

Women's Bible Study –Fall 2009

What's in the Heart: A Look into King David's Heart

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A Teachable Heart

1 Samuel 25

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Introduction---The physical heart is a marvelous organ in our bodies. It is the center of our lives ----pumping life-giving blood to all parts of our bodies keeping us alive. The average heart beats over 100,000 beats a day pumping blood the equivalent of 12,000 miles---the distance to fly from Los Angeles to Moscow and back, according to the radio commercial by Charles Osgood for a cardio supplement. The heart is God's perpetual motion machine. When it stops---so does our life. It's very important to take good care of our heart and keep it healthy.

Likewise our spiritual heart is the center of our lives. In Biblical language it is the center of the human spirit from which spring emotions, thought, motivations, courage, and action.

Prov 4:23 “....guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life.” Everything flows out of our hearts, both good and bad. It is our heart in which God dwells through the Holy Spirit. When we neglect and ignore the Holy Spirit, our human nature takes over and we act in ways that are not pleasing to God. Sin enters our hearts and we respond to people and situations in ungodly ways and our fellowship with God is hindered.

Just as we seek to keep our physical heart healthy by eating right and exercising, so we must keep our spiritual heart healthy by feeding it on God's Word and by exercising it through Bible Study and godly habits that keep it tender and teachable.

Titus 2:12 “....Say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.”

Today's lesson is about a “teachable heart” from an episode in the life of David. As we look through the Scriptures this morning, let's consider what constitutes a “teachable heart”?

We have three main characters in our story---David, Nabal the landowner, and Abigail his wife.

DAVID'S HUMBLE REQUEST---I Samuel 25:1-9

Background---David and his 600 men are hiding out ---keeping themselves hidden from Saul. As they roamed the countryside they often helped protect the flocks and the herds of fellow

Israelite shepherds who were employed by wealthy owners. David himself may have experienced this protection in his early years as a shepherd for his father's flocks. It was the custom in that day when the sheep were sheared that the landowner would give something to those who had helped protect his flocks. It was sort of like a "tip" we give to a waiter in a restaurant. It was not required but was a way of showing gratitude for a good job.

1 Samuel 25: 1-9 Then David moved down into the Desert of Maon. A certain man in Maon who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had 1,000 goats and 3,000 sheep which he was shearing in Carmel. His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband, a Calebite, was surly and mean in his dealings. While David was in the desert, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. So he sent ten young men and said to them, 'Go up to Nabal, at Carmel and greet him in my name. Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours.'! Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing. Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my young men since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them."

When David's men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited.

(Notice in vs. 8 David refers to himself as "your son David"---intimating that he was honoring him as a father and possible relative--- David and Nabal were from the tribe of Judah)

David had logical expectations and he had made a humble request in behalf of providing for his men. Sheep-shearing was a festive time, celebrated by the whole community of family and friends, and occurred each spring and early fall. Hospitality was very important in that culture and a man with that much wealth could certainly be expected to invite these men to share the feast or give some provisions to take back to David for the service of protecting his flocks.

APPLICATION ---Notice David's godly trait of humility, a servant's heart. As he was out in the fields he offered

protection to Nabal's shepherds and flocks out of the goodness of his heart.

Do you have a servant's heart? Are you willing to serve others humbly without praise or pay?

I Peter 5:5 "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another."

Galatians 5:13 ".....serve one another in love."

Ephesians 6:7 "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men."

A HUMBLE SPIRIT IS PLEASING TO THE LORD

NABAL'S HARSH REFUSAL--- I Sam 25:10-11

"Nabal answered David's servants, '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?"

Nabal's name means "fool"---which in Scripture is a person who lives his life as if there is no God. If you notice in verse 9, it said he was "surly and mean in his dealings"---which could mean he was dishonest. Later in verse 17 his own servants refer to him as "a wicked man that no one can talk to." In verse 11 you can recognize his pride and his self-importance with his use of so many personal pronouns. In his tirade Nabal scornfully dishonors David by referring to him as a fugitive and a renegade. Why should he share anything from his table with someone so insignificant? He harshly refuses to give David's men anything.

Proverbs 15:1 ".....harsh words stir up anger."

David's men return with their report---telling him "every word". Anger gets the best of David, he makes a hasty decision and fails to do one very important thing, ---- he doesn't take time to consult the Lord and pray. Instead, he tells 400 of his men to "put on their swords" and go with him to satisfy his passion for revenge.

(It is interesting to note that David has seemed incredibly patient so far in our study---when criticized by his brother Eliab and Saul's attempts to kill him. Last week in chap 24 David has the opportunity to kill Saul in the cave and he refuses to "lift his hand against the Lord's anointed".)

David's anger causes him to lose his self-control and he is spiraling downward to commit murder to Nabal and his household. Does this insult justify such a drastic response? This anger reminds us of

“road rage” that is prevalent in our society today.

Anger is a tool of the evil one, which tempts us to take matters into our own hands. We take our eyes off God and focus on the problem and satisfying our own selfish desires. The Scriptures consistently warn us to be on our guard against the devil’s schemes.

1 Peter 5:8 NKJV “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

Proverbs 29:11 “A fool gives vent to his anger.”

Proverbs 30:33 “....stirring up anger produces strife.”

Ephesians 4:26 “In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil foothold.”

It is important to take care of our anger before it causes us to sin. This verse implies that you should resolve it as soon as possible. Preferably within 24 hours-----or keep driving west before the sun goes down!!

APPLICATION---Have harsh words ever stirred up your anger? How do you handle insults? Do you retaliate with your own harsh words?? Do you resolve your anger as quickly as possible? Are you willing to ask the Lord to help you have a forgiving spirit toward the person who has offended you?

Anger, pride, and unforgiveness are dangerous because they block our relationship with God and lead us into further sin.

Scripture gives us some thoughts on how we should respond to insults and offenses against us.

James 1:19-20 “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.”

Colossians 3: 13 “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

2 Corinthians 7:1 “....dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

Someone has said—“A crisis is an opportunity to bring out the worst or the best in us.”

David's heart has been tender toward God throughout his life and he has sought to please Him. God in his mercy intervenes in this crisis situation through another person, to keep David from acting out this angry revenge. Abigail, Nabal's wife now enters the story.

ABIGAIL'S WISE RESPONSE---I Sam 25:14-34

One of the servants comes to Abigail and tells her the whole story of David's messengers coming with their request and Nabal "hurling insults at them". He proceeds to tell her the whole story and fill in the details of how David and his men were very good to them out in the fields and in protecting them. He said, "Night and day they were a wall around us all the time we were herding the sheep near them." He says to her, "Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."

The Scripture tells us that Abigail was an intelligent and beautiful woman. One could wonder why she is married to this foolish man. No doubt her marriage was arranged by her parents when she was very young as was the custom of that day. She has learned to live with this man who is weak and selfish and only interested in his money, food and drink, and having his own way. She sees the need for acting in his behalf to pay the debt her husband refused to pay. She tells the servants to get the food ready to bring to David and his men. Notice all she is bringing ---an abundance of the best in the house in verse 18.

She took---200 loaves of bread, 2 skins of wine, 5 dressed
Sheep. 5 seahs (about a bushel) of roasted grain, 100 cakes of
raisins, and 200 cakes of pressed figs.

She loaded them on donkeys and began her journey to intercept David and his 400 men who would be coming to take care of "Nabal and all the males in his household," (vs. 22 and 34) who would have been defenseless against such a number. She didn't tell Nabal her plans at this time. As mistress of her home she could dispose of the family provisions as she saw fit. One wonders how many other times she has had to intervene and rescue an embarrassing situation that her husband caused.

Only the Sovereign Lord could have arranged the perfect timing seen in vs. 20—"As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there was David and his men descending toward her, and she met them."

I Sam 25: 23-25 "When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. She fell at his feet and said: 'My lord, let the blame be on me alone. Please let your servant speak to you: hear what

your servant has to say. May my lord pay no attention to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name---his name is Fool, and folly goes with him. But as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my master sent.

Abigail has come as the “peacemaker”. Prov 15:1 “A soft answer turns away wrath.” Abigail bows before David with her “face to the ground” acknowledging him as her lord and king, and asks that the blame be upon her for the mistreatment that the messengers received. She tells him that she was unaware that they were there.

Even though she was innocent she apologizes and accepts responsibility for what happened in her household, much like an employer would accept the responsibility for something one of his employees has done.

I Sam 25:26-31--- Now since the Lord has kept you, my master, from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, as surely as the Lord lives and as you live, may your enemies and all who intend to harm my master be like Nabal. And let this gift which your servant has brought to my master, be given to the men who follow you. Please forgive your servant’s offense, for the Lord will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my master, because he fights the Lord’s battles. Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live. Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my master will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God. But the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. When the Lord has done for my master every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him leader over Israel, my master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the Lord has brought my master success, remember your servant.”

Abigail frequently refers to herself as “your servant” throughout the passage. She is a woman of faith who believed that David was the next king and she doesn’t want him to have a murder on his record.

She focuses on David and his future, telling him that “the Lord will make a lasting dynasty for my master, because he fights the Lord’s battles. (28) Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live.” She assures David that he didn’t have to fear the future, he was “securely bound in the bundle of the living by the Lord”(29)—like a “valuable possession carefully wrapped in a package for safekeeping” (**NIV foot note**), God would preserve his life in the midst of danger and his enemies would be hurled out like the stone from the sling David used when he defeated Goliath.

Now that he has not avenged himself with needless bloodshed, Abigail tells David to take the gift of food she has provided and turn around and go back. When the Lord fulfills all the promises to David:

(vs. 31) and “appoints him leader over Israel, remember your servant”, she says. Why do you suppose she said that?

Warren Wiersbe’s commentary gives this possibility.

“Was this a veiled suggestion of marriage, should Nabal die?

Or was Abigail merely looking ahead and seeing herself as a widow who could profit from friendship with the king?

Perhaps she was cautioning David to remember her and her advice when he became king so he wouldn’t be tempted to take things into his own hands and forget the will of the Lord.”

David responds to Abigail and recognizes God’s hand in this divine appointment and how she has kept him from acting impulsively and killing innocent people.

I Sam 25:32-33 “Praise be to the Lord, God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands.”

In verse 35 David accepts what Abigail has brought to him and he tells her to go home in peace. “I have heard your words and granted your request.”

David’s teachable spirit---Let’s consider what we have seen here. First, David’s heart is angered, his mind is made up, and he gathers his men with their swords and is ready for revenge. Along the way he meets a woman he has never seen before and he listens to what she has to say without interrupting. He recognizes God’s intervention and is willing to change his mind and do the “right thing”.

APPLICATION---Can you reflect on a past experience when you were tempted to do something in anger and God Intervened using His Word, circumstances, or someone’s wise words to change your mind?

Has God ever used you to be an Abigail---a peacemaker or mediator in someone’s life? Maybe you have helped a family member, a friend from church, or a neighbor to resolve a difficult issue. Sometimes we may not

even be aware of our words or actions that influence another person and help them to reconsider their plans.

Illustration---A number of years ago I had just such an experience. We had neighbors next door that we knew a little bit. We knew they wanted to sell their home and move to another. One morning I saw a moving van in front of their home and men were carrying out furniture so I assumed they had found a house and were moving. A friend called me to go to lunch. She picked out a place I rarely ever went. When we walked in---there were our neighbors having lunch. I thought it a little unusual they weren't directing the moving men. When we finished lunch I walked by their table and told them I saw the moving van and I was so sorry they would be leaving our neighborhood. The husband gave me a very puzzled look and mumbled something.

When I got home I noticed their car drove up and suddenly pieces of furniture were being unloaded from the truck back into the house. I assumed that they had planned to leave some furniture in the house until it was sold and the moving company had loaded too much. A week later I discovered that I had unknowingly "blown the whistle" on the wife's plan to move out of the house while they were having lunch!!! God had used me to tip off the husband. They separated for a time. When she moved back in, I felt it was my responsibility to "welcome her back" since I had foiled her plans. I invited her over for coffee and asked if she would be interested in a one-on-one Bible study with me each week. She was open to the idea and we met all summer and really got to know one another. In the fall she joined Bible Study Fellowship and through the study became a believer.

Galatians 6:1-2 ".....if someone is caught in sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Now, "The rest of the story" as Paul Harvey used to say --- (vs. 36-44) - --- Abigail returns home and finds Nabal in the middle of a banquet getting drunk. She tells him nothing about her trip. In the morning when he is sober she tells him how she met David and brought him gifts of food. Nabal was so shocked ---it says "his heart failed him and became like stone".

(NIV footnote ---says "he may have suffered a stroke---he who was without moral sensitivity became as senseless as a stone.")

"About ten days later the Lord struck Nabal and he died".

David hears about Nabal's death and sends word to Abigail to become his wife. Vs 42 "Abigail quickly got on a donkey and attended by her five maids, went with David's messengers and became his wife."

In this passage we find out that David also has other wives---Michal (Saul's daughter), and Ahinoam of Jezreel. One wonders why David fails to follow God's pattern for marriage---one wife.

Matthew Henry's commentary gives this reason. "Saul had already given his daughter, Michal to another in vs. 44 in token of his displeasure against David and disclaiming the relationship of a father-in-law to him. When David could not keep his first wife he thought that would excuse him if he did not keep to his second. But we deceive ourselves if we think to make others' faults a cloak for our own."

God had given some directions about the life of a king through Moses in Deut. 17:7 "He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray." David knew he would one day be King, but he disobeyed this specific command.

As we will see in David's later life he will reap the consequences of multiple wives and children from them (2 Sam 3:2-5—list of wives and sons). David's example is repeated in his son Solomon's life who had hundreds of wives and he was ultimately drawn away from God (1 Kings 11:3-4). The NT gives us the pattern for biblical marriage (Eph 5:22-33 and 1 Pet 3:1-7) which honors God, produces spiritual growth, and gives a man and wife great joy and satisfaction.

David has been described as a "man after God's own heart". He was Israel's greatest king and an ancestor of Jesus Christ, but he was not perfect. He sinned many times, but he was quick to confess his sins and experience God's forgiveness. He had a heart that was tender toward God and was the vessel through which the character of God is revealed in the Psalms. David's desire to be teachable and follow God is seen in a variety of the Psalms he wrote.

Psalms 139:23-24 "Search me O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."

Psalms 51:10 "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Psalms 143:10 "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God."

A TEACHABLE HEART

From what we have observed in David's life, what traits describe a heart that is teachable? A teachable heart is humble and willing to obey God's direction. Willingness in the dictionary means "cheerfully ready".

A teachable heart is willing ----

- ◆ To listen and be open to hear the Holy Spirit--- through the Scriptures, circumstances, or the counsel of godly people.

"Our ability to hear the Lord is directly related to a right relationship with Him---a clear conscience. " As we grow closer to the Lord our spiritual hearing becomes more sensitive.

- ◆ To recognize the problem or error.
Humbly seeking the Lord's help ----asking "What are you teaching me in this situation? What do you want me to see and learn?"

- ◆ To change direction.

Willing to change direction can change your destiny and that of your family and others.

I am here today because we were willing to change direction a number of years ago...

Illustration: During my husband's working career two doors opened to us. One was to move out of state with the company to AZ, the other to open our own business in a new shopping center in Wilmar, MN. We prayed for the Lord's clear direction, but our personal desire was to open this new business even if it would mean great personal sacrifice and expense. We weren't really interested in spending the company's money to look seriously at the AZ offer. But God seemed to say---"Will you trust Me and investigate this other door of opportunity?" We went and the peace we experienced showed us God was asking us to "change direction"-----He had other plans for us and our family. We didn't know at the time, after AZ God would move us to Rochester and help us fulfill our dream of opening our own Women's apparel business.

Jeremiah 29:11 "...I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

- ◆ To wait on God ---not act in haste---wait patiently on Him through prayer and the Scriptures.
Obey and act on what He shows you.

A TEACHABLE HEART HONORS GOD

Do you hear God speaking to your heart today? Are you experiencing difficulties in your family with strained or broken relationships? Is God calling you to change direction--- to let go of your anger, or forgive a wrong, and show His love regardless of your feelings?

Are you struggling with health problems or financial issues or loss of a job? Will you wait on the Lord and let Him use your situation to teach you new revelations of His love and grace as He meets your needs.

Phil 4:19 "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches
in Christ Jesus."

May David's own words from the Psalms be our prayer to help us have teachable hearts.

"Create in me a pure heart O God, search me and know my heart; teach me to do your will; may the words of my mouth and meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." (Excerpts from Psalms 51, 139, 143,

19)