

DAVID: A MAN OF PASSION AND DESTINY

STUDY NINE

What to Feed an Angry Man

1 Samuel 25

Is it any wonder God chose David as a man after His own heart? What a teachable spirit! He was willing to change. May God forever keep us flexible and teachable. Someone has a word in season for a blind spot in our lives, and we're nothing more than dummies if we ignore him or her.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

SLEEPING in the heart of every person is a lion named *anger*. It isn't always easily wakened, but once it is stirred, it prepares to pounce. Often, it claws at its victims in subtle ways—through cold shoulders, passive-aggressive comments, or feelings of bitterness. Occasionally, however, anger emerges with a roar of fury, leading a person to commit acts of horrific violence.

These behaviors don't seem to befit a follower of God. Yet, many Christians let the angry lion loose from time to time. Even David, a man after God's own heart, lost control and found himself prowling and ready to strike.

This *Searching the Scriptures* study looks at a conflict that awoke David's anger, and it will show how God graciously intervened to send the lion back to its den. While anger lives in every heart, God provides a way to soothe that beast into a deep, deep sleep.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

One can easily feel trapped in the circumstances of life and bound by the emotions these circumstances produce, such as anger, fear, shame, and guilt. As you prepare to search the Scriptures today, pray the words of *Psalms 40:1–3*, and ask God to release you from these chains.

*I waited patiently for the LORD to help me,
and he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the pit of despair,
out of the mud and the mire.
He set my feet on solid ground
and steadied me as I walked along.
He has given me a new song to sing,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see what he has done and be amazed.
They will put their trust in the LORD.*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

After David spared Saul's life in the cave at En-gedi, Saul, in a rare moment of humility, told David, "You are a better man than I am, for you have repaid me good for evil" (1 Samuel 24:17). Then Saul called off his ruthless pursuit of David . . . for a while, anyway.

Leaving En-gedi, David and his men moved to the Judean mountains to try to carve out a new life in the wilderness. Look up *Maon* at bibleatlas.org. Trace David's route from En-gedi to Maon. What do you observe about this region?



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Not much time passed before another person named Nabal offended David. How did David respond this time? Did he extend mercy to Nabal as he did to Saul? Or did David's anger overcome him? Open your Bible and turn to 1 Samuel 25 to find out!



Observation: Three Main Characters

When Pastor Chuck Swindoll studies a biblical passage, he always keeps his detective's eye looking for three things: people, events, and timeless truths.¹ Today's passage contains all three! As you observe *1 Samuel 25*, however, pay special attention to the major *people*, taking note of what they did and how the author described them.

Nabal—1 Samuel 25:2–13

Read *1 Samuel 25:2–3*. In the space below, write down a description of Nabal. What words do these verses use to describe him?

Reciprocation is a common practice today. For example, if a friend offers you a gift on your birthday, the unspoken expectation is that you would *reciprocate* and offer your friend a gift on his or her birthday. In many ancient cultures, however, reciprocation stood as a central pillar of social structures. Relationships often lived or died through reciprocation alone.

According to *25:7–8*, what did David point out to Nabal? How did David expect Nabal to reciprocate?



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How did Nabal react in *1 Samuel 25:10–11* to David’s request? What did David say in *25:13* when he heard Nabal’s reaction?

Abigail—*1 Samuel 25:14–31*

As the temperature of the conflict between David and Nabal rose, the only one who could cool off the tension was Nabal’s wife Abigail. According to *1 Samuel 25:18–19*, how did Abigail respond when she heard about their conflict?

According to *25:28–31*, why did Abigail treat David the way she did? What did she recognize about David that Nabal neglected?



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David—1 Samuel 25:32–44

In your own words, summarize David’s words to Abigail in *1 Samuel 25:32–35*. Was Abigail successful in what she set out to do?

While David previously had “repaid [Saul] good for evil” (*24:17*), Nabal was now repaying David “evil for good” (*25:21*). Thanks to Abigail, David showed restraint and did not seek vengeance against Nabal. Just as he did with Saul, David trusted God, and God judged Nabal for his actions.



Interpretation: Three Natural Conflicts

The three main characters in 1 Samuel 25 each provide an example for how the people of God should—or should *not*—act. More than this, however, interpretation of this passage will uncover hidden gems of theological truth about natural conflicts that will inevitably occur in life.

Between Husband and Wife

In what ways was Abigail different from her husband? What kinds of characteristics did Abigail show by bringing food and supplies to David without Nabal knowing (*1 Samuel 25:19*)? How did David describe these acts in *25:32–35*? For more insight into Abigail’s character, check out *Constable’s Notes* at netbible.org.



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Here's the practical side of wisdom. Abigail knew exactly what approach she would take when she encountered David. Three things stand out: her tact, her faith, her loyalty.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Between Employer and Employee

According to *1 Samuel 25:25*, what is the meaning of the name “Nabal”? In this narrative, how did Nabal live up to his name in his dealings with David?

Between Anger and Murder

How did David initially react to Nabal's poor treatment of him? How did David's treatment of Saul differ? (Compare *1 Samuel 24:12–15* and *25:12–13*.) Why do you think David's two responses differed so drastically?

Often, when we are faced with a crisis, the standard, garden-variety answer is to sort of tuck our tail between our legs and run. But there is a better way. God says, “There's a reason for this. 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. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Jesus on Anger

David felt so angry toward Nabal that he was ready to draw his sword and spill Nabal's blood. It almost feels as if Jesus had this very moment in mind when he addressed the topic of anger in His Sermon on the Mount.

Read *Matthew 5:21–26*. Which of the ten commandments did Jesus discuss in this passage? What connection did Jesus make between this commandment and a person's feeling of anger?

What alternative did Jesus offer those who struggle with feelings of murderous anger?

Jesus was teaching His followers to stop sin before it starts by dealing with it in the heart. That's how Abigail stopped David from murdering Nabal. She appealed to David's heart by casting a vision of how God would make him "leader of Israel," and she warned him not to "blemish" his good name with needless bloodshed (*1 Samuel 25:30–31*).



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Application: Supernatural Solutions to Natural Conflicts

Both Nabal and David acted in a less-than-godly way in this account. Both showed a great deal of anger toward the other. Combating anger sometimes feels like bailing water in a violent storm. Just as you toss a bucket of water over one side of the boat, a swell washes over the other side. Have you ever been surprised by a wave of your own anger? What caused it?

Unlike David and Nabal, Abigail showed the faith, tact, and wisdom of a true follower of God. From her example, Pastor Chuck developed two application principles:

First, *whenever conflicts arise . . . be wise!* Look at the big picture of the circumstances, at both sides of the conflict. Don't be hasty. Pray, and ask God for wisdom before you act.

What conflict are you facing today? It may be a marital conflict, or you could be dealing with a difficult situation at work. It is possible that your conflict is not *external* but *internal*—a conflict of conscience. Practically speaking, how can you be wise as you work through this conflict? How can you emulate the wisdom Abigail showed?



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Second, *whenever you realize there's nothing you can do . . . wait!* God allows impasses in order to stop you so you can wait on Him to work out His plan.

Waiting on God requires trusting Him, His plan, and His perfect timing. This never is easy. In the space below, write down a prayer, asking God to increase your faith as you wait for Him to work out your conflict.

When the lion of David's anger took control of his heart, he entered a heated conflict with Nabal. And when David lacked the wisdom to resolve the dispute, God sent Abigail to cool the anger of both men. And He will send you your Abigail, too. You only need to be wise and wait.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I know I get angry sometimes, and I know that I have contributed to many conflicts throughout my life. Please, forgive me of these things today. I ask You to work in me to replace feelings of unrighteous anger with the fruit of the Spirit like peace, patience, kindness, and self-control. Help me show these characteristics to all, especially to those with whom I am in conflict. Help me to be wise as I wait on Your perfect timing. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."