David, Abigail, Nabal

History tells us that the political situation in Israel when 1 Sam. 25 was written was pretty bleak. The nation was ruled by God as the supreme authority. There was no king. God's will was made known to the people by a series of judges. Many of the judges were corrupt and the people cycled between worshipping heathen gods, being punished, coming back to God and then repeating the dreary cycle all over again.

Samuel was a good judge. When he turned the office over to his two sons they turned out to be so dishonest that the people came to Samuel and demanded a king.

Samuel and God had several conversations and God told Samuel to anoint Saul the son of Kish as King.

Saul wasn't a very good king. He started well. He was tall, handsome and for a while he appeared to be following God's ways.

He was soon to reveal his true nature. He was driven by self-interest. Much more interested in himself and his dynasty than in following God's will.

There was a period of warfare with Israel's enemies. Then Saul disobeyed God when he was told to destroy Amalek.

God removed his hand of blessing from him. For several years Saul and his army attempted to find and kill David.

David had entered into a blood covenant with Saul's son Jonathan.

David and his band hid in caves and dens in the barren hills and deserts of Judea trying to keep body and soul together while they avoided Saul and his men.

Several times David passed up opportunities to kill Saul. He refused, saying, "He is God's anointed king. I will not kill him."

Then Samuel died. And in 1 Sam. 25 we have the story of Nabal and Abigail.

Nabal was rich, prosperous and rude.

Abigail was intelligent and beautiful.

Talk about beauty and the beast or opposites attract. This was surely a case of two entirely opposite personalities being married to each other.

Reading between the lines, Nabal was probably rude, ill-tempered, selfish and he probably treated Abigail like dirt.

Abigail, on the other hand, was probably submissive, obedient and gentle.
It was the custom for wealthy farmers like Nabal to contract the protection of their flocks to groups like David's.

It was a win-win for both sides. Nabal's herds and shepherds got protection from predators and thugs.

David's men had something constructive to do. It was customary for the farmer to give gifts to the protectors several times a year as payment for their services.

Sheepshearing time was one of the times David could have expected gifts from Nabal. It was a joyful, festive time. The sheep were sheared. The wool was a source of income and it was normal to throw a party for the help.

David, out in the hills, heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep.

David sent ten men to remind Nabal of the protection they had provided and to ask for gifts.

Nabal reacted in a way they did not expect. "Who is David?" he roared. "There are lots of men running away from their masters these days. How do I know who he is? Why should I take my bread, water and food and give it to an outsider?

"Go on; get out of here!"

David's men returned empty-handed and told him what Nabal had said.

David, reacting in anger, said, "Get your swords!" 400 men joined David on the road to Nabal's encampment.

Meanwhile back at camp one of the men found Abigail and told her what had happened.

Quickly sizing up the situation she ordered 200 cakes of bread, two jugs of wine, five butchered sheep, five measures of roasted grain, 100 clusters of raisins and 200 cakes of figs loaded on donkeys.

Without telling Nabal she started out for David's camp.

David was coming furiously down the mountain. As he came, terrible thoughts tumbled through his mind.

"This man is unfair! I've guarded his flocks all year. Nothing was missing. He has returned my good with evil. I'm going to kill him and every male in the camp!"

As he was thinking these dark thoughts Abigail's little group came around the corner. Dismounting from the donkey she fell on her face before David.

As David was trying to figure it out he heard these words:

"It's my fault! Please let me speak to you and please listen to what I have to say.

"Please don't listen to this worthless man Nabal. I did not see your men come. If I would have known I would have given you gifts. God has restrained you from murder.

"Please accept these gifts.}
"Please forgive my transgressions. 

"I know you are fighting the Lord's battles and evil shall not be found in you all your days.

"Now if you follow through with the murder you are planning, when God makes you king you will suffer from a guilty conscience.

"Please remember me when you become king."

Then, for possibly the first time, David paused and thought about the consequences of his planned actions.

He said, "Praise God for sending you today. Praise God for your good sense. 
"You have kept me from taking vengeance into my own hands.
"Go up to your camp in peace. I have granted your request."

When Abigail got home Nabal was very drunk. Next morning when she told him what she had done he had a stroke-like seizure and ten days later he died.

And for a happy ending for Abigail—Several days later David sent her a proposal and she became his wife.

Let's look at some lessons from these three lives:

David:

First, David reacted in anger.

If Abigail would not have intercepted him David would have murdered all the men of Nabal's household.

Once he would have done that there would have been no way back.
He would have had to live with the guilt for the rest of his life.

So often we are like David.
Something upsets us. We react to it immediately without thinking.
We say horrible things which we don't really mean. The person we are shouting at doesn't know we don't mean them!
You may be a person who does physical things when you are angry.
Throwing things, breaking things, spinning the tires or driving too fast.
We need to realize that when we react like that we are out of control.
We are not being controlled by the Spirit; we are being controlled by the anger.
We are allowing Satan to call the shots in our lives.
The old saying about counting to ten isn't too far off the mark. When we are angry we need to stop and think about the consequences of our acting out. We need to ask God to calm our spirits. We need to remember whose child we are. We need to remember what effect our sin will have on others. We need to think about how our sins of anger offend a holy God. We need to allow God the Holy Spirit to gentle our behavior.

The bombs of World War II are still killing in Europe. They turn up—and sometimes blow up—at construction sites, in fishing nets, or on beaches fifty years after the guns fell silent.

Hundreds of tons of explosives are recovered every year in France alone. Thirteen old bombs exploded in France in 1993, killing twelve people and wounding eleven.

Unexploded bombs become more dangerous with time. With the corrosion inside, the weapon becomes more unstable, and the detonator can be exposed.

What is true of lingering bombs is also true of lingering anger. Buried anger will explode when we least expect it.

Second,

David listened to Abigail.

Because David was willing to listen and change courses disaster was averted. It is so easy for us to form our opinions about things and not listen to any other point of view.

Someone has said, "Some people's minds are like concrete...all mixed up and permanently set."

Think about that a little before you laugh. It is so easy for us to close our minds and not really listen to our brother/sisters.

We are never called to compromise clear doctrine, but we should never be guilty of failing to hear and acknowledge the other's side.

We need to learn to listen. We aren't listening if we are frantically thinking about what our reply will be.

Some people are so opinionated. They have always done it better and bigger.

They always know the best way to do it. They are usually not shy about suggesting that their way be taken.
These kinds of people really can grate on others. Often they are pushy and angry if their way is not taken. You know what's strange about them? They never realize that they are this way.

Everyone else knows, but they are blissfully ignorant.

Let's be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to get angry and slow to push our opinions on others when we aren't asked for them.

David averted disaster by listening to Abigail. We can avert disaster in our personal relationships by being circumspect with our opinions.

Third

David's obedience was rewarded.
David refrained from striking Nabal.
David refrained from striking Saul.

David's situation was not ideal. He was living in the desert with a bunch of outlaws. He was relying on God's provision for their daily sustenance.

He was fleeing from Saul on a daily basis.

He probably thought often of the love around the campfire at the family home. He probably often remembered the rich surroundings that had been his at Saul's palace.

He probably knew God had chosen him to be the next king of Israel.

It probably often seemed to him that God was passing him by.
But God was not asleep—God was in sovereign control.

The day came without David's intervention where Saul was killed.
The nation called him to be king.
He had the sumptuous palace.
He became Israel's famous warrior king, a man after God's own heart.

God will not always reward us here and now for our obedience, but our disobedience is always sin.

Our obedience is always right. His reward for our obedience is an extra blessing.

Fourth...

David was willing to wait for God's timing.

David could have killed Nabal and taken Abigail.
David could have killed King Saul and taken the kingdom.
But he waited for God's timing.
What a lesson for us.
So often we tend to do our own thing.
We run ahead of God without checking to be sure what we plan is His will.

It is so important for us to quietly wait till we discern God's will before rushing ahead. We must not allow this to become an excuse for not moving. There is such a thing as trying to open doors in order to discern God's will, but our blindly rushing headlong into something without hearing from God often leads to disaster.

Many times God can teach us things in His waiting room that we would learn in no other way.

Abigail

Abigail is the picture of an obedient, submissive wife.
She is a perfect picture of Peter's admonition for the wife to be submissive to her own husband so that even if any of them are disobedient to the Word they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives. (1 Peter 3:1).

At first glance Abigail doesn't seem very submissive. But remember that Biblical submission doesn't require the wife to follow her husband's orders to engage in sin.

Abigail was faced with the choice of allowing the great sin of murder to take place or attempting a reconciliation.

Nabal was in no condition for her to present her case to him.
She acted for the good and when Nabal sobered up she informed him of what had transpired. There is no evidence from the text that she acted against his wishes when sin was not involved.

There is something about a submissive wife that God can use to convict the heart of even her unbelieving husband.

It is so hard for us to remember sometimes that sharp, cutting, unkind words will produce just the opposite result we are looking for.

Abigail is our model of submission.

Second...

Abigail accepted Nabal's blame in humility.
She prostrated herself before David.
She had no part in the sin of Nabal or the planned sin of David.
But she was willing to humble herself and accept responsibility.
Many times if we will humbly approach people halfway we can break the impasse and effect a reconciliation.
Abigail was heard because she humbled herself, covered for Nabal and allowed blame to be reflected to herself.
A soft answer turns away wrath.
There is usually more than one side in a dispute.
Scripture tells us "Why don't you even suffer wrong?"
Many times if we approach disputes or personal difficulties with humility God can work in hearts to allow reconciliation.

Third...

Abigail acted decisively and disaster was averted.

You and I need to be in tune with God's Spirit as we encounter various difficulties. We probably won't face the problem Abigail did. When we face a problem we need to seek God's will and when we have His will we need to move with it.
It is so easy to say, "I'm waiting for God to speak to me." That may be legitimate, but we must not allow it to become an excuse for inaction when we clearly know what God is telling us to do.
There may be some area of our lives that God is telling us to change. Maybe it's a sinful habit he is convicting us of.
When we clearly know what God is saying we need to act on it.
Failure to act is sin. God isn't interested in our great works for Him if we are failing to obey Him. God told Saul through Samuel the prophet,

"Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.
23 "For rebellion is as the sin of divination,
And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.1

Let's act decisively when God speaks to us.

Fourth...

Abigail acted as a peacemaker.

Abigail could have reasoned, "He did it. Let him fix it! He will get what's coming to him."

But she graciously sized up the situation and became a peacemaker.

Now we should not become busybodies in other's lives, always meddling where we don't belong, but if we are sensitive to God's Spirit's leading He will give us opportunities to be peacemakers.

We all know lots of people. Often we may be between people with whom we have influence who are involved in a dispute.

Their respect for us and our neutrality may give us a unique ability to mediate the dispute.

We should approach the parties in humility and try to get their separate perspectives on the matter.

Often the parties would be reconciled but there is a misunderstanding which you can set right.

Perhaps you can suggest a face-saving solution which would be acceptable to both. This may be something they would not have seen without your help.

Peacemaking is very rewarding when the parties respond and settle the difference. It can also cause one or both of the parties to misunderstand and resent your efforts. We need to be sure we are following God's leading before we get involved.

We need to be prepared to walk away if it doesn't work.

God calls us to be peacemakers.

Often we can effect positive change in other's lives if we follow his leading. He will instruct us when to get involved and when to walk away as we listen to Him. Sometimes he will ask us to confront in love.

In the mid-1980's, singer Amy Grant's life was not as charmed as it appeared. Troubles in her marriage—her husband Gary's cocaine habit and
their subsequent talk of divorce—left Amy in one of her darkest moments. She remembers:

"For a few days, I just stayed in bed and mourned my life. The only hope I could see was just junking it all, moving to Europe, and starting everything all over again. It was then my sister, in a last-ditch visit, marched up right beside my bed and said, 'Fine, go to Europe, leave it all behind, start your life again. But before you go, tell (my little girl) how you can sing that Jesus can help her through anything in her life, but that he couldn't help you.'"

The words hit home. Amy and Gary began marriage and personal counseling, slowing rebuilding their relationship with each other and with God.

1. **Nabal**

Nabal wasn't a very nice person.

We can pick out several character faults without really trying.

Nabal was stingy. He was a taker not a giver. He begrudged the legitimate payment that David's men had earned.

How do we do at paying our legitimate bills promptly and cheerfully? None of us should be careless with money, but it is a poor testimony for the Christian to be known as a person who will cheat, change the terms of a bargain or take an inordinate amount of time to pay.

The Christian should be fair, honest and easy to deal with. He should be generous and helpful toward those who have less.

At the bottom of this is a spiritual problem. We are greedy. We fail to understand that God owns it all. None of it is ours. He is simply allowing us to manage His funds.

If we are greedy or have too great of a love for money we need to examine our hearts and ask God to give us grateful, sharing hearts.

Someone has said...

All people you know make you happy...some when they come, some when they leave. Some people are winsome and encouraging to be around. When you are in their presence your spirits are always lifted. It is never hard to enjoy yourself when they are there.

Nabal wasn't like that.
Let's try to be the kind of people who encourage, lit up and inspire.

2. Nabal abused food and drink.

Verse 36 tells us Nabal was holding a feast like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him for he was very drunk.

The use of alcohol leads to an impairment of one's thinking. The alcohol takes control of one's speaking and acting. People under the control of alcohol say things they don't mean, do things they don't remember and suffer the consequences when they sober up.

Paul talks about this in Ephesians 5, v. 18 where he says to not be controlled by wine but be controlled by the Spirit.

We may not have Nabal's problem with wine, but we may have his problem with food. Food is put here to sustain our bodies. Eating is an enjoyable experience. Malcolm Smith says "Eating is a celebration".

Because it is so pleasurable we need to guard against its use becoming a hindrance to us.

We need to "eat to live" not "live to eat". As I get older and less active I need to guard against the tendency to simply eat more than I need.

Our bodies are temples of the Living God. The medical people tell us we can shovel our own grave with our fork and spoon! We need to guard against the use of alcohol and the over-consumption of food.

3. Nabal probably didn't treat his wife very well.

This is a bit of an assumption but it's probably not too far off.

Chances are he did not consider her suggestions very much.

Nabal lived in a day when many men treated their wives like property.

We husbands need to remember that our wives have feelings, needs and emotions. We should be sensitive to those needs—We should also not be so stubborn when our wives give us advice.

It's true the man is the head of the house. It's true that he should have the final vote.

It's also true that God has given your wife good sense and discernment.

He was wired her different from you. She can help keep you from making big blunders if you will consider her input.

Nabal was probably abusive, loud and domineering toward Abigail.
The Christian husband should not display this behavior toward his wife.

4. Nabal wasn't a person of integrity.

Nabal didn't pay his obligations; he probably cheated in his business dealings. The Christian man/woman today must be a person of integrity.

All around us the walls of integrity are crumbling.

It is alleged that Jeff Skilling and Ken Lay took the billion dollar world-renowned corporation Worldcom down the tubes because of a lack of integrity.

The political and religious moral scandals of the past few years point to the lack of integrity—

Nearly half (48 percent) of American workers admitted to taking unethical or illegal actions in the past year. USA Today (4/4/97) revealed the top five types of unethical/illegal behavior that workers say they have engaged in over the past year because of pressure:

• Cut corners on quality control
• Covered up incidents
• Abused or lied about sick days
• Lied to or deceived customers
• Put inappropriate pressure on others

Chuck Swindoll writes:

Whether an executive or an apprentice, a student or a teacher, a blue or white collar worker, a Christian or a pagan—rare indeed are those who keep their word. The prevalence of the problem has caused the coining of a term painfully familiar to us in our era: credibility gap. But I know Someone who will keep His word. In fact, He's never broken one promise. There's no credibility gap with Him.

Integrity is really pretty simple.
It is doing what we say we will do when we say we will do it.
It is being faithful to our mate.
It is being honest with our income taxes.
It is being loyal to a friend.
It is taking our standards and doing our actions because of what God's Holy Word tells us to do.

It is about character and what we do when we know no one else will ever know. Integrity is striving to live our lives as close to the pattern set by Jesus Christ as we possibly can.

Bill Gaither writes:

Gloria and I had been married a couple of years. We were teaching school in Alexandria, Indiana, where I had grown up, and we wanted a piece of land where we could build a house. I noticed the parcel south of town where cattle grazed, and I learned it belonged to a 92-year-old retired banker named Mr. Yule. He owned a lot of land in the area, and he gave the same speech to everyone who inquired: "I promised the farmers they could use it for their cattle."

Gloria and I visited him at the bank. Although he was retired, he spent a couple of hours each morning in his office. He looked at us over the top of his bifocals.

I introduced myself and told him we were interested in a piece of his land. "Not selling," he said pleasantly. "Promised it to a farmer for grazing."

"I know, but we teach school here and thought maybe you'd be interested in selling it to someone planning to settle in the area."

He pursed his lips and stared at me. "What'd you say your name was?"

"Gaither. Bill Gaither."

"Hmmm. Any relation to Grover Gaither?"

"Yes, sir. He was my granddad."

Mr. Yule put down his paper and removed his glasses. "Interesting. Grover Gaither was the best worker I ever had on my farm. Full day's work for a day's pay. So honest. What'd you say you wanted?"

I told him again.

"Let me do some thinking on it, then come back and see me."

I came back within the week, and Mr. Yule told me he had had the property appraised. I held my breath. "How does $3,800 sound? Would that be okay?"

If that was per acre, I would have to come up with nearly $60,000! "$3,800?" I repeated.

"Yup. Fifteen acres for $3,800."
I knew it had to be worth at least three times that. I readily accepted. Nearly three decades later, my son and I strolled that beautiful, lush property that had once been pasture land. "Benjy," I said, "you've had this wonderful place to grow up through nothing that you've done, but because of the good name of a great-granddad you've never met."

"A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold." (Prov. 22:1)