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LIFE LESSONS – 1 SAMUEL: The Good, The Bad, and The Offendedⁱ 1 Samuel 25

SERIES OVERVIEW:

Good morning! Well, we are in the middle of a teaching series right now called, “Life Lessons.” We are studying through the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. Today we come to chapter 25. So, I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 Samuel 25. We are going to work our way through a message I have entitled, “The Good, The Bad, and The Offended.” A play on the old Clint Eastwood movie, “The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly.” But in this passage are some great life lessons that I pray encourages us today.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: “Remember, you’re a Pastor”

I know I’ve shared with you some, how I have the privilege of coaching my boys in our local homeschool sports organization. I coach basketball and baseball.

Now, I have been known to be very competitive and at times I disagree with the refs and umpires. Now, while I am never vulgar, I’ve been known to let my thoughts be known. Man, I’m being transparent today, aren’t I?!

Well, when I get worked up, my wife, Cathy, has often walked by the bench or behind the dugout where I am coaching and shared some encouraging words. She walks behind me and simply says, “Remember, you’re a Pastor.” Which cuts me to the core. It can be a heart check for me. But I am grateful for those reminders as they serve as an opportunity to recalibrate my actions.

Well, today, we continue looking at David’s life in 1 Samuel. And today’s passage is a little unusual in that we take a break from Saul hunting David. Instead, we are going to see David’s interaction with two new characters in the storyline. And in these characters, we are going to see The Good, The Bad, and The Offended. And one of these characters will serve as a means of accountability for David and she will wind up saving David from folly.

BACKGROUND:

Let’s look at the story in 1 Samuel 25. Let’s begin in verse 1. *¹Now Samuel died. And all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah. Then David rose and went down to the wilderness of Paran.* [Pay-run]. The chapter opens with Samuel, the nation’s spiritual leader, dying.

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Samuel’s death is an end of an era. And this was a significant loss for the nation, but also for David personally. David often went to him for advice.

While the text says all of Israel assembled to mourn Samuel’s passing, we don’t know if both David and Saul are there. It is likely they both were, in my view. Samuel was a national icon. David was close to Samuel. It’s likely they both were there. Plus, the end of verse 1 says, “Then David rose.” That could allude to the fact that he showed up at Samuel’s funeral, keeping distance from Saul, and left as soon as the services were over. That’s just my opinion.

Verses 2-3. *²And there was a man in Maon [Moan] whose business was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. ³Now the name of the man was Nabal [Ney-Ball], and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was discerning and beautiful, but the man was harsh and badly behaved; he was a Calebite.*

Here are two new characters, Nabal and Abigail. We learn some key things about them. Nabal was very rich. He owned thousands of sheep and goats. His wife, Abigail, is intelligent and beautiful. But Nabal was harsh and badly behaved. The words translated here as harsh and badly behaved carries the idea of someone who was abusive or someone that mistreated others.ⁱⁱ

Abigail, on the other hand, was beautiful inside and out. She was discerning, meaning that she was wise.ⁱⁱⁱ Abigail is the good in our story and Nabal is the bad. In fact, the name Nabal, in Hebrew, means “foolish.”^{iv} Abigail means “fathers joy.”^v Now, I don’t necessarily think that Nabal’s parents named him that. It may have been a nickname he had earned for his actions.^{vi}

Now, you might be asking, “How did such a great lady end up with such a terrible guy?” They were total opposites. I think in this time-period, with the prevalence of arranged marriages, it’s likely that this may have been the case for Nabal and Abigail.^{vii} Nabal outkicked his coverage when he married Abigail. So, we have the good and the bad. Let’s see the offended.

Verses 4-8. *⁴David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. ⁵So David sent ten young men. And David said to the young men, “Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal and greet him in my name. ⁶And thus you shall greet him: ‘Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. [Peace, Peace, Peace. A very polite and proper greeting.] ⁷I hear*

*that you have shearers. Now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing all the time they were in Carmel. ⁸Ask 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 you have at hand to your servants and to your son David.”*

It was harvesting time for ranchers, a time of celebration. It was customary for ranchers to share to express thanks.^{viii} David and his men were living in the wilderness and protected Nabal and his assets. In that region, the Philistines would rob people during this season. David protected him. Nabal, in a sense, owed it to David to share. To show some gratitude.

But look at what Nabal, the fool, does. Verses 9-11. *⁹When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David, and then they waited. ¹⁰And Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters. ¹¹Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men who come from I do not know where?"*

This was an insulting response. “Who is David?” Everyone knew David. He’s a national hero. The guy that defeated Goliath. Everyone sang songs about David. And he was the anointed next king of Israel. But Nabal disrespected David and even brings his daddy into the insult. Who is the son of Jesse?

What’s more, in addition to the insult, Nabal shows his stinginess. “I’m not giving anything!” David and his men watched out for Nabal, put themselves in harm’s way, and protected him. The least Nabal can do is show gratitude. But he didn’t even say thanks. He instead insults David. Nabal is a jerk.

Look at David’s response. Verses 12-13. *¹²So David's young men turned away and came back and told him all this. ¹³And David said to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" And every man of them strapped on his sword. David also strapped on his sword..."* In other words, I politely asked for some food and wool, and he won’t give it. David is hangry. More than that, he’s offended. “Nobody disrespects me that way! Mount up, fellas, let’s take him out.”

Now, this does not look good on David. He’s acting on impulse, he becomes full of vengeance, and he overreacts. He crosses the line into sin. Sure, Nabal is a jerk, but to kill him over this?!

We tend to think of Bible characters as some sort of Superheroes. But they are still human. David is a man after God’s heart, but he is human. He struggled with ungodly traits, just like us. David obviously struggled with anger. And here he’s no longer struggling, he’s given into his anger and acting rashly.

David’s on a mission to kill Nabal. But one of Nabal’s servants went to Abigail and let her know that her husband insulted David and that they are on their way to kill everyone. She’s probably like, “My husband, the fool, is at it again.” Look what she does. Verse 18. *¹⁸Then Abigail made haste and took 200 loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs [say-oz] of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys. ¹⁹And she said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I come after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. ²⁰And as she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain, behold, David and his men came down toward her, and she met them.*

Abigail, the good and wise, acted quickly and loaded up goods to take to David. The fact that she could load so much stuff up quickly shows how stingy Nabal was. It wasn’t that he didn’t have it. He was just an ungrateful, scrooge.

Let me sum up what happens here as we are going to come back to it in a minute. Abigail approaches David and apologizes. She convinces him to turn from his anger and accept the gift she brought. In fact, he is grateful she came and intervened. So, David relents, and Abigail’s actions saved not only her, but her entire family. Plus, it prevented David from doing something foolish.

So, Abigail goes back home, and her crazy husband is having a party. He’s very drunk. She thinks, there’s no point in telling him about all this right now, so she waits until the morning when Nabal is sobered up.

Verse 37. *³⁷In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. ³⁸And about ten days later the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.* Nabal is so shocked and upset about what Abigail did that he has a heart attack or a stroke or something. Whatever the episode is, he winds up dying 10 days later.

See how the story ends. Verse 39. *³⁹When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the Lord who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and has kept back his servant from wrongdoing. The Lord has*

returned the evil of Nabal on his own head.” David views this as God bringing justice. And he’s grateful Abigail intervened. Then David sent and spoke to Abigail, to take her as his wife. ⁴⁰When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, “David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife.” ⁴¹And she rose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, “Behold, your handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.” ⁴²And Abigail hurried and rose and mounted a donkey, and her five young women attended her. She followed the messengers of David and became his wife.

Now, remember, David was married to Michal. But verse 44 tells us that Saul gave her in marriage to another man to spite David while he was on the run. Abigail was David’s second marriage, but he also took Ahinoam [Ah-hen-O-Um] as a wife and he will add many more wives as time goes on.

Taking multiple wives went against God’s design for marriage and oneness. As a result, David’s family was never blessed nor was it peaceful. In fact, family trouble resulted in some of David’s greatest trials in life.

LIFE LESSONS:

This story is full life lessons. I want to make mention of 3 this morning. I want to encourage you to spend time this week in 1 Samuel 25, though, examining the lessons in it. There are just too many to make mention of in our time this morning. But 3 life lessons I want to point out. First, ...

1) Value of accountability.

The truth is that we all need people in our lives that call us out when we are out of line. We see the value of having those people in our lives in this text.

David gets highly offended, and rightfully so. Nabal disrespected him and insulted his family. But David allowed his anger to lead to sinful thoughts. He was emotional and heated and that is always a recipe for poor decision making. But Abigail, in her wisdom, helped David reconsider his course. She was, in effect, holding David accountable. As a result, David avoided something that would have caused regret later on.

You and I benefit from these kinds of relationships, don’t we? Have you ever had someone in your life that helped you steer clear of a disastrous choice? I have and I am grateful. In fact, there are times that I have regretted a choice I

made and wished that someone would have said something to me to prevent that decision.

While we see the value in accountability, the issue, though, is how we receive accountability. But also, how it’s delivered. Wouldn’t you say that’s the challenge? If I’m in the wrong, am I willing to hear that? Or if I am trying to hold someone accountable, do I approach them in the right way?

I want to zoom in on the conversation between David and Abigail as we see both of these tensions at play. Let’s first look at Abigail’s approach in holding David accountable. Verses 23-31. *²³When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and **fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground.** ²⁴**She fell at his feet** and said, **“On me alone, my lord, be the guilt.** Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. ²⁵Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent. ²⁶Now then, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, because the Lord has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal. ²⁷And now **let this present that your servant has brought** to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. ²⁸Please forgive the trespass of your servant. For **the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house**, because my lord is fighting the battles of the Lord, and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live. ²⁹If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the Lord your God. And the lives of your enemies he shall **sling out as from the hollow of a sling.** ³⁰And when the Lord has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you and **has appointed you prince over Israel,** ³¹my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord working salvation himself. And when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant.”* I see 5 things Abigail did that caused the accountability she was bringing to be received by David. First, ...

A) She was humble.

When she saw David, she took a posture of humility. She bowed down and fell at his feet. She didn’t come in hot and start pointing fingers and raising her voice. No, she took on a humble posture toward David. This immediately

caused any wall David had up to come crashing down. It paved the way for his heart to receive what she had to say.

When we have the privilege of being an accountability partner for a brother or a sister, we need to follow Abigail's example in her approach. We cannot, nor do we really have the platform, to come from a position of superiority. Preaching at someone is never effective. But a humble approach opens one's ears to hear. Abigail was humble. Secondly, ...

B) She identified with David.

Abigail tells David, "This one's on me. My fault." In other words, I'm not perfect. I understand where you're coming from. I see your perspective. As a result, David was more apt to listen. Because she began by accepting responsibility, she had the opportunity to explain the situation from another perspective.

When we hold others accountable, we would do well to remember that we are sinners, too. When we place ourselves in their shoes, we gain the opportunity to redirect. So, Abigail was humble, she accepted responsibility. Thirdly, ...

C) She offered a better solution.

After earning the right to be heard and identifying with David, Abigail had the opportunity to suggest a better approach. Take this as an apology. Forgive him.

Abigail came humbly, acknowledged her own sin, and then offered a better solution. Fourthly, Abigail...

D) Reminded David of God's truth.

It wasn't until she humbled herself and identified with David that she started quoting God's Word. Once David was in a place to hear what she had to say, she reminded him of God's promise to make him king.

You know, when we come at someone with a machine gun barrage of Scripture, it often comes across as preachy and is less likely to be received. Proverbs 25:11 says, ***11A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.*** We need to remind one another of what God has to say, but making sure it is fitly spoken makes it powerful and receivable.

Abigail was humble, accepted responsibility, offered a better solution, and reminded David of God's truth. Fifthly, ...

E) She gave examples of God's faithfulness.

I want you to see how wise Abigail was. Look at what she says in verse 29. ***29If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the Lord your God. And the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling.*** In other words, "Look, David, God has been faithful to fight your battles for you. Remember when you used the sling to kill the giant? That was God. He was faithful then; he'll be faithful now."

When we hold others accountable, we need to follow Abigail's example. Come humbly, identify with them as a fellow sinner, offer a better solution, then remind them of God's Word, and give examples of how God can use the situation. Abigail's approach lifted David up instead of beating him down.^{ix}

How David receive this accountability? He was man enough to receive it. Verse 32. ***32And David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!"*** ***33Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand!*** ***34For as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male."*** ***35Then David received from her hand what she had brought him. And he said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice, and I have granted your petition."*** David saw Abigail's accountability as a blessing. We need to see it the same way.

So, we learn the lesson of valuing accountability. The second life lesson I want to point out is that...

2) Generosity cures arrogance.

Nabal was a very arrogant man. He was very wealthy, but he was stingy. He was Ebenezer Scrooge. He was a jerk and felt like everyone owed him. Think about his arrogance. He insulted a soon to be king and even spoke ill of his family. That's pretty bold, wouldn't you say? Like he was untouchable. He was so arrogant that he lost touch with any sort of respect for others.

You know, there is nothing wrong with building wealth. In fact, we see in the Scriptures the wisdom behind planning for your future. But self-reliance is what leads to arrogance. And when we become arrogant, we forget God's goodness

toward us, we become selfish, and we begin treating people without respect. Nabal even forgot what David had done for him by protecting his assets. See, Nabal looked at everything as his, instead of The Lord's.

Generosity serves as an antidote to arrogance. When we are generous with our stuff, we are reminded that it is God that gave it to us to begin with. When we are generous, we reflect the generosity of God. We recognize that all we have belongs to The Lord so you can have some of it, too. As a result, we become an avenue for others to experience the goodness of God.

1 Timothy 6:17-18 says, *"17As for the rich in this present age [that's you and me, by the way], charge them not to be haughty [or arrogant], nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share."*

Don't be Nabal. By nature of being the recipients of God's generous grace, we, as believers in Jesus, ought to be the most generous people.

So, value accountability and recognize that generosity cures arrogance. A third life lesson I want to point out is to...

3) Deal with offense appropriately.

In our passage this morning, David was offended. Nabal unquestionably disrespected David in the most offensive of ways.

And the truth of the matter is that we will be offended at some point. But how do we deal with that offense? For David, he was vengeful. He wanted to return evil for evil. But this is not God's way. Hurt feelings never justify sinning against those that offend us. Romans 12:17-21 says, *"17Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay says the Lord.' 20To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' 21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*

Retaliation never works, anyway. All it does is deepen the divide. We see evidence of that everywhere we look, don't we? Look at our politics. Look at

public discourse. Look at our workplace. If you and I are going to deal with offense in a healthy way, we have to learn to overcome evil with good.

CONCLUSION:

As we think about this story, I see one consistent theme. The need to go against our natural tendencies. I don't like being held accountable, but I need it. Generosity is not my default, but God has been generous to me. And responding to offense like Romans 12 just doesn't seem effective. But we need to realize that in our humanity, we always get things wrong. But when we live and operate by the Spirit, that's when we see God at work in our lives.

Didn't Jesus deal with us like Romans 12? After all, we offended Him. We disobeyed God. Our sin nailed Jesus to the cross. Talk about offense! But God showed us grace. And it's God's grace that changes us, right? His loving kindness is what leads us to repentance.

Perhaps you are here this morning and you've never begun a relationship with Jesus. You've never been changed by His love and His grace. Today you can do that. Scripture says that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But God loves us and showed His love for us in giving us Jesus, who died on the cross, a death we deserved, that by faith in Him we are forgiven and enjoy a relationship with God.

In a moment, we are going to sing, say our benediction, and following our service, our elders will be here at the front. We would love nothing more today than to visit with you about how you can have a life changing relationship with Jesus Christ.

Maybe you are here this morning, and you are in need of prayer. You're carrying a burden that seems overwhelming. We want to pray with you and over you. When our service ends this morning, we will be here for you as well.

Let's pray this morning and think about what we've been able to learn from the Scriptures today. [PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: Robert D. Bergen, *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Samuel, Vol. 7*, B&H Publishing: Nashville, 1996; Heath Thomas and J.D. Greear, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*, Holman: Nashville, 2016; Bill T. Arnold, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003; Troy Rackliffe, "Life Lessons Message 19," sermon preached at Glad Community Church in Daniels, WV; Ray Fowler, "The Wise, the Rash, and the Fool," published by Ray Fowler Ministries, accessed online: <https://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/1-samuel/the-wise-the-rash-and-the-fool/>; David Guzik, "1 Samuel 25 – David, Nabal, and Abigail," published by Enduring Word Commentary, accessed online: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-samuel-25/>; J.D. Greear, "How the Mighty Fall," sermon preached at Summit Church, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message/how-the-mighty-fall/>; Skip Heitzig, "Suffering With and Submitting to A Crazy King," message taught at Calvary Church, August 21, 2002, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/66/sermon/1004>.

ⁱⁱ Fowler.

ⁱⁱⁱ Strong's Concordance, 7922, sekel.

^{iv} Bergen, 245.

^v Ibid, 246.

^{vi} Arnold, 342.

^{vii} Rackliffe.

^{viii} Enduring Word Commentary.

^{ix} Ibid.