

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22-23

Lesson 6

Kindness and Gentleness

Abigail Is Wise

1 Samuel 25:2-42

After David killed Goliath, the people of Israel showed him more respect than King Saul. This made Saul so jealous that he was motivated to kill David. David fled from the palace and took refuge in the wilderness. David had a small army of men that went with him. As they moved from place to place they would find farmers and shepherds who were willing to share their food. In return for food, David and his men would protect the shepherds land from their enemies. Nabal, a rich sheep farmer living near Carmel, was among the shepherds who had his land protected. During sheep shearing time, David asked Nabal for supplies. Nabal rudely refused.

Introduction

Kindness and gentleness are Christian virtues. When one possesses them, they are said to be courteous. To lack in courteous behavior is to lack in love. A Christian that does not show love does not have God in his life. This is a lesson about two opposites. Nabal the rich shepherd who was rude, and Abigail, his wife who was a clever, kind and gentlewoman.

Progression of Events

Sheep throughout Bible times were an important part of life for almost every Israelite. There were many uses for sheep. A few products that would come from sheep were wool for yarn and fabric to make clothing, sheepskin for tents and of course food. The sheep were used for sacrifices and were a major part of the Passover meal (Exodus 12:3-

11). Once a year, in the spring, sheep are sheared for their wool. During Bible times, after the shearing was done, a festival would be held, celebrating a prosperous year.

- Nabal was a man in Maon who owned land in Carmel and was a descendant of Caleb. Caleb was one of the spies Moses sent to find out about the people and the land of Canaan. Nabal was a wealthy, harsh and evil man. He owned three thousand goats and a thousand sheep. He did not deserve his wife Abigail. Abigail was beautiful, sensible, well spoken, a capable manager and looked beyond herself and her own happiness.
- David heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep, so he sent ten of his men up to Carmel to greet Nabal in his name. "And thus you shall say to him who lives in prosperity: Peace be to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have" (1 Samuel 25:6). The young men were also instructed to let Nabal know that David and his men never hurt his shepherds, nor did they steal from him. In other words, David was letting Nabal know that he was partly responsible for his prosperity because he and his men had protected his work force.
- The young men did as David instructed. Nabal answered: "Who is David and who is the son of Jesse?"

There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?" Now at first glance you may want to side with Nabal. After all, Nabal did not ask that David and his men protect his men and his animals, so why should Nabal be hospitable? Our customs today do not require the same hospitality as they did then. Simple hospitality then required that when asked one should feed the traveler. In this case, there would not be a hardship. The name Nabal means fool and by his reply to David's men he was aptly named.

- The young men returned to David and told him how rude Nabal had been. David said, "Every man gird on his sword" (verse 13). David girded on (picked up) his sword along with four hundred other men leaving two hundred men behind to protect their supplies.
- A young man that worked for Nabal told Abigail, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he insulted them. But these men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them when we were in the fields. They were our defenders both by night and day. What can we do now, for harm is determined against our master and against his entire household? For he is such a scoundrel that one cannot speak to him" (verses 14-17).
- "Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs (about two gallons) of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys. She

said to her servants, 'Go on before me; see I am coming after you.' She did not tell her husband, Nabal" (verses 18, 19).

Climax

- As Abigail rode on the donkey, she met David and his men. She quickly got off the donkey and fell at David's feet and bowed to the ground before him and said: "My lord, on me let this iniquity be! Please hear the words of your maidservant. Please do not pay attention to this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he; folly is with him. But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men you sent. I beg of you not to shed blood nor avenge yourself upon your enemy. The Lord will fight your battles even as you fight the battles of the Lord. In the day of your triumph I ask that you remember your maidservant" or read (verses 24-31). David, the wise man that he was stopped to listen to what Abigail had to say. Why did Abigail's words calm David?

- What reasons did Abigail give David for not attacking her husband?
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- David said to Abigail, "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel who sent you this day to meet me. 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. Had you not come, I would surely have slain Nabal and all his household" (or read verses 32-34).

- David accepted her gifts and said: “Go in peace to your house. See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person.” Have you ever seen kind and gentle words and /or actions solve a situation? Explain.

Conclusion

- Abigail returned to Nabal who was holding a feast in his house. Nabal was drunk so Abigail did not tell him what had happened with David. The next morning, when Nabal was sober Abigail told him what had happened. Nabal’s heart was faint and he became like a stone. Ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.
- When David heard 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” (verse 39). David sent for Abigail, proposing marriage.
- When Abigail heard of David’s proposal, she bowed her face to the ground and said: “Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.”
- Abigail mounted her donkey, taking five young girls with her, and went with the messengers of David she became his wife.

Kindness And Gentleness

Abigail changed the course of history with her kind and gentle nature She was a wise, generous and humble woman whose gentleness stopped David’s sword and reversed his course of action. David showed Abigail gentleness by listening to what she had to say. Treating others with dignity and respect is treating them with gentleness. Kindness and gentleness show compassion toward others. Jesus did not ignore little children, He allowed women to listen and learn at His feet. He didn’t reject sinners. We need to strive to treat others as Jesus would.

Memory Verse

“Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand” (Philippians 4:5).

Answer the following questions:

1. Who was Nabal?

2. Who was Abigail?

3. What does Nabal mean?

4. How did Nabal live up to his name?

5. Explain why Nabal should have fed David and his 600 men.

6. We should be generous to those who help us even if we are not obligated by the law. True or False

7. How did Abigail show wisdom?

8. What did Abigail say that calmed David's anger?

9. What reason did Abigail give David for not attacking Nabal?

10. What is the lesson for us from Abigail's words and actions?

11. What did Abigail do to show her humbleness?

12. How did God avenge David?

13. Abigail had the ability to look beyond a crisis and see the big picture. Do you try to use your skills in times of trouble to promote peace? Explain.

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Lesson 6 Map

