



THE COMMUNITY

God Will Repay | PUTTING MATTERS IN GOD'S HANDS, NOT OURS

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

1 Samuel 25:1-44

Our passage this time is almost a replica of chapter 24. David almost takes matters into his own hands by killing someone, however this time he needs someone to speak some sense into him. David is on the move again as he approaches the wilderness of Paran. Nabal, a rich, harsh and evil man, is shearing his sheep in Carmel and David sends some of his men to ask for food and supplies. When the young men talk to Nabal, he is not very compliant. Once David finds out, he's ready to brawl, saying, "Every man strap on his sword." Abigail, the beautiful and intelligent wife of Nabal, hears that Nabal denied David's men what they asked for. She quickly devises a plan to deliver to David's men what they want and to plead for her husband's life. After talking to Abigail, David is convinced that he would have sinned had he killed Nabal.

Discuss with your group the importance of not only being a wise counsel to someone who is about to make a very ill-advised decision, but also to be humble and repentant when reproved for a wrong we are about to commit. The chapter ends with Nabal being "struck" by the LORD (v. 38) and David marrying Abigail. On top of that, David married a few more ladies as well (definitely not a practice we should seek to imitate today!).

David's Vengeful Heart (25:2-13)

The beginning of our narrative shows one big caution: even godly people can be driven by anger. David is fleeing further from Saul and finds himself in another wilderness. He hears that there is a rich man who is shearing sheep in the fields. This man's name is Nabal. Nabal is called "harsh and badly behaved" (v. 3). In fact, Nabal's name means "fool" in Hebrew. David sends young men to ask Nabal for whatever he has (v. 8). They are hungry and tired from running and hiding and they probably just want a nice bottle of water to quench their thirst. Well, Nabal's reaction is not what David expects. David told his young men to say, "Peace be to you, and peace be to your house" (v. 6) to Nabal, but he responds with, "Why should I give my hard earned things to men I don't know!" Immediately, David's temper flares up and he yells to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" (v. 13). It's safe to assume that God is not first on David's mind here. We could probably say that David is not walking in the Spirit and that he is living by the flesh. Even people who walk closely with God and long to know Him are susceptible to fits of rage with a vengeful attitude. David isn't perfect, but God, in His beautiful grace and wonderful mercy, protects David from doing something he would regret.

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What's the Big Idea?

God works through Abigail to keep David from taking his own vengeance on Nabal when Nabal scorns David's servants. Like the last lesson, this passage illustrates God's mercy as He protects His people from taking matters into their own hands and vindicates them as they trust in Him.

What's the Problem?

We doubt that God is sovereign and providential in our lives, so we want to take matters into our own hands instead of trusting Him.

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Now Nabal has a wife who could be confused with supermodel and a rocket scientist. Verse 3 describes her as “discerning and beautiful.” She finds out about Nabal’s negligence of David’s men. The young servant told her, “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...Now... harm is determined against our master and against all his house, and he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him” (v. 14-15, 17). The servant perceives Nabal’s absurdity in sending away David’s men. Abigail acted quickly and gathered bread, wine, sheep, grain, and fruit to send them with the young man to David.

She follows behind the young servant and when she meets David, she pleaded with him to not kill Nabal or his household. Abigail practically calls David out for wanting to kill Nabal, telling him that he would have blood on his hands.

“As the LORD lives,” she said, “and as your soul lives, because the LORD has restrained you from bloodguilt 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” (v. 26). Notice how David responds with an open heart and mind, seeing his sin and tendency toward revenge. He blesses Abigail for her discretion and warning him of the wrong he would have committed. We should be responsive when God sends people into our lives to show us the right thing to do. By His mercy, God saved David from committing a terrible sin. He will do the same for us if we open our hearts to His truth.

Nabal's Death, David and Abigail's Marriage (25:36-44)

After Abigail and David’s conversation, Abigail went to her husband to tell him what happened. The text says Nabal’s “heart died within him, and he became as stone.” The news is devastating to Nabal that he became a vegetable. Ten days later, the LORD takes Nabal’s life. David did not take matters into his own hand and God repaid Nabal’s evil with justice. When David hears of this, he praises God, saying, “Blessed be the IORD who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and has kept back His servant from wrongdoing.” When we are faithful to the Lord and pursue Him and His goodness, He will take care of our enemies or the sour circumstances in our lives. We are called to be holy, not avengers of evil.

Pray that this chapter sinks into your groups mind and heart (as well as yours!). Know that God is infinitely faithful, even when we are not. Discuss with the group the importance of depending on God and trusting that He will continue to give us mercy and grace despite our brokenness and tendency to take matters into our own hands.

What's Our Response?

We must recognize and respond to the expressions of God’s gracious and merciful providence in our lives.

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What Are the Questions?

1 Samuel 25:1-44

Launch

Talk about a time when someone warned you not to do something but you ignored the warning and suffered for it.

Explore

Read 1 Samuel 25:2-13

1. How does this passage describe Nabal?
2. How does this passage describe Abigail?
3. What is the focus of the drama in this narrative?
4. How does David respond when he hears Nabal’s response to his men?

Read 1 Samuel 25:14-31

5. How do Nabal’s men respond after Nabal rebuffs David’s men?
6. What additional insights do verses 14-17 give about this unfolding drama?
7. How does Abigail respond when she hears the men’s report?
8. What do verses 21-22 reveal about David’s heart and intentions?

9. What stands out to you about Abigail as she meets David?

10. What does Abigail say to David to try to dissuade him from killing Nabal and his men?

11. Think about a recent or current situation in which you haven’t been sure what to do. What signposts of God’s providence (people or circumstances) do you see that may be His way of protecting or vindicating you in a way similar to what David experienced?

Read 1 Samuel 25:32-38

12. How does David respond to Abigail?

13. In what way is Nabal’s demise in verses 36-38 a confirmation of what this passage has already revealed about him?

Read 1 Samuel 25:39-44

14. Why does David praise God in verse 39?
15. Summarize the happy ending of this story.

Apply

16. What does it say about our need for God’s grace in our lives that David was so careful not to take matters into his own hands against Saul in 1 Samuel 24 but so willing to do so with Nabal?

17. Read Romans 8:31-39. How do the truths of these verses counter the temptation to vindicate yourself and lead you to trust in the vindication God provides through faith in Christ?

NOTES:

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What Are the Answers?

1. He's rich but harsh and evil.
2. She's intelligent and beautiful.
3. David sends his men to ask for kindness from Nabal. But Nabal rebuffs them, even though David's men have conducted themselves honorably toward Nabal's men.
4. He gathers his men, intending to kill Nabal and his servants.
5. They report what happened to Nabal's wife Abigail.
6. David's men were good to Nabal's men and provided protection to them. Nabal is so worthless that no one can speak to him.
7. She prepares gifts to appease David.
8. He thinks he wasted his time in showing kindness to Nabal, and now he wants to kill him and all his men.
9. Allow the group to discuss.
10. She reminds him that God has kept him from shedding blood and taking his own vengeance. She reminds him that he will be king someday. And she encourages him not to let unnecessary bloodshed blemish his future kingship.
11. Allow the group to discuss.
12. He praises God and her for keeping him from shedding blood and taking his own revenge. He grants her request not to kill Nabal and his men.
13. His drunkenness, his heart turning to stone, and the LORD striking him confirms the worthlessness of his character.
14. He praises God for vindicating him against Nabal and keeping him from taking his own vengeance on Nabal.
15. David and Abigail get married.
16. It shows the wavering nature of our hearts and our constant need of God's grace to keep us from ruining our lives.
17. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from blood-guilt and from avenging myself with my own hand!

1 Samuel 25:33



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