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1 SAMUEL 25:1-27

1 Samuel Series

We are now going to look at 1 Samuel 25. Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, thank you for this church, for the opportunity we have to build friendships. Those are important to us. Those relationships we're able to connect in other times during the week and find encouragement, stimulation in our growth, and just supporting the lives that we face. So I'm grateful for the friendships that I have here and brothers that are developing here as well. Lord, we thank you for what you've done for us in Jesus Christ dying on the cross, and for how that transforms our lives, and gives us an opportunity to deal with who we are differently. As we look at this subject of anger, you know it's something we all face and it's something that we need help with. I just thank you for your word that gives us specific guidance and instruction here. I pray that you would give us all open hearts, willing to hear the message and not just point at somebody else who gets angry, but look at our own hearts and see the anger that we need to address in our own lives. So Lord, we're trusting our hearts to you right now. Hold them gently we ask. Confront us where it needs to be confronted. We do it in a way that we can receive and accept. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

We're going verse by verse through the Bible and we happen to be in 1 Samuel 25, which is one of the key passages in the whole Bible about anger. It's a strategic passage and it's done in a story form. We'll look at some other passages this week as well.

In particular I really like it because David, who is a man after God's own heart, is a guy who loves God, but in this particular passage he flairs up with anger like you and I do sometimes. We get angry about certain things. So we're going to go through this passage and we're going to look at a particular kind of problem that we experience and that's a problem when our anger gets really intense and we wish it would go away. We know we shouldn't be this angry, but we've got to get over it. How are we going to get over it so it's not dominating us. Because sometimes our anger can start dominating our lives, dominating our interaction.

Young people, I want you to listen to this today because in this midst of this if you can grab the success principles in this material we're going to see in God's word today, it can radically change you. It can help you meet the challenges you're going to face for the rest of your life.

Let's jump in. 1 Samuel 25 starts this way. *Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Paran.*

So the first verse is really about Samuel. We get this last word about him here. Now just to remember who he was, he was the guy who as a child of just a few years old, maybe it was five or six, something like that, he started hearing the voice of God and having this close relationship with God. So we know God speaks to kids. God speaks to young people and He wants to do that in the lives of young people today. Samuel grew up with just a lifestyle of serving the Lord. A remarkable man. We just pay tribute to him now as we see this one verse before we go on in our story.

If we look at verse 2, here's where our story starts with the three characters that were involved. *A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel. His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite.*

So we have the first character whose name is Nabal. Nabal is a wealthy guy. He invested in stock, in this case livestock. He had a lot of sheep and a lot of goats, as is mentioned in the passage. So he had a lot of investment in that. He had his wife who's name was Abigail. She's the second person in the story. It says she was *intelligent and beautiful*. We have another character we're going to see in the next verse. His name is David. He's the guy we're going to be looking at.

I'm going to take this whole story now in 1 Samuel 25 and we're going to look at it from the perspective or the point of view of David. I'm going to take you through this whole passage in a few weeks and we're going to look at it from the point of view of Abigail. It's just such a beautiful passage. But today we're going to look at it from the perspective of David because he's going to get hot-headed, he's going to get mad, and some things are going to happen that are going to help him to manage his anger. In fact there are four things in this passage that we're going to be able to apply to our own lives.

I've just got to say, the Bible has got to be the best psychology textbook in the world. If we will understand how God made us and follow the principles that are there, we will be able to deal with ourselves in much more effective ways than you might find anywhere else.

The next verse tells us about David. Here's where they are, Carmel and Maon. You can see the picture perspective of southern Israel. It's blown up here and if you want another landmark, Bethlehem is south of Jerusalem. So that's basically where we are. It's very hilly and it's an arid area. It's a place where there's a lot of hills and mountains and that's where all of the story takes place.

While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. So he sent ten young men and said to them, "Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name. Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours! Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing.'"

In essence, this was a place where there were some battles over the territory and the Philistines were in the army at that time. That was the enemy that was battling with them. They would come in and raid them, especially during harvest time or sheep-shearing time, or take some of their animals and so on. But nothing was missing. In fact we're going to see that David and his men who were soldiers would protect these people. So he did a lot to protect them so that they didn't have to fight and they were able to maximize their investment. They didn't lose any of their investment, so that's what is happening here.

It says in verse 8 – *“Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them.”*

Sheep-shearing time takes place in the spring. It's a time when the sheep have gone through the winter, they've given their little baby lambs, and now it's time to shear their sheep. So it's like a dividend on their stock. This was an opportunity for them to have some additional income from all of the shearing of the sheep and they could sell it at the marketplace, they could use it to make things out of the wool. So it was a festive time. They'd be celebrating, they'd be killing some of the sheep, and they'd be enjoying a special dinner together. Just a festive time. It was a celebration that was going on.

It's at this time that David comes and asks for something. You know we've been taking care of your shepherds, we've been doing a lot of things to protect those people and couldn't you give us something? So he's just asking for something and for some benefit of some kind. That's his request.

When David's men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited. They waited for Nabal to think about it. What is he going to do? How is he going to respond?

Nabal answered David's servants. I want you to hear the sarcasm because the sarcasm is what I think is particularly hurtful to David. This is a guy who's mean. He's surly, it says, which is in a form meanness. Nabal answered David's servants, “Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?” So that's the insult coming to David from this guy.

Now I want to stop here for a moment and talk about people like Nabal. Nabal we're going to see is a fool. In fact there's a play here on words. It's kind of ironic in this story because the name Nabal means fool. That's what it means. In the book of Proverbs often we have the word 'fool.' One of the root words is *nabal*. So this guy is acting foolishly and you know these people. It's not just David who experiences these foolish people. You and I experience them. They're all around us. Sometimes we live with them. Sometimes they are in our neighborhoods. Sometimes we drive on the road with them. They are at work. They are foolish people. We know them because they're selfish, self-seeking, self-serving. They are stingy. They're just looking out for their own self. They're ready to trample on somebody else. These are the foolish people of the world. So that's who Nabal is. And he's just demonstrating that right here. He is a fool.

Now I want to pause here again for a moment because I do believe that as Christians we want to be compassionate for everyone. God loves everyone, even fools. We want to be able to love and demonstrate the love of God to them and care for them. We want to be compassionate to people that we think are fools or seem to be acting differently than us. That's very important.

I don't want to minimize that, but what I'm trying to do today is put ourselves in the position of David. David is mad because he thinks this guy is a real fool. He can't believe it. Some people just feel like, man, I've got fools all around us. Idiots. I've got to live with them. Not just live them. You've got people all around who are idiots. One guy said, "If idiots grew on trees, I must live in an orchard." There's a sense that there are people all around and they're making me angry. Every time I turn around somebody is making me angry.

Well let's look at David a little bit more. It says – *David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word.* And I believe they also reported the inflection in the voice, the sarcasm that was there.

David's response is livid. I know you've experienced this. I've experienced this. I know what it's like. Livid. Can't think straight. Give me my sword. I'm putting it on. We're going to go out there and we're going to get this guy. *David said to his men, "Each of you strap on your sword!" So they did, and David strapped his on as well. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.* We're going to go get these guys.

Now I know you have this experience. Don't just pretend you have these nice clothes on on Sunday and your heart doesn't have this experience. We all have this experience you're seeing here. Maybe you don't have your sword.

The key verse for my grandchildren when they grow up is Proverbs 12:18. Here's what it says: *Sharp words are like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.* Proverbs 12:18.

Now I think you can probably put yourself in this thing. You're laying on your bed going, "I can hardly wait to rip them up one side up and down the other." David is doing that in his mind with real swords. He's figuring out how he's going to kill these guys and he can hardly wait to get the revenge because they shouldn't be alive. You must feel that sometimes. This person should not be alive. I'm going to get him. I'm not going to put up with this anymore. I'm going after him. So he's going to do that.

Here's what's really interesting. The irony here is Nabal is being the fool, but David by getting angry is also being a fool. That's what Proverbs says because Proverbs explains or shares this very idea. *A fool vents all of his feelings, but a wise man holds them up.* Proverbs 29:11. Very important principle. If you get livid and you're acting out on your anger, you're often acting like the very person that you think is a fool because you're coming at it and you're being a fool yourself. We can't lower ourselves to the other fools that are around because of our emotion. We have to take the high road, if you want to say. We have to think about it differently. Very important that we don't come down and be the fool that the other person is being. Just the irony in this story about fools is a fascinating one.

Let's go on. Lots in this passage. Now we're going to go to Abigail. I want you to see what she does because Abigail's words are going to be used in David's life to loose him from his angry talons.

You know what that anger does. "I'm so angry," and you spend a couple hours meditating on your anger. You can't go to sleep at night, you're wandering around, and it just captures us.

She's going to say some things. Actually four things are going to happen in this passage that she's going to say, and when she does these are the things that we need in order to help us to be able to release our anger in those difficult moments. So this is great stuff. I hope you'll pay attention to what happens here.

One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them. Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."

Abigail acted quickly. She took two hundred loaves of bread (now there's six hundred guys there, so this is a meal, a least a festive meal for them), two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. Then she told her servants, "Go on ahead; I'll follow you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

So she's taking initiative. We're going to look a lot more at her in time to come, but she's doing something very important. She's going to meet David on the path and she's going to talk to him and give him some words that are going to free him up so that he is going to turn around. His anger is going to subside and good things are going to happen. Same thing is going to happen with us.

As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her. So you can imagine the picture. A ravine, nobody can go around anybody. They're going to have to meet her. They're coming down and she met them.

David had just said. This is the kind of meditating that goes on in our hearts when we're really angry. You can picture David saying this. He's talking to himself. "Self, we're going to kill these people." David had just said, "It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. May God deal with David (he's using his own name), be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!"

You can hear his heart, can't you. You can hear him wrestling in his livid rage just overcoming him in the midst of that. This is so unfair. My kids are so ungrateful. They never do anything for me. I have to do all these things and they just leave these messes all around. If they could see all the things that I do, if my spouse would just be thankful for the things I do, then at least I get

gratefulness. I get no gratefulness around here. My boss passes me over and gives things to other people. My neighbors are selfish. We all have these things that make us angry. When they do, we start going to this cycle inside of our hearts that gets us into trouble. That's exactly what's happening to David. See what's happening and surging inside of him before Abigail starts to speak.

Here's what she says. This is the first point we want to see. I want you to see it comes from the Bible. So I'm throwing up the point first and then we're going to read it. When we're livid, when we're angry, when we're upset, we must shift our attention. That's the point we're going to see here in verse 25.

When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. She fell at his feet and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. Please pay no attention."

Would you say those three words? Let's say it together. *Pay no attention*. When you leave here today and you remember your anger, you need to remember those words. Say them again. Pay no attention. Okay, we're coming back. The words come right out of the Bible that I'm putting in the point.

"Pay no attention my lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly goes with him. And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my lord sent. And now, my lord, as surely as the Lord your God lives and as you live, since the Lord has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal. And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you."

Okay. I'm going to talk about this one idea today. We're going to talk about shifting your attention. The other three points we've got to save them for another week because I just can't get through all of this. This is such a valuable one that we need.

Shift your attention. What's the three words? *Pay no attention*. Take that with you when you leave so when you start getting really angry you do that. Now here we all have this ability to manage our attention.

I better stop there because some people don't think they have this ability. Here's how some people believe. Some people believe that here's the problem over here. Situations are over here – situations like my kids make messes, my kids show up late at night, my parents tell me what to do, make me get off the iPad, the boss does this. There's situations over here. Sometimes they're not even people related. It's raining and over here are my emotions. Some people believe they don't really manage their attention, but that the situations cause them to feel emotions. That's what people believe.

Most people believe that you make me angry. Kids will say, "My parents make me mad." Parents will say, "My kids make me mad." People think that there's a direct connection between these situations of life and these emotions.

It doesn't work that way because God has created us with something very important that goes in the middle. That's this thing right here in the middle. That's the heart. And inside the heart we have desires, beliefs, expectations, and those are the things that cause us to be angry.

If it's raining outside, some people wake up and see the rain or they look at the weather report and it's going to be raining all day today, and they go, "Oh it's going to be a bad day today because of the rain," as if the rain caused the bad day. Now you got to understand. Not everybody who wakes up and sees the rain feels like it's going to be a bad day.

When I was in Kenya I was teaching in the Bible college. There are two rains in Kenya. There's the long rains and the short rains. It doesn't work like here in America. The long rains start in October and they go for a couple months and the short rains start in March. Well we arrived in August and I'm teaching in my class and the first day of rain came. I got students in my class and I'm teaching away and all of a sudden rain starts coming outside. You see the rain and all of my class jumps up and they say, "We've got to go outside!" So they go outside. They do this every year at the first rain. They go outside and they dance in the rain. Do you know why? Because the rain represents life to them. It represents the sustenance. They want to praise God for His gift of rain that they've been given on that day. Wow.

The point I'm trying to make is that situations that happen in our lives don't cause us to be upset, but rather what happens is this stuff in the middle. We can take our attention from the situation that we invest wherever we feel is best. We invest in the middle and we can try to make our attention work in a more effective way.

Now some people have this attention deficit disorder. Some kids have that, some adults have that, and of course that's one of the things we work on at the National Center for Biblical Parenting. We do therapy with these kids to help them, using their parents as the therapist.

But what it means when you have attention deficit disorder is that you don't do this managing of attention well. So these kids sometimes can't focus or stay on task. They can't invest their attention. But other times, they'll play a video game and you can't get them off of it because they invest their attention so much there. So they have a hard time managing attention.

It's not just kids, folks. Because when you get livid about something and you get your attention all focused on that, you have to be able to move your attention. So what are you going to do? How are you going to move your attention and what are you going to do with it?

Well notice what happens in the passage. In the passage Abigail says this first of all. She says, "*Please pay no attention.*" So she said don't put your attention on that, but notice what she also does. She gives him a gift. This gift has all of the things that he wanted in the first place. When we call dressed sheep there that doesn't mean they had suits on. What it means that these sheep were ready to be put on the spit so they could be cooked. The food that is in there that she provided that we read earlier was pressed raisin cakes. Those are desserts that they could eat. She has brought them a huge meal on lots of these donkeys. Now she is saying to David, "Don't pay

attention to the situation and this Nabal and this foolish guy. But you need to pay attention to something. I'm giving you a gift. Let's shift your attention."

Here's what I think we can do in our lives. We can take our attention and shift it from the situation to gratefulness. Isn't that what's happening in the passage? One of the ways that David is able to leave there and go back there is his shift now goes to gratefulness for the gift that he is receiving. So now the anger that he has subsides and he is able to go forward.

Gratefulness is a tremendous tool for moving people past emotional struggles that they have. Some people are captivated by their emotions. They're stuck there. So when I work with people, the first thing I say is let's practice gratefulness. Why? You can use gratefulness or love or peace or any of those things that God gives us to shift and learn how to transfer your attention. You are in control of those emotions. Being grateful changes your emotional state. A really valuable thing.

In fact it's the same thing mentioned in Philippians 4. I'm going to quote it for you. Watch for the word thanksgiving in there. He says – *Don't be anxious about anything, but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving* (don't forget that part, that's a real important part in the therapy of the passage) *make your requests known to God. And the peace that passes all understanding will guard your heart* (there's heart, that's in the middle) *and mind* (the stirring, racing with all these thoughts) *in Christ Jesus.*

Then he goes on to the next part. *Whatever is right, whatever is noble, whatever is admirable, think on these things.* In other words, change your attention from the problem over there to something else. Really important. If we shift our attention, good things happen.

But I don't want you to think it's all about positive thinking and having happy thoughts. Sometimes there's value in putting our attention into something that may appear like negative thinking. For example, maybe you have some failures of the past that hinder you from being able to go forward because you have these regrets. Maybe it's best, although it sounds negative, to put your attention on those and deal with them a little bit. Allow God's grace to forgive yourself so that you can go on and be successful. It's a growth experience. Maybe if you have fears in your life that are hindering you from making progress, spending a little bit of attention to that and allowing God to identify the misbeliefs that are causing the fears can provide the healing necessary for you to be productive.

You see, we put our attention wisely where God would have us put it. I'm not saying we're just trying to think happy thoughts and we're just trying to be positive. I'm saying let's be good managers of the attention that God has given to us.

If you go to the doctor with a broken leg and the doctor's looking at your leg and says, "Boy, that is really a broken leg. Here's how I can help you. You've got another good leg. Just think about that one," that's not going to be that productive. I have a problem. My problem is I have a broken leg. I would suggest that sometimes the Holy Spirit has this way of putting His finger on a problem in our lives and saying, "I think you should deal with that. You could be much more

whole in your heart if you would give that part of your life to me.” So the attention then we put into that particular place produces the results that are necessary.

This idea of pay no attention to Nabal is a key element in our emotional health. God gives us a lot of spiritual strength to be able to deal with the challenges that we face in our lives. That’s one of the beauties of being a Christian. You don’t have to face these challenges alone. When you come to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, He gives you these spiritual resources that allow you to address some of these deeper issues that are going on. He gives you something that you can focus on and you can entrust this injustice that’s taken place to the Lord.

The problem is there is a problem that still needs to be addressed. Sometimes you can’t just think happy thoughts because you still have selfish kids that are fighting. You’ve still got to work it out with your wife or your husband because there’s a problem that exists. You still have to challenge your boss or go to court. Whatever you’ve got to do, you’ve still got to do it. But here’s the thing. You’re not investing your attention in this thing in a way that’s going to draw your emotions in. Our emotions are the key part that are dropping off for David and good things are going to happen in his life.

I just love this story. We’re going to come back to it over a couple more weeks and see some other ways that we can learn from it. There’s three more principles that I planned to share today, but when I got into this I was thinking if I do that, you’re going to tune me out because we’ll go too long. But let’s start with this one.

Pay no attention. Say it with me again. Pay no attention. When you start getting upset, you want to be able to divert your attention to something that is more godly, productive, whatever that God would be saying to you. Or you spend some attention on why does this thing make me so mad. Figure it out so that God can free you up to go forward.

It’s beautiful what God has done for us. He gives us a heart and when we accept Jesus Christ to come into our lives, He comes into that heart. He deals with our beliefs, He deals with our desires, He deals with our emotions, and those other things that wreak havoc in our lives.

So the greatest thing that I could do or suggest to you if you want to deal with anger in your life is to become a Christian and then let the Holy Spirit run your life. Does that mean you’ll never get angry? No. There’s a righteous anger. We saw it in Jesus in the Bible. There’s a righteous anger. I’m not saying we never get angry. But the anger that comes from personal justice that I’ve been mistreated, this isn’t fair, people don’t value me, I don’t get any gratefulness (which is what is happening in David’s life), that kind of anger is usually inappropriate. It may need some correction and work that we need to do with those people that need to change, but it doesn’t have to require that the anger be there and rob us of what God would have.

God wants us to enjoy that *peace that passes all understanding and guards our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus*. It’s a spiritual blessing that God provides. So knowing Jesus Christ personally is relevant. This isn’t just about attending a church or lighting a candle or something. This is about living our lives in a way that is allowing God to control us in a powerful way.

So if you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I would encourage you to do it today. It'll start you on a whole new path for managing your emotions or challenges that you're facing. God wants to walk through those with you and He wants to empower you in the way that it will be most productive in your life.

Would you stand with me and let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, I ask that you would use these truths today to make an imprint on our hearts. I know we're going to face these angry situations. They sometimes overcome us before we realize. Whether it's anger, depression, or anxiety, sometimes we just need you right now in this moment that we just feel like we're hanging on (or maybe not hanging on) and we just need you right now. So Lord, I just ask that you would make your presence known to each young person that's here and each adult that's here. That the experience that we have with you would be so real and powerful that it would take us to the emotional parts of ourselves that cause us discomfort personally. Lord, bless us and be with us. Lord, just know from the bottom of our heart we say to you we need you, we want you now in our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.