
“The Beauty Of A Discerning Woman”

1 SAMUEL 25:1-35

MARCH 1, 2026

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AT A GLANCE

David was moments away from bloodshed when God intervened — through Abigail. In this message from 1 Samuel 25, we explore how God used a discerning, humble woman to restrain an impulsive leader and preserve His purposes. This passage highlights the beauty of complementarian design, the power of respect and blessing, and the importance of a clear conscience. Abigail reminds us that godly leadership is not weakened by wise counsel — it is strengthened by it.

Every David needs an Abigail discerning enough to intervene. And every Abigail needs a David humble enough to listen.

THE STORY OF ABIGAIL, BEAUTIFUL & DISCERNING

Verse 1 says, *“Now Samuel died.”* An era ends in a single sentence. The prophet is gone. The spiritual father of David is buried. The man who anointed him, guided him, and covered him in prayer is no longer there. David is still hunted. Still displaced. Still living in caves. But now he is grieving too.

And when grief meets pressure, and pressure meets pride, even a godly man can unravel quickly. A bruised ego. A foolish insult. Four hundred swords strapped on. David — the future king — is seconds away from becoming Saul. And God stops him. Not with a prophet. Not with a vision. Not with a thunderbolt from heaven. God stops him with a woman.

Today we are going to behold one of the most remarkable interventions in Scripture — the moment when a discerning woman stepped into the path of an impulsive man and kept him from wrecking everything. This is the story of Abigail, a woman beautiful and discerning.

END OF AN ERA

Verse 1 Now Samuel died. And all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah.

The spiritual father of David died and was buried in the place of the prophets – Ramah – a place of spiritual shelter for David. It’s the end of an era for David. What happens next does not seem coincidental.

Then David rose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. Seems risky for David to be at such a prominent occasion given the circumstances. But perhaps he did since **all Israel assembled and mourned.** Now David moves to the **wilderness of Paran.**

In **verses 2-12** the narrator explains a situation in which David sends some of his men to a rich man named Nabal in the region of Maon. While David and his men were in the region they protected Nabal’s shepherds and flocks. A festival time came up so David sent his men to Nabal to ask for a

gratuitous offering of some food to celebrate. Compared to the thousands of goats and sheep David and his men protected, what's a handful to help his men enjoy the feast?

A BRUISED EGO

Though it says David sent them **in his name** with a threefold peace offering: **Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have, (verse 6)** Nabal responds rather selfishly. **“Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse...” (verse 10)**

Nabal doesn't seem all that grateful for what David did to preserve his wealth because Nabal is an idiot. And now David is enraged.

Verse 13 And David said to his men, “Every man strap on his sword!” And every man of them strapped on his sword. David also strapped on his sword. And about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.

Let's just acknowledge this for what it is – Impulsive. Erratic. Egotistical. David would come to see this, too. How he gets there is really the point of this story.

ABIGAIL, BEAUTIFUL AND DISCERNING

Enter the **beautiful** and **discerning Abigail**.

In **verses 14-17** one of Nabal's men went to Nabal's wife, Abigail, and told her what was going on and how David had been protected Nabal's interests. He asked Abigail to think of something because Nabal was a hard-head no one could get through to. This is where the story really gets interesting.

Verses 18-20 Abigail springs to action and prepares rations for David's 600 men - **two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys. (verse 18)** Can we take a second to acknowledge that preparation? Wow.

In **verses 21-22** the narrator sets the scene and lets us know exactly where David's heart and mind were. **Now David had said, “Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him, and he has returned me evil for good. ²² God do so to the enemies of David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him.”**

David's intent was clear – kill 'em all. Just. Like. Saul.

A MOST INCREDIBLE INTERVENTION

Now let's read one of the most incredible interventions by a woman recorded in scripture. The impact of her actions cannot be overstated. God used a woman named Abigail to keep David from becoming another Saul.

Now, I have a daughter named Abigail. And I have asked Abigail if she would be willing to play the part of her namesake and read for us Abigail's message to David.

Verses 23-24 **When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground. ²⁴ She fell at his feet and said...**

Verses 24-31 **“On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. ²⁵ Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent. ²⁶ Now then, my lord, as the LORD lives, and**

as your soul lives, because the LORD has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal. ²⁷ And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. ²⁸ Please forgive the trespass of your servant. For the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live. ²⁹ If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the LORD your God. And the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling. ³⁰ And when the LORD has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince over Israel, ³¹ my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord working salvation himself. And when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant.”

At 299 words in English and 153 in Hebrew, this is one of the longest speeches by a woman in the Old Testament and longer than most prophetic rebukes period.

To begin with, Abigail asks forgiveness for her foolish husband’s trespasses. She honors David’s authority. She blesses him. She speaks a word of protection in the Lord over his life. She pronounces judgment on his enemies. Then she appeals to the spirit of God in David by appealing to his conscience.

DAVID HONORS ABIGAIL

And it worked! Listen to the words of David as he publicly honors Abigail.

Verses 32-35 And David said to Abigail, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! ³³ Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand! ³⁴ For as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male.” ³⁵ Then David received from her hand what she had brought him. And he said to her, “Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice, and I have granted your petition.”

David **obeyed** the **voice** of a woman and honored her in front of all his men with a three-fold blessing. Remarkable. Why did he do it? Because this woman spoke words of discretion. Words of honor. Words of restraint.

Abigail appealed to the best version of David – and brought that man out of him. It’s no wonder David asked her to be his wife when Nabal died. But we’ll get to that.

This passage presents for us the beauty, wisdom, and power of a woman with discernment. Abigail matters in the story of redemption. Likely more than we could possibly understand. What does that speak to the power of a godly woman’s voice?

This passage does not overturn New Testament teaching on headship.ⁱ Abigail did not become king because David obeyed her voice. But it absolutely teaches that God uses discerning women to restrain impulsive men. So let’s consider what made her intervention so powerful.

Let’s begin with...

HUMILITY AND AUTHORITY

Some women believe they have something to say, something laid upon them by the Lord, but they refuse to submit to proper authority. They usurp it. “I am woman, hear me roar!” They reject God’s created order. Because God has given them wisdom, they feel they must be heard no matter the context, no matter the structure, no matter what. Any limitation is viewed as chauvinistic and wrong. But Abigail submitted to authority, she didn’t usurp it.

She, like Sarah to Abraham, called David **lord**. Not like Jesus is Lord, but like *sir*. Abigail respectfully submitted to David. Discerning women understand how important respect is to men.

When men speak to one another, it’s all about respect. When a man speaks to me with respect, he immediately gets elevated in my mind. It’s involuntary. If a man treats me respectfully, I respect him.

On the other hand when a man speaks with disrespect, or with bravado trying to one-up, it’s hard not to see that as a sign of insecurity.

It’s not about superiority and inferiority. Respectful men are respectable men. And respect is central to this story.

Do you think I’m exaggerating? David was about to kill Nabal’s entire family because Nabal disrespected him. He’d have been wrong to do it, but women please hear this for what it is. Men crave respect.

If you want to bruise your husband, fiancé, or boyfriend, or moms your sons, speak disrespectfully to them. Emasculate them. Scold them. Mock their attempts to lead. Discredit their masculine impulses. Be critical that they do not think, speak, or act like you.

Point out their failures publicly. Make it known to them and others how disappointed you are in them. Disrespect erodes men.

But if you want to inflate their hearts, speak words of respect. I helped Kellye see this as Hudson entered adolescence, which is a hard transition. Boys’ bodies are being flooded with testosterone which makes them impulsive, adventurous, dangerous, risk-takers who are sometimes jerks, and often irresponsible. And moms it drives you nuts!

This boy, who you trained so well suddenly becomes...reckless. And you may feel the instinct to put him back in his place. Don’t get me wrong, you’re still his authority. But the way you address him needs to change if you want to shape his masculinity rather than crushing it.

This is how I helped Kellye understand how to speak to our son. I told her to say things like, “Son, godly men do not disrespect women and they do not disregard authority. When you talk back to me or when you disobey me, you are dishonoring God and your dad.”

“Son, I see that you tried really hard today and you had some disappointing moments, but godly men don’t stay in the dirt. They rise and they repent and they drive on.”

“Son, what you did today makes me so proud to be called your mom. The way you handled your responsibilities and managed yourself today was exactly what godly men, like your dad, do.”

You speak that kind of language to your sons and you watch that boy become a godly man. God has given you incredible power in your words.

It’s no different with your husband, fiancé, or boyfriend. Deep down every man wants to be respected by his peers. But *way* more than that, he wants to be respected by his wife.

A man can put up with a lot of disrespect from other people. We can tolerate it when coworkers disregard us, mock us, avoid us, whatever. But when we come home to a wife who genuinely respects us, man, that's healing and life-giving. It's balm. You become a place of nurture and refuge. You help stabilize us. In the end, that's what David was trying to do – reset the respect equilibrium. “Nabal disrespected me. I'm going to show him I'm a man that deserves respect!”

You have the opportunity, not obligation, to help your husband or your son reset the respect equilibrium.

We also ought to acknowledge that Abigail asked forgiveness, which brings us to the second point.

FORGIVENESS AND BLESSING

This is something godly men and women should do regularly and easily. We shouldn't need a whole lot of prompting to say, “I'm sorry.” Abigail didn't come with claws out or shrieking like an emotional Karen. She came to David and apologized. **On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. (verse 24)**

We can all begin hard conversations by asking forgiveness for something because none of us is perfect. And it's a powerful way to disarm someone who is emotionally stirred up. This isn't about manipulation. People see through that. But when you genuinely apologize, that has a powerful effect. It makes you much more trustworthy. It was incredibly discerning of Abigail to lead off with an apology.

After seeking forgiveness, she began to bless David. She spoke good over his life. She prayed for David's protection, victory, and a clear conscience.

What man doesn't want to hear a woman tell him he's fighting the Lord's battles?

To hear a woman speak positively of his leadership?

To hear a woman speak words of divine protection?

I'll say it again, women you have so much more power over a man's life than you imagine. And you give it all away when you try to wield it like a sword in control. People lose authority when they weaponize it.

Your husband, your fiancé, your boyfriend, your son, needs to hear these prophetic words coming from your mouth: you're doing to the Lord's work, you're leading us after Jesus, you're a godly man, the Lord is your refuge and strength. These are words of honor that appeal to his warrior spirit.

HONOR AND WARRIOR SPIRIT

Perhaps what Abigail did best was appeal to David's sense of right and wrong. She appealed to his conscience. She knew that David was a godly man and she called out to him, even while that godly man was being suppressed by the rage in his heart.

She didn't rebuke David for violence. She rebuked David for misplaced violence. She *blessed* David's military endeavors. She even called it **fighting the Lord's battles**. This speaks to what I call a man's warrior spirit. We want to fight for a noble cause. We want our lives to count for something honorable. Abigail called out to the man deep within David's heart with words that reminded him of who he is and what his purpose was.

Can you imagine, women, the power of your husband hearing you speak these words?

Sincerely apologizing first sometimes?

Speaking prophetically over his life – blessing him in his work as he fights the Lord’s battles to provide for his family with integrity and hard work...

Pleading the Lord’s protection of his mind and his body...

Speaking powerfully over his heart to be a man with no pangs of conscience because he’s resisting temptation? That he’d come home today with a clear conscience.

I spoke last week of the power of a clear conscience. I’ll speak to it again. It’s a game-changer. You’re not responsible for keeping his conscience clear, but sisters, these words from your mouth have impact on his heart to inspire him to do what is right. Not by nagging, but by honoring.

Imagine blessing your husband or son as he picks up his bag and walks out the door to conquer the enemies of his world – even if they’re just spreadsheets, deadlines, and cold-calls!

Imagine him walking back in at the end of the day like a warrior with a clear conscience who did what he was supposed to do to honor the Lord and to honor you? Is that overly sentimental? I don’t think so. I think it’s created order.

When you submit to his authority and speak words of respect, when you readily apologize and pronounce blessings over your man’s life, and when you call out to his warrior spirit with honor language, you will see this godly man that your soul longs for come to life to the glory of Christ.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The complementarian view says that man is head of his wife, but is not complete without her. If ever there were a man complete in Himself, it is Christ.

Yet Christ chose to enter creation through a woman’s womb.

Nursed at his mother’s breast.

And was supported in ministry by women.

Unlike David, Christ never needed to be restrained from sin. But like David, He publicly honored discerning women.

He affirmed Mary for choosing the better portion.

He honored Mary of Bethany for her anointing.

He praised the Canaanite woman for her “great...faith.”

And He appeared to Mary Magdalene first after the resurrection.

In His life, Christ defended women, commended them, restored them, and entrusted them.

Jesus died for women.

Jesus rose for women.

Jesus calls women to follow Him and use their gifts in His service.

And often that gift looks like Abigail: a discerning woman who speaks into the life of a man and providentially keeps him from wreaking everything for everyone.

Every David wants an Abigail – a woman with beautiful discernment. And every Abigail wants a David — a man humble enough to say: **I have obeyed your voice.**

Men — cherish the discerning voices God places in your life. Both here at church and in your home.

Single men – don’t settle for less than an Abigail. But be the type of man an Abigail delights to marry.

Women, married or single, moms and wives — study Abigail. Ask God for that kind of discernment to speak words of life to the men in yours.

Let's praise the Lord that He often preserves His purposes by placing discerning women in the path of impulsive men.

Church, behold the beauty of a discerning woman.

ⁱ Whatever we say about headship in the home, we must consider passages such as this. Abigail was married to Nabal, even if the reader knows it's only for a few more verses. She proved herself to be a discerning woman when she treated her husband like the complete fool he was and disregarded his decisions. This is certainly not the rule, it is an exception. And the force of this story is not Abigail and Nabal's relationship as Abigail and David's yet future one. She refers to him repeatedly as lord, which can also be translated, "my husband." God will demonstrate that both Abigail and David acted honorably in this story.