

Abigail – A Study of Courage

Widows of the Old Testament

Teacher/Facilitator Study Guide

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Italics indicate the text in the Student's Study Guide.

*Indicates the author's study helps for the teacher/facilitator.

Review of Ruth

a. *In our last study, we learned about Ruth, the Moabitess. What do you recall about her background and first marriage? Answers will vary.*

- 1) Descendant of Lot's son Moab
- 2) Worshiped Chemosh, an idol
- 3) Married Naomi's son, Mahlon
- 4) Became a believer in Naomi's and Mahlon's God
- 5) Became a childless widow

b. *What did Ruth do after her husband died? How did God provide for her?*

- 1) Committed to stay with Naomi and follow her God
- 2) Went to Bethlehem with Naomi
- 3) Gleaned in Boaz's field – gathered grain to meet their needs
- 4) Proposed to Boaz to be her kinsman-redeemer
- 5) Boaz married her and they had a son, Obed – Elimelech and Mahlon's heir.

c. *Share something God has done for you this past week or a need for prayer.*

Prayer

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“I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure” (Psalm 16:7-9).

We will see courage acted out in this study. Caleb, Samuel, David and Abigail were all courageous servants of God. Courage is described as boldness, bravery, fortitude and valor.

Map: Show Wilderness wanderings and Kadesh-Barnea; Show Division of Promised Land to the tribes.

As this study opens the times of the judges had reached an end, with Samuel (and his sons) being the last of the judges.

- 1. Abigail’s father was a descendant of Caleb who was of the tribe of Judah.*
- 2. According to Joshua 14:6-14 Caleb was forty years old when he was one of twelve spies whom Moses sent into Canaan to spy out the land. All the spies except Caleb and Joshua were afraid to take the land at that time for fear of the giants. Israel then wandered in the wilderness for forty years until all who were afraid to go in had died. Then God enabled them to enter Canaan under Joshua’s leadership.*

Read Deuteronomy 31:6, 8

Discuss: *Do you believe that the same words God gave Joshua and the Israelites, are words He has for you today in your difficult situations?*

- 3. When the land was divided between the tribes, Caleb requested his area, of Judah’s appointed land, where the giants (Anakites) lived. He was eighty years old when he said “Give me this mountain” and conquered it in battle.*

Map: Show the Hill country of Ephraim and Shiloh

4. *Samuel grew up in the House of the Lord in Shiloh. Eli, a judge and priest, taught him to love and serve the LORD.*

5. *What did Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, take into battle with them and what happened? They took the Ark of the Covenant into battle. It was stolen by the enemy and they were slain on the battlefield. Why did they take the Ark with them? They thought it would save them. Only faith in God and His power could save them.*

Discuss: *Will going to church or baptism save you from eternal death – eternal separation from God (See Mark 16:15-16)? No.*

**Only one's personal faith (belief) in Jesus Christ; what He has done for him/her – his death, burial and resurrection - will save a person's soul. "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned'" (Mark 16:15-16).*

6. *When Eli heard that Hophni and Phinehas had died, what happened to him? He fell off his stool and died. Who became judge and priest in his place? Samuel*

7. *How did Abigail learn about the history of Caleb, Eli and Samuel? These stories of Jewish history were passed down from generation to generation.*

**As families gathered around their fires in the evening they shared stories of their ancestors.*

8. *Samuel "cried unto the LORD" (prayed) for Israel and "the LORD heard him". The name Samuel means God hears (pg. 68).*

Discuss: Through all the difficult times, Samuel rehearsed the words of the people in the ears of the LORD. Read 1 Samuel 8:21 (KJV). Would doing this same thing now, make a difference in your life? Would you like to share an example?

9. *Why did the nation of Israel ask for a king? They wanted to have a king like the other nations around them. They said Samuel's sons were dishonest judges. Samuel anointed Saul as king. When Israel rejected Samuel as their leader, whom did God say they were actually rejecting? God. What three offices did Samuel hold? Judge, Priest and Prophet.*

10. *When Abigail was a girl, her father told her about a youth named David who slew the Philistine giant Goliath with a stone from a slingshot and cut off his head with Goliath's own sword. Abigail loved to hear the story of this brave young Israelite over and over.*

**Even before this, when David was 15, God sent Samuel to anoint him to become Israel's king after Saul's reign and the Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power (1 Samuel 16:13).*

Discuss: *David said "The battle is the LORD's." Read 1 Samuel 17:45-51. How does this scripture encourage you today?*

Map: Show Carmel in the desert of Maon (located a day's walk southeast of Hebron). Show En Gedi.

**This is the northern edge of the area in the wilderness where the Israelites journeyed before the spies entered Canaan north of Kadesh-Barnea.*

11. *Abigail's father arranged for her to marry Nabal, a Calebite from Carmel in the desert of Maon. In what way do you think this was or was not a good choice? He was a wealthy man from a good family background with land and many herds; able to support Abigail well. However, he was a foolish, mean-spirited man and was not a man of good character.*

Discuss: *What qualities do you hope and pray for, in mates for your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews?*

12. *In living with this difficult man, Abigail learned to do what Samuel had done; she brought to the LORD's ears the words and actions of Nabal and the LORD would comfort her and help her know what to do. Abigail learned to conquer the giants of fear and bitterness (pg. 70).*

13. Samuel and David provided models of spiritual strength and hope for Abigail. When Samuel died, all Israel mourned for him. David and his men camped in the desert of Maon where he protected Nabal's men and flocks (1 Samuel 23:24-29). Then David's group moved north to En Gedi, where he was pursued by King Saul with three thousand soldiers (1 Samuel 24:1-22). *In the light of what takes place later when Abigail meets David, she may have been in the habit of praying for him, for his protection from Saul and for his relationship to His LORD.

Read 1 Samuel 25:1-8

14. Samuel was the link between the time when Israel was a theocracy, under God's rule, and the time when Israel was a monarchy, under the rule of a human king. Why was the rule of the kingdom eventually removed from Saul and his family (pg. 71)? King Saul had dishonored and disobeyed the LORD

15. How many years did the LORD prepare David from the time of his anointing to the time he became king? Approximately twenty two years. "So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised" (Hebrews 10:35-36).

*Sometimes God allows delays and death of a vision or plan, to bring about His purpose or to shape our lives. I like the quote, "Our disappointments are His appointments." When God says "No!", He has something better in mind for us.

Read 1 Samuel 25:9-11

16. David and his men's watchful care promoted Nabal's prosperity. An eastern chieftain would normally have shown gratefulness with rich rewards. How did Nabal respond? He turned David's men away empty handed and with insults.

Read 1 Samuel 25:12-13

17. *How did David respond to Nabal's actions? He and his men put on their swords, prepared to take vengeance on Nabal and his household's men and boys, including servants.*

Discuss: *Why did David spare King Saul's life, yet desire vengeance on Nabal? "I will not lift my hand against my master, because he is the LORD's anointed" (Samuel 24:10b).*

Do you ever make decisions without considering the long-range consequences to you and those you love?

*Answers may vary. He allowed for God's vengeance. "May the LORD judge between you and me. May the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you" (1 Samuel 24:12). Nabal, on the other hand, was not anointed. He had plenty and would not share with David and his men, who were in need and had done him only good.

Read 1 Samuel 25:14-17

18. *Why did the servant rush to Abigail with news of the problem? He recognized the problem and knew she was a wise woman and could do something to make a difference.*

Discuss: *Abigail may have remembered Caleb's and David's successes against giants and believed God could give her victory in facing this challenge. Can you think of any giants we are up against in our present day society? Have you faced any giants in your life?*

Read 1 Samuel 25:18-19 (5 seahs is about 1 bushel).

19. *Abigail oversaw, with haste, the preparations and loading of the food on donkeys. Why do you think she did not tell her husband? He was given to excessive drinking and was probably drunk. The servant said no man could talk to him. He was not available to her at this time of crisis.*

Discuss: *Whom do you speak to first for wisdom? Pastor? Friend? A relative? Husband? “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you” (Psalm 32:8).*

*If a woman is in a difficult marriage, she needs to strengthen her relationship with the Lord and He will help her strengthen her relationship with her husband. The goal is for her husband to reach his full potential as a godly leader in their home. Abigail quickly consulted with God for wisdom.

Read 1 Samuel 25:20-22

20. *What was David’s last statement in this passage? May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave one male of all who belong to him! How did God intervene? By sending a courageous, Spirit filled woman – Abigail – into their path.*

Discuss: *Has God ever asked you to do something courageous, difficult or dangerous? “This is the word of the LORD . . . ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit’, says the LORD Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6b).*

*God’s Spirit can empower us, just as He did Abigail.

Read 1 Samuel 25:23-25

21. *Abigail showed humility by bowing low. Humility is an attitude of dependence as we recognize that all we have is a gift of God. How did Abigail appease David’s anger? She acknowledged Nabal’s wrong decision and mistreatment of David and his men. She accepted the blame.*

*God will give us understanding in a crisis and teach us His ways, just as he did Abigail.

Read 1 Samuel 25:26-29

22. *Who kept David from bloodshed and seeking vengeance? The LORD. He used Abigail. Wisdom overcomes foolishness (pg. 77). Abigail gave a peace offering and sought forgiveness.*

Discuss: *The Bible, in Romans 6:23, says we are sinful creatures deserving death. Who is our peace offering? Jesus Christ, God's gift to us, who gave His life as our sin offering.*

*Because of his sacrifice, we can ask forgiveness from God, have a personal relationship with Him and be saved from spiritual death.

23. *Abigail, by God's Spirit, foretold that David would have a lasting dynasty because he fought the LORD's battles. [Jesus] will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The LORD God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end (Luke 1:32-33).*

24. *David was strongly urged not to yield to wrongdoing through all his life (1 Samuel 25:28).*

*Abigail may have thought about the many times she was kept from doing wrong by running to the LORD to pour out to Him the hurts and struggles she faced. God brought her out of all her troubles and gave her a beautiful countenance. He used her hardship to train her in wisdom.

Consider: *How do you keep from yielding to wrongdoing? How do you respond to hardships? Is God training you to seek Him? Are you pleasing God?*

25. *God gave Abigail insight which she shared with David. Concerning his struggle to flee from Saul, she prophesied that though his life was threatened, he would be kept safe and secure by God. She used shepherd's language to speak to David. She probably grew up around sheep and could speak his language clearly to relate on a spiritual and personal level. God used Abigail to be an encouragement to David's heart and a balm to his soul (pg. 79).*

Consider: *Has God sent anyone to you, who could speak to your heart and soul; a person who understood you? Has God used you to speak to someone who needed encouragement, a challenge or a rebuke? Is He speaking to you now about someone you should go to?*

Read 1 Samuel 25:30-31

26. *Such an understanding greeting and prophetic utterance could only be given by a person filled with God's Holy Spirit; the Spirit of Truth and Knowledge.*

Consider: *In Ephesians 5:18b, God commands us, as His children, to “be filled with the Holy Spirit.” As we yield to Him in obedience to His Word, His Spirit fills us.*

Read 1 Samuel 25:32-35

27. *David affirmed Abigail's wisdom in acting quickly. He accepted her offering and assured her Nabal's household was safe and no longer in danger of David's wrath. Nabal still had to face Abigail, himself and the wrath of God. “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).*

Consider: *Have you ever felt that someone who brought pain and suffering to your life, seemed to be without understanding or justice? Take courage, God is aware of it and He is a just God. Pray that God will change the heart of the person who hurt you.*

Read 1 Samuel 25:36-38

28. *What happened to Nabal when Abigail confronted him with the truth concerning David? His heart failed him and ten days later, the LORD struck him dead.*

Discuss: *Have you been placed in a caregiver role? What are your greatest challenges? See Hebrews 4:15-16; Philippians 4:6-7.*

**God's Spirit enables us to deal with problems using wise words and actions. When we are weak, we can be strong with God's strength.*

Consider: *Are you in a situation of struggle and pain caused by someone who needs to be confronted? Ask God to show you what to do. He may lead you to talk to a trusted person who understands your situation and can pray with or for you and help you work through it. See Matthew 18:15-17.*

Read 1 Samuel 25:39-41

29. *When David's servants came to Abigail with his proposal, how were these men received? They were greeted with respect and served. Their feet were washed by Abigail.*

Read 1 Samuel 25:42

30. *How did Abigail respond to David's marriage proposal? She accepted it without hesitation.*

Personal Application

Review the application opportunities, presented in the "Discuss" and "Consider" sections, in your personal prayer time and ask God to help you act on those that speak to your needs.

31. *Have any of you come to a deeper understanding of salvation because of what you are learning in these studies? Are you willing to share with others about your relationship with the Lord? If anyone has questions about her/his salvation experience or needs assurance please speak with your teacher/facilitator. It is the most important issue in your life.*

Exercise: *Get together with a Christian you respect sometime in the next week or so, to share your spiritual story with her or him. Talk about when you fully committed your life to God and what that means to you. Talk about what Jesus Christ has done for you.*

Prayer