

# DEVOTIONAL

SHIPWRECKED  
STUBBORNESS: NABAL AND ABIGAIL  
OCTOBER 9, 2022

GRACE  
FELLOWSHIP

**Discussion Starter:** What is stubbornness? Why is stubbornness so destructive to relationships?

**Key Text:** “Now 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. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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.” (1 Samuel 25:1-3).

On August 31, 1986, the 17,000-ton, 525-foot Russian ocean liner *Admiral Nakhimov*, carrying 1,234 passengers, collided with the Russian large bulk freighter *Pyotr Vasey* in the Black Sea. The passenger ship sank so quickly—in 15 minutes—that there wasn’t time to launch lifeboats. 423 passengers died in the icy waters. Authorities said both vessels’ captains knew for 45 minutes that they were on a collision course, but neither captain would give way—both stubbornly disregarded warnings to steer clear. Both captains were arrested, found guilty, and jailed.

In the case of this maritime disaster, two ships were quite literally shipwrecked due to the captains’ stubbornness. But similar stubbornness—strong-willed, obstinate determination not to change one’s opinion or course of action despite good reasons to do so—has also shipwrecked many relationships. In this final message in our “Shipwrecked” series, we’ll see how the stubborn attitudes and actions of a man named Nabal ruined his relationships, including his own marriage to a wonderful, godly woman named Abigail.

## Who was Nabal?

Nabal was the first husband of Abigail before she later married King David after Nabal’s death. The name Nabal means “fool,” 1 Samuel 25 describes Nabal as “*harsh and badly behaved*” (v.3). Nabal’s arrogant, stubborn, and narcissistic demeanor pushed people away and ultimately shipwrecked his marriage to Abigail.

**Discuss:** It has been said that stubbornness is the ugly side of perseverance. What is the difference between stubbornness and perseverance?

**Discuss:** What do you think leads a person to adopt stubborn attitudes and actions?

## Who was Abigail?

Abigail lived with her husband Nabal in a town called Maon in the wilderness of Paran, an area near the Sinai Peninsula. 1 Samuel 25 describes Abigail as “*discerning and beautiful*” (v.3). Through courageous action, the righteous and caring Abigail put herself at risk to intercede for her evil husband Nabal, despite his bad behavior toward King David, and saved him from death.

**Discuss:** What do you think is the best way to deal with a stubborn person?

### 3 Events Surrounding the Conflict Involving Nabal, Abigail, and David:

#### 1. Nabal arrogantly insulted David and refused to help when David was in need.

David was on the run from King Saul. David and his brave men supported themselves by defending towns and farms from raiders and thieves. It was normal for wealthy farmers to provide supplies for the men who guarded their property. David was low on provisions, so he sent a few of his men to seek help from Nabal. Nabal arrogantly belittled David and refused to help, saying to David's men: "*Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse?...*" (1 Sam.25:4-10). Nabal knew perfectly well who David was since David had been anointed as King several years before. Yet, Nabal still chose to insult David and stingily withheld assistance.

**Discuss:** Arrogance and stubbornness seem to fuel each other. Isaiah 14 describes Lucifer's fall. Where do you see a connection between stubbornness and arrogance in Lucifer's 5 "I will" statements in Isaiah 14:13-14?

#### 2. David responded to Nabal by preparing to destroy him and his household but then calls off the attack after Abigail intercedes and pleads for mercy.

David's men would have easily wiped out Nabal and his household in a fight (1 Sam.25:12-13). However, unbeknownst to Nabal, Abigail intervened on Nabal's behalf by personally begging for mercy (1 Sam.25:14-31). Abigail's humility and courage impressed David, so he called off the attack, blessed Abigail, and sent her home in peace (1 Sam.25:32-35).

**Discuss:** How do Abigail's actions on behalf of Nabal remind you of Christ's actions on our behalf?

#### 3. Nabal was so angry when Abigail told him of her actions that he had a heart attack and died, freeing Abigail to enter into a happy marriage with David.

When Abigail returned to Nabal, he had been hosting a kingy feast for himself and was drunk. After he sobered up, Abigail told him what she had done to appease David. Nabal became so angry that he had a heart attack. He lingered for ten days and then died (1 Sam.25:36-38). Abigail, full of beauty, grace, and wisdom, then enters into a loving marriage relationship with David (1 Sam.25:39-42).

**Discuss:** Read and discuss key words and concepts in these verses about stubbornness: Proverbs 29:1; Zechariah 7:11; Romans 2:5. Why does God take stubbornness so seriously?

**Discuss:** What, per Jesus' example in Luke 22:42, is the remedy for stubbornness?

#### For Further Study:

Free online commentary on the Book of 1 Samuel at [www.enduringword.com](http://www.enduringword.com)

"What Does the Bible Say about Being Stubborn?" article at [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

"Are You an Abigail or a Nabal?" article at [www.crosswalk.com](http://www.crosswalk.com)