

## 1 Samuel 25-26

I am now in my 19<sup>th</sup> year of being a follower of Jesus Christ. Early in my faith I placed a lot of expectations on my behavior – I needed to be as perfect as possible. I took to heart what Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, “*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*” The thing was, is I was relying on **my own** strength to be as perfect as I could. The results of my efforts in those early days were nothing to brag about. That led to a lot of self-condemnation, which led me further and further away from the kind of behavior I thought I should be exhibiting as a Christian.

What is different over the last several years is I’ve changed my **focus** of expectations to **not be on my behavior** but be on **what Jesus is doing** through the Holy Spirit in me. As God has revealed His true character to me and the deep love He has for me, I am learning **it is His agape love** living in me that is drawing out a desire to love Him more and seek to be more like Him. What this means is the freedom to be fully human – utilizing the gifts God has given me is greater than ever because the energy I used to spend on *being good* is now put to better use by *being loved*. With the security of God’s love, I have the freedom to love others more freely. *The fruit of being loved by God is greater devotion to Him, to be more like Him, and loving others.* This is the magnificence of living in God’s grace.

Please know I’m not telling you this in an attempt to make myself look like some perfect Christian – believe me, I am far from it – just ask my wife, Vickie or my brothers here in my POW group. The reason I’m telling you this, is this is what I see in David. He is very much a human – loaded with emotions and flaws. What made David different is He understood how much God loves him, and He understood that everything he had was as a result of what God had given him. His character was formed by his recognition of God’s greatness and love for him. *Character is formed by what or Whom we are devoted to.* David’s primary devotion was to God. As a result of his devotion, he developed Godly character.

As we go through chapters 25 and 26, we get a good look into this man, David – a man after God’s own heart. We’re going to see more of David’s:

- Humanity
- Humility
- Honor

We get an interesting introduction to this couple – Nabal & Abigail. Nabal literally means “*fool*”, and Abigail means “*Joy of the Father*”. Joe Jackson wrote a fitting song for these two back in 1979 called, “Is She Really Going Out With Him?” Disney took it one step farther and came up with Beauty and the Beast. These two being together is quite a head-scratcher. J. Vernon McGee speculates it was an arranged marriage.

David is earning a living watching out for Nabal’s sizable livestock inventory. It was customary to do this in these times, so the fact that David sent some of his men to get some supplies is not a matter of extortion. David’s messengers remind Nabal of the quality of work they’ve been doing for him and go on to ask if he can spare them some supplies. They give this message in David’s name.

Nabal arrogantly responds “*Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days.*” His response is his taking a shot at the lie that Saul possibly started that **David** was the one who broke away from Saul. The truth, as we know, is exactly the opposite. Saul chased away David!

Nabal “the fool” is adding “the ungrateful” to his list of negative superlatives about himself. He asks why he should give up the food he has for his shearers for “men coming from who knows where?” My response to him would have been, ‘*Hey fool, here’s one reason - how about if you didn’t have David and his men watching*

*out for your livestock, you wouldn't have any supplies to feed your shearers?'* John D. Rockefeller was once asked how much money is enough. His response was telling ... *"just a little more"*. Jesus knew what He was saying about the wealthy – it will be easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than a rich man enter the Kingdom of God. People who become wealthy often let their wealth become their god.

I once heard a great reason for giving. By giving away your money, you lose your grip on your wealth, which allows you to hold onto something more valuable – your Savior's nail-pierced hands.

David gets the report of Nabal's foolish comments, and he doesn't handle it well. He wants to go kill Nabal for his ingratitude and greediness. As I mentioned a few minutes ago, one of the things we learn about David in this section of reading is his *humanness*. He's just like you and me. Not long ago, he showed great restraint by not chopping off Saul's head when he had the chance. Now – with a snotty come back from a blowhard like Nabal, he wants to assemble his troops and go on a killing spree. Remember Peter's bold claim that he would never deny Jesus? Yet, with the simple question from a little girl, he denies his Lord.

We can show such great gestures of courage in big situations, but we completely fail in the little situations. Why? Usually, our failures are tied to our dependence on **our own** strengths and abilities as opposed to **God's**. We have a couple of victories through God's strength, and we start to feel like we're really becoming future members of Chapter 11 of Hebrews Hall of Faith. Our spiritual pride raises its ugly head, and suddenly, out of nowhere, we're confronted with what should be a no-brainer to resist or flee from, but we end up blowing it. *Pride is never a good thing, but spiritual pride is even more dangerous and harmful.*

So one of Nabal's and Abigail's servants tells Abigail of what Nabal did, and what David is about to do. The servant reminds Abigail how undeserving Nabal's treatment of David's men was and how good they had been to them - they provided

exceptional protection of the livestock and the servants. The servant prompts Abigail to come up with a plan because he knows what David is going to do to Nabal. It's interesting that they're coming to Abigail – even the servants could figure out what a bozo Nabal was.

So Abigail gets a bunch of supplies, has them loaded on donkeys, and tells the servants to head towards David – she would follow shortly after. Verse 19 tells us she did not tell Nabal about her plan. This is a BIG detail as women were at a minimum divorced and often stoned for doing things that superseded their husband's orders. A traditionalist might look at Abigail and think she's out of line at this point. However, because of the way her pleas to David are characterized, she never hints at a desire to roll Nabal under the bus and move on with her life. She owns what a fool he is, but she is going to come to his rescue.

David expresses a genuine frustration of what it's like working for a lousy employer in verse 21, *“David had just said, “It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good.”* Have you ever felt like that? After doing good work and working hard for someone or an employer, they end up stiffing you for a pay raise or even letting you go. That's the human perspective – we think and believe that we did well, but it was “rewarded” with evil. From that perspective, we develop what we believe is a righteous animosity towards these people or companies.

Please join with me in going back to the book of Genesis. You remember Joseph – one of Jacob's sons? You'll recall he was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, went through many years of hard living, but ended up being second in charge of all of Egypt. Joseph is a character-type of Jesus, and when finally meeting up with his brothers once again – they are scared he is going to take revenge on them for how they mistreated him. Joseph makes this profound statement in 50:20a, *“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.”* (NKJV) If we take to

heart Romans 8:28, “*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*” The key words in this verse are “*all things*”. “All things” means the good things **AND** the bad things. Joseph’s statement is a bold proclamation that what we may physically see as something evil is happening to us, God’s always-good intentions towards us is using this “evil” for something good for us. More often than not, that goodness God is making out of this evil is a greater revelation of His character and His overpowering love and presence in our lives.

The problem in our story is David’s too angry with Nabal’s mistreatment of him and his men to see this or know about this at this point. Enter Abigail.

In verse 23, she bowed down with her face to the ground. Here, she showed **humility**. In verse 24, she asks that Nabal’s sin be upon her. This is a statement of **sacrifice**. She acknowledges the burden of her husband’s bad name in verse 25 – (she **takes responsibility** for the issue. In verse 26, she tells David that the Lord has prevented him, to this point, of bloodshed. Here, she is reminding him **God is in control**. Next, in verse 27, she provides the gift that they should have been given by Nabal. Here, she’s showing **a concern for David and his men**. She confirms David’s true identity as King who has done nothing wrong in verse 28. Abigail is demonstrating **honor to him**. In verse 29, she confirms God’s protection on David and references proof of this by her knowing of his confrontation of Goliath using a sling. In this statement, she is confirming **God’s true character**. Building on this, in verse 30, she confirms that God will keep his promises to David as the ruler over Israel. She’s reminding him **God is a keeper of His promises**. Finally, in verse 31, Abigail reminds David of the lack of guilt he will experience because of avoiding needless bloodshed. Here, she is demonstrating **good wisdom**.

Look at this list. This is an extraordinary example of not just a Godly woman but of a Godly human being - humility, sacrifice, honor, and a profound

understanding of God's character. May we all arrive at such a place the next time we are confronted by an intimidating situation. Personally, I believe what Abigail did here is every bit as brave and bold a statement of faith as what David did with Goliath.

Now we see the humility of David. He is a man of God, and he has just been confronted with a bold presentation that he no doubt recognizes was from the Lord Himself. He immediately recognizes that his intentions of killing Nabal are wrong – he knows he's out of line. And what are the first words out of his mouth when being humbled by the Lord's presence? *"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel."* (1 Samuel 25:32) While David did not write all of the Psalms, he did write the majority of them. The word "praise" is used 171 times in the NIV version of the Psalms. David was a man of praise. Merriam Webster's online dictionary defines praise as, *"to express thanks to or love and respect for (God)"*

When we truly come to grips with the totality of God's goodness, of God's love, and God's provision, we arrive at the first of two places. First, we begin to realize how completely lost we are without God. The veil of our pride and arrogance is ripped off, and we see the poverty of what our lives would be without God's loving intervention. This type of confession is what Isaiah is speaking to in chapter 66, verse 2b, *"These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word."* From this place of humility, we begin to take in the depth of the power of God's love and compassion for us. We then arrive at the second place – a place that will become a wellspring of praise and thanksgiving for all God *has done, is doing, and will do* in our lives. May we each become fountains of praise to God every day. Amen?

David accepts everything Abigail has said and given him and tells her to go home in peace – he acknowledges he will not carry out his plan to kill her husband.

This is an extraordinary act of humility and grace on the part of a man who is, in God's eyes, the King of Israel.

So Abigail goes home, and she finds her husband partying and drinking – in other words, he's living up to his name – a fool. She wisely holds off telling Nabal what she had done until the next morning when he's sobered up. When he hears the news, it so jars his soul, he has a stroke. He would die ten days later.

David hears the news of Nabal's death and once again, what are the first words out of his lips? – Praise. David recognized what was true in 2 Chronicles 20:15c, *“For the battle is not yours, but God's.”* I don't know about you, but when I think of the amount of time I have spent worrying about or preparing for a battle that wasn't mine to fight, I could probably add years onto my life. We need to realize that some of the battles the Lord allows in our lives are merely there for Him to prove that He's the one that is going to fight them. They're being used to remind us of His character and presence in our lives. If we allow God to fight our battles, we'll see He will do just that, and, when He does, we will end up at the same place David did – praising Him!

David clearly didn't forget Abigail's intercessory presentation, so upon the news of Nabal's death, he sends his servants to tell her she is to become his wife. What a romantic. No Facebook or Instagram moments here, right! Abigail again shows great humility and honor in accepting David's “proposal” and offers to wash the feet of David's servants! This is truly an extraordinary woman.

We learn in the final two verses in Chapter 25 that David not only married Abigail, but he also married a woman named Ahinoam. Moses, in speaking of the behavior of the future king, warned in Deuteronomy 17:17a, *“He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray.”* Having multiple wives was not condoned in Scripture, but it was a common practice in Biblical times. Interestingly, polygamy

always ended in disaster in the Bible. In this case, Ahinoam gave birth to Amnon, and he would later rape his sister and destroy David's family.

Heading into Chapter 26, David is going to Ziph. This is not his first time there – he was there in Chapter 23, and the men had betrayed him there. So why would he go back to a place that wasn't kind to him the first go around? There's no real explanation, but David's heart regarding this place is revealed in Psalm 54. I don't have time to read through this Psalm, but it's worth your time to read it at some point.

Saul is once again pursuing David, and David knows it. He sends out scouts to find out if Saul had arrived on the hill of Hakilah facing Jeshimon. Then David himself sets out and goes to the place where Saul is camped. He sees where Saul and his right-hand man, Abner are sleeping. He then asks who would go with him down into Saul's camp. Abishai volunteers. Jon Courson makes a great commentary on this moment, "*A dictator says, "Go". A leader says, "Let's go". Jesus, our Greater than David, neither asks us to go where He hasn't gone before (Hebrews 4:15), nor where He won't go with us (Matthew 28:20).*"

David and Abishai sneak into the camp at night and get to where Saul is sleeping. There's a spear stuck in the ground near Saul's head, and Abishai offers to finish off Saul once and for all. Here, we see the third revelation of David in today's reading – his **honoring** God's anointed. Saul has been throwing spears at him – thankfully, Saul's a terrible shot. Wouldn't you think after missing David a few times he would come up with a different thing to try to kill him? Regardless of Saul's attempts, David is no doubt building on what Abigail had just reminded him in the last chapter. He says in verse 10, "*As surely as the LORD lives,*" he said, "*the LORD himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish.*" The Lord will fight his battle with Saul, and David's comments are prophetic as, spoiler alert, that is exactly how Saul will die – on the field of battle.

David, though, is not above sending a message of his presence to Saul and Lil' Abner. He grabs the spear and water jug near Saul's head and crosses over to the other side of the hill. Verse 12 notes that God honored David's honoring Saul's position by Him putting Saul and his troops in a deep sleep. David calls out and starts ridiculing Abner for not doing his job in watching over Saul. He tells Abner he and his men are toast for not guarding Saul and then asks him where is the spear and water jug that was near Saul. Sleepy Saul finally wakes up and recognizes what's going on and recognizes David's voice. He asks if it is indeed David he hears, and David acknowledges it is him.

David asks Saul in verse 18, "*Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of?*" He should be outraged at the relentless and baseless pursuits of Saul, but he's trying to get through to him to stop his attacks by appealing to the truth of David's treatment of him. He goes on in verse 19a, "*Now let my lord the king listen to his servant's words. If the LORD has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering.*" David's humility is on display – he's willing to accept a message from the Lord through Saul that he has done something wrong and is willing to offer a sacrifice as a request for forgiveness.

I can think of few things in life that get me upset faster than being wrongfully accused of something. I confess I do not respond well to false accusations. I am humbled when I look at David's words towards Saul. While he believes in his heart he has done nothing wrong, he is willing to accept a word from the Lord for wrongdoing. He is living out the words he wrote in Psalm 139:23-24, "*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*" David wanted a clean heart for the Lord, and He knew the only way that was possible was to allow a perfect and holy God to inspect and cleanse it.

If we're even remotely honest with ourselves regarding our hearts, to ask this of God could be, at a minimum, unsettling. The thing is, it is only unsettling if we have the wrong understanding of God's character and attitude towards us. If we come from the place that God is angry or disappointed with us, then I can understand the fear we may have by asking God to check out our hearts. I understand that perspective because I lived like that for a long time. Here's the **truth** – God is **not** angry with you, He is **not** disappointed with you, and He does **not** want to punish you. When you invite God to inspect your heart, He gently and lovingly looks at those parts of your heart that are not pure and begins to cleanse and heal those areas because He knows more than anyone the damage that it's doing to you. To His children, God is a God of healing and restoration – **not** a God of punishment and condemnation. You have nothing to fear in asking God to search your heart – you should only have **hope** because when He's through cleansing your heart, **all** your guilt and shame will be gone. You will have a newfound hope, joy, and love to offer God and those in your lives. It's a beautiful thing to let a beautiful God reveal the beauty in you.

Saul confesses his sin, asks for David to come back to him, acknowledges David's true treatment of him, and promises to not harm him again. This will be Saul's last interaction with David. He finally arrives at the truth of what his life has become and confesses in verse 21, "*Surely I have acted like a fool and have been terribly wrong.*" These are not exactly the words any of us want on our tombstone, are they? I find it hard not to have some compassion for Saul. He didn't asked to be king – it was forced upon him. He started out strong, but he got caught up in the blessings of God and lost sight of Who made him what he was. He made poor decisions, and ultimately he was accountable for those decisions.

For those of you who were here last year, you may remember I offered a Christmas message from Jesus that focused on what **He** wanted for Christmas –

namely each of you. Well, I have another message from the Lord for you, but this one is taking a different perspective. Please put your pens or pencils down, take a deep breath, close your eyes, and listen to what your loving Lord has to tell you.

My Beloved Child,

Regardless of the efforts of the modern day politically correct individuals and organizations to prove otherwise; the foundation of the Christmas season is the celebration of **My** birth. No doubt because the three wise men brought me gold, frankincense, and myrrh as gifts honoring my birth, this set the pattern of giving gifts during the Christmas season. The gift giving process is a two-way street: one direction is where we give gifts to others; the other way is where others give gifts to us. When it comes to receiving gifts, those who want to give us something might ask us what we would like for Christmas. In response to this, we may spend some time thinking about the things we don't have that we may want. The question I'm asking you this Christmas season is do you know what you already have that I have given you?

With the influence of my fellow Godhead member, the Holy Spirit, My faithful servant Paul wrote a letter to My children in Ephesus that provided a beautiful list of what My Father has given them and also to you as believers in Me through Me. First and foremost, I gave you *every* spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Not just a few of them – I gave you every one of them. You might be asking what are these spiritual blessings, and that's a great question to ask! For the purpose of keeping this letter short, I will offer a few of My favorites.

When I was nailed to the Cross, I was thinking of you. It was My joy to pay the consequences of your sins because whatever pain I was feeling didn't compare to the glory that would be revealed by My Father – first to Me and then to you. I knew

when you would come to believe in Me, you would be no longer Satan's possession – you would be mine forever. My redemption of your soul brings you into the family and Kingdom of God. As an adopted child, it was my good pleasure to choose you to be a part of My family. As My child, you are totally accepted in the Kingdom. You may not feel like it sometimes, but that is Satan trying to make you remember your old self that was lost with no hope. You are Mine – as a new creation now and forever!

Every sin you have committed, you might be committing now, and every one you will commit before you breathe your last breath is completely and totally forgiven. There's nothing more for you to do to deal with your sins – I took care of all of it – that's what I meant when I said on the Cross, "It is finished." As My child, I give you wisdom that surpasses even the smartest people you might now know. The first-fruits of that wisdom is your awareness of Me and My will for you. I know a lot of My children ask Me all the time what is My will for them. It's a simple answer – to love Me and love others.

Here's the thing about My love – it brings total and complete peace. My love is peaceful because it is thoroughly safe. When you are My child, I will always be watching over you, interceding for you, defending you, delivering you, and encouraging you that with Me in You, all things are possible. This doesn't mean while you're still here on Earth you won't suffer. Because the enemy doesn't like Me, He doesn't like My children. Therefore, He's going to try to hurt you, distract you, frighten you, and do everything He can to insert himself between you and Me. Nothing can separate you from My love for you – not even Satan. You are completely safe in my care because you are perfectly loved, and perfect love casts out all fear.

As you learn to see how much and freely I love you, you will learn to love others the same. This may seem especially hard for some people – especially for those who have hurt you. I totally understand that concern – I thought about that

while I was on the Cross. But then I remembered that I was on the Cross for *everyone* – even the ones that may have hurt you. They need to be forgiven and healed every much as you did. I can do that, but I need you to bring them to Me. I know that’s a scary thought, but remember, with Me, you have nothing to fear. Not only am I your Deliverer, but also I am your Savior and Defender.

Instead of thinking what you don’t have this Christmas, think about what I have given you. It was My joy to give it all to you, and I plan on continuing to reveal more and more of what I’ve given you for the rest of your life until I call you home. It’s ok to tell people who want to give you something what you don’t have. Maybe, though, after you give them that information, give them what you *do* have – Me – by loving them as I have and always will love you.

Merry Christmas to you,  
Jesus.

Let’s pray.