

28. Anger management 101

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Uncontrolled anger is so debilitating because it is shown in public and unpredictable. Of course, the answer to anger is self-control which is a part of the aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. Anger is a choice and a learned behavior. According to psychologists, severe anger is a form of insanity.

Though God's mercies are new every morning, so are satan's schemes against us. Like the rest of us, David learned the hard way that we can't live today on yesterday's obedience. In our last chapter, he chose to leave vengeance in God's hands. But in today's scene, he is overcome by his own hotheaded ugly attitude and nearly commits murder.

However, this story doesn't end in the shedding of blood, but in an outpouring of grace. Let's take a look at David in one of his most human moments – and by the wise woman, God used to turn his hostile heart back to God Himself.

A. CHARACTER INTRODUCTION

1 Samuel 25:1-3 Then Samuel died; and the Israelites gathered together and lamented for him, and buried him at his home in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the Wilderness of Paran. 2 Now there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel, and the man was very rich. He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. 3 The name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. And she was a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance; but the man was harsh and evil in his doings. And he was of the house of Caleb.

Israel's last judge and the preeminent prophet Samuel had died.

Tired and sad, David left the cool of En Gedi to scratch out some sort of living in the wilderness of Maon. There he and his men employed themselves in protecting the local ranchers and their herds from invading tribes and wild animals. This was not the same as the Mafia style of "Protection Racket." Theirs was a volunteer force; no contracts were signed. But it's customary for ranchers to compensate their protectors with a small portion of the harvest and the herds.

As the time of harvest, the shearing of the sheep was a festive occasion. However, the sheep aren't the only ones to get skinned off by Nabal.

Let's get a quick look at the main characters here:

1) Nabal – A wealthy man with no brain, but selfish, harsh, and evil attitude toward everyone else. Nabal means "fool." I guess that his mama didn't like him. It doesn't mean that he was ignorant or retarded. He was living as if there is no God.

Psalms 14:1 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."

2) Abigail – Stood in stark contrast to her husband, she was a smart individual and quick thinker with the well-groomed manner and godly attitude. To top it off, she had a beautiful appearance. Most likely, their parents arranged their marriage before they were married as in their custom was.

There were three beautiful women mentioned in the Bible: Rachel – Jacob’s wife, Queen Esther, and Abigail.

3) David – He displays remarkable patience and obedience to God in spite of the once in a lifetime opportunity to finish off his enemy Saul. What a man of God! But his training by the Lord is not over by any means.

B. A VERY BAD MOVE

1 Samuel 25:4-19 When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep, 5 David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. 6 And thus you shall say to him who lives in prosperity: 'Peace be to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have! 7 Now I have heard that you have shearers. Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel. 8 Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David.'" 9 So when David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in the name of David, and waited. 10 Then Nabal answered David's servants, and said, "Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. 11 Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?" 12 So David's young men turned on their heels and went back; and they came and told him all these words. 13 Then David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword." So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies. 14 Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them. 15 But the men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields. 16 They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. 17 Now therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his household. For he is such a scoundrel that one cannot speak to him." 18 Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys. 19 And she said to her servants, "Go on before me; see, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

What is your interpretation of this?

David's request was polite, very gracious, and not demanding. His young men now standing in front of Nabal the fool with their hats in their hands and waiting.

"Who is David?" Many people might not know about a lot of things at that time, but they all heard about David and Saul's 'cat and mouse' situation for several years. Nabal didn't say this because he didn't know David, but to insult him. That was a very bad move on his part. Nabal used the words "my" and "I" 7 times in one sentence of his short conversation with David's men. Obviously, he was not caring about anyone but himself.

We may have a great victory in patience today, but it does not carry over to tomorrow. God doesn't give us patience on credit. Every day is a brand new day for God to train us for our patience and faith in Him. Our anger can be controlled by exercising God-given and God-honoring patience and forgiveness to that person as God forgives us.

Saul is after David's head. David could easily justify his killing of Saul as self-defense, yet David showed his exceptional patience with Saul a few months earlier and spared his life. But because of a few insulting words from a fool, David lowered himself to the same level with the fool, Nabal and Saul.

Matthew 5:39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

Four hundred men! That'll probably handle one fool, don't you think? Sometimes, we act like David against Nabals of our lives. We may not put on our swords on our sides, but in our hearts, we prepare to revenge that person we want to get back with a devious plan.

Did you notice the servant came to her, not to Nabal? She was open to suggestions and had a teachable heart.

Abigail had her chance to get rid of this miserable fool, Nabal. She could have said something spiritual, like this: "Lord, take him swiftly." But she was not like that.

C. THE BEAUTY AND THE HOT HEAD HUNGRY WARRIORS

1 Samuel 25:20-31 So it was, as she rode on the donkey, that she went down under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men, coming down toward her, and she met them. 21 Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belongs to him. And he has repaid me evil for good. 22 May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light." 23 Now when Abigail saw David, she hastened to dismount from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground. 24 So she fell at his feet and said: "On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant. 25 Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. 26 Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, since the Lord has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand, now then, let your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be as Nabal. 27 And now this present which your maidservant has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord. 28 Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant. For the Lord will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the Lord, and evil is not found in you throughout your days. 29 Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God; and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, as from the pocket of a sling. 30 And it shall come to pass, when the Lord has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, 31 that this will be no grief to you,

nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. But when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant."

What do you see here?

Abigail was waiting for David with a clog pot in her hands. She already planned what she was supposed to say to this angry man who was about to dismember her foolish husband.

Her intercession is tactful, acknowledging Nabal's fault and respectfully addressing David as "my lord". She also displays her faith, crediting the Lord with both restraining David from murder and forming a new dynasty through him.

By now, David's men smelled the yummy food enough, they are starting to whisper to David, "Just say, "Thank you," and take the food, David. We are hungry." This is the first recorded catering service in the Bible.

When we're faced with critical decisions, sometimes we have to do something very creative. Apart from the Bible, there's no handbook that tells us what to do when those times come in God's way.

Often when we are faced with a crisis, we can tuck our tail between our legs, run into a corner, and let cobwebs form on us. But there is a better way. As long as we have breath in your lungs, we have a purpose for living. No matter how bad that track record might have been, marked by disobedience and compromise through much of our life, we're alive. And God says, "There's a reason. And I'm willing to do creative things through you to put you back on your feet." It will take creativity, it will take determination, it will take constant eyes on the Lord. But when He pulls it off, it's marvelous.

D. DAVID'S TEACHABLE SPIRIT

1 Samuel 25:32-37 Then David said to Abigail: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! 33 And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. 34 For indeed, as the Lord God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hastened and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal!" 35 So David received from her hand what she had brought him, and said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person." 36 Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light. 37 So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became like a stone.

What is your interpretation of this?

Three things strike me as I think about this incident in the life of David and our lives today:

1) Whatever you do when conflicts arise, be wise in the Lord.

If you're not careful, you will handle conflicts in a typical fleshly way. And then, you'll regret. What do I mean by being wise? Let's look at the whole picture. Fight against jumping to quick conclusions and seeing only your side. Look both ways.

Being wise in the Lord is to pray. Get God's perspective. He gives us the wisdom we need when we ask Him for it.

2) Take each conflict as it comes and handle it separately.

You may have won a battle yesterday, but that doesn't count when today's skirmish comes. You may have a great measure of patience today, but it makes no difference tomorrow when the attack comes again.

3) Whenever you realize that there's nothing you can do, wait patiently.

Impossible impasses call for a firm application of brakes. Don't keep going. Restrain yourself from anything hasty. I've seldom made wise decisions in a hurry. Furthermore, I've seldom regret things I didn't say. David obviously learned this lesson well, for he writes in Psalm 40:

Psalm 40:1-2 I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. 2 He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps.

Psalm 40 never says that David's situation changed. It says David changed. When you wait, your situation may not change, but you will. In fact, you may discover that the reason for waiting was all for your benefit, because you're the one who needed to change.

Suddenly and ironically, the one who had a heart of stone, "became as a stone" and died.

E. THREE QUALITIES OF A PEACEMAKER

Men, in general, don't think through everything thoroughly. For everything God created, He said, "It is good." After He created a man, He said to Himself, "*It is not good that man should be alone.*" We men need a lot of help. To have that help, we need to be teachable to the Lord and His Word.

We all can learn a lot from this lady peacemaker Abigail:

1) Tact: She called herself as "maidservant" 6 times and addressed David as "my lord" 8 times during her conversation with him.

Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

2) Loyalty: Abigail took the responsibility of Nabal's foolishness on herself. Even though she knew Nabal was a fool, she kept her commitment to him. Especially, over half of the marriages are going down the drain nowadays, this kind of commitment is rare and special.

3) Faith: From v26 to v31, Abigail knew and acknowledged that David would be a king someday.

Isn't it amazing when we please the Lord in spite of the difficult situation, God will do wonderful things to show His approval on our choices of actions?

F. HAPPILY EVER AFTER?

1 Samuel 25:38-44 Then it came about, after about ten days, that the Lord struck Nabal, and he died. 39 So when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil! For the Lord has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head." And David sent and

proposed to Abigail, to take her as his wife. 40 When the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her saying, "David sent us to you, to ask you to become his wife." 41 Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, "Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." 42 So Abigail rose in haste and rode on a donkey, attended by five of her maidens; and she followed the messengers of David, and became his wife. 43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and so both of them were his wives. 44 But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

It ends almost like a fairy tale story.

G. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Yesterday's victory does not guarantee today's battle against satan.
- 2) If we handle conflicts in a fleshly manner, we will fall.
- 3) Let's restrain ourselves from anything hasty.
- 4) When conflict arises, be tactful, be wise, be loyal to do what is right, and be faithful to God.