

Abigail: No Victim¹ of Circumstances²



SABBATH—OCTOBER 23

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Samuel 25; Isaiah 28:23; Isaiah 53:12; Daniel 9:15–19; Matthew 15:10; Romans 8:34.

MEMORY VERSE: “Wisdom rests in the hearts of those who understand what is right. And even among foolish people she [wisdom] makes herself known” (Proverbs 14:33, NlrV).

HAVE YOU EVER FELT YOU WERE A VICTIM OF EVENTS OR SITUATIONS THAT YOU COULD NOT CONTROL? Have you ever wished you could be somewhere else? Or that you were someone else? Then you will be interested in the character³ for this week: Abigail.

Abigail was a smart and beautiful woman. But, sadly, she was married to a selfish, stubborn, and mean man named Nabal. Nabal came from the family line of Caleb. But Nabal was nothing like Caleb. Nabal may have been wealthy. But his name or nickname, which means “fool” or “foolish,” really showed who he was.

In the time of Abigail and Nabal, parents decided who their children would marry. So, Abigail probably had no choice but to marry Nabal. Life's events seemed to speak against her in such a marriage as this one. Conditions were not favorable for Abigail. But by studying the life of Abigail, we can learn not to become victims of circumstances.

Abigail did not try to escape what happened to her. She was honest about her situation in life (1 Samuel 25:25). But she did not let the events of her life ruin her. She decided to grow where she was planted.

1. victim—someone who is hurt by an unfortunate situation.

2. circumstances—events or situations that cannot be controlled.

3. character—a person who appears in a story.

SUNDAY—OCTOBER 24**SOMEONE WHO WILL LISTEN
(Isaiah 28:23)**

Most people have no problem talking. The truth is that most of us talk too much. How much better would it be if we learned to be good listeners? There are seminars (workshops) given to teach people how to be better listeners. After all, a lot is going on around us. But that makes it even more important for us to listen.

Read Isaiah 28:23; Matthew 15:10; and James 1:19. What are these verses telling us to do? And why?



Most people have no problem talking. But how important it is for us to listen.

David and his men were on the run from Saul. They were living in the wilderness of Paran. In Paran, they met up with the herdsmen and animals of the wealthy landowner Nabal. Instead of taking the animals for themselves, David and his men protected the herdsmen and the animals. Soon, the

sheep-shearing time arrived, and a holiday spirit was in the air. This was the time for saying Thank you and for giving gifts. So, David sent 10 of his men to ask Nabal for food.

According to 1 Samuel 25:1–11, why is David so upset by Nabal's answer? What does David hear?

Nabal truly makes good on his name. He foolishly calls David's men runaway slaves and sends them away with nothing. Nabal makes it very clear that he thinks David is a nobody. In his mind, David is not important and not worthy of help. David has shown great self-control with murderous King Saul. But he, like us, feels deeply wounded when told that he is a nobody and is worth nothing. Even worse, David showed Nabal kindness and was rewarded with insults.

Nabal does not understand the man he is dealing with. He does seem to know some of the facts. He knows who David's father was and that David is on the run from Saul. But Nabal is so self-centered and blind that he does not want to listen to his servants. Nabal's servants have lived near David's men. They know that David and his soldiers are not men you want to be enemies with. The servants recognize that their master "is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him" (1 Samuel 25:17, NIV). And so they turn to someone who will listen—Abigail.

When was the last time your

failure to listen carefully caused trouble for you or others? How can you learn from your mistakes?

MONDAY—OCTOBER 25

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS (1 Samuel 25)

What is the important point of the story in 1 Samuel 25? What lessons can we learn from it? What questions remain?

Abigail hears the report of the servant. Quickly she begins to get things ready. Abigail does more than listen; she acts. First Samuel 25:18, 19 details the list of supplies Abigail readies: raisins, figs, sheep ready to be cooked, roasted grain, bread, and wine. These supplies were plenty and probably more than David's men expected.

The next part of the story is full of movement and action. The writer of the passage moves between different scenes,⁴ building the tension.⁵ We wait and hold our breath for the moment of the meeting. In the heat of the moment, without stopping to listen to God or reason, David and his men march out to take revenge (to get even) because of Nabal's insult. David takes two-thirds of his men to fight, which shows just how angry he is.

When we become angry, it is hard to think or act in the right way. We say or do things we do not mean or wish we had not done or said. Abigail does

not just send the gifts off and then wait to see what happens. She rides out to meet David herself. Abigail is married to a cruel and stubborn man. But she has not allowed him to crush her spirit. She still has a strong sense of self-worth. She is ready to risk her life in order to protect her household. This is something like the young David facing Goliath.⁶ This time it is a woman with donkeys loaded with food and a few servants, going to face 400 armed and angry men.



Abigail does not just send gifts off to David; she saddles her donkey and rides out to meet him.

Meanwhile Nabal, the fool, is also busy. His brave wife is going out to face an angry army. But he is at home having a dinner party and getting drunk.

What do Matthew 7:21; Matthew 25:31–46; and James 2:14–17 teach us about how important our actions are?

4. scenes—a division of an act in a play during which the action takes place in a single place without a break in time.

5. tension—a difficult situation caused by the opposite needs of two different ideas or desires.

6. Goliath—a giant warrior killed by David in his youth.

Talk may be cheap, but our actions support or oppose our speech. The actions of Abigail, David, and Nabal tell us a lot about what they thought, who was important to them, and what kind of spirit was behind their actions.

If someone were to judge you and the kind of person you are only by your actions, how would they judge you? And why? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

TUESDAY—OCTOBER 26

A TIME TO TALK (1 Samuel 25:23–31)

Carefully read Abigail’s speech in 1 Samuel 25:23–31. How is it different from what Nabal says in verses 10 and 11? What do their different ways of speaking tell us about the difference between Abigail and Nabal?

Abigail calls David “my lord.” Perhaps these words help to remind David that he should behave as God’s chosen king and not as the leader of a band of robbers. Abigail is able to bring out the best in David and help him to act nobly because she has not lost her own sense of self-worth. This helps her to believe the best about David and encourage him to act with goodness and honor.

What is the first thing Abigail says to David? What do her words remind you of? What is she trying to do? Read also Exodus 32:32; Esther 7:2–4; Isaiah 53:12; Daniel 9:15–19; and Romans 8:34.

Intercession⁷ can take many forms. But each form always has one thing in common: the intercessor (the person working for another person) must feel close to the person who he or she is working for. It does not matter if the intercessor gains anything from this work for himself or herself. The person must be willing to put aside what he or she wants and ask for what would be best for someone else. Abigail could have seen this threat on Nabal’s life as a way of getting rid of her husband and gaining her freedom. But she chooses instead to be on his side. She begs for his life, which he does not deserve.

Perhaps the best kind of intercession we can do is to pray for others. We pray for people who are not able or willing to pray for themselves. We talk to God for these people and not for ourselves. We put our own wants (desires), needs, and wishes aside and talk to God for these people instead. Our prayers give God the excuse to move into Satan’s territory. It is by praying for others that we better understand God’s great mercy⁸ for us. We can learn how to bless those who curse us and pray for those who do not treat us well (Luke 6:28).

7. intercession—acting or working for another person’s sake.

8. mercy—kindness or forgiving treatment.



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Have you ever had someone intercede (work) for you at a time when you could not take care of yourself? How did that situation help you to understand what it means to have Jesus interceding (working) for our sakes?

WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 27

WHAT ABIGAIL WILL NOT DO (1 Samuel 25:25, 26)

People often are afraid of an abusive person. They protect the abuser. They will lie and pretend in order to please the abuser.

Read 1 Samuel 25:25, 26. What do these verses say about why Abigail was so open about her husband's faults (weaknesses)? How does this make her intercession (work) for the sake of her husband even that much more wonderful? If someone were interceding (work-

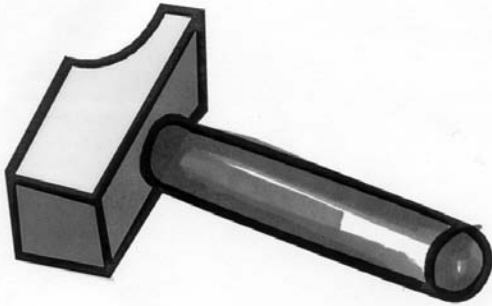
ing) for you right now, what might be said about you?

Abigail is ready to risk her life to save her household. But she is loyal and honest in how she acts. She does not lie for Nabal. She knows that he is the one with the problem. And she is not afraid to say so, even in front of other people.

Someone in an abusive relationship often begins to feel that he or she is to blame for the actions of the abuser, which makes him or her feel guilty. Abigail does not do this. She has a strong sense of self-worth. This sense of worth begins with her sense of mission (work done for God). She does not give herself credit for stopping David and bringing the gift. Instead, she knows she is simply God's instrument (tool) in changing David's mind. Because Abigail knows who she is, she is able to encourage David to be his best. She reminds him that he is the one who will fight the Lord's battles and that he should not waste his time and energy getting even for personal insults. Abigail's advice, " 'Don't [Do not] do anything wrong as long as you live' " (1 Samuel 25:28, NIV), is a warning to David not to dishonor himself as Israel's future king.

Abigail also reminds David that with his life firmly tied to God, he does not need to "save face" or defend his honor. God will do it for him.

Remember, too, that in Abigail's world divorce, and even separation, were not choices a woman could make. From an earthly point of view,



Abigail is God's tool that He uses to change David's mind.

she would “belong” to her husband for the rest of her life. But Abigail does not think of her life as useless or as a never-ending prison. She believes that God will deal with her husband in His own good time.

Abigail's speech shows that wisdom can be found in any situation where we surrender (give) ourselves to God. Wisdom is not a theory (unproved idea). Instead, it is a useful way of living and dealing with the people around us.

What does it mean to surrender ourselves completely to God? How do you do it? Suppose someone said to you, “I want to give myself completely to the Lord. But I do not know how.” How would you answer?

THURSDAY—OCTOBER 28

IN AND OUT (1 Samuel 25:41)

Many of us cannot take positive

criticism.⁹ But David could. He heard the work of God in Abigail's words. In a moment he understands what the results of his actions would be. David is thankful that God has acted to prevent (stop) a terrible battle. Abigail arrives home to learn that her husband is not in any condition to listen. So, she wisely waits until the next morning to tell him what has happened.

Nabal becomes very scared. It is possible that he suffers a stroke.¹⁰ Ten days later he dies. David has not forgotten Abigail and sends men to ask her to marry him.

Think about Abigail's last words in this week's lesson (1 Samuel 25:41). What do they tell us about Abigail? What other people in the Bible follow Abigail's example?

Abigail was a woman of influence.¹¹ She had five female servants. But she was willing to serve. Much later Jesus would say, “Be like the Son of Man. He did not come to be served. Instead, he came to serve others” (Matthew 20:28, NIV).

Abigail's life was no fairy tale, even after her marriage to David. David had many wives as a lot of men did in those days. It was not the family life we see in God's idea of perfection. Abigail was David's second wife. Being his wife meant she would always be on the run from King Saul. At Ziklag she, along with the families of the

9. criticism—the act of finding fault; disapproval.

10. stroke—a serious illness caused when a blood vessel in the brain suddenly breaks or is blocked.

11. influence—a person or thing that affects someone or something in an important way.

other men, was captured by the Amalekites and later rescued. This is when Abigail disappears from the Bible's narrative (story). We would probably expect that this wise and beautiful woman would be at King David's side. We would expect her to play an important part in David's kingdom. But there is only silence. All we know about Abigail after this is that she had a son called Daniel (1 Chronicles 3:1) or Chileab (2 Samuel 3:3). Abigail's son was second in line to the throne by birth order. But her son also disappears from the picture. Some scholars (experts; thinkers) believe that both Abigail and her son died violently. With all of the rapes, murders, and rebellions (infighting) that David's oldest sons were involved in, it is very possible that both Abigail and her son died early deaths.

As followers of Jesus, we do not always live fairy tale lives. God knows the end from the beginning. All the turns of our lives do not need to make sense to us. We simply need to trust in the goodness of God.

Humbling ourselves before others is not easy. This is because it means surrendering (giving oneself completely) to, and depending on, God. How good are you at humbling yourself? How can you learn to surrender when you need to? How can we learn from Christ's wonderful examples of surrender?

FRIDAY—OCTOBER 29

ADDITIONAL STUDY: "A holy Christian life is ever giving light and comfort and peace. It is shown by a pure, wise, simple, and useful life. It is controlled by that unselfish love that makes holy all that we say or do. It is full of Christ and leaves a trail of light wherever its owner may go. Abigail was a wise counselor. David's anger died away under the power of her influence and reasoning. He believed that he had taken a course that was not wise and had lost control of his own spirit."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*,¹² page 667.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Spouse abuse is a big problem. As a church, we have a responsibility (duty) to help. That is why every year, on the Seventh-day Adventist calendar, the fourth Sabbath of August is Abuse Prevention Day. This gives us a special opportunity (chance) to educate fellow members and to help people understand this problem better. What can we do to help those who are suffering in abusive relationships?
- ② "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). Remembering what you have learned in this week's lesson, what are the qualities (good points) of peacemakers? How can we make peace without giving up our principles?

12. patriarchs and prophets—patriarchs were leaders of God's people in early Bible times, men such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men or women who are spokespersons for God.