

1 Samuel 25

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[0 : 00] 1 Samuel 25 We'll read most of it eventually.

But let me start by reading 1 through 17. Let's read together. 1 Samuel 25 Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah.

Then David rose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. And there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel. The man was very rich. He had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats.

He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was discerning and beautiful, but the man was harsh and badly behaved.

He was a Calebite. David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. So David sent 10 young men. And David said to the young men, Go up to Carmel and go to Nabal and greet him in my name.

[1 : 22] And thus you shall greet him. Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. I hear that you have shearers. Now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm.

And they missed nothing all the time they were in Carmel. Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David.

When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David, and then they waited. And Nabal answered David's servants, Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse?

There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their master. Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where?

So David's young men turned away and came back and told him all this. And David said to his men, Every man strap on his sword. And every man of them strapped on his sword.

[2 : 21] David also strapped on his sword. And about 400 men went up after David, while 200 remained with the baggage. But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, Behold. David sent messengers out of the wilderness to greet our master, and he railed at them.

Yet the men were very good to us. And we suffered no harm, and we did not miss anything when we were in the fields, as long as we went with them. They were a wall to us, both by night and by day, all the while we were with them, keeping the sheep.

Now therefore know this, and consider what you should do, for harm is determined against our master, and against all his house. And he is such a worthless man, that one cannot speak to him.

So there's a common pattern in different cultures, and in different situations, that in order to prepare for greatness, for leadership and responsibility, that you have to go through a period of intense testing.

So in some tribes, there are rituals of when you go from being a boy to becoming a man, where you actually have to go out into the wilderness, and live on your own for a couple days, or go with the other 12 or 13 year olds, or whatever age they do it at.

[3 : 38] We can see this in all kinds of ways. When my dad was growing up, he played high school football, and every August, he had two a days. The most grueling practices in the hottest month of the year.

Practice in the morning, go home, shower, recover. Practice in the afternoon, go home, collapse on the couch, do it all over again the next day. But that's how you prepare for football season, and for winning the championship, hopefully.

Same pattern in the military. You start by going to boot camp, and you don't do anything else, and you don't have hardly any contact with the outside world for six to eight weeks. And somehow you come out of there ready to be a soldier.

Or, since it's Mother's Day, being a mom. The first three months of pregnancy. Morning sickness. You can hardly keep anything down. You're throwing up, nausea.

Then labor and delivery. Then the first few months of having a baby, where you don't sleep more than two hours at once. You see, in order to prepare for the big game, the heroic battle, to being a mom, to be in a great leadership position, we have to be trained and tested and nearly brought to the end of our rope in the wilderness.

[4 : 57] Now, this is what we see happening to David in this section of Samuel. Now, chapter 24 through 26, David's in the wilderness. Several times in each chapter, it talks about David being in the wilderness, right?

In this chapter, it's verse 1, verse 4, verse 14, and verse 21. Four times it says David was in the wilderness. And he's fleeing from Saul, who is trying to kill him. But God is testing and training and preparing him to one day be the king over all Israel.

And through the trials and opposition he faces, God is developing and refining his character. Now, in these three chapters, we see David facing three tests.

If you were here last week, right, Saul comes into the cave where David and his men were hiding. And David's men say, here's your chance. God has delivered him into your hands.

Just kill him. Be done with him. You don't have to deal with him coming after you anymore. You can be king just as God has anointed you to be.

[6 : 01] And David cuts off a corner of Saul's robe and then he says, no, I can't touch him. He's the Lord's anointed. And David prevents his men from attacking Saul.

Instead of taking matters into his own hands, he spares Saul's life. Chapter 26, the next chapter, if you look at the heading in the Pew Bibles, it says David spares Saul again. It's almost a repeat.

We'll look at that a little bit next week. But basically, Saul's camping near where David is hiding. David, again, has the opportunity to kill Saul.

Just be done with him right there and now. When Saul is sort of pursuing him like a maniac and following him wherever he goes and stalking him and hunting him down and wanting to destroy him.

And David again says no. He spares Saul's life again. Now, right in the middle of these two episodes is tonight's story.

[6 : 57] And Saul isn't part of this story at all. But David's in the same situation where he has the opportunity to take matters into his own hands and to repay evil for evil.

And to execute vengeance on an ungodly and very difficult man.

But God in his mercy restrains him. And what God's doing, I think, is he's developing not only self-control, but also mercy in David's heart.

Both of which are crucial character qualities of a good leader and of a king. So tonight, I want to look into this story and see how God was testing David and also how he was restraining David and ultimately preparing him to be a leader.

And we'll also see how God tests us and prepares us and how God restrains us by his grace. So, first, in the verses we've just read, we see God tested David through the foolishness of Nabal.

[8 : 09] If you look down at verse 2, we're introduced to Nabal. And verse 2 describes his business and his possessions.

And that he was shearing his sheep, which was basically throwing a big party where he would also do a lot of business and earn a lot of money. So, it was sort of like saying there was a man from Darien who had a business in Greenwich.

And he was very rich. He owned a BMW and a Lexus and a Porsche and three businesses and four houses. That was sort of what Nabal was like. And he was throwing a big party outdoors for seven days and nights.

Now, interestingly, it tells us all about Nabal's possessions, his stuff, before we even learn his name. And that's appropriate because Nabal was basically defined by his stuff, his possessions.

And we'll see that throughout the story. Verse 3 says his wife was discerning and beautiful, but he was harsh and badly behaved.

[9 : 13] He was a Calebite. That's not a... That just means he was a descendant of Caleb, who was actually a faithful Israelite, one of the faithful spies.

So, it's not a sort of a negative thing. It's basically saying he was descended from a faithful man, and yet he didn't live up to that legacy.

Anyway, so David's in the wilderness. He's barely surviving. He hears Nabal's throwing this big party, right? It happened once a year. You shear your sheep, you get a lot of wool, and you can make all kinds of things with it.

And so, he sends a messenger saying, could you just give us whatever you might have available? Approaches him humbly, respectfully. You know, David wasn't just trying to mooch off Nabal.

Sometimes it might... You might wonder that. He wasn't sort of like going to a college graduation just to steal all the free food, right? And because he had no connection to anyone there, he just knows there's plates and plates of free food, right?

[10 : 16] No, David and his men, as Nabal's servant says in verse 15 and 16, had protected Nabal's men. Right? David and his men were out in the wilderness.

Nabal and his servants were taking care of the sheep out there. And David had treated Nabal right. And David had seen to it that Nabal's men didn't miss anything.

No one stole anything from them. David's men were like security guards and loyal allies to Nabal. Even when...

David really didn't have to do that. You know, and David was in a precarious position himself. But you see him caring for someone else and being loyal to him.

Now, Nabal's response, verse 10 and 11. Maybe you caught it while I was reading it. Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? Now, who does he sound like?

[11 : 15] Sounds like Saul. Doesn't Saul say the same thing? Who is the son of Jesse? That's how he calls David. He doesn't even like to call David by his real name. Nabal goes on.

So I take my bread and my water and my meat that I've killed for my seers. You get it? Nabal's life is all about himself and all about his stuff. And his stuff belongs to him.

And why should he give it to anyone else? Just as Nabal was... Just as David was a faithful servant to Saul and Saul tried to kill him, David was a faithful servant to Nabal.

And Nabal just dissed him. And despised him. He repaid evil for good. Nabal was a little bit like back in Numbers.

Nabal talks about... And in Deuteronomy, it talks about... Numbers 20, Deuteronomy 23. It talks about the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Edomites. And basically, when the people of Israel were going through the wilderness on the way to the promised land, those three groups of people refused to help them.

[12 : 23] In Numbers, they come to the land of the Edomites and they say, Can we just pass through on your highway? We won't drink any of your water. We won't eat any of your food. We won't touch anything that belongs to you.

Can you just allow us to pass through peacefully? And they say, no. Absolutely not. We don't want to do anything for you. Sure, you're in the middle of the desert.

But, no. It's not our business. We're not helping you. You know, they didn't do anything to actively harm the Israelites. Nabal didn't do anything that he actively harmed David.

But he didn't do anything to help David. When David had helped him. In the New Testament, in James. James says, Whoever knows the good that he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

And, in Jesus. Matthew 25. In the parable of the sheep and the goats.

[13 : 28] Remember he says, He says, To the goats. He says, I was hungry. You gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty. You gave me nothing to drink.

I was naked. You didn't clothe me. I was in prison. You didn't visit me. You didn't do anything. And he says, Whatever you didn't do to the least of one of these, my brothers and sisters, you didn't do it for me.

God takes it very seriously when we ignore or disrespect his people who are hurting and helpless. Now, let me just say, that doesn't mean that every guy on the street who walks up to you and says, Can I have five dollars that you should give them money?

In fact, I think many times the most loving thing is not to give them money. Because everybody knows you might just be enabling them in their drug habit.

But, perhaps to spend time getting to know that person. Or to invest some of your time in volunteering at a homeless shelter.

[14 : 36] Or at a soup kitchen. Or investing in people that you can get to know and love and care for. So, it's not saying that you just do everything that everybody asks for you and not be discerning.

But, I think it is saying, particularly if there is somebody who puts their hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. Who is your brother or sister in Christ and they really need help.

Don't neglect them. Don't turn away. And say, well, that's not really my business. There's a warning.

Don't leave them alone if you can help them. See that they are helped somehow. Anyway, so that's Nabal. That's what Nabal does to David.

Now, how does David respond? Well, verse 12 and 13. Says to his men, strap on your swords. David's ready to kill off all of Nabal's house.

[15 : 37] You see, David's being tested by having to deal with this foolish, selfish, harsh jerk. And David just wants to pay him back.

And get rid of him. And not have to deal with him anymore. So, we see David's weakness here. He's tempted to take matters into his own hands.

He's just about to do it. Even though he hasn't been given that authority by God. He's not in the position where he should be executing judgment on Nabal.

So, first we see God tested David through the wickedness and foolishness of Nabal. And sometimes God tests us. When we have to deal with selfish, really selfish and self-centered people.

Who come into our lives. Maybe we help them and protect them and take care of them. And be loyal to them. And they absolutely refuse to do anything for us. We can face that same test that David did.

[16 : 46] And want to just repay evil for evil. But, second, what we see is that God preserved David from falling into that trap.

Through the wisdom and courage of Abigail. So, let's keep reading. Starting at verse 18. Then Abigail made haste. And took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine.

Five sheep already prepared. Five seahs of parched grain. A hundred clusters of raisins. And two hundred cakes of figs. And laid them on donkeys. And she said to her young men, Go on before me. Behold, I come after you. But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

And as she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain. Behold, David and his men came down toward her. And she met them. Now David had said, Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him.

And he has returned me evil for good. God do so to the enemies of David. And more also if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him. When Abigail saw David she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground.

[17 : 53] She fell at his feet and said, On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears and hear the words of your servant. Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow Nabal for as his name is so is he.

Nabal is his name and folly is with him. But I, your servant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. Now then, my lord, as the lord lives and as your soul lives, because the lord has restrained you from blood guilt and from saving with your own hand.

Now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal. And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. Please forgive the trespass of your servant.

For the lord will certainly make my lord a sure house. Because my lord is fighting the battles of the lord and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live. If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the lord your god.

And the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling. And when the lord has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince over Israel, my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord working salvation himself.

[19 : 12] And when the lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant. And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the lord, the god of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me. Blessed be your discretion and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from blood guilt and from working salvation with my own hand.

For as surely as the lord, the god of Israel lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me truly by morning, there had not been left in Nabal so much as one male. Then David received from her hand what she had brought him, and he said to her, Go up in peace to your house.

See, I have obeyed your voice and have granted your petition. So Abigail hears that David is coming and she takes decisive action.

She organizes a feast, food to feed an army. She boldly approaches David. I mean, imagine this. David and 400 men with their swords strapped on their sides, barreling down toward Nabal's property, and one woman going out.

Now, probably she had her servants with her to carry all the food. But one woman going at the head of all her servants and coming before this man who is ready to decimate and kill every man in the household.

[20 : 42] I mean, that takes guts. That's courageous. In Abigail's speech, on the one hand, she's very discreet.

All right, she's tactful. She brings all this food. She affirms the Lord's promise to David. She takes responsibility for Nabal's foolishness and asks forgiveness on his behalf.

She bows down before David. She pleads with him respectfully. David notices her discretion in particular. So she's discreet, but on the other hand, she's very bold.

Approaching him on her own initiative. And you know, she's not unclear about what she's asking for. Verse 31, it's very clear what she's saying.

And she says, you know, she pleads with David and says, so that when you become king, you won't have guilt over and remorse over having shed blood without cause.

[21 : 59] So you see, she's very respectful and very discreet and at the same time, very bold and very courageous in coming before David. And God uses Abigail in her discretion and in her boldness to restrain David from repaying evil for evil.

And thankfully, David listens. You know, Abigail's speech is really the center piece of this narrative, of this story. And right before Abigail's speech in verse 21 through 22, David's vowing to wipe out every male in Nabal's household.

And after Abigail's speech, 32 through 35, he's promising peace to the house. And so you see, it's Abigail's speech and it's Abigail's action that God uses to restrain David from taking matters into his own hands.

David's about to fall, but God preserves David through Abigail. Two applications, I think, before we go on. first, do we listen to warnings from a sister or a brother?

This is a major difference between David and Saul. They're both tempted to take matters into their own hands, left to themselves.

[23 : 22] They both would. God warns them. He sends Samuel to warn Saul. Here he sends Abigail to warn David. Saul refuses to listen.

Saul refuses to acknowledge his wrong when he does wrong. He never really takes responsibility. But God graciously preserves David from falling into the same traps.

And God gives David a willing heart to listen and to take heed. So first, do we listen to warnings? And second, do we give warnings?

Right? If we see one of our brothers or sisters who's tempted to take matters into their own hands and go do something foolish because somebody else has wronged them or whatever it might be, do we have the courage and the discretion of Abigail?

Abigail's action is a model. It's a hard model to follow. I think it's one of the hardest things to do as a Christian is to take initiative and go to someone else, go to a brother or sister who's about to self-destruct or about to do something really unwise.

[24 : 46] and to both be gracious and respectful but also bold and clear. But that's what God uses.

God uses Abigail here. God uses her discretion and her boldness to restrain David from falling into repaying evil for evil.

So we've seen how God tested David, how God restrained David and finally God reassured David that he's ultimately in charge. Verse 36 to 38, Abigail came to Nabal and behold he was holding a feast in his house like the feast of a king.

Nabal's heart was merry within him for he's very drunk. So she told him nothing at all until the morning light and the morning when the wine had gone out of Nabal his wife told him these things and his heart died within him and he became as a stone.

And about 10 days later the Lord struck Nabal and he died. Nabal was acting like a king. He was full of wine and he was full of himself and he was full of pride and arrogance.

[26 : 02] What do we see what have we seen throughout this whole book of 1 Samuel? God brings down the proud and he lifts up the humble. God feeds those who are hungry in the wilderness.

He doesn't abandon his people who are in trouble and distress but God empties those who are full of themselves.

Now that's what Hannah says in her song in the beginning of 1 Samuel. She says talk no more so very proudly let not arrogance come from your mouth and then she says those who were full have hired themselves out for bread but those who are hungry hunger no more.

And that's what we see with Nabal that he was full of himself and full of pride and full of arrogance and full of wine and God's judgment was that he would be emptied out.

his heart failed him and he became like a stone. You see his heart was already a heart of stone on the inside and God's judgment was that his inner spiritual condition became outwardly manifest in his physical condition.

[27 : 24] That his heart of stone and pride and arrogance became on display in his own body. On the other hand David who is hungry in the wilderness ends up inheriting Nabal's wealth and marrying Nabal's wife after he dies.

So how does David respond to God's judgment on Nabal? Well on the one hand he benefits Abigail beautiful and discerning discreet and bold becomes his wife that's verse 40 through 42 but we also learn in verse 43 it says David also took or perhaps could be translated had taken this might have already happened Ahinoam of Jezreel and both of them became his wives.

Interesting little note David has already taken Michal Saul's daughter is his wife but she was wrongly taken away from him as verse 44 says and now David goes and takes two more wives now the author doesn't comment on this but he points it out and if you remember way back in chapter 8 when the people were demanding a king and God warned them he said the kind of king you're asking for is going to take take take he's going to take all kinds of things and David would actually continue this pattern of taking wives by the time of 2 Samuel 3 2 Samuel 3 talks about how by then he had six sons from six different mothers 2 Samuel 11 he goes one step further and he takes another man's wife

Bathsheba his greatest failure his greatest downfall and this is a bit of sort of ominous sign that he's going down this road of taking taking taking in a way that God did not originally intend so just a side note the Bible is not promoting polygamy it tells it like it was because that's how it was it's not how it was meant to be the point here is David wasn't perfect God restrained David from repaying evil for evil and so ultimately he passes these tests in the wilderness he doesn't take matters into his own hands he doesn't kill Saul he doesn't kill Nabal but there's still a lot of redemption that needs to be done in David's life and the point of this story is God preserved

David through the wisdom of Abigail and God will also continue to preserve David by his grace and you know that's the New Testament holds out similar promises for us all right Philippians 1 verse 6 he who began a good work in you will be faithful to carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus and Paul said that to the church at Philippi and they were a great church they faced a lot of trials but you know what they weren't perfect they had some people with some arguments with each other they were tempted to look more to their own interests than those of others so Paul had to keep reminding them about humility and about serving servanthood but he says God began a good work in you he's going to carry it on to completion or 2 Timothy 4 18 Paul says the

[31 : 23] Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom you know sometimes God tests us by bringing us into contact with people like Nabal who are foolish and ungodly and self centered and harsh and he calls us not to repay evil for evil but to overcome evil with good sometimes when we're about to fall into sin when we're about to take matters into our own hands and we're about to do something really stupid God sends a brother or sister with a word of advice with a gracious rebuke a timely warning praise God for timely warnings and he restrains us and that's one of the signs that he's reminding us I've got you and I'm going to be with you to the very end God because ultimately

God's the one true judge and we can trust him to do what is right Nick read earlier from 1 Peter 2 about how Christ suffered for us leaving us an example that we might follow in his steps you know David faced these three tests in the wilderness and he barely passed only by God's mercy and intervention of Abigail was he restrained from taking matters into his own hands remember Jesus Christ went into the wilderness and he faced three tests from the devil himself and he stood firm he stood firm in the word of God he stood firm by the power of the spirit of God he stood firm all the way to the end he never failed he didn't need an intervention he didn't need a warning he was the perfect son of

God he was the perfect king he was the perfect servant of God and he's the one who's gone before us so if you're in the wilderness God is testing you and you're not sure that you can make it remember that Jesus Christ has walked this path he's gone before you he's paved the way that you are walking on and he has sent his spirit to be with you every step of the way all the way until you see him in glory so be encouraged brothers and sisters Jesus is the one we can trust and lead us through the wilderness and lead us safely home let's pray Lord thanks for your provision for David for restraining him from evil thank you for the ways that you restrain us from evil when we are tempted and

Lord that is a wonderful sign that you have called us to be your own that you've sent your Holy Spirit to contend with us and to persevere with us so that we might persevere with you to the very end Lord I pray that we would be encouraged and that you would strengthen us to face the trials that we face Lord we pray in particular that you would give us wisdom and mercy and self restraint in responding to even very difficult or selfish people that might come alongside us Lord we pray that you would in particular preserve us from repaying evil for evil help us instead to overcome evil with good and to fix our eyes on you we thank you

Lord Jesus that you are our faithful king amen