



PORTRAIT OF ABIGAIL

(1 SAMUEL 25)

John Job

The story of Abigail is found in its entirety in 1 Samuel 25 and it is unlikely that she would have made any appearance at all in the Bible, if her husband Nabal had played his hand more wisely in this dealings with David. The portrait of her in this passage is very striking and far from irrelevant for 21st century Christian examination.

What linked Abigail and David in the first place was the sad train of events which connected David with her husband Nabal, which began with the unsolicited kindness shown by David and his men in giving Nabal's shepherds protection in their area of operation.

Nabal was a sheep owning tycoon in a big way, as indicated by the scale of the festival he was organizing for his sheep-shearers. When David's request for a share for his men in the feast was rudely rebuffed by Nabal, David's reaction was to exact a fearful revenge. In the nick of time, one of Nabal's young shepherd boys related this to Abigail, fully endorsing the protection that he and his fellow shepherds had received from David and his men. The young shepherd boy also complained that Nabal's behaviour had been completely unreasonable, albeit in character.

Abigail reacted quickly by seeking out David with a handsome gift of goodies which required donkeys to carry. More importantly, she sought an audience with David to plead for mercy, not revenge against Nabal. David was convinced by her argument and believed that she had been sent by God himself to change his mind and so he sent her home with the assurance that all was well.

On arrival home, Abigail found her husband Nabal dangerously drunk and decided to leave her confession of all that had happened until the morning. When morning came and Abigail shared about her encounter with David, it was greeted not by her husband's loss of temper; instead Nabal had a stroke, which left him only about ten more days to live.

Abigail's part in the story ends by David sending some of his servants to invite her to be his wife and concludes with Abigail's humble acceptance of the proposal.

QUESTIONS

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. When Abigail first heard of the crisis, what might have been her reaction? What might Jesus have said, looking at Mark 14:8?
2. Think of reasons why Abigail does not need defending for her mission to defuse the situation behind Nabal's back.
3. Nabal is called a fool by the narrator and his name means 'fool' in Hebrew. How is his folly illustrated by his reaction to David's request?
4. What basic arguments in Abigail's approach to David are of particular importance as an illustration of how a Christian might act and respond, and why?
5. If there is an element of sadness in the fact that, by marrying David, Abigail was moving into a polygamous household, what arguments can be raised in her defence?
6. 'A woman of good standing' is Bible commentator Matthew Henry's description of Abigail. In what order would you place also her tact, spirituality, humility and courage? Can evidence for each of these be found in the text?
7. Is Abigail profitably to be compared with Ruth?
8. What qualities portrayed in Abigail most liken her to the picture of a follower of Christ as found in the New Testament?



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