

Who was Abigail in the Bible?

Abigail was one of David's wives. Her story is found in 1 Samuel 25. At the beginning of the story, Abigail is the wife of a wealthy man named Nabal who lived in a town called Maon in the wilderness of Paran, an area near the Sinai Peninsula. Abigail was "an intelligent and beautiful woman" (1 Samuel 25:3) who saved her husband and his household, prevented David from doing something rash, and secured an unexpected future for herself.

The story of Abigail in the Bible is an interesting one for many reasons. For one, Nabal is a rather bizarre character. For no apparent reason, Nabal refuses David's request for food and shelter. Despite knowing of David's previous benevolence to his shepherds, Nabal churlishly refuses to aid David and his men as they tried to keep one step ahead of King Saul. David's request was not unreasonable, but Nabal, who is described as "surly and mean" (1 Samuel 25:3), essentially spits in the faces of David's servants, saying, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?" (verses 10-11).

David did not take this rejection well. He swore to kill every male associated with Nabal's household (1 Samuel 25:22). He had strapped on his sword and was on his way with four hundred armed men (verse 13), when Abigail met him on the road. She offered David gifts of wine, grain, prepared meat, and cakes of figs. Then she fell down in front of David, pleading with him to show mercy to her husband, Nabal (verse 23). In her plea, Abigail shows that she understands Nabal's character: "Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly goes

with him” (verse 25).

In taking up Nabal’s cause and asking David to spare his life, Abigail proves herself to be a righteous, caring woman. At great risk to herself, she approaches David, an angry man bent on revenge, and intercedes for her husband, despite his bad behavior. Her request can be seen as a picture of Christ, who offered Himself as a sacrifice to save foolish sinners from the consequences of their own actions and who continues to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25).

Abigail’s propitiation saves the day. David thanks Abigail for staying his hand and repents of his own foolish and rash decision to slaughter Nabal’s household (1 Samuel 25:32-34). In fact, David sees Abigail’s coming to him as a blessing from God, and he sends her home in peace (verse 35).

Meanwhile, Nabal, insensitive to his wrongdoing and the danger that he had been in, holds a kingly feast for himself and gets drunk (1 Samuel 25:36). Abigail waits until the next morning for her husband to sober up, and then she tells Nabal everything—how David had been on his way to destroy him and how she herself had saved Nabal. Upon hearing this news, Nabal falls ill: “His heart failed him and he became like a stone. About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died” (verses 37-38). David then sends a message to Abigail asking her to become his wife, and Abigail responds affirmatively (verses 40-42).

Scripture says that we should not seek vengeance for ourselves. Rather, we should “leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:19; cf. Deuteronomy 32:35). This is exactly what happened in Abigail’s

story. David was prevented from taking revenge, and the Lord Himself took care of the matter in due time.

David and Nabal can be seen as representative of the two responses men have to Christ. Nabal does not repent or acknowledge his sin; neither does he thank Abigail for her willingness to risk her own life on his behalf. On the other hand, David's heart is tender and repentant, and he calls Abigail blessed for her actions. David is spared the consequences of the sin he had planned, but Nabal dies in his sin.

In the end, Nabal's wealth, his wife, and his very life are taken from him. Abigail—a savior full of beauty, wisdom, and discretion—enters a loving relationship with David. In Abigail, we have a small picture of the ultimate Savior, the Source of beauty and wisdom, who desires a loving relationship with us forever.