

"Pride, Humility, and Points in Between" - 1 Samuel 25

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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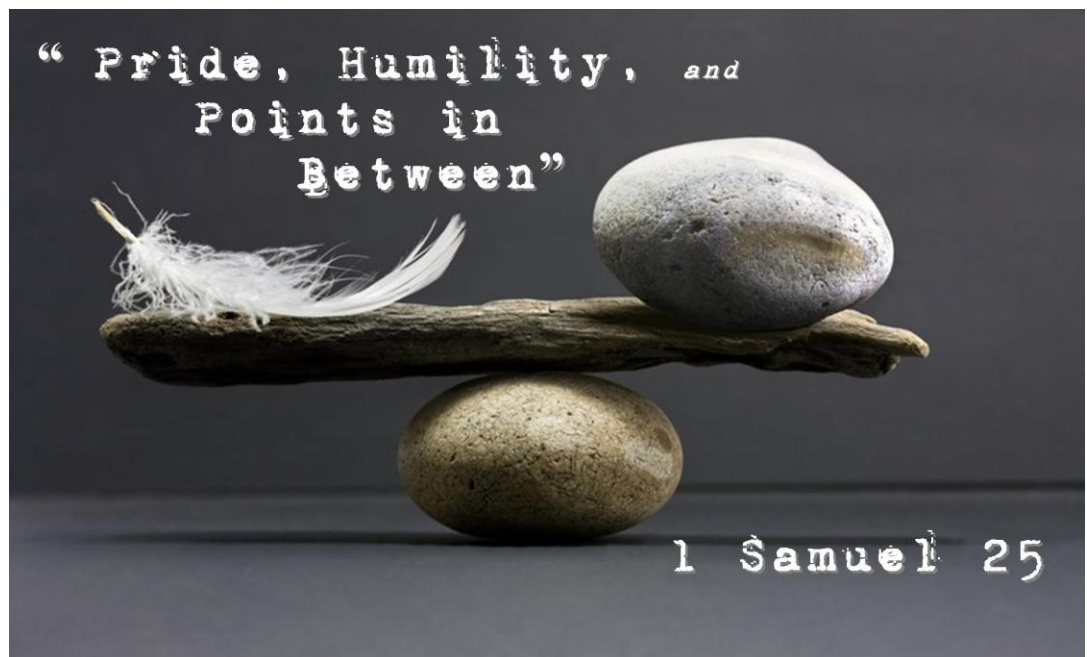
All of us have met or even
know a Nabal. I doubt if
anyone is naming their son

Nabal, as the legacy that he would leave would be one of self-centeredness and prideful arrogance. For a lot of folks, what they *have*, what they *own*, establishes their worth...at least in their own hearts and minds. So Nabal thought he was something great because he owned a lot stuff and had a lot of money. Mankind has never done very well with self analysis and honest personal evaluation!

One would tend to imagine "arranged marriage" here between this Nabal and Abigail. Such was the general practice in that day. So no doubt Abigail had little if anything to say in the fact she ended up as Nabal's wife. But one never knows for sure and a lot of men have changed in the years of their marriage. Maybe Nabal seemed like a great guy at one time? I wish I could say that it was just the arranged marriage that had precipitated this bad situation. But then we would have to ask what was it that caused the same dynamic in marriages that today look ghostly similar to that of Abigail and Nabal. While it certainly is not the focus of this chapter, I would hate to bounce right on by this aspect without comment. Because I am aware of a lot of marriages that somewhere made a wrong turn and resulted in a comparable relationship as this.

I have no doubt that Nabals pride was not born on the wedding altar! I am sure he had had such pride and self-centeredness long before he married Abigail. Maybe he was less likely to have worn it on his shirtsleeve, but the roots of such were there even way back at the beginning. I can't speak for Abigail, but a lot of young women have been 'swept off their feet' by some young man, and sometimes just by the prospect of marriage where, as everyone knows, everything is perfect and always a Cinderella story! I have seen a lot of young people get carried off by the expectation of a Hollywood love story and an idyllic life. But it didn't go down that way. Warning signs were unwillingness to seek marriage counseling, lack of patience-in a hurry, blind to the participation of the people that had loved them and been a part of their lives, refusal to hear anything that might cast a pale on their spouse or upon the pending wedding in general, premarriage sex, etc. A lot of these, like Nabal and Abigail, stay married in quiet desperation, but a lot of them don't.

We have a deep contrast between these two. But you can see that even though Abigail was a great person, she was likely living in the shadow and street cred of this Nabal. Such is still the case so often in our generation. And that fact pales in light of the misery that Abigail will endure along with all the Abigails that will follow. Such an apparently wonderful woman who had lived under the shadow of a cruel and cold man.



Samuel, David's spiritual leader had now died, and as the last of the 'Prophets', his death would usher in the age of the kings. I wish I could tell you that things operated better during this latter period in history, but sadly they did not! Saul also was a man well known and held great respect and power in Israel, but you would never know it by his life nor in his death. Samuel was buried back in his home town, not in some massive memorial in Jerusalem. He didn't need that kind of attention and he never sought it. Saul on the other hand had already built a monument to himself at Carmel. They were two different men, and they led two different lives.

There is a line in Francis Coppola's movie "Apocalypse Now" where Martin Sheen was speaking of Colonel Kurtz...the man he would journey through the whole movie to find and to assassinate. Sheen recalled Kurtz's talent, his education, and his achievements. He then said of Kurtz "*He could've gone for general, but he went for himself instead.*" For his ego was bigger than the military, his aspirations were more grandiose than any service he might have offered to anyone else. A lot of folks have thrown away much with that kind of heart...we certainly have seen that around here. That was Nabal. He was that man.

It appeared that Samuel lived with the full realization that he would one day die. Others of us live on every day as if there will always be another. I have seen these guys. They always seem so shocked and surprised when the end finally came! As if they would beat even death itself!

David sought some neighborly assistance from Nabal, and felt justified in doing so because he had protected Nabal's men when they were in the fields with their sheep. No one made David and his men do this, rather they did so just as a nice gesture. This was not the only time that David risked his own life and those of his men in order to take care of the people around him. He had no obligation to do so. It was apparently just the kind of man he was. But Nabal was apparently not impressed and would not help David with the food and supplies he had asked for. Nabal didn't feel that he owed David anything. You see Nabal was a "taker." Giving was not on the agenda. Nabal had plenty and could have helped David. But for Nabal, it was the principle of the thing. Apparently Nabal would have appeared weak perhaps. And guys like that can't appear weak...

How easily we can act in self-survival mode. Often we move to guard and shore up our own reserves of money, time for ourselves, and possessions. Such is expected from a lost world, but not from a redeemed believer! How can we do so with opened eyes to the real condition of humanity and the needs of the people around us? We reflect Christ, or we reflect the world, the choice is ours! Nabal was in the "Pride Mode."

There is no doubt that Nabal was a man lost in his own self-importance and self-entitlement. But when David was slighted on this matter by Nabal, he too flashed in anger and rose up to defend himself. No doubt this is the hand of Satan. For if he cannot gain your wholehearted premeditated allegiance to his methods, he will attack you with the same in hope of eliciting an equally ungodly response. David forgot that the "heart of man is desperately wicked." But then again, he did not have the New Testament scriptures to read and draw wisdom from! That passage doesn't say the heart of a *lot* of men...or the heart of *most* men, but clearly refers to the heart of *all* men! When David was so slighted by Nabal, his immediate reaction was to lash out and hurt Nabal. A 'taste of his own medicine' in you will! David goes into attack mode and sets out to do Nabal harm. No doubt there would have been significant 'collateral damage' if he had. Generally that is the rule rather than the exception when we fight.

So David...a "man after the heart of God", moves to avenge his own pride and if he had not been intervened...or better, *if he had not allowed himself to BE intervened*, perhaps the story of David today would have been a very different story! The fact is, no matter how well you think you hear from God, we need other people. May we always remember that we are *fallen creatures*! And we seldom hear God as clearly as we should. The Bible is rife with examples wherein God uses other men and women to guide, intervene, shore up, and correct because of that fact. The 'lone ranger' Christian is sure to crash and burn...it is only a matter of time. There are those who believe that they need no one else...that they need no other authority in their lives and no other counsel than the Holy Spirit. We take the mighty 'high road' and claim all we need is God...and how I wish that was true. But it never has been for any one of us and never will be. We are too stubborn, too passionate and emotional. And while I trust the Holy Spirit, I don't so much trust you ...or me for that matter, to hear Him well!

David was lost in the "points in between pride and humility"...and his opportunity for intervention was on its way...

Abigail was brave, apparently fairly wise, and according to scripture, quite beautiful. Having such intelligence, understanding and wisdom made her a perfect candidate to be used by God on this mission of intervention. And while she did not act out of selfish gain, she would gain just the same! Perhaps she was one of the first to come to understand the principle of "*seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you.*" (Matt 6:33)

Abigail...seeing the writing on the wall, jumped into action. She didn't hesitate or wait under the ruse of "I'll just pray about this..." Now that is not to say that prayer and patience is a bad thing! But dealing with truth here is crucial. For many of us know what we need to do, we are just afraid to do it so we lean on the super-spiritual angle and fail to move when we know we are to move! Abigail quickly moved on this and prepared things according to her plan of intervention. She left nothing to chance...she acted in secret so Nabal would not stop her from doing what she needed to do. Abigail was in the "Humility Zone"...

Abigail was not afraid to humble herself. She too had gone to battle...just as David had, except her approach was vastly different than his. There would be no swords or horses or troops...but rather she would win the day with humility and submission. As she went to her knees, most folks would see such as a loss. But ironically it was Abigail that would win that day, and she did it without "firing a shot." She willingly took the blame instead of passing the buck...she stood in the breach in a battle that many would say was not hers to fight. But like David with Saul and Jesus with us, Abigail moved to save the life of one who was unworthy of such action. At great risk to herself, she stood in the gap. The Bible says "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." (James 4:10) And while it appeared Abigail was the loser, she in fact was the winner. God would indeed 'lift her up.'

It has been said that "Pride is concerned with WHO is right, and humility is concerned with WHAT is right." Abigail was the one with Spirit that was motivated by *what was right* when the men were obsessed with *who was right*, and they were willing to go to war to win the argument. I wonder how far we are willing to go? For I have seen a lot of folks trash their finances, their families and marriages, their careers, and whatever else happens to stand in their way in order to win. And after they have thrown everything away, they have lost it all including the original point!

Where are the people of courage and character? Where did we lose these traits from the innate description of a Christian? How we hurt others and slander the name of Christ by our actions while wearing the mantle of Christian. Abigail successfully intervened that day and is often forgotten on the pages of history. I think a lot of us have "abigails" in our lives that have stepped in to save us from disaster and perhaps did so without thanks or gratitude from us even though we were the receivers and the beneficiaries. David did not go and kill Nabal and his boys...but essentially God did! Scripture tells us that "vengeance is God's." Romans 12:19 says "*Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the LORD.*"

Behind every sin we commit is pride. Pride that I don't have to listen....that I don't have to acquiesce and submit...that I don't have to humble myself. We go to our graves and many on to hell thereafter clutching white knuckled to our pride. And the greatest loss...often the *only* loss, is our own. Such is the heart of man, and such is why we need a Savior, and why ultimately, we *need each other*...

But all of this matters little if we cannot hear the warnings...if we cannot just stop and consider that maybe WE are the ones who are wrong. And maybe....maybe...even if we are aren't, in the winning we will lose. It appeared that Jesus was the loser when he went to the cross, but that day He won it all...