

• *David has more to learn*

Perhaps David thought, after his kindly treatment of Saul, that he had learned how to show mercy. But soon something happened that would show him he had not yet got to where God wanted him.

• *David loses Samuel*

Samuel's death took place at about this time¹. It was a moving occasion, for Israel lost an intercessor and a counsellor. Samuel must have had a reputation for wise advice to the very end. For Saul went to extraordinary lengths to consult him even after Samuel had died!² David was now more alone than ever. He no longer had someone who could teach him lessons about kingship, as had happened before in his life. If he is to be king he is going to have to think for himself and get advice from more than one source. David loses Samuel but he is about to gain Abigail.

• *Lessons for a future king – to think for himself and to get advice from more than one source*

• *On the move*

Now that Samuel has died Saul might be even more unrestrained. David thought it a good time to move yet again¹. He went to the wilderness of Paran¹, not the distant Paran that we know from elsewhere but another Paran near Carmel and Maon. Alternatively the NIV and Septuagint translations are right in reading 'Maon' not 'Paran'.

• **David meets Nabal**

– *a wealthy landowner*

The move led to David's coming into contact with a man in Maon, the first character in our story, a man who was in a position to be very helpful to David's men. The man's name was **Nabal**. It means 'fool' and, since it was what he proved to be, perhaps it was the name he was known by after his character developed rather than when he was born. There are examples in the Bible of a name being given to someone after some aspect of his story shows what name is appropriate. He was a wealthy landowner and it was a time for shearing sheep, a time when there was plenty of feasting¹.

• *Nabal's wife*

He had a wife who was intelligent and attractive, but the man himself had an aggressive and unpleasant manner¹. It was unexpected in one who was a 'Calebite', that is one who descended from so fine a man as Caleb¹, who followed God wholeheartedly².

• *David sends a courteous and reasonable request for help to Nabal*

David was in need of food for his men. He hears about the occasion¹ and sends some of his men to ask for help. They are to approach Nabal with respect and courtesy², and remind Nabal that his men and David's men have met and have had a good relationship. Although David's men could have forcibly helped themselves to the supplies of Nabal's men, they have treated Nabal's men well and have actually been a protection for them against raiders ('they were a wall to us,'³). They are to courteously ask for Nabal's generosity⁴. Such hospitality was recognised in the days of David. To ask for some help was reasonable in the light of the customs of the day.

• *Nabal's ungenerous and aggressive response*

It is Nabal's ungenerous and aggressive ways that reveal themselves first. He keeps the young men waiting¹, and then is deliberately provocative and insulting. David is now famous but Nabal treats him as a nonentity ('Who is David...?'²). David is a man of stature but Nabal treats him as nothing more than a runaway slave², and of unknown origin³.

• **David's impulsive response**

The second character in the story is **David**. David reveals that he still has more to learn about mercy. Again the issue is willingness or unwillingness to take revenge. David had learned not to touch 'the Lord's anointed.' But he has to learn not even to want revenge when it is not 'the Lord's anointed' but a churlish, unpleasant person who deserved no

¹ 25:1a

² Chapter 28

¹ 25:1b

¹ 25:2

¹ 25:3

² Joshua 14:13-14

¹ 25:4

² 25:5-6

³ 25:16

⁴ 25:7-8

¹ 25:9

² 25:10

³ 25:11

mercy at all and was not anointed for anything! As yet that is something he has not learned. When David hears what has happened, he responds with anger and with violence^{□1}. There is no mention now of his consulting the LORD and asking ‘Shall I go and attack this Calebite?’^{□2}.

□1 25:12-13
□2 contrast 23:2

• *A lesson for any servant of God – to forgive infuriating people*

Any servant of God will have to learn not merely to forgive the average sinner but an infuriating Nabal. It is one thing to forgive a king but another thing to stay cool before wilful provocation and deliberate insult. David had resisted sin once and refused to kill Saul. But the question is: will we refuse to yield when the temptation comes again in a more acute form? David succeeded when tempted to get vengeance for himself over Saul. But here he fails.

• **Abigail – the real heroine**

• *A woman with practical wisdom and a peacemaker*

The third character in the story, **Abigail**, is the real heroine. Abigail shines out as a truly great person. David is taught by a woman not to take revenge. It is one of the lessons of leadership he needed to learn. Abigail reveals her practicality, her wisdom and her great skill as a woman of peace. She has a good reputation, and is known for her approachability. The young employees of Nabal have witnessed the way Nabal deliberately insulted David like a bird of prey attacking its victims^{□1}. They know that David’s request was reasonable^{□2}. They also have experienced Abigail’s wisdom and resourcefulness and know that she will know what to do^{□3}. They know it is a waste of time to speak to Nabal^{□3}.

□1 25:14
□2 25:15-16
□3 25:17

• *Decisive and speedy action*

She is worthy of her good reputation because she acts speedily and energetically^{□1}. She sees something needs to be done and acts immediately and decisively. She acts in faith because she believes something can be done to recover the situation despite what her husband has done. She decides to act first and tell her husband afterwards.

□1 25:18

• *Her request put to David*

She resolves to do what she can to persuade David to relent^{□1}. She and David meet^{□2} and she puts her request^{□3}. David is impressed and grateful^{□4}.

□1 25:18-19
□2 25:20-23
□3 25:24-31
□4 25:32-35

• *Advanced lessons in forgiveness and graciousness*

Soon David will be king, but God will not let him have the kingship until he is ready. In these chapters David is learning advanced lessons of forgiveness. If we are to be used by the Lord, we probably will have to get to an advanced level of graciousness, and God must put us through whatever it takes to bring us to that point.



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