

Bible Study Questions for
Abigail: A Novel
by Jill Eileen Smith

1. How does the Bible describe Abigail? In contrast, how does the Bible describe Abigail's husband Nabal (1 Samuel 25:2–3)?
2. What event sparked Abigail to act against her husband's wishes (1 Samuel 25:4–19)?
3. In Abigail's day, wives were expected to respect and obey their husbands. Did Abigail sin by taking food to David (see Deuteronomy 30:19–20)? What law might she have chosen to obey above the law of her husband (see Acts 5:29–32)?
4. In 1 Samuel 25:21–22 David's rage against Nabal has him headed on a course to murder every male that belongs to Nabal. David, the warrior, is familiar with the practice of wiping out entire tribes to execute God's judgment against idolatrous nations. Why is this different? Was David's anger a just reason for exacting punishment against Nabal and his household (see James 1:19–20)?
5. In her speech to David, Abigail recognizes that David's actions could cost him the future goodwill of the nation, and the price of shedding innocent blood or of having avenged himself could weigh on his conscience (1 Samuel 25:30–31). Why was this important to the future of David's rule in Israel? (Hint: David dealt with seven years of civil war before he managed to unite all Israel.) Why was it wrong for David to avenge himself (see Deuteronomy 32:35–36)?
6. Abigail returns home to Nabal and tells him everything. What happens to Nabal when he hears her words (1 Samuel 25:36–38)? Why do you think God struck him (verse 38)?
7. David wastes no time in seeking Abigail's hand in marriage. Why do you think he wanted to marry her? Why do you think she accepted (1 Samuel 25:39–42)?
8. What does the Bible tell us about David's wife Ahinoam (1 Samuel 25:43; 27:3; 30:5; 2 Samuel 2:2; 3:2; 1 Chronicles 3:1)? For further research, read 2 Samuel 13 to get a glimpse of Ahinoam's son Amnon. Could the character of the son be any reflection on his mother? If so, in what way? If not, why not?

9. Abigail is with David when he travels to the foreign land of the Philistines to escape the vengeance of King Saul. During their stay in Ziklag, David makes a practice of lying to the Philistine king Achish, telling him he was killing Israelites when in fact he was wiping out Amalekites, Girzites, and Geshurites (1 Samuel 27:7–12). These were people of Canaan whom God wanted judged for their idolatrous ways (Deuteronomy 25:17–19). Though David may have been carrying out God’s judgment against these nations, how did his lies to Achish come back to haunt him (1 Samuel 28:1–2)? How do you think David felt about the prospect of fighting against his own people, against Jonathan?

10. First Samuel 29:1–11 gives us the story of how God rescued David from having to fight against Israel, his people. But his joy is short-lived. When David returns to Ziklag, he finds his wives kidnapped and Ziklag burned (1 Samuel 30:1–5). When his men also turn against him and seek to stone him, what does David finally do (verses 6–8)?

11. The Bible records an incident that happened as David set out to rescue his wives—something that aided him in finding where the Amalekites had taken them. For the sake of the story’s pacing, this part was left out of the novel. What did David find that guided him to the kidnapers (1 Samuel 30:11–15)?

12. Second Samuel 2:1–3 is the next time we read of Abigail—when she follows David to Hebron to see him anointed king of Judah. By 2 Samuel 3:2–5 David is listed as having six wives and six sons, who were born to him in Hebron during his seven-year reign over Judah, before he became king of all Israel. How do you think Abigail felt going from being one of two wives to one of six? Does the Bible condone polygamy (see Genesis 1:27; 2:24; 5:2; Matthew 19:3–9)? (Hint: Moses gave laws to govern divorce. According to Jesus, he did so because of the hardness of men’s hearts. Moses also gave laws to govern the taking of more than one wife (Deuteronomy 17:16-18; 21:15-17). Some people today see Moses’ words as justification for polygamy. But Jesus’ words in Matthew 19 could apply to both laws of Moses—those governing divorce and those governing polygamous households—because “it was not this way from the beginning.” Divorce was not God’s original design, nor was polygamy. God’s intention was for marriage to be for one man and one woman. His purposes do not change.)

13. Second Samuel 3:3 and 1 Chronicles 3:1 list two different names for Abigail’s son—Chileab and Daniel. The Bible speaks of Solomon being named Solomon by his parents and Jedidiah by the Lord, making it believable that a man could carry two names and still be the same person. Do you think there is a different explanation? If so, what?

14. Second Samuel 13 shows us the downfall of David's firstborn son Amnon. Second Samuel 15–18 tells the tale of David's thirdborn son Absalom and his rebellion against his father. First Kings 1 speaks of David's fourthborn son Adonijah and his attempt to become king. There is no mention of Chileab (Daniel), David's secondborn son, in any of these chapters. Also, the last mention of Abigail is at the beginning of David's reign after Chileab's birth in Hebron, leaving any future insight into their lives open to imagination and speculation. Some commentators suggest Chileab died young. If he did live, what reasons might he have had not to follow in his father's footsteps as king? Could Abigail's teaching have influenced his decision? If you had walked in Abigail's sandals and lived in a harem of conniving women vying for places of prominence for their sons, what would you have taught your son in the hopes of keeping him from becoming corrupted?

15. Deuteronomy 17:14–20 gives instruction to kings. What things were kings told to do and not to do? How should these laws have affected David's decision to add wives to his household?

16. First Samuel 25 gives us our only description of Abigail (verse 3) and our only insight into her character. How would you describe Abigail based on this Scripture? Do you see her life as one filled with tragedy or hope or both?

Author's note: My fictional account of Abigail's story imagines what might have happened to her during her years with Nabal, who was "surly and mean in his dealings," and later with David, who made her a wife of polygamy. In truth, Abigail likely knew abuse and hurt in many different forms, yet she inspires us even today with her words and her actions—a woman of faith even in hardship. I hope my version of Abigail's story will inspire you to read and study the biblical account. You may be surprised at the insight you will glean from her life.



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