



Abigail, The Fool, and The King – A Short Study

Setting The Stage

Women had a tough time in the old days. In many cultures, the men had options and women stayed home. Abigail, in the Old Testament, was no exception to that general rule. She was married to an insensitive brute who cared more about power and partying than he cared for his family, servants or business partners. It seemed Abigail ran the ranch and she was respected by all who knew her. Nabal, her husband, was truly fortunate to have a smart, compassionate and beautiful wife. She saved his hide as well as the lives of those on the estate from the wrath of a future king after Nabal managed to insult him.

Consider what has changed in relationships of all kinds over the centuries. Has our behavior, or reactions, changed much? Have confrontations improved? Do families still struggle with the same issues as in Abigail's story? How about your own story as you may be struggling to live uprightly, do good and walk with God?

I hope you will be encouraged by Abigail's story. There is always hope as God upholds those who desire to be obedient to Him.

The Fool and the Bands of Young Men

During David's time in the Old Testament land owners and shepherders depended on bands of young men who protected their lands, livestock and servants. At harvest, the landowners paid their young guards. It was a gentlemen's agreement.

One season, David sent his representatives to Nabal to collect their earnings. Nabal not only did NOT honor the agreement, but he scorned David's men and insulted David before sending them away empty handed. "Who is David and why should I pay him with MY goods?" The young men went away angry and informed their leader of their grievances.

This business meeting turned into a nasty confrontation.

What ramifications could this stir up?
How did it show Nabal's character?
Is there a way to redeem such an error in judgment?



Fixing the Problem

After Nabal insulted David when he sent his representatives to be paid for the services rendered to Nabal, things went downhill fast. That business meeting invited disaster for Nabal. David, highly inflamed, ordered his men to gird on their swords with the intention of annihilating all those they had just spent a season protecting. Too bad Nabal didn't think of everyone in his employ before delivering those insults.

However, a servant approached Abigail, Nabal's wife. We are told that she was beautiful and wise. It appears she was the one who really ran the ranch. The servant did not mince words as he told Abigail what her fool husband had done. He went on to say everyone and everything was now in mortal danger and expected her to make it right. How interesting.

What kind of servant approaches the boss's wife behind the boss's back?
What kind of servant calls it like it is (Nabal is a fool) without fear of reprisal?
What does that say about Nabal?
What does that say about the servant?
What does that say about Abigail?

The Danger

Because of the brave servant who came to Abigail, after Nabal's insults led to David's war march to the ranch, she was able to rush into the breach.

Abigail wasted no time. As soon as the servant told her the situation, she started shouting orders to those in her household. "You - bring the roasted meat. You - bring the fresh baked bread. You - bring the fruit..." Like the businesswoman she was - she brought all the gifts to David and his men that Nabal should have offered.

She faced danger head on.

Ahead of the gifts, she knelt before David in the road to ask forgiveness for Nabal's attitude and even likened him to a fool, as his name means. She then confronted David with God's plan for his future and David possibly messing it up. She stopped a bloodbath and brought David to his senses. He would be King one day - did he want revenge - unrighteous blood on his hands?



David raised her and thanked her. He accepted the gifts on behalf of his men.

Should she have called her husband a fool in front of all those men?

Were her suggestions to David appropriate?

Look up David's response to her actions and words. Were they more like the actions of a King?

News Flash

Abigail did NOT confront her foolish husband at first!

No, not until later and saving lives all around the estate as a result. You see, Nabal was busy with a drunken party. Imagine him belly laughing as he held his cup half tipped in the air, declaring how he'd bested those rabble rousers who dared to come to him for pay. No, Abigail did not confront her drunken narcissistic husband while he was partying.

She told him the next day. Imagine this, too.

"Dear, while you were busy sashaying around, I took food and supplies to David's men. They spared our lives."

Hmm, Nabal might have stared at her, face growing red as his anger built, but unable to do anything about it. Because his eyes rolled back in his head as his body slumped to the floor in some sort of stroke or heart attack.

But he didn't die then. No, he got to lay in bed for ten days before his life left him. Did he have a good long time to think about how he'd wronged people? Or did God, in His great mercy, give Nabal that time to talk to Him alone and repent of all his evil deeds?

The question everyone asks – Should she have gone behind Nabal's back to fix the situation?

She wasn't the one responsible for the situation, yet she made it right. Still...was she right to go behind his back?

Not only in going to David, but also in not clearing it with Nabal first?

Or was this more of a thoughtful timing issue for the greater good of all?

Might Abigail have been a real hero?



The Rewards

We have seen that Nabal, Abigail's foolish husband, died of said folly. In that culture, a woman did not own property. That was the privilege of her husband. The home that Abigail had run for some years was no longer hers. A relative of Nabal would come to claim the ranch, the livestock, the slaves and even Abigail herself. She could find herself as the wife of another fool. Or she could find herself the servant of a new mistress in the home where she had been mistress.

Remember that the servants respected and loved Abigail. How would that go over with the new mistress? Abigail was not looking at a great future prospect.

David sent her a marriage proposal. Considering that David already had wives, why do you suppose Abigail was so quick to take him up on his offer of marriage? Wasn't that going from the frying pan to the fire?

That's what I thought when I first read her story. But, as I came to understand the situation, it seems to me that she made a very wise choice. And she hurried to vacate the premises as well.

Did this showcase David's generosity in repaying his debt to her? I believe it did. It gave her reward for her wisdom, integrity and community respect the rest of her life. As a wife of the king, she would be well treated. She and David also had a son, which removed her shame as a barren woman as well. I like to think that David consulted with her on world affairs because of her wisdom.

What can we conclude?

Confronting someone or even a situation is a difficult task, but perhaps lives may depend upon it.

How do you prepare to confront someone?

How well do you "read" the people involved?

Do you consider a redemptive kind of result?

Does God reward us when we obey Him?

Ponder it.