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ABIGAIL: INTERVENING FAITH



Who's someone you want in your corner when trouble is brewing?

QUESTION #1

THE POINT

Honor Christ by stepping in to help resolve conflict.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

It's always good to have someone in your corner. Emma has Molly. Emma is the family dog. She's a small Yorkiepoop who's naïve, carefree, and often unaware of her surroundings.

Molly is the other dog in our family. She's the "nanny" for our family because she makes sure everyone is where they need to be—even making stops at night to ensure everyone is in their beds. Molly is a comforter, but she is also a protector.

When we moved to a house with a large unfenced lot, both dogs began exploring their new territory. One of our neighbor's sixty-pound dogs ran over to meet five-pound Emma, and Molly sprang into action, positioning herself directly between the smaller Emma and the imposing bigger dog. Molly is not a big dog herself, but she willingly put herself in harm's way in order to protect Emma.

Some might think it's none of our business if we choose to be like Molly and try to prevent a conflict from escalating. One woman in the Old Testament, though, showed us that we can make a positive difference when we do.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 Samuel 25:2-3,14-17

² A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel. ³ His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite.

¹⁴ One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. ¹⁵ Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. ¹⁶ Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them. ¹⁷ Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."

What a contrast between this husband and wife! While Abigail was "intelligent and beautiful," Nabal was "surly and mean." In other words, Abigail was levelheaded while her husband was a knucklehead. This may sound like a classic case of "opposites who attract," but in Eastern culture, it was more likely their marriage was arranged. Abigail probably didn't have a say in her marriage to Nabal, whose name literally means "fool."

By contrast, Abigail was intelligent. This was more than "book smarts." The Hebrew word for "intelligent" is tied to "good." Abigail showed emotional wisdom and maturity in the way she responded to the situation in this chapter. She was able to discern what was true and right, and that was also coupled with insight on how she should act.

What impresses you about Abigail in these verses?

QUESTION #2

David sent some of his men to offer greetings, hoping for some kind of gift in return for protection they had provided to Nabal's shepherds in the wilderness. Instead, Nabal sent them back to David with nothing—a sign of selfishness and foolishness.

For all the good things we know of David, in this moment, his reaction was not good. His goal became retaliation—revenge on Nabal and his entire family. His kindness to Nabal's men was not being repaid in kind, so in a move that may seem out of character for David, he led about four hundred of his men back toward Carmel to pay back evil with harm.

For David to have been driven to retaliation is further evidence that Nabal had gone too far in the way he had dealt with David's men. It would take a wise woman to avoid disaster.



1 Samuel 25:23-28

²³ When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground.

²⁴ She fell at his feet and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say.

²⁵ Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal.

He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly goes with him. And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my lord sent. ²⁶ And now, my lord, as surely as the LORD your God lives and as you live, since the LORD has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal. ²⁷ And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you.

²⁸ "Please forgive your servant's presumption. The LORD your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the LORD's battles, and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live."

How can we know whether it is best to intervene in a conflict or to stay out?

QUESTION #3

PEACEMAKING

Use the acrostic below to list attributes you see in Abigail that helped her be a peacemaker. Then answer the question.

P

E

A

C

E

What are some ways you can further develop qualities or be better postured to live as a peacemaker?

"He that is not a son of Peace
is not a son of God."

—RICHARD BAXTER

Abigail's encounter with David is one of the most remarkable encounters between a man and a woman in Scripture. Some might even call it scandalous in light of their culture. Yet, Abigail approached the situation with wisdom, humility, resourcefulness, generosity, and courage.

Abigail quickly prepared a large amount of food, the gift Nabal should have given in the first place. Then as soon as she saw David, Abigail humbled herself before him even before she spoke. Bowing before David showed humility and respect, as well as a plea for mercy. It was only after establishing her humility before him that she spoke. (This is the longest speech by a woman in the Old Testament.) As she spoke, Abigail did four notable things.

- ▶ **She interceded on behalf of her husband.** In her confession, Abigail implied that she should have been watching out for her husband's welfare.
- ▶ **She asked for forgiveness.** Even as she accepted the blame for Nabal's offense, she asked for forgiveness.
- ▶ **She prophetically revealed David's destiny.** Abigail shared her understanding of God's purpose and plan for David to become the ruler over Israel.
- ▶ **She sought to prevent David from bringing judgment on himself.** Abigail softened David's heart and his desire for retaliation. Knowing the Lord had chosen David as the next king, she encouraged David to put the incident in perspective of his greater future.

Since ancient times, treaties have been crucial tools for diplomacy between nations. The Treaty of Paris, signed in 1783, ended the American Revolutionary War. It not only helped establish the United States, but it did so with many favorable terms. Led by top-notch negotiators John Jay, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams, they convinced the British that a strong and prosperous America would be in their best interest against the French, which later enabled the United States to expand westward.

Abigail became the negotiator that would confirm David's future as well as her own. Conflict is inevitable, but God seeks to use godly and wise people to intervene and bring reconciliation in the midst of conflicts. Every believer can be an intercessor through prayer, but we also may be called to be a humble mediator for others.

1 Samuel 25:32-35

³² David said to Abigail, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. ³³ May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. ³⁴ Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak." ³⁵ Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, "Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request."

Abigail's generosity and eloquence of speech penetrated the heart and actions of David. She gave away part of the family fortune, acted as a person of peace, and saved the day for everyone. Both challenged and encouraged by Abigail's words, David responded with a threefold blessing.

- 1.** David blessed the Lord for working in Abigail's heart and sending her to him.
- 2.** David blessed Abigail's discernment. He praised her for her perceptiveness and good judgment.
- 3.** David blessed Abigail for stepping in and preventing him from taking bloodshed and avenging himself.

God would act on behalf of both Abigail and David. He would be the avenger of Nabal's foolishness by striking him dead days later (vv. 37-38). This reminds us God will bring justice in His time. He will act on our behalf when we follow Him.

Scripture makes frequent references to living in one accord. God's people must pursue peaceful living and reconciliation, understanding our differences and asking for forgiveness whenever conflict exists. When unity happens among God's people, He is glorified and the body of Christ is strengthened.

How does engaging in peacemaking honor Christ?

QUESTION #4

How can God use our group to intervene on behalf of others?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

Honor Christ this week by asking Him to help you develop a faith that intervenes and preserves unity. Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Pray.** Pray for someone in your life who is dealing with conflict. Ask the Lord to intervene.
- ▶ **Give permission.** Give someone permission to step in whenever you are on the verge of a bad decision.
- ▶ **Step in.** Is the Lord asking you to intervene for someone else? Spend time reading Scripture that mentions unity in the body and pray for God to give you humility as you mediate.

It's tough to know when to get involved in a situation and when it is right to stay out of it. But with God's help, we can often intervene as His agents and bring the light of the gospel to bear.

My thoughts

