

Revive Our Hearts™

ABIGAIL

LIVING WITH THE
DIFFICULT PEOPLE
IN YOUR LIFE

A Bible study based
on the teaching of

NANCY DEMOSS
WOLGEMUTH

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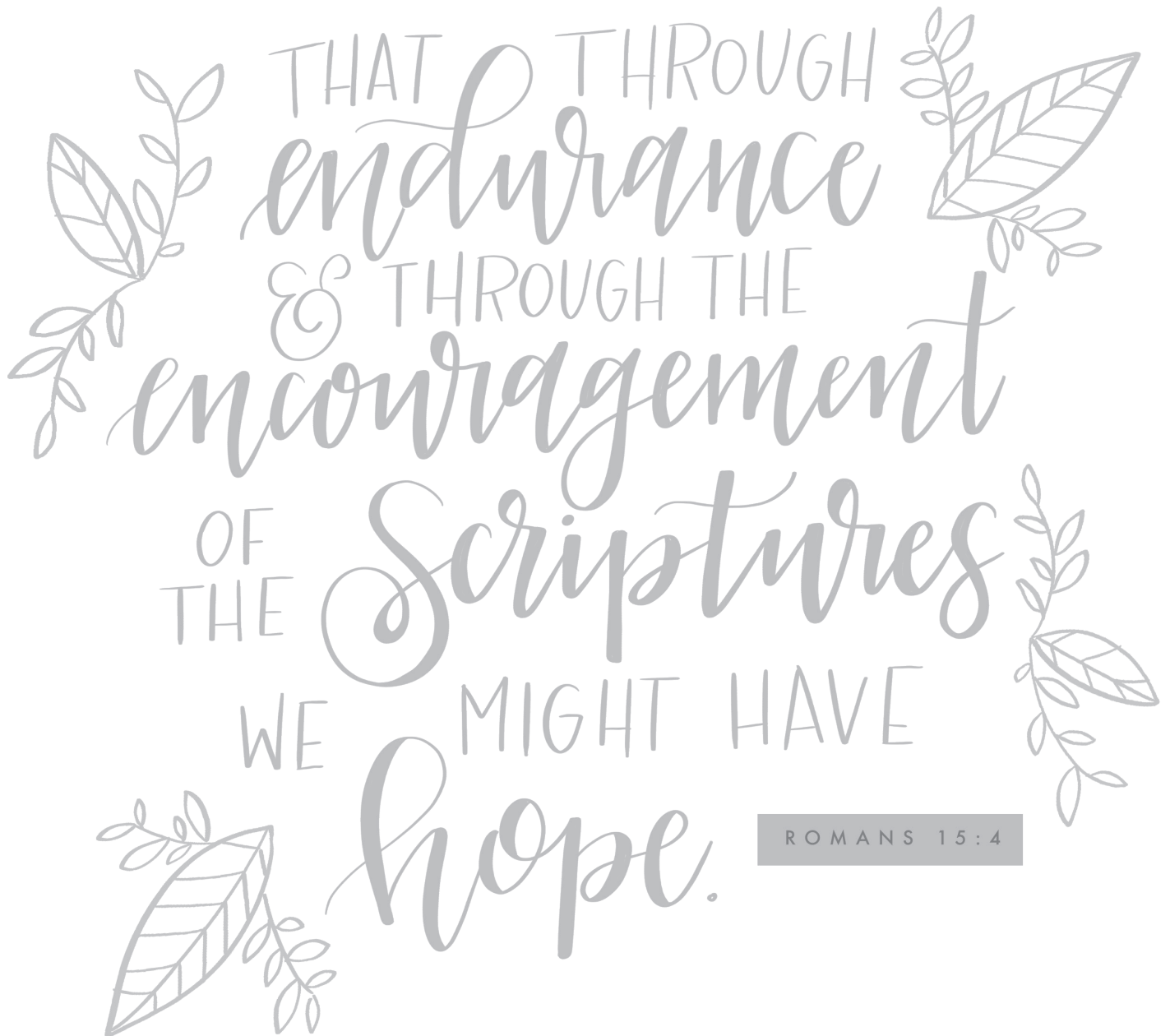
Adapted from the teaching of Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth by Mindy Kroesche, Micayla Greathouse, and Leanna Shepard, edited by Hayley Mullins and Erin Davis.

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As you work through this study, use this space to doodle, color, and meditate on God's Word and consider how the account of Abigail's life gives you true hope.

FOR WHATEVER WAS WRITTEN IN FORMER DAYS
WAS WRITTEN FOR OUR INSTRUCTION

THAT THROUGH
endurance
& THROUGH THE
encouragement
OF THE *Scriptures*
WE MIGHT HAVE
hope.

The text is surrounded by several decorative illustrations of leaves and branches. There are three leafy branches on the left side and two on the right side, all rendered in a simple, line-art style.

ROMANS 15:4

1 Samuel 25

THE DEATH OF SAMUEL

¹ Now Samuel died. And all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah.

DAVID AND ABIGAIL

Then David rose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. ² And there was a man in Maon 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. ³ Now the name of the man was Nabal, 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. ⁴ David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. ⁵ So 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. ⁶ And thus you shall greet him: 'Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have.' ⁷ I 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. 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 you have at hand to your servants and to your son David."

⁹ When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David, and then they waited. ¹⁰ And 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. ¹¹ Shall 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?" ¹² So David's young men turned away and came back and told him all this. ¹³ And 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. And about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.

¹⁴ But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to greet our master, and he railed at them. ¹⁵ Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we did not miss anything when we were in the fields, as long as we went with them. ¹⁶ They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. ¹⁷ Now therefore know this and

consider what you should do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his house, and he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him."

¹⁸ Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys. ¹⁹ And she said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I come after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. ²⁰ And 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. ²¹ Now David had said, "Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him, and he has returned me evil for good. ²² God do so to the enemies of David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him."

²³ When 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.

²⁵ Let 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.

²⁶ Now 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. ²⁷ And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. ²⁸ Please 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. ²⁹ If 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. ³⁰ And 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, ³¹ my 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.”

³² And David said to Abigail, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! ³³ Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand!

³⁴ For 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.” ³⁵ Then 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.”

³⁶ And Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, 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. So she told him nothing at all until the morning light. ³⁷ In 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.³⁸ And about ten days later the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.

³⁹ When 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.” Then David sent and spoke to Abigail, to take her as his wife.⁴⁰ When 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.”

⁴¹ And 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.”⁴² And 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.

⁴³ David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and both of them became his wives.

⁴⁴ Saul had given Michal his daughter, David’s wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was of Gallim.

INTRODUCTION

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Many of the letters and emails we receive at *Revive Our Hearts* are from women feeling trapped in a difficult or impossible situation.

For some, it's their marriage. They're married to a man who is impossible to love, humanly speaking. Or perhaps it's a situation at work—a boss or coworker they can't please. It may even be someone they can't get along with in their church.

You might have one of those difficult people in your home, workplace, church, neighborhood, or somewhere else. The question is, how do you live with these kinds of people? How do you respond with wisdom when you're dealing with someone who is ungodly or foolish?

First Samuel 25 tells an amazing story of an extraordinary woman who did just that. She's not as well-known as some of the other women in the Bible like Mary of Nazareth or Deborah or Sarah. But this woman, Abigail, has so much to teach us through the example of her life.

As we go through this study, we will also study two other main characters in this passage. At any given time in your life, you may relate to any one of these three people. So as we look at their examples, we want to see what God has to teach us for our own lives.

TIPS FOR USING THIS STUDY

When you do a character study in the Bible, it helps to determine whether the person is giving a good or bad example to follow.

Throughout this study, ask yourself these questions:

- Is there an example for me to either follow or avoid? If so, what?
- What do this passage and these people teach me about the heart, the ways, and the character of God?
- How does this passage point to Jesus and the gospel?

At the end of our six weeks, we will revisit these questions as we review what God has taught us about our lives, how He wants us to live out the gospel in specific situations, and most importantly, about His heart and His character.

As you go throughout the study, you may find it beneficial to listen to the accompanying audio series, “Abigail: How to Live with the Fools in Your Life.” Find it at ReviveOurHearts.com/Abigail.

Remember, the Holy Spirit is our primary teacher as we seek to understand God’s Word. Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit is a gift and a “Helper” able to “teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26).

Secondary tools that can help you better understand the Word of God (but aren’t necessary to complete this study) include:

- An English dictionary to look up the basic meaning of words
- Various translations of the Bible
- A concordance
- A Bible dictionary
- Commentaries
- A study Bible
- Colored pens or pencils to write in your Bible

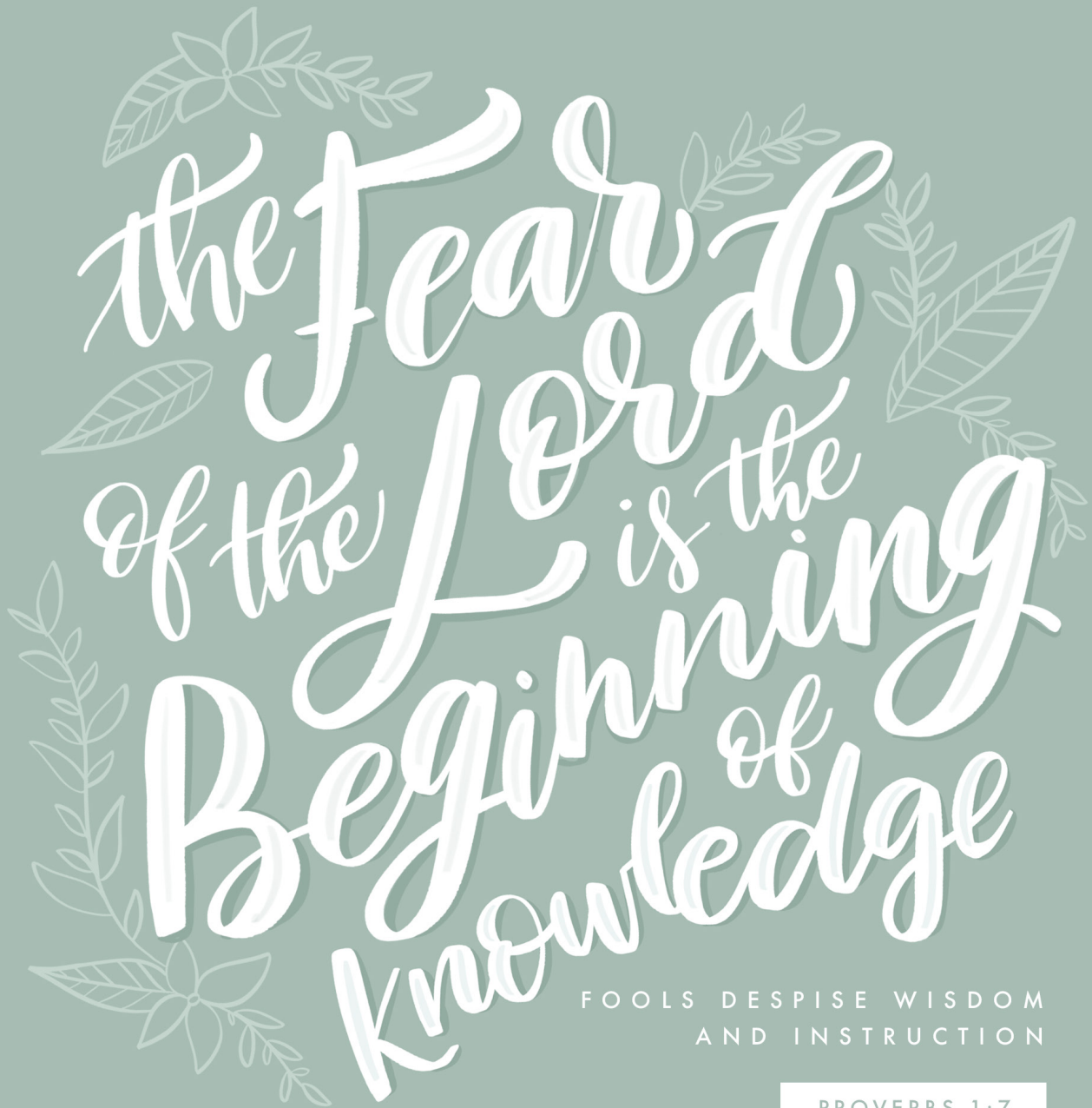
A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Note: Throughout this study, you will find fill-in-the-blank sections using the English Standard version (ESV) translation of the Bible. If you prefer a different translation, you can use an online Bible such as BibleGateway.com or a Bible app to help with these sections.

We’ve also included group discussion questions at the end of this study. You can further join the Abigail discussion with our *Women of the Bible* podcast created to accompany this study, available at ReviveOurHearts.com/WomenOfTheBible.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Spend time meditating on and memorizing the following verse this week:



the Fear of
of the Lord is the
Beginning of
Knowledge

FOOLS DESPISE WISDOM
AND INSTRUCTION

PROVERBS 1:7

Week 1

A KING, A FOOL, AND A WISE WOMAN

Introduction

What's in a name? All throughout the Bible, many people are introduced in the text by their name and the meaning of their name. Twins Jacob and Esau were named because of their characteristics at birth. The firstborn entered the world as a red, hairy baby, "so they named him Esau" (Gen. 25:25). Jacob received his name because he left his mother's womb grabbing Esau's heel. In the case of Abram and Sarai, God Himself renamed them Abraham and Sarah with great purpose and foreshadowing of the people that would come from them.

Names carry significance with them in Scripture, and they can sometimes be indicative of a person's nature. Long before Jesus was born, it was prophesied that His name would be Immanuel, which means "God with us" (Isa. 7; Matt. 1). He is with us indeed.

In the story of Abigail, names matter. This week we'll be looking at some individuals who lived up to their names in both good and bad ways. As we study their lives, we will learn how to relate to people with difficult characteristics.



1st SAMUEL OVERVIEW

AUTHOR

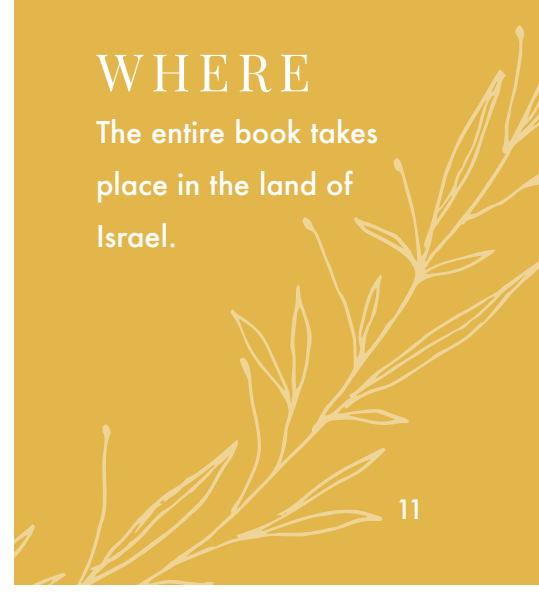
The Bible does not say who wrote 1 Samuel, but many scholars think that the prophets Samuel, Nathan, and Gad provided much of the material.

WHEN

First Samuel covers a period of 110 years, starting from the ending days of the judges, when Samuel was born (ca. 1120 BC) through the death of Saul (1011 BC).

WHERE

The entire book takes place in the land of Israel.



Day 1: A NATION IN MOURNING

Read 1 Samuel 25:1.

When President Ronald Reagan died in June 2004, the United States mourned as a nation. Flags across the country were flown at half-mast, and thousands upon thousands of people lined up—first in California and then in the streets of Washington D.C.—to stand and watch the funeral procession drive through the streets. As Reagan’s body lay in state at the Capitol Rotunda, over 100,000 people stood in line (some of them for up to three hours) to file by the casket and pay their last respects.

We start off 1 Samuel 25 in a similar place, not with the character of Abigail herself as you might expect, but with a nation in mourning.

In verse 1, we discover that the prophet Samuel has died: “All Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah.”

Samuel was a man of God and the last of the Old Testament judges. He anointed Saul to be the first king of Israel, and he also anointed David to be Saul’s replacement after Saul rejected God.

Of all the people who grieved when Samuel died, David probably mourned this loss as much as anyone else in Israel. Samuel had been a buffer between David and angry, violent Saul. And now Samuel is gone. David could have been feeling abandoned, vulnerable, discouraged, and wondering, *Are God’s promises for my life really ever going to come true?*

Have you ever had a spiritual leader or mentor die? How did that affect you? What was your response?

In the midst of that vulnerable time in David’s life, verse 1 says, “Then David rose and went down to the wilderness of Paran.”

In 1 Samuel 19–24, David was fleeing for his life from King Saul. He was a fugitive. Previously he had camped out with his men in the wilderness of Engedi. After Samuel died, David moved even farther south to the wilderness of Paran to put more distance between himself and King Saul.

On the way to Paran, by the village of Carmel, David encountered a couple, of which one person loved and feared the Lord, and the other was an ungodly, selfish, wicked person.

Dive Deeper into God's Word

Read 1 Peter 3:1–4

Summarize this passage in your own words.

What is the hardest thing in this passage for you to believe and obey? Why?

What immediate questions or thoughts do you have about this passage? Write them in the space below.

Day 2: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Read 1 Samuel 16:1–13 and 25:2–3.

Before we delve into specific verses, let's take some time to get an overview of 1 Samuel 25 and its main characters.

Give a brief description of each of the three main characters in this story. Try using words, drawings, word art, or a combination. Be creative!

NABAL

DAVID

ABIGAIL

Is there a characteristic of Nabal that you see in your own life? In what circumstances are you most likely to respond like Nabal?

Is there a characteristic of David that you see in your own life? In what circumstances are you most likely to respond like David?

What is one characteristic of Abigail you would like God to develop in your life?

There's also a fourth character in this story—God Himself. He is always behind the scenes ruling, overruling, and intervening in the affairs of men. He is sovereign and continually working to achieve His purposes and fulfill His promises.

What evidence of God's working do you see in this passage?

This same God is in *your* story. How have you seen God involved with your life throughout the last week? The last month? The last year?

Dive Deeper into God's Word

Read 1 Peter 2:11–3:7.

This larger passage puts yesterday's verses in context. Did you notice that 3:1 starts with the word "likewise"? This word points us back to something in the previous verses. Based on today's reading, what do you think Peter is wanting us to think about as we dive into the topic of wives' submission?

According to this passage, who else is to be subject to authority? Which authorities does Peter mention, and what reasons does he give for the commands to be subject to them?

Consider the authorities you are subject to. Does this passage give you any new perspective on submitting to them when it's difficult?

Day 3: A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN AND A RICH MAN

Read 1 Peter 3:1–2. Reread 1 Samuel 25:2–3.

Although we've already done an overview of Nabal and Abigail's character, let's look more specifically at each of them.

How does our passage describe Nabal? If possible, look up this passage in at least three different Bible translations, and list all of the different adjectives used.

How is Abigail described in verses 2–3? Again, if possible, use more than one translation of the Bible.

Most likely, Nabal and Abigail’s marriage had been arranged by her parents, as most marriages were in that culture. She probably had no say in the matter. She was beautiful; he was rich—you’d think that was a great combination. Her father may have thought he was doing her a favor by marrying her into this rich man’s family. But the problem is that beauty and wealth are only external characteristics. What truly matters in real life is the heart, not outward appearance or material wealth.

In the case of this couple, the difference between their hearts could hardly have been more extreme. It was like night and day.

In Hebrew, Nabal means “fool, senseless,” and Abigail means “father’s joy.” How do we see them live up to their names throughout this passage?

Nabal was a foolish, ungodly man; Abigail was a wise, godly woman. We don’t know if he had always been that way or had developed this character through time. All we know is that Abigail ended up in a difficult marriage.

Write out 1 Peter 3:1–2 below.

A spouse who is following Jesus and living in the power of the gospel can have a powerful influence on an ungodly mate. But **choosing to live God's way does not necessarily guarantee that your spouse (or others in your life) will be godly. Nor does it guarantee that they will change.**

Another powerful lesson we find in the story of Abigail is that **you don't have to let a harsh, badly-behaved person turn you into a harsh, badly-behaved person.** The fact that your spouse or someone else you have to be around is ungodly doesn't mean that you can't be godly yourself.

We often tend to feel that our level of godliness or spirituality is tied to the people around us. *They* make us react this way. But no one can *make* you react in an ungodly way. Your character and responses don't have to be controlled by theirs.

When you see someone acting foolishly like Nabal, how do you usually respond?

Think of a person in your life who is difficult to be around. Write out a prayer, asking God to help you have Spirit-controlled responses to this person.

Dive Deeper into God's Word

Read 1 Peter 2:18–25.

Consider Jesus and fill in the chart. What does this passage tell us that He experienced? And how did He respond?

EXPERIENCE	RESPONSE

Why did Jesus endure all of these experiences? (See vv. 21 and 24 for help.)

Are you experiencing anything on the list above? How have you responded? If your responses are sinful, confess, believe the gospel (v. 24), and ask Jesus to help you “follow in his steps.”

Day 4: WHAT IS A FOOL?

Read Isaiah 32:6.

A key point of this study is how to deal with “Nabals,” or difficult and foolish people, in your life.

What does it mean to be a fool according to Scripture? Write a short summary of what each of these verses teach about foolishness.

PSALM 14:1 _____

PSALM 74:18 _____

PROVERBS 1:7 _____

PROVERBS 12:15 _____

PROVERBS 15:5 _____

PROVERBS 29:11 _____

Write out your own definition of a “fool” based on the verses above.

When we see the word “fool” in Scripture, it’s not describing someone who is *mentally* deficient, but someone who is *morally* deficient. It’s a person who wants to live their life as if

there was no God. A fool has no fear of God, no fear of man, and no regard for what is moral or spiritual. As a result, fools act stupidly, foolishly, and disgracefully.

As we study the examples of Nabal and Abigail, we find an important truth: **Your heart determines your behavior.** If you have a foolish heart, you will act foolishly. If you have given your heart to Jesus and you surrender to His control, then He will help you act in a way that's glorifying to the Lord.

It's easy to read about Nabal and think of someone we know. But as we go through this study, let's ask God to shine the spotlight of His Spirit and His Word into our hearts and ask ourselves, *Could any of this be true of me?* Write out your answers to the probing questions below.

- Am I sometimes impossible to deal with?
- Are people not honest with me for fear I'll blow up?
- Am I arrogant, proud, harsh?
- Do I assume the worst of others?
- Do I answer roughly rather than graciously?

The Scripture says we're all foolish from birth. Only the grace of God and the power of the gospel can transform our hearts. Apart from that, we would all be Nabals. But through God's grace, He can make us gracious, kind, and sweet-spirited in our homes and our relationships, no matter what type of people we have to deal with on a daily basis.

Dive Deeper into God's Word

Read 1 Peter 3:1–6.

What words does Peter use to describe the actions and heart of a godly woman in these verses? List them out below.

From what you know of Jesus' life, how did He live out these characteristics during His life on earth?

When we “follow in his steps” by living this way, God views this as “very precious” (v. 4). What emotions does this stir up in you? How does knowing that God sees your obedience in this way give you hope for dealing with difficult people?

Day 5: TAKE IT HOME. MAKE IT PERSONAL

Read James 1:22.

How does having a relationship with Jesus and walking in Him keep you from being a fool?

What can you do this week to show grace to the foolish and difficult people in your life?

Write down what God taught you through the first week of this study, including any actions He wants you to take or insights He wants you to apply to your life.

Dive Deeper into God's Word

Read 1 Peter 3:7–22.

What are Peter's encouragements to all of us in relating to others? And what reason does he give for this (v. 9)?

What are the promises in this passage for those who suffer from difficult or foolish people unjustly?

Jesus suffered, just as we do (v. 18), but because of His suffering, we have hope! All things are subject to Him—even the ungodly authorities and foolish people we deal with (v. 22). As you move into next week, what truths from this week’s passage in 1 Peter have you found to be most helpful? What practical steps will you take to apply them to your situation?

Father, help me to live in a way that honors and glorifies You as I deal with the difficult people in my life. No matter how they treat me or if they never change, I pray that my behavior would not be controlled by their choices but by Your Holy Spirit. Lord, I also ask that You would reveal to me any marks of a fool in my own life. Forgive me for my foolishness, and help me to change. Make me kind and gracious as I interact with others—that by doing so, I would reflect Jesus Christ.

FATHER,
help me to
LIVE IN A WAY
that honors
AND GLORIFIES
you