

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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**SERMON:** *Abigail*

**SERIES:** *1 Samuel*

**SCRIPTURES:** *1 Samuel 25*

**SPEAKER:** *Shaun Kipe*

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*\*Credit to Eugene Peterson Commentary; Brazos Commentary; Andy Stanley*

Well good morning and welcome to Five Forks Church. It is good to worship with you today. Everybody here in the room and also to those of you tuning in on the live stream.

We have been on this journey through the book of **1 Samuel (Series Graphic)**.

As we make our way through the year each year, in our sermon series, we try to gain a better understanding of Scripture. We want to be familiar with the entire story-line of Scripture, I think that makes it easier for each of us to understand when we sit down and read on our own. And so my hope is that through this series on 1 Samuel you have a picture of how this book fits into the larger story of the Bible. But more than that we have taken the stories we learn along the way and thinking about how they apply to our lives. Ancient stories, but speak to real life experiences in our own lives.

Today we come to the final message in our series. We learned last week how David was chosen to become the second King of Israel. That was 1 Samuel 16. For the remainder of the book of **1 Samuel**, through **2 Samuel** and on into the beginning of **1 Kings** we read stories about King David. And as I had mentioned last week, there are more chapters dedicated to King David than any of the other Kings of Israel. He is by far the most significant King.

If you have your Bible with you today we are going to **1 Samuel 25**.

And let me just set the stage for you. If you recall from last week, in chapter 16, David is a young boy, but is secretly anointed the next King by Samuel. The anointing is more symbolic than anything, because, it doesn't mean he just becomes King. It means, God has chosen him as next King. This is why the anointing is done secretly, because if Saul finds out that David has been anointed, he will kill him. Over the next few chapters, David slowly makes his way onto the national stage.

He works for **King Saul** playing music, he becomes best buddies with Saul's son, **Jonathan**, he marries Saul's daughter **Michal** and he "defeats" **Goliath** in battle which makes him very popular among the people. And in the course of events Saul, begins to realize David's increasing popularity. And he knows David is now becoming a threat to his throne! And so, Saul decides he needs to kill David.

David has enough popularity that he rounds up a group of warriors who will follow him. But he does not yet have the power of the Kingship. And so for a number of chapters there are all of these stories of King Saul, trying to track down and kill David and fleeing **all over the place (PIC)**. Here's a map of some of the chapters near the end of 1 Samuel...shows David's movements, running away from King Saul.

And in one of these stories, David ends up seeking refuge in the **desert of Maon (highlight on map)**. Where he has an interesting encounter with two characters

### **I. Nabal and Abigail**

So as we've done each week so far in the series, I want to talk us through this story in 1 Samuel 25. We're gonna spend a few minutes longer than we usually do going through the story, because it's kind of an engaging story. It's one of those stories, where you find yourself saying "you can't make this stuff up". So I think you'll enjoy

this one. And then I'll highlight for us two important lessons that we can learn from the story, that connect with our lives today. Ok?

**Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him...**

So, remember Samuel, we met him when he was young, he went into training to become lead priest, led Israel for a while, until the people asked for a King and then he anointed the first king of Israel and then he anointed David as the second King of Israel. Samuel now dies at the end of the book of 1 Samuel.

**Then David moved down into the Desert of Maon.**

He's running from King Saul who is trying to kill him.

**<sup>2</sup> A certain man in Maon, who had property there...was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing... <sup>3</sup> His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean...**

**<sup>4</sup> While David was in the desert, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. <sup>5</sup> So he sent ten young men and said to them, "Go up to Nabal...and greet him and.. <sup>6</sup> Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!**

**<sup>7</sup> "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 in the desert, nothing of theirs was missing. <sup>8</sup> Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore, be favorable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them."**

So let me just explain what seems to be going on here. Ancient middle Eastern desert was **a dangerous place** to live. There are stories about young David, as a desert shepherd killing a lion and bear in order to protect the animal herds. More

than that the desert was a “high-crime district.” Bandits and robbers and thieves preying on travelers and the defenseless shepherds and stealing animals and crops.

Jesus tells a famous story about a defenseless traveler who is robbed, beaten and left for dead, until a “good Samaritan” comes along to rescue him.

Nabal, wealthy farmer, has herds and herdsmen regularly out in this dangerous desert. Well, it so happens, that as David has been out, running from King Saul and living out in the desert with his warriors, they have taken it upon themselves to help protect the farmers and shepherds and the herdsman and at times have actually protected Nabal’s herds and herdsman.

More than that, notice we are told it is **sheepshearing time**. Do you know sheepshearing time means in ancient Hebrew? It means, the time of year when they sheared sheep. In that culture, it was traditionally a time of festivity and generosity. Think of it a little bit like “Christmas spirit” in our world. Have some Christmas Spirit, we’ll say. Be a little more generous this time of year.

And so David and his men who are tired and hungry, renegades, living out in the desert, they are simply asking for food and water and to be shown hospitality, by a wealthy individual, whom they have helped...this was not an unreasonable request by David.

Since we were good to you, would you be good to us? Since we were kind to you, will you be kind to us? Seems fair, right? So back to the story...

(Peterson Commentary 162/Stanley sermon)

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

**<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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?"**

In other words, "This David, who does he think he is? All these renegade, rebels running around the desert, untrustworthy, sketchy and now coming to me asking for help. I didn't ask for his help, I didn't ask for his protection, I don't owe him and I don't owe you." (Stanley)

**<sup>12</sup> David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word. <sup>13</sup> David said to his men,**

*"That's ok. Many years from now, Jesus will come along and he's gonna teach us about the golden rule...treat others the way we want to be treated...that we need to love our enemies and turn the other cheek and do good to those who persecute us. Let's just leave Nabal alone and move on."*

No, what does David say?

**"Each of you strap on your sword!" So they did, and David strapped his on as well."**

David and his men are fuming and they are going to go and settle things with Nabal. You may be aware of this...but often in the Bible, name's of characters, carry great significance. **Nabal**, his name literally means "**fool**". Because his actions in this story are very foolish.

In the mean time...one of Nabal's servants, goes to Abigail, Nabal's wife and tells her what is going on. That David sent messengers, asking for generosity and confirming to her that David and his men had been very good to the shepherds and the herds in

the desert. But that Nabal, had sent them away empty handed and full of insults. This is not gonna be good, you gotta do something.

**18 Abigail acted quickly...**

Without telling her husband, she got together all of these supplies and says to her servants take these to David right away and I'll be on my way to meet him as well.

**20 As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and she met them. 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:**

And she gives this masterpiece of a speech to David...

**“Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you...25 Please pay no attention, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name means Fool. As for me...I did not see the men you sent. 26 And now...since the LORD has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands...let this gift, which your servant has brought, be given to the men who follow you.**

And then she really lays it on thick...

**28 “...God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for you, because...no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live. 29 Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, your life will be bound securely...but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. 30 When the LORD has fulfilled for you every good thing he promised and has appointed you ruler over Israel, 31You will not have on your conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed. And when the LORD your God has brought you success, remember me, your humble servant.”**

David, what you are about to do is wrong? You know this not God's idea. You are doing this out of vengeance and for your own personal satisfaction. Please stop. Turn around.

Now you have to remember in the ancient world, women did not have the same status as men. Why should he listen to her!

**<sup>32</sup> David said to Abigail, "Praise be to the LORD, who has sent you today. <sup>33</sup> May you be blessed...for keeping me from bloodshed and from avenging myself. <sup>34</sup> ... if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak."**

**<sup>35</sup> Then David accepted...what she had brought him and said, "Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request."**

So David, listens to Abigail and he and his men turn back. And then there is like this crazy ending to the story. Abigail, returns home and she goes to tell Nabal about what has happened but he's have a big party and he's very drunk. So she waits til morning to tell him..

**in the morning, when Nabal was sober, she told him all these things, and his heart failed him and he became like a stone. <sup>38</sup> ...ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died.**

**<sup>39</sup> When David heard that Nabal was dead...sent word to Abigail, asking her to become his wife...**

**<sup>41</sup> She bowed down with her face to the ground and said, "I am your servant...<sup>42</sup> Abigail quickly got on a donkey and, attended by her five female servants, went with David's messengers and became his wife.**

**And they lived happily ever after. The End.**

Phew, what a story, right? I told you can't make this stuff up. This is so relatable to your life, isn't it? So let's talk about the Bible's advice on how to get a spouse. I'm just kidding. Let's look at

## **II. Two Important Lessons**

From this crazy story.

First, we learn an important lesson in this story, from David's actions about...

### **A. Admitting when we're wrong.**

In many ways, the climax of this story, happens around verse 32, at the end of Abigail's speech.

Her speech is powerful and convincing and gracious and thoughtful. But at the heart of her speech, she's saying, "*David what you are about to do is wrong. It goes against who God is asking you to be. This is a huge mistake. Turn around and go home.*"

And so at verse 32, the outcome of this story hangs in the balance. David is headed the wrong way...will David choose to accept that what he is doing is wrong and listen to Abigail and turn and go home or will ignore her, justify his actions and continue on to execute his revenge on Nabal? The story hangs in the balance. The lives of real people, an entire village of people, hangs in the balance.

And **David listens to Abigail**. He and his 400 soldiers are geared up and ready to fight. And listens to Abigail. He admits he is in the wrong and he turns around.

You know, one of the hardest things to do in our world today is to admit when we are in the wrong. To admit when we have made a mistake, messed up and to turn and go the other way. Humility!

In fact, one of the things that stands out, in the story, and I think we're supposed to see this on purpose...is when we compare **David's** response here, to the pinnacle moment of **King Saul's** demise. We talked about King Saul's demise two weeks ago. And do you remember what was at the heart of his demise? It was **disobedience**, specifically going into war, killing people for his own **personal benefit, wealth and power**. And after Saul makes this mistake...God says, you are no longer fit to be King.

And there is a sense in this story where David is facing the same moment as King Saul. He's going to kill, slaughter, destroy for his own personal vengeance and benefit.

What is it that makes David, different from Saul...in some ways it's that he **admits** he is in the wrong. It's not that David is perfect. But in many of the stories about David...he often admits to his wrong. Admitting when we are wrong one of the most powerful things we can do in life.

It makes me wonder, how much hurt, pain, heartache could be spared in our own world, among nations, within families and individual lives...if people would be willing to admit when they are wrong...to fess up and to change course...when they have made a mistake

C.S. Lewis once wrote – **“If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road...There is nothing beneficial about being pigheaded and refusing to admit a mistake.”**

I just bet you can relate, can't you? You have made a mistake, you have acted foolishly, you have been headed on the wrong path, you have justified your actions...this week you will learn from David. You will listen, you will admit you were headed the wrong way and you will turn around. It will save relationships in your life.

Second, we also learn from this story an important lesson about...

### **B. Golden Rule Living**

You've heard of the golden rule, right?

The golden rule is something that Jesus taught, near the end of his own sermon...Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 7**.

**“So in everything do to others what you would have them do to you...for this sums up the law and the prophets.”**

We've mentioned the idea of being part of the **Upside-Down Kingdom**, as followers of Jesus. The Golden rule is one of the centerpieces of this upside-down theology. Jesus says the Golden Rule sums up the heart behind following Jesus. It should be your “guiding principle in life”, in your relationships with others. If you want life and relationships to work best, treat others the way you want to be treated.

Let's think about the three primary characters in our story today in relation to the Golden Rule.

**Nabal** - Nabal does not live by the Golden rule. In fact, he kind of lives by the opposite. In the story someone, David and his men, do something good for him and he decides rather than returning good for good, **he is going return evil for their good**. And so, he is an example of the opposite of the golden rule. He represents the epitome of evil. Very few even in our world, behave as Nabal. Returning evil for good.

Then there's...**David** – David also does not live according to Golden rule theology. But I think many people can relate to David. In the story, he flips the golden rule backwards. Rather than doing to others what he would have done to him, he decides to **do to others what they have done to him**. So he intends to return evil for evil. You did wrong to me, I'll do wrong to you.

Now before you become too critical of David, this was actually the standard for God's people during David's time in history. David lived during the Old Testament, literally old covenant. Remember God's people had this covenant or contract agreement with God. He would be their God and they would be His people. And they would live according to His laws. That was the contract. And that contract was specified in writing on the tablets of the 10 commandments, that were kept in what sacred object, all you fine Five Forks Bible scholars? Ark of the covenant. And according to the old covenant or contract with God, the rule was **“an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth.”**

In our world, this is how often how we measure fairness and justice. It's how we make sure that other people don't take advantage of us. And you have seen this in very real ways in our world. You did this to me, you said this about me. So I am justified in doing this back to you. (Concrete example)

But, if you live by this mentality, you end up creating **a cycle of revenge and violence** that never ends. It's called a “vicious cycle”. You did this to me. So I retaliate and do this to you. So you retaliate and do this to me.

This is David right? The whole way down the mountain into that ravine. “Here's how I'm gonna get Nabal back.” And you've done that to. Here's how I'm gonna “even the score.” You've thought about, rehearsed it. You've told your friends about it and they support you. And they've given you a host of other ideas as well about “what you can do.”

**“The Rule of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth cannot sustain itself forever; ultimately both parties end up blind and toothless.”** Ghandi

This brings us to **Abigail**. This is why Abigail is such an intriguing character in the story. This is why Abigail is the hero. She encourages David to live by a different way.

Abigail encourages David into golden rule living. She basically says, “Do to him, what you would have wanted him to do for you. **Return good for evil.**”

It’s fascinating. I mean through this series we’ve talked about some of the challenges of reading the OT and how we make sense of it today and some of the ways God is depicted that are troubling, but here in this story we catch a glimpse of what God was pointing people toward!

In this way, **Abigail begins to give us a taste of the way of Jesus making it’s way into the ancient world.**

Jesus came to start a new kind of Kingdom, with a new kind of contract. People live by a different rule. The kind of rule that is intended to end the vicious cycles of retaliation and revenge. Do to others, what you would have them do to you. It will transform your relationships.

And this idea is just foreign to our world too, isn’t it? Like can you even imagine if politics and political candidates started functioning according to this principle. What kind of adds you might see.

*“Hey I know so and so called me a scoundrel and falsely inflated my views on the economy and foreign policy and immigration policies and...but I just want you to know deep down I think he means well. I admire that he truly does care about our society and our world. He’s been a good dad to his kids. I’m going over to help him mow his*

*lawn later this week. I heard he has a close friend in bad health and I've been praying for healing. I personally shouldn't have said what I said about him last week, it was crude and inappropriate."*

Can you imagine? It's make believe, isn't it? Well in one sense yes, because that will probably never happen for most of the world. Our world and most people in our world live by the eye for eye, tooth for tooth mentality and it's destroying our world. Individuals, families, entire nations.

But there was this Jewish Rabbi 2,000 years ago who came along and he began to teach, **"You have heard it said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say, love your enemies and do good to those who persecute you. This is only way to end the cycle of violence and retribution and brokenness in our world."**

His followers caught hold of that vision for humanity and they said, it might cost our lives, but that seems like a better way to do life.

Peter says, **1 Peter 3:9 - <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.**

Whenever you are mistreated. You don't ignore it. You don't retaliate in similar fashion. You respond in a positive manner. Because you were called to this. In other words, the rest of the world will probably not do this. But as followers of Jesus, you are to be different in your response, set apart to respond in a way the rest of the world does!

***Refusing to repay evil for evil may be one of the most "Christ-like" things you'll ever do in this world.*** (Stanley)

And folks as far fetched as that sounds, Jesus invites us to join in that Kingdom. The church should be that group of people. You can shout at us and step on us and throw us in the garbage if you like and we'll respond as best we can by loving you in return.

That's challenge we see in the hero of the story today, Abigail. She would say to each of us, "there's somebody in your world, who is doing this to you. Mistreating you. Being evil in their actions towards you. Speaking poorly about you. The call of Jesus is to stand up and love that person. Repay evil with incredible, extravagant love." It will rock your world and it will probably change their life.

What would it look like for you to return good for evil? What would it look like for you to be a blessing to someone who hurt you? To not just ignore them. That would be merciful. To not give them what they deserve, that's merciful. But to give them, a blessing, to give them what they don't deserve that's grace.

And, and don't that kind of behavior is the very heart of following Jesus. Because that's what Jesus does for every single one of us. In Jesus, God returns good...extravagant, gracious love for our evil.

**Romans 5 - 10 For...while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son...**

Grace is the best way that our lives, can reflect the life of Jesus.