**ABIGAIL – An Ideal Woman?**

**1 Samuel 25; Proverbs 31:10-31**

Mother’s Day Talk

Sunday, May 11, 2014

Sandy Ridge Church

**Outline**

**Proverbs 31:10, 30; 1 Samuel 25:2-3** (Someone will read these before I speak)

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**Conclusion: A Woman who fears the Lord Proverbs 31:10-31**

**Introduction**

**Prov. 31:10, 30**

**“A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.**

**Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”**

For those of you who don’t know me, I’m Tawna Robinson. No, I am not the Pastor of this church. Pastor Travis and his family are out of town this week, so he asked me to speak on one of the women of the Bible in honor of Mother’s Day.

This is a day set aside to honor and remember our mothers and all mothers.

We all had a mother. Without them we would not have come into being. Because of our mother, we were brought into this world, have grown up and learned how to live on our own apart from them.

Some of us are a mother, having already entered into that most demanding and rewarding of roles a woman can experience.

Some of you would like to be a mother, to know the unique intimacy and challenge of being the caregiver of children.

Some of you are married to a woman who has become the mother of the children you share and call your own.

Some of you would like to find a good woman to be the mother of your children, a woman to whom you could entrust this most special of roles.

With this day comes the inevitable scrutiny of ourselves and our mothers. We search for just the right words to write in a card, to compliment and express our love to them. We mothers worry about whether we were good enough, and each failure haunts us. Perhaps our children will remember only the bad times, when we punished them unjustly or embarrassed them in front of their friends, and not all the long nights we spent finishing a costume or nursing them through an episode of chicken pox or flu.

**How do we measure up?** We’re going to watch a short clip on this very subject.

**Mary Poppins Practically Perfect Clip:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXn3r5plloI>

Today we are going to look at a woman in the Bible during a period of time where she seems to be like Mary Poppins – practically perfect in every way!

**Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 25.** (Page \_\_\_\_\_\_ in the Pew Bibles)

**Introduction of Characters: Abigail, Nabal and David**

**1 Samuel 25:2-4**

**1 Samuel 25:2-4**

**2 A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He**

**had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel.**

**3 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**.

**4** While **David** was in the desert, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep.

**Abigail**: She is intelligent and beautiful, and is married to Nabal.

**Nabal**: He is a wealthy Calebite man who owns 1,000 goats and 3,000 sheep. They

are in Carmel with the animals for it was sheep shearing time. The annual shearing

was done in the spring, and it was such a big job that friends and family often came to

help. Nabal is known to be surly and mean, harsh and evil in his dealings. The name

“Nabal” comes from one of the Hebrew words for “fool.” This particular word means

wicked, crooked, immoral, to wither or to fall like dead leaves.

**David**: This is King David, but here he is a young man in his twenties who is leader of

a band of 600 warriors. He has had great success in the war with the Philistines,

beginning with his defeat of Goliath with his slingshot. After a later victory, the women

of Israel had welcomed him with this song of praise: “Saul has slain his thousands, and

David his ten thousands.” This made King Saul so angry and jealous that he had tried

to kill David on several occasions. So David and his men are on their own, on the run,

trying to stay one step ahead of Saul’s forces. David was a shepherd in his younger

days, so he knows that shepherds need protection while they are shearing the sheep.

He also knows that a great feast will be enjoyed once the shearing is done, and all who

have participated are usually invited to join in the celebration.

**This story takes place about 1015 BC (a few years before David becomes king, which is about 1011 BC).**

**Abigail’s Dilemma**

**1 Samuel 25:5-17**

5 So David sent ten young men and said to them, “Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name.  
6 Say to him: **‘Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!  
7 “ ‘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.  
8 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.’ ”**  
**David and his men have performed a valuable service to the shepherds, keeping them and their sheep safe while the shepherds have been busy hand shearing each animal.**

**9** When David’s men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David’s name. Then they waited.  
**10 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.  
11 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, true to his name, has foolishly insulted David and his army of 600 men who are currently camped all around him and his flocks!**

**Not surprisingly, David did not take this very well. When his men reported what Nabal had said,**

**13 David said to his men, “Put on your swords!”**

**And he took 400 men to go and slay Nabal and his household.**

**14 One of the servants told** Nabal’s wife **Abigail: “David sent messengers from the desert to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them.  
15 Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing.  
16 Night and day they were a wall around us all the time we were herding our sheep near them.  
17 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.”**

**Abigail’s Decisiveness**

**1 Samuel 25:18-22**

Abigail’s servants knew their master to be a wicked and foolish man. But they also knew their mistress and didn’t hesitate to go to her with the problem. I get the feeling that this is not the first time she has been called into action as a result of Nabal’s temper and selfishness.

**18 Abigail lost no time. She took 200 loaves of bread, 2 skins of wine, 5 dressed sheep (ready to be cooked), 1 bushel of roasted grain, 100 cakes of raisins and 200 cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys.  
19 Then she told her servants, “Go on ahead; I’ll follow you.”**

**But she did not tell her husband Nabal.  
20 As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and she met them.**

**21 David had just said, “It’s been useless—all my watching over this fellow’s property in the desert so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good.  
22 May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!”**

**Abigail’s Discernment**

**1 Samuel 25:23-42**

**Abigail Speaks to David 1 Samuel 25:23-31**

**23 When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground.  
24 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.

**25 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.**

**26 “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.**  
**27 And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my master, be given to the men who follow you.**  
**28 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.**  
**29 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.**  
**30 When the Lord has done for my master every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him leader over Israel,  
31 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.”**

**In her plea to David, Abigail is showing great discernment and tact that comes from knowledge and wisdom. She is intervening in a dangerous situation that is the result of her husband’s foolish greed and evil nature, and David’s foolish anger.**

**Her Attitude:**

(23, 24) humility – bowing before David, calling him lord and herself his servant

**Her Knowledge of David:**

(28) He fights the Lord’s battles

(29) King Saul is pursuing him to take his life

(29) His enemies will be taken care of even as Goliath was, with a sling shot

(28, 31) He needs to keep his conscience clear, not taking personal vengeance

**Her Knowledge of God’s Plans for David:**

(28) He will give David a lasting dynasty, and many kings will come from him

(29) He will bind David securely in His loving and life-giving hands

(29) He will take care of David’s enemies

(30) He will appoint him leader over Israel

(30, 31) He has promised him great success and every good thing

**Her Requests:**

(24, 25) Let the blame for this situation be on me alone

(25) Pay no attention to what Nabal, that foolish wicked man, has done

(27) Receive the gift of this food for you and your men

(28) Please forgive my offense to you

(31) Remember me, your servant, when the Lord brings you success

**Abigail was marked by both beauty and wisdom – the wisdom of God that allowed her to deal with the foolishness of both her husband and David.**

As Abigail’s servant had said, no one could speak to Nabal, so Abigail left without telling him what she was about to do. However, David is a man who will listen to reason, and he responds well to her wise words.

**David’s Response 1 Samuel 25:32-35**

**32 David said to Abigail, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me.  
33 May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands.  
34 Otherwise, as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.”  
35 Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, “Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request.”**

**Abigail and Nabal 1 Samuel 25:36-37a**

Having averted the disaster about to fall on her household, she must now return home and confront the problem of telling her husband what had happened.

**36 When Abigail went to Nabal, he was in the house holding a banquet like that of a king. He was in high spirits and very drunk. So she told him nothing until daybreak.**

Abigail was wise enough to know that this was not the time to talk to her husband about what she had done. So she waited . . .

**37 Then in the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things,**

**Nabal’s Response 1 Samuel 37b-38**

**and his heart failed him and he became like a stone.  
38 About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died.**

Most commentators agree that Nabal probably had a cerebral hemorrhage, a stroke, which initially left him unable to move, and then caused his death.

**David’s Response 1 Samuel 25:39a**

**39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, “Praise be to the Lord, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal’s wrongdoing down on his own head.”**

God fulfilled the promise of **Deuteronomy 32:35** that Abigail had hinted at when she confronted David about taking personal vengeance on his enemies. In that verse, God says,

**“It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them.”**

God took vengeance on the enemy of David and brought about his downfall at the proper time.

**Abigail and David 1 Samuel 25:39b-42**

**39b Then David sent word to Abigail, asking her to become his wife.  
40** His servants went to Carmel and said to Abigail, “David has sent us to you to take you to become his wife.”  
**41 She bowed down with her face to the ground and said, “Here is your maidservant, ready to serve you and wash the feet of my master’s servants.”  
42 Abigail quickly got on a donkey and, attended by her five maids, went with David’s messengers and became his wife.**

**Abigail’s Devotion**

**To Her God**

Abigail knew her God and she knew His word. She demonstrated this by how she lived her life.

She loved the LORD her God with all her heart, soul and might. (**Deut 6:5**)

She did not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of her people, but loved her neighbor as herself. (**Lev. 19:18**)

She did what the Lord said was good in **Micah 6:8**: She acted justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with her God.

And even though this passage was not yet written when she was alive, she lived out **Hebrews 10:23-24**: She held unswervingly to the hope she professed, for she knew that God who promised is faithful. And she spurred others on toward love and good deeds.

She was humble before God and willingly served others. Her life demonstrated what God has called each of us to do and to be.

**To Her Husband, Nabal**

She knew her husband Nabal and served him faithfully. She knew what he was likely to do or not do, and stood at the ready to avert disaster when necessary. She did not seem afraid of him, nor did she try to get rid of him or the marriage. Instead, she did what she counseled David to do, she gave Nabal to the Lord and let God deal with him in the right way at the proper time.

**To Her Household**

There’s no doubt that Abigail’s presence contributed greatly to the prosperity of Nabal’s holdings. As the saying goes, behind every successful man is a good woman. Her wisdom and intervention on behalf of her household was probably a well-established pattern as evidenced by the fact that the servants knew exactly who to come to when disaster struck.

**To Her Future King**

She knew that David was going to be the next king over Israel. Knowing that, she was led to remind him of his destiny and his responsibility to follow God’s commands and submit to God’s timing. David recognized that she was used by God to remind him of this, and he praised God for her intervention.

**To Her New Husband, David**

Her quick response to David’s proposal of marriage seems to indicate that she saw this as God’s plan and provision at her time of need. As the widow of Nabal, she probably brought more than herself and five maids into the marriage with David. Her share of the household’s wealth and flocks would be of great value to David and his men. She was joining a man who had no permanent home at this time in his life, and she would join him “on the road” with his soldiers for several years before they settled at Hebron in 1011 BC when he was anointed king over Judah.

**But this is a talk for Mother’s Day. Was Abigail ever a mother?**

**There is no evidence that she and Nabal had a child. However, she did have a son with David who was born after they settled in Hebron.**

**To Her Son with David**

Both **2 Samuel 3** and **1 Chronicles 3** list the six sons of David born at Hebron.

(1 Chronicles 3 also lists his nine sons who were born later in Jerusalem.)

**2 Samuel 3:2-5**

**2** Sons were born to David in Hebron:

His firstborn was **Amnon** the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel;  
**3** his second, **Kileab** the son of **Abigail** the widow of Nabal of Carmel;

the third, **Absalom** the son of Maacah daughter of Talmai king of Geshur;  
**4** the fourth, **Adonijah** the son of Haggith;

the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;  
**5** and the sixth, Ithream the son of David’s wife Eglah.

**1 Chronicles 3:1-5**

The list is the same, except for the name of Abigail’s son **1** the second, **Daniel** the son of Abigail of Carmel;

**David and Abigail’s son was apparently given two names. In the Old Testament era, names were not given simply as a label. Rather, a name described the child or expressed their hope for that child.**

**Kileab:** The name **Kileab**, literally means “the perfection of the father.” That name indicates that this child was a clear look-alike of his father. God gave David and Abigail a son in the likeness of David, with no likeness whatsoever to Nabal.

**Daniel:** The name of Abigail’s son in 1 Chron. 3:1 is Daniel, which means “God is my judge,” or, “the judgment of God.” This name indicates that God had judged in the matters pertaining to Nabal, David and Abigail.

In both of these accounts, **Abigail’s son is the second son born to David**. Amnon is the firstborn, and Absalom is the son born third, and Adonijah was born as the fourth son. **Each of these sons was born to a different mother, so the influence of their mothers would have played a big role in their character development.** The order of their births is important in terms of succession to the throne of David as well as rights of inheritance to their father’s fortunes.

Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah brought strife and heartache to the house of David.

Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar then refused to marry her. Absalom had Amnon killed for having done this to his sister, then he tried to overthrow his father and take the throne by force and was later killed. When David was an old man, his fourth son, Adonijah, also tried to take the throne through treachery. Solomon, David’s son by Bathsheba, was God’s choice to rule after David and he had to have Adonijah put to death for further rebellion and sin.

**The actions of Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah reveal them to be self-serving, rebellious and wicked.**

**Kileab/Daniel, by contrast, is never mentioned again in the Bible. Abigail undoubtedly taught her son to live as she did: to trust in the Lord, and to submit to David: the anointed of God, his father and his King.**

Abigail knew her God and she knew His word. She demonstrated this by how she lived her life. She was humble before God, and she served those in authority over her, including her foolish husband and the man she saw as her future king. When she spoke, she delivered God’s wisdom with gentleness and reverence. Her marriage with David brought him a son who seems to have been a reflection of his father, but also of his godly mother, Abigail.

**Proverbs 31 – The Ideal Woman**

We have just read about a situation in the life of Abigail which took place over a few weeks, and then I made some assumptions based on what we know about her marriage to David and their son. But was Abigail as perfect in all parts of her life as she was during this particular time?

Let’s compare what we know of her to the ultimate passage about women:

**The Proverbs 31 Woman.**

This passage about the ideal woman, wife, mother and homemaker has brought many women to their knees as they put their lives alongside hers. We often feel that we just don’t measure up well at all, that we’re not even close to being “practically perfect.”

The whole passage is **Proverbs 31:10-31**. But I am going to read just those verses which I think describe Abigail.

You should have received a handout with these verses written on it so you can follow along as I read.

**Proverbs 31:10-31  
10 A good woman is hard to find, and worth far more than diamonds.   
11 Her husband trusts her without reserve, and never has reason to regret it.   
12 Never spiteful, she treats him generously all her life long.   
13** She shops around for the best yarns and cottons, and enjoys knitting and sewing.   
**14** She’s like a trading ship that sails to faraway places and brings back exotic surprises.   
**15 She’s up before dawn, preparing breakfast for her family and organizing her day.**   
**16** She looks over a field and buys it, then, with money she’s put aside, plants a garden.   
**17 First thing in the morning, she dresses for work, rolls up her sleeves, eager to get started.   
18** She senses the worth of her work, is in no hurry to call it quits for the day.   
**19** She’s skilled in the crafts of home and hearth, diligent in homemaking.   
**20 She’s quick to assist anyone in need, reaches out to help the poor.   
21** She doesn’t worry about her family when it snows; their winter clothes are all mended and ready to wear.   
**22** She makes her own clothing, and dresses in colorful linens and silks.   
**23 Her husband is greatly respected when he deliberates with the city fathers.   
24** She designs gowns and sells them, brings the sweaters she knits to the dress shops.

**25 She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she always faces tomorrow with a smile.   
26 She speaks with wisdom, and always instructs with kindness.**

**27 She keeps an eye on everyone in her household, and keeps them all busy and productive.   
28 Her children respect and bless her; her husband joins in with words of praise:   
29 “Many women have done wonderful things, but you’ve outclassed them all!”   
30 Charm can mislead and beauty soon fades. The woman to be admired and praised is the woman who lives in the Fear-of-God.   
31 Give her everything she deserves! Festoon her life with praises!**

When we compare Abigail to this paragon of motherly and wifely virtue, the Proverbs 31 woman, she comes out looking pretty good! She measures up favorably with 14 of the 21 verses. We don’t know about the other parts of her life. She could have been a terrible cook, an incompetent seamstress, or a horrible money manager.

But that gives us all a ray of hope! We cannot be perfect, but perhaps in a few of the qualities listed we can say with confidence, “I’m pretty good at that!”

**Conclusion**

**Abigail was an ordinary person, but because of her devotion to God and to what was right, her life counted in an extraordinary way.**

The paper you have with the modern version of Proverbs 31 on it is yours to keep and to use.

On one side it says, “**Check all that apply to Your Mother**” and the other side says, “**Check all that apply to Yourself, Your Wife, Your Girlfriend**, or to any other woman of your choosing.

I invite you to use this passage to find the positive ways that the women in your life have blessed you with their presence, their words, their talents and strengths.

Then, most importantly, if at all possible, please let them know how you appreciate them for these good qualities. The last verse says,

**“Give her everything she deserves! Festoon her life with praises!”**

That’s what this day, **Mother’s Day**, has been set aside for.

**Happy Mother’s Day!**

**We thank You, Lord, for the gift and privilege of knowing and being a mother!**

**In Jesus name, Amen!**