

ABIGAIL

Day One

Names have meaning. In Hebrew, Jacob means “trickster,” Esther means “hidden” and “Esther’s” given Hebrew name, Hadassah means “flowering Myrtle tree.” In the Jewish custom, the Myrtle represents a star, especially the morning star. Queen Esther was frequently referred to as the “beautiful morning star.”

It should not be surprising then that as we come upon another figure in the Bible, we need to examine what her name means as well. The person who we are looking at is Abigail. Her name in Hebrew is broken down into two parts – “Avi” meaning “father” and “gil” meaning “happiness.” The translation then is that Abigail means “my father rejoices,” “father’s joy” and/or “delight to her father.”

Abigail was a Hebrew married to a wealthy man who was a descendant of the faithful Caleb. The very same Caleb who scouted out the land of Canaan for Moses.

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.” (Numbers 13:30)

We do not know much about Abigail’s ancestry, but we do know that she was beautiful.

And the name of his wife, Abigail. And she was a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance. (1 Samuel 25:3)

Abigail’s wealthy husband was Nabal. Nabal means “fool.” We can’t be sure whether this was his given name or a nickname, but nevertheless, his name meant fool.

Beautiful Abigail was married to a fool. Their marriage may have been arranged as was custom during this time. It was her beauty perhaps that afforded her the opportunity to help her family by marrying a wealthy man.

What do you know about your ancestors?

Has anything in your “bloodline” helped you gain access to things that may have otherwise been unavailable?

Because of the faithfulness of his ancestors, Nabal was living the good life. He was wealthy in the eyes of the world. The Bible measures worldly wealth on a person's livestock. In the case of Nabal, he had

3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats (v. 2)

We can base his level of wealth on Job's restored fortune.

So the Lord blessed Job in the second half of his life even more than in the beginning. For now he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 teams of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys. (Job 42:12)

While Nabal was not as wealthy as Job, he was still considered wealthy. His household included servants and he owned property. Although Nabal was wealthy, he was not nice.

Nabal....was crude and mean in all his dealings. (v. 3)

Describe the character of someone you know that is considered wealthy in the world's standards.

Would that person agree with your characterization? Why or why not?

Take time today to reflect on your worldly possessions. Whether you inherited them or worked for them, do they define you? How would others define your character?

ABIGAIL

Day Two

As mentioned yesterday, Abigail was a Jew and she was “beautiful in appearance.” This is the same Hebrew phrase that was applied to Esther (Esther 2:7). However, Abigail did not just have physical beauty going for her. She was also intelligent and wise.

Proverbs 22:6 tells us,

*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old
he will not depart from it.*

Unlike Nabal, Abigail was devoted to the God of her ancestors. She was raised in a home that taught her about God and how to be a godly wife.

Were you raised in a home that taught the Bible? If you have children, did you raise them, or are you raising them, in a home that taught/teaches the Bible?

Like many women, Abigail found herself married to a man that was not walking in the ways of the Lord. While Abigail may not have had a choice in the matter, women today are much more able to choose whom they date and/or marry. Sadly, like Abigail, many today quickly discover how difficult life is when a believer marries an unbeliever.

Have you been or are you currently married to an unbeliever? Maybe you are not, but perhaps someone you are close to is – maybe a daughter, a son, a friend.

Describe some of the obstacles and challenges you have faced or are facing (or have witnessed)? List any regrets you may have.

Although Abigail endured a marriage that was led by a cruel husband who liked to drink, she never considered leaving him. Instead, she was joyful in her circumstances. Remember, her name means “delight to her father.” Through all the stuff in her life, she was still joyous. Like Nabal who may have received his name because of his foolish choices, Abigail may have received her name because of her disposition.

*But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them sing joyful praises forever. Spread your protection over them, that all who love your name may be **filled with joy** (emphasis added). For you bless the godly, O Lord; you surround them with your shield of love.
(Psalm 5:11-12)*

How do you handle stressful or unpleasant life situations?

Would people characterize you as joyous no matter what?

Are there any areas of your life that need to be surrendered so that you can find the joy that God holds for you?

Take time today to reflect on the joy God wants to give you. Search scripture for promises of God’s provision and hide these words in your heart so that you may not depart from His Word.

ABIGAIL

Day Three

Yesterday we discussed Abigail's beauty and wisdom. We know that in life, our outward beauty fades, but our wisdom can mature over time.

*Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord,
she shall be praised. (Proverbs 31:30)*

"Fear of the Lord" is not a cringing fear, but instead is an awesome reverence of God. It is a respectful fear similar to the fear a young child has of their own father and mother, but on a much larger scale. Nabal, in his foolishness, failed to remember who God was and what God had done for his people. He was the opposite of wise.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Psalm 111:10)

Abigail was wise and was wise about what was going on in her day. When David's men came up to Nabal and made their request for food, Nabal scoffed, "'Who *is* David, and who *is* the son of Jesse?'" (1 Samuel 25:10). The NLT translation translates his response this way, "'Who does this son of Jesse think he is?'" Nabal was loyal to Saul and Nabal's use of the term "son of Jesse" was disrespectful. Nabal knew who David was, but he failed to give him the respect he deserved as the future king. Abigail, on the other hand, knew exactly what God had in store for David. While the Bible does not specifically call Abigail a prophetess, such as the six specifically named – Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Noadiah, Isaiah's wife and Anna, she was given the gift of prophesying in this instance.

A prophetess is simply a female prophet. Just like a prophet, a prophetess is a person called by God. A prophet (male or female) is the mouthpiece for the one who sends him or her; the prophet speaks on behalf of the sender (Exodus 7:1-2). A prophet is considered a seer (1 Samuel 9:9), because God gives him or her the gift of foreknowledge. God reveals his secrets to prophets (Amos 3:7), and true prophesy is initiated by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11 both rank prophets as second only to apostles.

Do you believe that people have the gift of prophesying still today? If so, what role do you feel they serve?

Romans 12:6-8 lists the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit. The gift of prophecy is among them.

Do you have the gift of prophecy? Do you know others who have the gift of prophecy?

The gift of prophecy is tricky. Often times, prophecies must be tested to see if they come to pass. A prophet who repeatedly makes predictions that do not come to pass, may need to be ignored (see Deut. 18:20-22, Jeremiah 28:9). However, some prophecies are contingent upon the response of the recipient (see the book of Jonah and the judgment upon Nineveh).

Abigail's prophecy required action. Abigail prophesied in 1 Samuel 25:28:

For the Lord will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the Lord, and evil is not found in you throughout your days.

Thus, this prophecy was contingent upon Abigail taking action to go out and meet David and also contingent upon David hearing the message delivered through Abigail.

So why Abigail? Why was it that God chose Abigail to deliver His message? Abigail was not present when David's army came upon Nabal and asked for food. Rather, one of the servants came and found Abigail and told her what had transpired.

Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them. But the men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields. They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his household. For he is such a scoundrel that one cannot speak to him."
(1 Samuel 25:14-17)

As a Hebrew woman, Abigail was restricted by the customs of her time to give counsel only in times of emergency and in the hour of greatest need. Clearly this was the case. The servant stated, "for harm is determined against our master and all his household." (v. 17). What the servant was basically saying was, "Abby, David's going to kill all of us unless YOU think of something to do NOW."

Let us go back again to what Abigail means. Abigail was joyful. She was a peacemaker. No doubt she had to navigate this tricky road of the submissive wife and peacemaker before. This probably was not the first time her husband spouted off something that offended someone and Abigail had to quietly come behind and make the peace.

Describe an instance when you played the role of peacemaker in your family?

Can you describe how God is using your disposition to help or save others?

Take time today to reflect on the gifts that God has given you through the Holy Spirit. Thank him for the spiritual gifts He has given you (prophecy, administration, knowledge, wisdom, discernment, shepherding, faith, evangelism, apostleship, hospitality, serving, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership and mercy), as well as the fruits of the Spirit that He gives (love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control). Ask Him whether you are using your spiritual gifts in a way that brings Him glory and/or show you what that might look like for you. Examine whether you are bearing fruits of the Spirit. Meditate on the goodness of those fruits and what they mean for your life.

DAY FOUR

Abigail

Female black bears are known to fiercely protect their baby cubs...even to the death. This defense mechanism does not come from the fear of humans, instead it comes from the reality that male bears will kill the cubs for food. As a result, mother bears must be overly protective. While humans are not known to kill other humans for food, historically, men were warriors and would kill anything that stood in their way.

Many mothers, even today, would die for their children and families. One current instance of this motherly protection comes to mind. While Tim Tebow was making headlines for his football prowess and his “Tebowing,” a little known fact came to light. While Tim’s mother was pregnant with him, her doctor advised her to abort her unborn baby. His birth could risk his life, as well as her own. She chose to take the risk and we have been blessed by her choice.

Abigail went into full survival mode when the servant came and told her that David was going to be really mad and was on his way to slaughter their entire family. As it was sheering season, there was plenty of food stocked up for the celebrations that took place during sheering time.

When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep, David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, “Go up to Carmel, go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. And thus you shall say to him who lives in prosperity: ‘Peace be to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have! Now I have heard that you have shearers. Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel. Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David.’”
(1 Samuel 25:4-8)

Even though Nabal was not willing to share his blessings with David and his men, Abigail knew it was imperative to their survival. So she stocked up.

Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys. (1 Samuel 25:18)

The next line may come as a shock to some of you.

But she did not tell her husband Nabal. (v. 19)

I can hear the audible gasps! What? A submissive wife doing something behind her husband's back? What a rebel!

Not exactly. Abigail was a godly wife. What does it mean to be a godly wife? Ephesians 5:22-33 describes the roles of both a husband and a wife within a marriage. In these verses, we are told that wives are to submit to their husbands. However, as godly wives, our first responsibility is to God and then our husbands. On the surface, it may appear that Abigail acted hastily, but we must remember (1) Abigail was a wise woman whose wisdom came from her fear of the Lord and (2) Abigail had discernment.

How would you describe discernment?

Where do you think discernment comes from? Do you feel you are discerning? Why or why not?

Abigail took care of her business with David. Abigail graciously greeted David. She requested permission to speak. She apologized for her husband's behavior. And, she even took the blame for him!

*Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground. So she fell at his feet and said: "On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant. Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name, and folly is with him! But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent."
(1 Samuel 25:23-25)*

Read it again, *she took the blame for her bumbling, mean-hearted husband!* Now that's a godly wife!

David accepted her gift and praised God that He had sent Abigail to save him from "coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand." (v. 33) After David had sent her on her way, the Bible tells us that she immediately went to Nabal. However, the "fool" was back to his shenanigans.

Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light.
(1 Samuel 25:36)

Why didn't Abigail tell him what had happened? Why didn't she just call him out in front of all his drunk friends? Because, she was a godly wife and she had discernment. She had no desire to disrespect her husband. She didn't do what she had done to prove herself to be the leader of her household. And for good reason, she may have feared her husband's response. We don't really know what his personality was after drinking, but we knew he was "churlish" while he was sober. She was the "Beauty" living with a "Beast."

**Do you think that you are tactful when handling marital situations?
Do you ever feel the need to call your spouse out? Why?**

How does it make you feel afterwards? Why do you think that is?

Abigail made the choice to tell her husband in the morning after he had sobered up. Immediately, we are told, Nabal's heart "died within him, and he became like a stone." (v. 37) Like a child being caught stealing a cookie from the cookie jar, Nabal immediately knew that he had made a grave mistake. Perhaps he suffered a stroke or a heart attack, but we know that within ten days, the "Lord struck Nabal, and he died." (v. 38)

Have you ever found yourself in a situation similar to what Nabal experienced? A situation where you scoffed at doing something that was right, but chose not to, only to have someone else step in and do the right thing? Describe that situation and the outcome.

Take time today to reflect on the role(s) that God has you in right now. Is your first allegiance to God and then others? Ask God to show you where you are doing well and where you may need to reprioritize.

DAY FIVE

Abigail

We do not know all the particulars of Abigail and Nabal's marriage. We know that he acted like a fool and talked like a fool, but we do not know much else. While concern for physical safety is a potential reason for divorce today, we do not know if Nabal crossed that line. Even today, there are many men who toe the line of physical abuse only to instead emotionally and verbally abuse their wives. It happens. Nevertheless, Abigail stuck with her marriage. Not only did she stick with her marriage, she defended her husband when she took the blame for what had transpired between Nabal and David's men. Some today may call her an enabler, but she should really be called what she was, a servant.

Abigail had a servant's heart. We already learned that she had a joyful disposition. She served her family and her husband. When Abigail approached David, she did so as a servant would

*Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground. So she fell at his feet and said: "On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant."
(1 Samuel 25:23-24)*

One definition of "servant" reads "one who yields obedience to another. Another definition reads "one in a state of subjection."

Abigail knew her place with David. In fact, she had no idea how he would react to her approaching him. Can you imagine the pounding that was taking place in her heart as she approached the future king? She didn't approach David with an "I can't believe that you are going to kill my family over something my foolish husband said!" attitude. No, she knew who David was and what he had the authority to do to her.

Do you view yourself as a servant? Who would you say you are serving?

**Do you serve out of fear or obligation or do you serve out of the overflow
of your heart?**

Abigail was a proper, godly wife. I can picture her attending to Nabal as he lay dying over the ten days following Abigail's explanation of what had taken place. Even as he lay dying, she probably continued to serve him. Even though he was a mean and cruel husband she served him. There is no place in scripture that says Abigail did a "Ding, Dong Nabal's Gone! dance." She did not gather her friends and say "Let's throw a party!" She faithfully served him because she knew that was pleasing to God.

We see one more time in scripture where Abigail lowers herself to that of a servant. After David heard about Nabal's death, he sent his men for Abigail to request that she become his wife. Abigail didn't respond with a "Yes! I *finally* got what I deserve. I was married to a beast and now I'm going to be married to a king! I'll be living large at the castle now!" No, Abigail's response came once again from the recesses of her heart.

And David sent and proposed to Abigail, to take her as his wife. When the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her saying, "David sent us to you, to ask you to become his wife." Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, "Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." So Abigail rose in haste and rode on a donkey, attended by five of her maidens; and she followed the messengers of David, and became his wife. (1 Samuel 25:39-42)

After all Abigail had endured with Nabal, here was her chance to finally be exalted. The future king had sent for her! Instead, however, we see Abigail bowing her face to the ground and proclaiming that she would be the servant to wash the feet of David's servants. Sound familiar?

After Jesus' last supper with his disciples, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples.

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:3-7, 12-17)

Long before Jesus appeared on this Earth, Abigail was modeling what Jesus would do for his followers and what he also requested of his followers. Abigail had been rescued from a horrible husband and was rewarded with the proposal of the future king. She could have let it go to her head, but she didn’t. She chose instead to call herself a “servant to the servants” when she could have asked for so much more.

What do you think your response would have been if Nabal had been your husband? Would you have been happy about his death?

To whom do you feel justice was carried out? Was it David who was saved from committing murder or Abigail for her suffering and obedience?

Abigail can teach so many of us what it looks like to be a godly wife even in the midst of what might not be a godly marriage or a perfect life. She served with a joyous heart and was rewarded by God for her obedience. While her life was not perfect after she married David (he had several wives and had several children and she and her son were kidnapped when David’s whole family was taken hostage (1 Samuel 30: 1-5)), she knew that she had been divinely vindicated. In fact, the son that Abigail had with David was named Chileab, or Daniel (see 2 Samuel 3:3 and 1 Chronicles 3:1). The latter name means, “God is my Judge.”

Today reflect on the fact that right now wherever you are God is with you. He is keenly aware of all that is taking place. Be prayerful and discerning to the Holy Spirit in all you do. You never know if what you may view as little may in fact be huge in God's ultimate plan.