

Abigail, a Woman of Faith and Discretion

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We can learn a valuable lesson from this woman of faith, on how to be discreet from Abigail, who shows us an example of a very important virtue; discretion. How does a Christian woman learn to be discreet? (Titus 2:5)

When we look at the word discretion, it can be defined in two ways: "the quality of being discreet, especially with reference to one's own actions" or "speech; prudence or decorum or the power or right to decide or act according to one's own judgment; freedom of judgment or choice" (Dictionary.com).

In 1 Samuel 25:1-13, we find David on the run and hiding from King Saul and in the wilderness of Paran, an area near the Sinai Peninsula. David's men watch over the flocks of sheep in the area, including those of a wealthy, rude man named Nabal. At sheep-shearing time, a time of celebration, David's men ask for something in return for their protection of this wealthy man's animals. Nabal arrogantly refuses, insulting and demeaning David and his men.

In the heat of anger, David plans revenge, in which not one male of Nabal's household will survive alive. A terrified, young servant tells Abigail of David's plan. "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 25:17).

Abigail is married; the Bible is not clear on whether this is by choice or by the customary arrangement between her father and her prospective bridegroom. She was married to Nabal, a wealthy, successful sheep rancher, but the Bible says, "His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings-he was a Calebite" (1 Samuel 25:3).

Abigail's daily challenge was to try to live peacefully with her "surly and mean" mate, while maintaining her own integrity and strength of character; in which was necessary her to learn to use discretion in her words and her activities to accomplish the best outcome for her and everyone in her household. Abigail quickly understood the magnitude of the situation as the young servant's words resonated in her ears: "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 25:17).

Wasting no time, Abigail put together a peace offering in hopes of appeasing the offense: "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"—all loaded on donkeys and sent ahead with her servants to meet David in advance (1 Samuel 25:18). Upon seeing David, she dismounted and fell on her face at his feet, begging for his indulgence. She respectfully petitioned for mercy, even offering to take the blame for her foolish husband's offense.

In the end, David's heart softened. He saw the folly of his actions and recognized the wisdom of her plea. "Then David said to Abigail: 'Blessed is the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. For indeed, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal!' "So David received from her hand what she had brought him, and said to her, 'Go up in peace to your house. See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person'" (verses 32-35).

Abigail was married to an evil man whose foolishness had ominous ramifications. She realized that, given the circumstances, she was the only one who might avert impending disaster and preserve her household. And so she acted.

Abigail reminded David of God's purpose and plans in his life, "For the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the LORD" (verse 28). "And it shall come to pass, when the LORD has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, ... when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant" (1 Samuel 25:30-31).

Abigail believed and had faith in God! Abigail made the trip back home to find Nabal in the midst of a drunken orgy. The Bible says she didn't tell him anything of her activities upon arriving home to find Nabal in a drunken celebration, she wasn't going to hide anything from him, but Abigail had learned timing was so important! The next day, when Abigail was planning to tell Nabal of her activities, and not knowing what to expect from her husband, something else happened. Nabal's "heart died within him" and he died 10 days later (1 Samuel 25:37).

When David heard the news, he immediately saw the LORD's hand in the whole matter. "So when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, 'Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil! For the LORD has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head'" (1 Samuel 25:39).

Abigail's faith in God, her courage, her quick thinking, and her discreet words saved lives. David later took her as his wife, after her husband died. We can learn many things from Abigail. Many situation in life require us to show respect, use discretion and wisdom to

determine the best course of action for the good of everyone concerned.

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