be in that meeting. I wanted to meditate on the news I just received, and I wanted to go to sleep, and I wanted to eat something. I was exhausted and hungry and tired and crushed by bad news. And I went into the meeting and I did not behave properly in that meeting. Someone was very rude to me and I was very rude right back. They were very rude to me and I was rude two and a half times more than he was rude to me.

Because we all can fall now. David is in many, many ways a type of Christ is a type of Christ in his courage, in his victory over evil, in his patience. Most of the time in entrusting himself, the Lord is judge. But we have a little reminder here that if the heroes of the Bible point us to Christ in their excellence foreshadowed excellence of Christ, it's also true that the heroes of the Bible point to Christ because they all fail. As one of my teachers said, we all have feet of clay up to our navels.

Every person who appears at length in the Bible eventually does something that declares yes, and he or she needs a redeemer to. We have to be careful about our adulation of leaders. We'll be tempted, you know, to adore the next lead pastor. It's true. We're tempted to adore our political heroes. We're tempted to look back at the heroes of our nation.

What do we call George Washington and Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson? We call them the Founding fathers, the fathers of our nation. And we respect them. And we praise and celebrate their skills and their courage and their endurance and military campaigns, their willingness to die for the sake of our country. But they also called and they get angry at each other.

And if you read the biographies, betrayed each other and committed all kinds of sins, sensuality. Two of the three appear to have hated Christianity and hated Christ, as is presented in the gospel. Let's not deify anyone. Not our founding fathers, not our spiritual leaders, not even people who show their fantastic gifts in the pages of the Bible. Like David, David wants to wipe out the entire household of the ball because he insulted his young men and would not share in him with him those gifts of the moment.

Well, David's servants did tell Nabal about the insults, and everyone knew that it was pointless even to talk to the ball. After he blows up, his servant said, there's nothing to be done. And so they ran to Abigail. Now Abigail is described in the pages of Scripture, the very beginning, as a beautiful and wise woman. David, by the way, is also described as a wise man.

Earlier, the same word is used. The word is shekel, which creates a little bridge between them. David is wise, although he's not acting wise at the moment. Abigail is wise and is acting wise at the moment, and the servants know how very rude Nabal was. And they recount again to Abigail how David and his men were like a wall around the protected them, and were loyal friends of theirs, and made sure that nothing of theirs was missing, despite the marauders and the wild animals.

He protected us. And they sell this to Abigail, and Abigail grasps the gravity of the situation. In verses 18 to 23. She quickly gathers food 200 bread, loaves of bread, and a plentiful supply of wine and raisins and figs and sheep. It's a lot. It's not excessive and she departs without telling her husband. She simply gets up and goes.

Now the scene is almost cinematic. She's coming down the hill with a few helpers. This beautiful woman, this wise woman is coming down the hill and David is sorry. She's going up the hill and David is coming down the hill breathing out threats. We're going to kill every last male in the house. And then they. And then they meet each other. David said, May God curse me if I don't kill every male in this house. He's raving, he's frenzied. He's allowed things to get wildly out of control. Have you ever have you ever been like that? Have you ever gotten disappointed when your spiritual resources were low? You took my what? You took my keys. You took my car. You took my coat. You took my clothes. You took my baseball bat. You took my baseball glove. You took my... And you didn't tell me. And I was stuck. And I didn't know where it was and where to gone. And that's what you do. You always take my keys, my car, my clothes, my gloves, my back, my things. In our house, when people get upset, we have a saying.

The saying is this twice is always and once is never. You took my coat twice. You always take my coat. You didn't return my coat. You never return my coat. You never put it back. This is how people get upset. It starts with a real offense. You took my coat. You took my umbrella. You took

my. Whatever it is. My pen, my phone, my computer, whatever it might be. And you didn't put it back. And somehow we just go off.

David had gone off, and Abigail knows it. And so she meets David. She dismounts from her donkey and bows before David as a first sign of respect and reverence. She bows before him, showing that generosity of humility of spirit that Nabal would not and never would show.

And then she begins to show her intelligence. Remember, she's beautiful now she's intelligent and begins to soothe David. She says, first, I admit you've got a good point. She disarms David. She says, my Lord, look, the blame for my husband's action fall on me. Be angry at me. How can he be angry at her? She didn't do it.

She's kind, gentle. But she's saying, please offer some forgiveness. Please. And then she says, since the Lord has kept you from vengeance and bloodshed, you must trust the Lord to avenge this offense, since she's thinking the best of him, saying the best of him, and then she offers a gift. And it's not a payment. It's not to David.

It's a gift to the young men, his wounded dignity and the thought about the food that he needs for his men is also addressed. She admits the complaint without admitting his overreaction to number one. She disarms number two. She offers a gift. Number three. She sees far past this situation and says, David, think theologically. Remember who God is.

Remember what his promises are. Remember the character of God. Remember what God has done for you. You don't have to save yourself by attacking this man. God is your Savior. Don't you remember, David, that the Lord fights your battles for you? Don't you remember, she says in verse 28, that God has promised to build a dynasty for you?

Don't you know that you're anointed to be king, and therefore God will protect you and build a house for you? And then even more clever, number four, she gives off an illusion, a brilliant illusion to David's previous victory over Goliath. She says, God will hurl your enemies away from you. As a man hurls stones from a sling even as you hurled stones from a sling.

And you yourself, David said the battle is the Lord's and he will deliver you from our hands. Remember that God will hurl your enemies away from you as from a sling. God will deliver you. You don't need to avenge yourself. And then verses 30 and 31, when you become king, you will not want innocent blood on your hands.

You will be king. God has promised you this and it's going to happen. But when you become king, you want to enter the throne as a righteous and pure and innocent man. And so she admits that he's a man who has been mistreated many times by Saul over and over, throwing a spear at him when he's playing a harp to bring calm to Saul, thinking the worst of David, hating all the success that David has, even though it's all for Saul's sake.

Being chased around the countryside, driven from his home. And yet, and yet the Lord, she says, is your protector, your sponsor, the one who's promised. Friends. If you find yourself in one of these situations where you feel put upon and you are put upon, but it's getting to you in an unusual way. It's just it's so hard to believe that duty upon, duty upon duty has been thrown upon you.

And no one seems to notice. No one seems to care. God is your protector. God is your defender. The Lord is still the one who saves. So we see what she does. Three things she does. Number one, she admits mistake. It's not hers, but she still apologizes for it. She takes the blame, which is something we can do if we're connected to a sinner.

She is connected to a sinner. She's the wife. She's part of the family. She says. I take the responsibility. That's one number two. She says, you know, we didn't treat you well. Let us give you a gift. She tries to make things right, but beyond that, she says, can we just step back from all this distress you're feeling?

Let me offer you a divine perspective. People get upset about little things, you know, my brothers and I, one of brought one of the three of us. I won't say who it was. It wasn't me. Would steal desserts from the others. You know, we could get pretty upset about that brother that stole the dessert. But here's the good news. We never starve to death. We're still alive. You know, there is enough food around, and.

People have taken my umbrella on a number of occasions. But there's one thing that I know about humans, and that is we're waterproof. No matter how many times I get wet from rain, no matter how many times my feet get wet from puddles, I somehow seem to survive. It's amazing. It's just. It's just not that bad. And besides, you love each other and God's taking care of you. And God has taught us to forgive, right? Isn't it so?

So three things. Admit the mistake, give a gift and put it in perspective. And that is exactly what Abigail does. Now, ordinarily, when you have a story like this in the Bible, we have a climactic scene you know, he's going to kill, here comes the woman and nothing happens.

There's no further action. Instead, David just bursts out into a sudden explosion of repentance and thankfulness and says, praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day, and from avenging myself with my own hands. Praise God for sending you beautiful speech, a thing we can say to each other.

Praise God for Lord, giving you my wife, my husband, my children, my mother. Praise God for this gift. But she does exemplify biblical wisdom. But it doesn't praise her. He praises her, and he praises God for sending her. She appeased his wrath by appealing to his emotions and to his

mind. Here's my summary. Abigail reasons from the law of God and from the nature of God, and from the promises of God to persuade a man of God to act like one.

Let me walk you through that very quickly. She reasons from the law of God murder is wrong. Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. We don't avenge ourselves and other people. David doesn't want blood guilt on his head. She reasons from the law of God. She reasons from the nature of God. God is the judge. You're not the judge.

God holds people to account, not you. She reasons from the promises of God. God has promised to make you King. You will be a prince in Israel. God has promised to preserve your life. He will preserve your life because we know these things, we can be confident that the Lord will protect you, that your wrath is misplaced. And so she persuades David, though he's the one who has authority, and she does not, though he's the leader of Israel, and she is not, she persuades him.

Now, in our circles, we often talk about what women can do in the church. Now, I have to tell you that Abigail does not publicly teach theology or preach, but she does publicly teach a public man one on one, which is what we find in a number of times in the Bible. She is a lay theologian. She does know the promises of God. She does know the law of God, and she applies it in a situation where counsel is desperately needed. And David takes it up in this. She is like a variety of other women. I'm going to mention two others who counsel and are used mightily by God to counsel in crucial moments, not preaching, not behind a pulpit, but teaching.

Importantly, David, corrected by Abigail, reminded of God's promises. Another person who's like that a page of Scripture is Priscilla. Now, Priscilla did not teach alone, but she did teach Apollos. It was one of the early leaders of the church who needed to be acquainted with the ways of God more thoroughly. He had gaps in his knowledge. Although he was a strong teacher in the church with Priscilla and Aquila, she's mentioned first most of the time. Priscilla and Aquila teamed up with Paul to take him deeper into the ways of God and into the leadership of the church, which reminds us of Romans chapter 16 and the many women and I forgot their names... A variety of women, about ten women, are mentioned in the chapter of Romans 16 that that helped build the church and led the church forward.

And the most striking of this group of women is actually found in II Kings 22. It's a woman named Huldah who is described as a prophetess in the text. You might remember the story. Josiah has found a book of the law under his father. For the last decades, the nation had fallen into terrible sin and idolatry, and the book of the law, almost certainly the book of Deuteronomy was lost. No one had a copy, and they were renovating the temple, and they found the book of the law. And Josiah and his men decided to go and consult privately with Huldah, didn't ask her to give a sermon, but they said, we need to know what you think. We do know what God has to



say to you. They didn't ask her to come preach in the temple courts. They went to her house, but she counseled them and they heeded her counsel. Josiah ultimately had the authority, but all of a sudden, listen, there's going to be judgment coming because of this decades long run of idolatry, neglect of God's Word. But because you do, you, Josiah, have repented. It's not going to come in your day. And it's exactly what happened. And so she guided the men on that occasion. So women do have the ability to teach privately the nature of God and the promises of God. Persuade men and women of God to act accordingly.

Let me say it very differently. One day I was exhausted and very low and I had at that time in my house, a seven year old and a four year old, and a one year old. And I went into my four year old's room and four year olds, you know, can be pretty perceptive. And she said, what's wrong, daddy?" And I said, I'm just so tired. And she said, don't be sad, daddy. Jesus loves you. And I felt better because it was true. And she perceived and she told the truth to me. And I said, you know what? I feel worse than I should feel. Thank you. Thank you for telling me something. I already knew that Jesus loves me. And that's a theological statement.

Now, at the end of this episode, David says to Abigail, go in peace. Her argument won the day he takes his gift, she goes back and Nabal is feasting and drinking and is drunk. And that very night his life is taken from him. David says to her, thanks be to God that he did not let me play this role of judge and executioner. And, you know, later on, David became married to Abigail. And that means that Abigail gave David through the inheritance, a whole bunch of nobles wealth, which is the Bible sense of humor. I want to say one more thing for us, for our edification.

The desire for revenge can be powerful in us. I mentioned Rupert Murdoch starting Fox News Channel, but he did other things. At one point, Turner, angry at his former friend, compared Murdoch to Adolf Hitler in one of his CNN pieces.

And the New York Post, which was owned by Murdoch, ran the following headline -- Is Ted Turner Nuts? You decide. And gave side by side statements. I mean, here are two men battling each other in public because they just want to get even. What a waste of energy.

How sad that David wanted to wipe out a whole household. We don't know how they got in such a desperate spiritual dryness or a state of anxiety or loss of self-control. Loss of restraint. We don't know how it happened. We can take guesses because we know how we lose restraint.

God sent Abigail to restrain him, and he had enough godliness, enough love of the Lord's ways to say, you have just spoken the truth. Thank you, thank you. Praise be to God for sending you today. And if we have lessons about God protecting and God preserving and how we can lose our way, temporary when we're upset about things, the most important lesson of all is that God is the judge and we're not.

And it's God who exercises vengeance in this world. And we should be careful about asking for vengeance too much, because our only hope is that God, who could avenge upon us our sins, does not avenge his wrath upon us, but offers us his peace, his peace, forgiveness, and mercy and grace in Christ. That is to say, the ultimate cure for anger and wrath and vengefulness is to behold the kindness, the love, the justice, the mercy, the provision of our Lord Jesus Christ who did not come to condemn the world but to save the world as the Gospels teach us.

So let us meditate on these things. Let us, when we are in distress, remember the promises of God. Remember the covenants of God. Remember, the purpose is the prior provision of the Lord for us and remember the grace of Christ. And as we do, extended to others, whomever we may be.

Let's pray. Heavenly father, as we, as we prepare to close the day and spend a little bit of time with our wives or mothers or dear people in our life, I pray that we would hear what you're saying to us today, to see how easy it is for us to become angry, upset, vengeful, to lose our way, bring us back, we pray. Even as you brought David back by sending Abigail bring us back. We pray to the people you put in our lives, the books we read through meditation on your word so we would pull away from vengefulness and say once again, thank you Lord, for providing for me. Thank you, Lord, for protecting me. Lord give us, we pray not only in this, but in all of life thankful hearts, even for our mothers, even for the roles we have the privilege of playing in each other's lives. And we ask it all in Jesus name. Amen.