

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,
3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 17**

**FIRST SAMUEL
CHAPTER 25**

INTRODUCTION

Personal relationships play a very significant part in our lives. The people whom we encounter will mould our thinking and disposition; some for good and others for evil. David's encounter with Abigail was an eye-opener for him.

Abigail was instrumental in preventing him from committing a great sin against God. Moreover, her plea in behalf of her husband must have set David to examine his heart. This is one of the greatest records of what a woman can do in times of crises to avert disaster. Courage and wisdom can work together to bring about a just and godly conclusion. Another valuable gem of the Word concerns forgiveness. Many Christians have an inadequate understanding of how to seek forgiveness from those they have wronged. In this chapter, Abigail exemplified the correct way of seeking pardon from David who was the aggrieved party.

The chapter opened with the announcement of Samuel's death. Then it introduced Nabal, a very rich man, who refused to accede to David's request for provisions for his men. David was enraged and sought to kill Nabal and his household but

he was intercepted by Abigail. The conversation between Abigail and David was recorded for our benefit. The account ended with the death of Nabal and David took Abigail as his wife.

COMMENTARY

Samuel Died—25:1

The period of Judges had ended and a new era had begun with the death of Samuel. He was the last Judge. All the Israelites gathered together to mourn Samuel's death. They buried him at Ramah, his hometown. It was stated that they buried him in the compounds of his home. Perhaps this was a reminder that his mother Hannah had sent him away, as a child, to live with Eli and to serve the LORD full time. We remembered how his mother, Hannah, had prayed for a child and the vow she had made to give him to the service of the LORD (1:11). Samuel was one of the LORD'S most faithful and godly servants. When Eli and his sons died, the spiritual welfare of the children of Israel fell on the shoulders of Samuel, a Nazarite.

No other prophet had been so important to Israel since the days of Moses and Joshua. Samuel's personal character and behaviour were impeccable. He introduced valuable spiritual and moral reforms. He ushered in the period known as the prophets and became the first prophet. He established a school of prophets, and in all probability, Gad could have been a student there.

Many a time, Samuel had led his people against the Philistines. His judicial work in the various towns and cities that he had visited were beyond reproach. He also

functioned as a king-maker, anointing Saul and David as the first and second kings of Israel respectively. He was admired and respected by the whole nation. However, God's servants are not indispensable. Although God chooses a man to do HIS work, the man must realize the honour given to him and not let this honour go to his head.

Samuel's high calling from birth was over. He had gone home to be with the LORD in paradise which was far better. But God's work on earth must continue until His plans and purposes are fulfilled.

Nabal's foolish arrogance —25:2-13

When David heard that Samuel had died, he and his men moved further south to the wilderness of Paran. This was a wise move because there was now no restraining influence in Israel. He expected Saul to step up his search to find and kill him. There was no one like Samuel whom he could turn to for help. He sought shelter and protection in the wilderness of Paran. While David trusted God for protection and safety, nevertheless he also understood his human responsibility. His flight to move deeper into the wilderness of Paran should not be viewed as a lack of trust and faith in God. It is good common sense. In fact, the doctrine of human responsibility demands that every child of God practises good common sense. Not to do so would be to put God to the test.

Nabal was introduced as a very rich man who lived in Maon in Judah (meaning: 'dwelling-place') which was about 10 kilometres south of Hebron. His property and possessions were in Carmel

(meaning: 'garden', not to be confused with Carmel in the north-east). This Carmel was near to Maon. Nabal was famous and his wealth was substantial—3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. He probably had many servants to help look after his livestock. His wife was called Abigail (meaning: "my father rejoices"). She was intelligent, wise and beautiful. In contrast, Nabal (meaning: 'foolish') was hard-hearted, stubborn, proud and "evil in his doings". He was of the tribe of Caleb, Judah. In other words Nabal and David came from the same tribe.

It was the season for the shearing of the sheep. David and his men had gone deeper into the wilderness of Paran to seek refuge. Food was difficult to get. David was forced to find provisions for his men. David heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. Sheep shearing was a time of celebration and distribution of profits. All those who were involved in the sheep shearing joined in the celebrations. Nabal employed a sizeable number of shepherds to care for his flocks of sheep and goats and engaged some more to shear the sheep at this time.

Hence, when David heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep, he sent 10 of his men to him to request for some provisions.

A farmer with such a large number of sheep and goats was vulnerable to bandits and hostile nations who might raid their flocks. David had been a shepherd himself and knew what it meant to look after and protect the flocks. He and his men had provided protection for Nabal's flocks (v.15). Nabal could have lost his flocks if not for them. David now sent his men to Nabal to

ask for some favour in return for protecting his flocks. David specifically instructed his men to greet Nabal cordially and mention his name. By this time, most Israelites would have known who David was. David told his men to assure Nabal that they had come to him in peace and that they had no intention of hurting him. David addressed himself as a “son” to him. It was not only a mark of humility but also of reverence and respect. David hoped that Nabal would receive his men and be generous to them.

David’s men arrived at Nabal’s place. They carried out David’s instruction to the letter but Nabal was rude and disrespectful—“Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse?” He continued and added that many slaves rebelled against their master. These remarks were degrading. They implied that David and his men were such characters. And to add insult to injury, he retorted selfishly (v.11): “Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?” The key in understanding this reply of Nabal is to observe the use of the many “my”. A little generosity and some kind words on Nabal’s part would have been appropriate and would secure appreciation from David’s men. Instead, he heaped insults on them. On hearing this reply and sensing that their request for food was futile, David’s men returned empty handed and reported to him what Nabal had said.

David reacted instantly and ordered his men to arm themselves with their swords -- 400 armed themselves ready to follow him while 200 stayed behind to look after their

belongings. It was evident that David had lost his temper. He was enraged by the injustice and ingratitude of Nabal for reciprocating evil for good. He was determined to destroy every man related to Nabal so that not one of them by the morning of the next day would “pisseth (urinate) against the wall” (v.21, 22). These were strong words unbecoming of a man after God’s own heart! About 400 of his men armed themselves to go with David while 200 stayed behind to look after their belongings.

David was acting in the flesh and not thinking straight. If he had believed as he had stated that God would deal with his enemies then he should do nothing to Nabal. In contrast, his attitude towards Saul was different. When he had the chance to remove Saul once and for all, he stayed his hand and was guided by spiritual principles. But now he was motivated more by personal revenge. Would God allow David to carry out this horrific act?

A Young Man’s Courageous Duty—25:14-17

A young servant of Nabal who witnessed the meeting between David’s men and Nabal, his master, got news that David was coming with his men to destroy them. The young man told Abigail that David’s men were polite and respectful but Nabal was insolent and sarcastic to them. He testified that David’s men had treated them well while they were shepherding their flocks in the fields. Not one of the sheep was hurt or lost. David’s men protected them during the day as well as night. He appealed to Abigail to take some action to avert the evil that would befall his master and his household.

Before Abigail could say anything, the servant honestly

remarked that his master, Nabal, was “a son of Belial” and that no one could speak to him (v.17). The expression “son of Belial” meant a person who was worthless and lawless. In the New Testament period, this became the nickname of Satan. It took a lot of courage on his part to speak so frankly with Abigail. Abigail, in her heart, agreed with him (v.25).

Abigail’s Timely and Wise Intervention—25:18-31

Abigail believed all that the young man had said to her. He must have been a trusted and responsible servant. Abigail asked no question. Sensing the terrible danger that would befall Nabal and his household, she immediately moved into action. David and his men deserved the kindness that they had asked for. She ordered the preparation of 200 loaves of bread, two bottles of wine, five sheep “ready dressed” (readily prepared), five measures of parched corn, clusters of raisins, and 200 cakes of figs (v.18). These were to be mounted on asses ready to be transported. Abigail’s intention was to intercept David before he could reach them and to compensate him for the protection he and his men had rendered to them. She did the right thing and it was good. The speed at which she organised the preparation of the supplies and gifts was astonishing. She had made sure that the gifts and supplies were sufficient. This swift and decisive action of Abigail demonstrated that she was a capable wife to Nabal.

Abigail rode with her servants to intercept David. When she saw David at a distance, she quickly dismounted from her donkey, and then she fell prostrate before David

(v.23). She showed courage in riding headlong toward a stranger who was mad enough to kill. She also showed great respect for David unlike her husband Nabal. She was shrewd because her intention was to calm David and make amends for Nabal’s rudeness. Her opening words to David were to ask him to lay the blame on her for the wrong that he had received. She continued and pleaded with David to hear her out. Abigail maintained an attitude of humility.

She asked David not to take to heart the conduct and behaviour of Nabal, a worthless and lawless man, for that was his name and he was foolish. Expressively submissive before David, she said that she did not see the young men whom David had sent to them. She then blessed David and pointed out that it was the LORD (YAHWEH) who had intervened and prevented David from shedding blood and from avenging himself with his own hand. Addressing David as her lord, she expressed her desire that David’s enemies who sought evil towards him be as Nabal (v.26). She showed some understanding in the providence of God. She then presented the gifts which she had brought and told David that they were to be given to his men who came with him. She pleaded for David’s forgiveness of her trespass. Then she assured David that the LORD would make David “a sure house”. This phrase has royal dynastic overtones.

Abigail was saying that David could be assured of becoming king and his successors would be permanently blessed. This tells us that she knew of the anointing of David as the next king. She further

pointed out that David had been fighting the LORD'S battles and no "evil" had been found in him all his days. She then argued hypothetically that should a man rise up and purposed to hurt him, she was confident that "the soul of my lord" (David) would be bound in "the bundle (a pouch or bag) of life" with the LORD his God (v.29). This was a figure of speech common in those days. A person would put her jewellery and precious stones together and bound it for safety. By this, she meant that David would be kept safe and secure with the LORD his God if ever his life was threatened. But the one who sought his life would be severely dealt with by God.

Abigail brilliantly ended her plea by saying that when the LORD had done everything that He had promised him and made him king over Israel, he would not be sorrowful over shedding blood without a cause or taking vengeance. In other words, when the LORD would make him a king, he could have a clear conscience if he refrained from avenging himself by killing Nabal and his household. Finally, Abigail asked David for a favour for herself, and that is, that he would remember her when the LORD made him king. Abigail knew so much about David, how could Nabal asked "Who is David?" It was definitely not a lack of knowledge but one of total disregard for what David had done for him.

David was Saved in the Nick of Time—25:32-35

David said to Abigail (v.32): "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me". David recognized that this interception by Abigail was the

providence of God. He thanked Abigail for her counsel and blessed her for restraining him from carrying out his murderous mission. David confessed that if it had not been for the LORD God, he would have wiped out Nabal and his household. So, David accepted Abigail's gifts and the supplies she brought for him. He told her to go in peace with the assurance of pardon.

Nabal's "Deadly" Response—25:36-38

Abigail returned to her home. She wanted to relate to Nabal her meeting with David. But Nabal was holding a feast in the house that was befitting a king. Nabal was very happy and enjoying himself tremendously. He had drunk too much wine. Abigail postponed telling Nabal until the morning of the following day. On the next morning, Nabal was sober because the effect of the alcohol had worn off and Abigail told him about her meeting with David and what had transpired. Upon hearing the account, Nabal had a stroke that probably paralysed him and he "became as a stone". Ten days later, the LORD took his life and he died. All this would not have happened if he had been kind and generous. He had so much yet he could not use it for a good cause. He was a victim of his own greed, selfishness and stubbornness.

David Married Abigail—25:39-44

On hearing that Nabal had died, David attributed it to the LORD who had dealt with his enemies in his behalf. David sent his men to Abigail with a proposal of marriage. David sensed that her beliefs, values and her aims in life were akin to his. Abigail humbly accepted the proposal. She showed great respect for David's men and expressed that

she would be a maid to wash the feet of David's servants. She rode her donkey and, with five of her chambermaids, followed David's men as they returned to their master. Abigail became David's wife. David's desire to marry Abigail was genuine. One could understand why he was attracted to her. Abigail displayed a godly and resourceful disposition and demeanour. Some Bible scholars think, without any basis, that he married her because she was a rich widow and would be able to ease his financial burden. David took another wife, Ahinoam (meaning: 'pleasant') of Jezreel (meaning: 'God scatters') in order to broaden his political support. But we are also informed that Saul had given his daughter, Michal, David's first wife, to another man, Phalti (meaning: (deliverance of the Lord')).

PRACTICAL VALUE

Nabal was a foolish man. His characteristics of selfishness, stubbornness and arrogance were marks of a fool, and they will lead a person to destruction (Proverbs 13:20). We should not keep company with such people.

Was he not foolish when a little kindness and generosity would have gone a long way to building friendly relationships? When someone is in need and asks for assistance, it is well to help as far as one can. The Lord Jesus taught us to love our neighbour as ourselves.

David refused to avenge himself against Saul because the latter was the Lord's anointed. But in his anger, he wanted to kill Nabal and his household, even those who were innocent. He had been away from the LORD and could not think

straight. As a result he did not react wisely to Nabal's insolence. He had allowed his emotions to take control. We should guard our emotions. There are times when it is necessary to take action but we should act only after we have calmed down and considered the matter carefully, after much prayer.

If David had carried out his murderous mission, he would not be any different from Saul who had killed Ahimelech and all the priests. And for the rest of his life, his conscience would prick him and make him miserable. God used the young servant and Abigail to intercept and prevent David from carrying out his murderous mission. If the young man had not informed Abigail, she would not have known and taken the steps to stop David. We know that God often does not act directly. He often uses secondary means to fulfil His plan and purpose.

Abigail's attempt at reconciliation was a classic model. She adopted a humble and submissive disposition. She did not deny Nabal's foolishness. She blamed herself for her husband's foolishness. She asked for forgiveness from David. In her plea to David not to carry out his mission, she helped him to evaluate the consequences of his intended action. She based her arguments on spiritual principles. She recognized that it was God's will that David become the next king of Israel. She assured David that he was under God's care and that God would deal with his enemies. David could trust God. We need to be reminded that if we live in the will of God, we are in His Hands. He cares for us and will

protect us. We can trust the Lord our God.

Was it right for the young servant to speak “unkindly” of Nabal, his master, to Abigail? Abigail also mustered her courage to speak to David. There are times when we must gather our moral courage and integrity to speak the truth in order to save someone or a situation that could go out of hand. But it must always be the truth.

REVENGE IS MAN'S WAY. It is often disguised in such terms as “It is my right,” or “I do not have to take this.” VENGEANCE BELONGS TO GOD and He promises that He will repay (Romans 12:19). Let us trust Him and commit our case to Him, always.

AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 1 Samuel 25:1-3; Proverbs 3:27-29.

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 25:4-13; Romans 12:17-19.

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 25:14-22; James 2:20.

Thursday: 1 Samuel 25:23-35; Psalm 41:1-4.

Friday: 1 Samuel 25:36-44; Proverbs 31:10-31.

Analysis

Text	Practical Value
1 Samuel 25:1-3	
1 Samuel 25:4-13	
1 Samuel 25:14-22	

<p>1 Samuel 25:23-35</p>	
<p>1 Samuel 25:36-44</p>	

3. In what way was Abigail an example for us?

4. What did David learn most about himself and God in this chapter? What do you think is the intent of the Holy Spirit in recording this incident between Nabal and David in 1 Samuel 25?

Discussion Questions

1. Describe Nabal's character. Why did he act in the way he did? What was it that he lacked?

2. What were the outstanding features of Abigail's character?

5. What are some of the lessons in this chapter? Was it right for the wife to intercept and deal with the husband's problem without his knowledge?
