

Lesson 6 2 December 2012

Abigail's Wise Counsel to David

Lesson Scope: [1 Samuel 25](#)

Lesson Focus

First Samuel 25 opens with the death of Samuel and his burial at Ramah. Saul and David had just reached a mutual agreement that neither would harm the other. However, David's continuing distrust of Saul is evident in his choice to remain near the safety of Engedi. While living in this area, David and his men provided protection to the shepherds and farmers. Custom dictated that David's service to these men would be recognized and reciprocated in some way. Nabal, being rich and living in luxury, should have been well able to do this, but he refused.

Because David was always on the lookout for the physical well-being of his men and himself, it seems that he nearly failed when confronted with this personal challenge. To take things in hand would have brought lifelong regret and left an indelible blot on his reign. Abigail's recognition of the situation and her appropriate response averted disaster.

The mutual sharing of counsel is essential among God's people. Those who are honest and open before the Lord will graciously offer and receive sound advice.

Counsel is an important part of the Christian walk. No man is able to face the temptations and trials of life on his own. As we see in the example of David in this lesson, even someone with integrity and conviction is subject to the fallen nature and in need of good counsel. David lived in tune with God; therefore he recognized Abigail's counsel as from the Lord. This gave him strong incentive to overcome his emotional response to Nabal and thereby avert a personal tragedy. Being receptive to counsel is a skill that is rooted in character qualities that must be honed continually, well before such counsel is needed.

Lesson Aim: To show the place of wise counsel among God's people.

Theme Verse: [Proverbs 1:5](#). A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.

Lesson Text

Nabal's Insult

1 Samuel 25:5-14 ⁵ And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name: ⁶ And thus shall ye say to him that liveth *in prosperity*, Peace *be* both to thee, and peace *be* to thine house, and peace *be* unto all that thou hast. ⁷ And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. ⁸ Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. ⁹ And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased. ¹⁰ And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who *is* David? and who *is* the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. 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*? ¹² So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings. ¹³ And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff. ¹⁴ But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them.

Abigail's Intervention

1 Samuel 25:23-26 ²³ And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, ²⁴ And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, *upon me let this iniquity be*: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. ²⁵ Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, *even* Nabal: for as his name *is*, so *is* he; Nabal *is* his name, and folly *is* with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. ²⁶ Now therefore, my lord, *as* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to *shed* blood, and from

avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.

1 Samuel 25:30-31 ³⁰ And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; ³¹ That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

David's Acknowledgment

1 Samuel 25:32-35 ³² And David said to Abigail, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: ³³ And blessed *be* thy advice, and blessed *be* thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. ³⁴ For in very deed, *as* the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. ³⁵ So David received of her hand *that* which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

Questions for Study

Nabal's Insult

1. Evaluate the tactfulness of David's request.
2. What factors likely figured into David's response to Nabal's insult?
3. Who needs counsel and when do they need it?

Abigail's Intervention

4. Prove that Abigail's intervention was not merely selfish.
5. What are some occasions that call for sharing counsel in the brotherhood?

David's Acknowledgment

6. Why did David receive Abigail's advice?
7. How can we make it easier for others to give us counsel? Lesson 6

Analyzing the Passage

David and his men served as a voluntary security force in the region of

Carmel, just west of the Dead Sea. David sent his young men to Nabal "in a good day" (1 Samuel 25:8); sheepshearing was a time of income for those who owned flocks. Having provided protection for months without pay, David was now properly asking for consideration in the day of plenty.

Nabal means "fool." His response to David was inappropriate economically, culturally, and socially. He insinuated that David was an irresponsible runaway, a "nobody" he did not even know. As a result, David assembled four hundred men immediately to take vengeance. Contrast this with David's restraint of his men when they had the opportunity to kill Saul.

Both Abigail's approach and words to David are quite revealing. She came to him in humility, taking full responsibility for Nabal's insult. She understood why David was upset, and she sympathized with him. She recognized the long-term negative effects David's planned actions would have on both their houses. He would regret later that he had taken vengeance with his own hands. His rash action would not only disturb his conscience but also be a blot on his reputation when he became king as the Lord had promised he would.

Abigail's appeal to David's sense of right and wrong, as well as her reminder of how he would later view his action, was effective. David not only changed his mind but also expressed profuse gratitude to God and to her for her courageous action.

Principles and Applications

Nabal's Insult

1. The need for good counsel arises from the uncertain affairs of life (1 Samuel 25:5-8). These were uncertain times for David. Saul had assured David that he would no longer seek his life, but Saul had broken promises before. David and his men lived with danger and hunger from day to day. When our circumstances are uncertain and threatening, we are more likely to make hasty and unwise decisions. In those times we need words of caution and wisdom from our friends.

2. Good counsel is needed when others mistreat or misunderstand us (1 Samuel 25:10-11). Misunderstandings often occur when our communication is vague or indirect. If a misunderstanding is apparent, it is best to clear the issue promptly. When others mistreat us deliberately despite

the facts, we need to exercise forbearance and allow the Lord to work the situation out. Taking matters into our own hands will generally only intensify the problem. Here again, those who are close to us can help us keep a right perspective.

3. Good counsel is needed when emotional reactions overrule better judgment (1 Samuel 25:13). David was not thinking clearly after receiving Nabal's response. His emotion got in the way of his usual level headedness and led him onto a path that would have brought regret had it not been interrupted. We must be ready to receive counsel as David did, even in the heat of emotion, with an open mind that considers the situation rationally.

Abigail's Intervention

4. Counsel is best given with a humble attitude (1 Samuel 25:23-24). Such an attitude is usually evident to the person receiving it, and it indicates respect for him. If humility is not evident, the motivation for giving counsel is likely not the good of the other person. Rather, some self-serving motive is at work either consciously or unconsciously.

5. Wise counsel often can explain the problem, address the need, and give positive solutions (1 Samuel 25:25-26). Abigail identified both Nabal's insult and David's vengefulness as problems. She provided for the immediate physical needs of David and his men, and she pointed out a solution for David's long-term benefit. Often a person in need of counsel lacks a clear grasp of the issue. If he can be helped to see his situation as it really is, he is ready to consider possible solutions so that a proper outcome can be achieved.

6. Good counsel helps a person gain a right perspective of the Lord's work in his life (1 Samuel 25:30-31). Abigail did not tell David anything that he did not already know; she simply reminded him of some things that he had forgotten or ignored in the heat of the moment. David was in line for the throne. When he became king, the vengeance he was about to vent would matter a great deal. It would blot his reputation, burden his conscience, and perhaps hinder his rule. David needed a reminder of his responsibility to the Lord and to His people, Israel.

7. Wise counsel is motivated by the desire to spare another from bitter reaping (1 Samuel 25:31). If the love of Christ dwells in our hearts, we will take no pleasure in seeing another stumble or fall spiritually. If we have any experience at all, we know firsthand what follows mistakes

and failures. This leads us to reach out with compassion, humility, and understanding to those we see headed in the wrong direction. Experience is worth little if we cannot use it to help another avoid some pitfall.

David's Acknowledgment

8. Those who are open to good counsel receive it as from the Lord (1 Samuel 25:32). God has our best interests at heart. Abigail and David both recognized that it was the Lord's hand that intercepted David in his vengeance. Her gracious words and his open heart combined to commit them both more strongly to God. Counsel is best received as it is best given—humbly, openly, and with thankfulness.

9. The wise are quick to perceive, accept, and apply good counsel (1 Samuel 25:33). The natural man often rejects good counsel in an effort to save face. The benefits of taking such a course are short-lived and minimal at best. Wise men will change their minds when shown a better way. To them, the outcome is far more important than the temporary humiliation of admitting they were wrong.

10. When wise counsel is accepted, both the giver and the receiver experience mutual trust and respect (1 Samuel 25:35). Both David and Abigail left their meeting place, satisfied that the result was of mutual benefit. A foundation of trust had been laid for future relationship.

When the wise counsel of a spiritual brother or sister spares us from harm, we will more readily go to that person again when we sense a need. This trust and accountability enhances our stability, safety, and usefulness in the brotherhood.

Important Teachings

1. The need for good counsel arises from the uncertain affairs of life (1 Samuel 25:5-8).

2. Good counsel is needed when others mistreat or misunderstand us (1 Samuel 25:10-11).

3. Good counsel is needed when emotional reactions overrule better judgment (1 Samuel 25:13).

4. Counsel is best given with a humble attitude (1 Samuel 25:23-24).

5. Wise counsel often can explain the problem, address the need, and give positive solutions (1 Samuel 25:25-26).

6. Good counsel helps a person gain a right perspective of the Lord's work in his life (1 Samuel 25:30-31).
7. Wise counsel is motivated by the desire to spare another from bitter reaping (1 Samuel 25:31).
8. Those who are open to good counsel receive it as from the Lord (1 Samuel 25:32).
9. The wise are quick to perceive, accept, and apply good counsel (1 Samuel 25:33).
10. When wise counsel is accepted, both the giver and the receiver experience mutual trust and respect (1 Samuel 25:35).

Answers to Questions

1. Evaluate the tactfulness of David's request.

David made his request at a time when Nabal was well able to spare of his abundance. David's men gave him a friendly greeting and reminded Nabal of the service they had provided. The request for food was not demanding, and it left with Nabal the decision of how much to give. No reasonable person would have refused David's request.

2. What factors likely figured into David's response to Nabal's insult?

No doubt David dealt with a lot of stress from living in constant danger of his life; food likely was not plentiful; and he was responsible for the hundreds of men with him. He likely felt keenly the injustice of being rebuffed after he had so kindly done good to Nabal. This was one more blow on top of what he had already suffered.

3. Who needs counsel and when do they need it?

Sooner or later we all need counsel because we have within us a fallen nature that easily leads us wrong. Our limited perspective needs the balancing effect of faithful people around us. Counsel is needed whenever we sense that someone is following a course that will bring harmful consequences. A little counsel given early is better than a lot of it given later. If we see that counsel is needed but delay to give it, the other person's recovery will be much more difficult.

4. Prove that Abigail's intervention was not merely selfish.

Abigail brought a liberal supply of food. Her concern was that David would later regret taking vengeance; the deed would disturb his conscience and hinder his role as Israel's king.

5. *What are some occasions that call for sharing counsel in the brotherhood?*

We have a special need for counsel when some new phase of life begins—the Christian life, courtship, marriage, parenthood, a change of occupation, a major financial investment, or a move to a new community. Counsel is needed when we see someone making changes in their practice that will lead them in the wrong direction. Counsel is often needed when life is disrupted by sickness, accident, or the death of a close relative.

6. *Why did David receive Abigail's advice?*

David perceived that Abigail truly understood his situation and wanted to help him do right. Her words agreed with what his conscience was already telling him.

7. *How can we make it easier for others to give us counsel?* We can maintain a humble spirit, be approachable, and sometimes even ask others for advice.

Summarizing the Lesson

Oh, happy is the man who hears
Instruction's warning voice,
And who celestial wisdom makes
His early, only choice.

For she hath treasures greater far
Than east and west unfold;
And her rewards more precious are
Than all their stores of gold.

In her right hand is length of days
For those who heed her voice;
Her left hand offers wealth and praise
To make her sons rejoice.

She guides the young with innocence
In pleasure's paths to tread;
A crown of glory she bestows

Upon the hoary head.

According as her labors rise,
So her rewards increase;
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.
—Michael Bruce

Research Guide

1. Read the chapter on "Humility" in *Doctrines of the Bible*.
2. Read Matthew 18:15-20 and Luke 17:1-4.