



## Abigail 1 Samuel 25

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**Opening Prayer:** “God, we ask you to guide us as we hear the story of one of the lesser known women of the Bible. Be our teacher as we hear and learn from Abigail’s story about how you are calling us to serve others in our time. Amen.”

### Abigail Monologue

My name is Abigail. Like so many others, I found myself doing something that I really shouldn’t have been doing. I was married to Nabal who was truly a fool. He was never happy, always yelling. But, I do have to say that he had done well for us. We had a nice life. And, then one day that fool opened his mouth to the wrong men – David’s men.

One of our shepherds knew that going to Nabal would only make things worse. He came to me instead and told me what had happened. He also said that he was sure David would be back to kill us all for what Nabal had done.

Sometimes you just have to take matters into your own hands. I gathered up food and wine as a peace offering and I headed out to meet David and his men before they could get close enough to do any damage.

I was terrified, but I knew it was our only chance of surviving. Really, when I saw David’s men come over that hill, I realized how close to the end we were. He was so very angry, and he was ready to take action.

My legs and hands were trembling, but I spoke right up and begged him to have mercy on all of us. I told him that acting in anger would only hurt him in the long run. I apologized for the rude behavior of my husband, and I offered the supplies I had brought for him.

I’ve always been good about finding solutions to problems. Nabal wouldn’t have wanted anyone to know just how much I did to take care of the business. I know men, too. And, sometimes a smile can go a long way with a man!

So, I smiled up at David as I knelt there pleading for grace. And, when he smiled back, I knew we would be okay. I never dreamed things would turn out as they did, though.

I knew I had to tell Nabal what I had done. I also secretly hoped he would realize how close he came to losing everything because of his foolishness. I waited until the next day because he was having a feast and was quite drunk when I returned. After a good night’s sleep, I approached Nabal and told him everything. Within minutes he was in a coma. Within days, he was dead.

I couldn’t believe it. I wondered if I should have kept it all to myself. Had I killed him? All of my friends tell me no. They say that God took care of him for his foolishness. I still don’t know what to think about all of it.

I thought I had saved us, and then my husband died. I didn’t know what I was going to do without him. Even in his foolishness, he took good care of me. I was afraid, but then I received word that David wanted to make me his wife. I couldn’t believe it, but I jumped at this opportunity to be well cared for as one of the King’s wives.

Was I used for a particular purpose? I really don’t know how all that works. I’m just glad that God helped me to have the courage to go out and face David and his men. So many innocent people would have suffered otherwise. I’m thankful David had ears to hear what I said. – Foolishness transformed!

### **Discussion Suggestions (Abigail):**

(Identify agencies in your community that work with persons who have experienced abuse and violence. Learn about opportunities for women to volunteer through these agencies. Be sensitive to the security and privacy needs of persons these agencies serve.)

1. Inquire: "What is your response to Abigail's story? Why do you agree or disagree with her words that she found herself doing something that she shouldn't have been doing? Perhaps we have found ourselves in situations where we felt that it was necessary to take matters in our own hands. Can you think of situations where it's necessary to do this?"
2. Ask: "What were the risks of Abigail taking charge of things? What may be some of the risks when we take charge? Why do you think Abigail felt that she must speak and act for God in spite of the risks? What were some positive outcomes of what Abigail did? What may be positive outcomes of our actions when we speak and act for God?"
3. Comment: "Abigail has been called a model: a model of one who speaks and acts for God, a model against violence, a model peacemaker, and a model of courage. What about Abigail do you think supports her being called a model for us?"
4. Encourage women to identify and discuss situations where we can speak or act against senseless violence and for peace in our time and place such as in our home, work, school, church, neighborhood, community, world?
5. Report on the agencies you identified that work with persons who have experienced violence and abuse. Guide women to talk about how individuals or your group might volunteer through these agencies or other groups the women mention. Seek God's guidance and make plans to follow through in service.
6. Invite women to pray with you the prayer that is often called the Prayer of St. Francis:  
*"Lord, make me an instrument of Your Peace!  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon.  
Where there is discord, harmony. Where there is doubt, faith.  
Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light.  
Where there is sorrow, joy.*

*Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen"*



## Deborah

### Judges 4—5

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**Opening Prayer:** “God, help us to be aware of ways you are working in our lives for such a time as this as we hear the story of Deborah. Amen.”

#### Deborah Monologue

My name is Deborah. Sometimes I’ve been known as “woman of fire.” I guess that is a good thing. I suppose I’ve been called that because I’ve never been afraid of very much. I think it was this quality that made people trust me as a judge. I wasn’t afraid to speak the truth, no matter who was standing in front of me.

I’ve heard the voice of God speak for as long as I can remember. I don’t mean this metaphorically either. I literally hear God, and God is who I listen to in order to make the best judgements. Most of the time anyway. I try my best. I guess a lot of us do.

I wasn’t afraid to go into battle either. I think Barak thought I would be. When I told him that God had said it was time for Israel to go to war with Canaan, he slyly said he would go *if* I went. I’m sure he thought that he would get out of it easily by saying that. But, I was not afraid. I knew God was in control. I also knew that God was using us women in a very real way in the world. I wanted to make myself available for God to use me in whatever way God wanted.

I didn’t enjoy the battles. I won’t say that I’m happy all of those Canaanites were killed. I don’t think God is ever happy when lives are lost. But, God did take those moments and transform them – made a better life for the Israelites.

And, as I had predicted, a woman brought an end to the tyranny led by Sisera. No, it wasn’t me. It was Jael. She killed Sisera with her own hands. I can’t even imagine what that must be like. I imagine that she has nightmares about that to this day. It certainly isn’t a pretty picture, but it is what brought victory and freedom to the Israelites.

So, Barak and I wrote a song about it. We sang and danced in victory when we heard what had happened. I hurt for the Canaanites left behind, those who lost husbands, sons, fathers, I really do. I pray for the day when war will be no more, when we can all live in peace together. But, after being oppressed for twenty long years, it was time to stand up and do something about it. And, I really felt God leading me to this. I felt it was the right thing to do.

I believe Jael was brought to a place for “such a time as this.” It has haunted her since, but I believe she was an instrument of God. Was I? I suppose without my guidance, the battle would have never begun. I suppose God called me to be there, to be a leader for the people. First, by offering wisdom as a judge and then by being brave enough to accompany Barak into battle.

I still prefer sitting under my palm tree and listening to folks try to work out their differences. But, if God called me, I would go again. I will try to always go as God leads me. Woman of fire or not.

### **Discussion Suggestions (Deborah):**

Comment: “Deborah said that she had heard God speak to her all of her life. Recall a time and circumstance when God spoke to you. How did God speak to you? What was your response? What were the results of your responding to God’s speaking to you? Who would like to tell about that experience?”

Deborah also said that she listened to God to make the best judgments. Guide women to discuss: “How has listening to God helped you to make good judgments? How has God guided you when you had to make difficult decisions? When have you had to put the needs of others ahead of your own comfort, safety, and perhaps principles you valued? How can we know and follow God’s leadership in such times?”

Deborah acknowledged that she did not act alone in accomplishing God’s purpose to free the Israelites from the long years of severe oppression. Ask: “Name some ways you have worked with others to accomplish God’s purpose that you could not have done alone. Where do you see needs right now that God might be calling you to meet, and how could you encourage other women to join you in meeting those needs?” Note that Deborah, Barak, and Jael each brought their own abilities and personalities for God’s use. Each was unique and necessary. Guide women to talk about how they can bring together their abilities and personalities in mission, service, and outreach in your community. How can they work together to accomplish God’s purpose for such a time and place as this?

Recall that Deborah and Barak celebrated God’s using them to give God’s people victory and freedom from oppression. Ask women to consider whether we are often so busy planning our next project or task that we may fail to acknowledge and celebrate ways God has used us victoriously to help accomplish God’s plan. Invite members to brainstorm ways we can celebrate and give praise to God for being at work in our lives as we listen and serve God.

Choose at least two or three of the ways suggested to celebrate right now. Joyously praise God and celebrate God’s work through your lives for such a time as this.



## Sarah

Genesis 16; 17:1-22; 18:1-15; 21:1-7

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**Opening Statement:** “Faith has often been compared to a journey. As you hear Sarah’s story, listen for how her story tells of her faith journey. Pray that God will help you see your own faith journey in a new light.”

### Sarah Monologue

I am Sarah. My life has been full, to say the least. My husband is Abraham. Yes, that Abraham – Father Abraham and all. Our life still amazes me. God blessed us in so many ways, even when we made so many mistakes.

Well, I think everyone in the world heard about the old woman giving birth. Beautiful Isaac, what a true blessing. I never dreamed I would have such an experience. It was amazing.

You know these folks who tell you that you must have faith in order for God to bless you? Well, I believe that to a certain extent. But, I will tell you, I never believed that I would really give birth to Isaac. In fact, when those mysterious men first told Abraham that I would, I laughed and laughed at the silliness of such a notion. We know now that those men were sent straight from God, but at the time it all felt like a bizarre dream. And, of course, too good to be true.

In fact, even after I was pregnant, I couldn’t believe I would really be able to have the baby. I worried every day that something would happen, that I would miscarry. I was hard for me to believe that everything was going to be okay. In fact, Isaac was three years old before I stopped constantly having the sense that he would be taken from me at any moment. It got better, but I do have to say that it has never gone away completely.

So, don’t let anyone tell you that if your belief is weak, God refuses to answer your prayers. I know it may be surprising to hear someone like me say such things, but my belief or faith has been weak all my life. That isn’t to say that I didn’t follow God. Abraham and I tried to go where God called even when it meant leaving all we knew and not knowing where we were going. So, I’m not saying that my doubts kept me from following, but they did keep me wondering about what was going to happen. I was always questioning.

And, now I look back and see how my lack of trust in God caused me to try to make things happen on my own. Rather than trusting and listening for God’s plan, I would come up with a plan and try to get God to fit into it.

I really regret how I treated, or mistreated, Hagar and Ishmael. I was just so lost and confused. I thought the answer to not having any children of my own was to have Abraham and Hagar have a child together. It was a rash decision, to say the least. And once it had all happened Hagar and I just could not get along. I, of course, was jealous. And, I think she began to feel like I was less of a person because I was unable to get pregnant and she was. I’m sure she felt used too. And she had every right. I was so mean to her after all that happened. I just couldn’t bear the thought of it and she and Ishmael were constant reminders.

Oh, how Abraham loved me. He would do just about anything for me. I know it broke his heart when I made him choose either me and Isaac or Hagar and Ishmael. I was so caught up in the moment. To be honest, I was only thinking of myself and my son. Yes, that is still one of my biggest regrets.

But, I also know that I have been forgiven by the God who loves us more than we can understand. I have grown to trust God more and more. And, God continues to bless me. It may be through a place. It may be through an experience. Or, of course, it may be through other people. Even after all my mistakes, God is faithful to me. The blessings - oh how they come!

**Discussion Suggestions (Sarah):**

(Provide a chalkboard and chalk or a large piece of paper and felt-tip marker. Also provide pencils and paper for each person.)

Ask: “How would you compare faith to a journey? What traveling words would you use to describe your journey of faith?”

Comment: “Sometimes it is helpful to chart a faith journey so we can see where the person has been and how God has acted in the daily events of life. Let’s chart what we know about Sarah’s faith journey from hearing her story.” As women call out major events in Sarah’s life, list them horizontally on the chalkboard or large piece of paper. Guide women to discuss the high and low points in Sarah’s journey and indicate these with up and down marks on the list you made. Encourage discussion of Sarah’s times of weakness, disbelief, jealousy, mistreatment of another as well as her times of claiming God’s blessings. Ask: “As you look at the ups and downs of Sarah’s faith journey, where do you see God opening up possibilities for blessing even when Sarah had difficulty seeing hope for the future?”

Give each woman a sheet of paper and a pencil. Ask each woman to list horizontally major events in her life. When the major events are listed, ask women to indicate both high and low points in their faith journey. Encourage women to reflect on times when God’s strength was apparent in their weakness, when God forgave them for mistakes, and when their faith grew stronger because of God’s faithfulness. Encourage women to recall times when they were able to be a blessing to others through service and outreach. Ask those who would like to share highlights of their faith journey with a partner or the larger group.

Close with a time of guided prayer with some of these elements:

Ask God’s forgiveness for mistakes, lack of faith, and so forth.

Thank God for being with us every step of our faith journey.

Ask God to strengthen us, to help us see hope for the future, and to respond to God’s calling us to be a blessing for such a time as this.





## Woman at the Well

John 4:1-42

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**Opening Prayer:** “God, help us to enter actively into the story of the Samaritan woman so that you can speak to us through her testimony. Amen.”

### Woman at the Well Monologue

I am the woman at the well – a Samaritan woman. A woman cursed with a lack of stability. A woman who knows the ways of God. Although none of us can understand those ways, I can hold my own in a conversation about faith. My people worshipped God on the mountain. The Jewish people worshipped God in Jerusalem. Because of this difference, our people hated one another. The feud was terrible. We would not even speak to each other.

That is why he took me by surprise. A Jewish rabbi talking to me? This was against everything I’d ever seen or been taught. He should not have been speaking to me. To do so meant shame being brought upon him. But, he spoke to me nonetheless. And even asked me for a drink of water. Well, to speak to me was one thing, but to ask to drink out of my same cup was too amazing to me. I couldn’t believe this man, so I just called him on it.

To be honest, by this point, I was wondering what it was that he wanted from me. Men didn’t talk to women like me unless they wanted something. So, I asked him! I asked him why he, as a Jewish man, would be asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink. He spoke in riddles at first and said something about living water that would cause a person to thirst no more. I thought he was crazy. Of course, I was a real smart mouth about it. I laughed and said to him, “Oh, please, give some of this water to me so I never have to come to this well again.” What a joke!

I never liked to go to the well early in the day when all the other women were there. I hated to hear the gossip and sure didn’t want to listen to what they had to say about me. I went in the middle of the day when I knew no one else would be there. It was always so hot then, but it was better than dealing with the harsh looks. So, it was hilarious to me that this stranger would offer water that would quench my thirst for all time. A wonderful thought, but hilarious.

And then he did something that stopped my laughter. He knew things about me, intimate things. Things that no one knew. He knew me, all of me. That is when I wondered if he were some kind of prophet. So, I asked him about the feud. I asked him to explain to me why our peoples could not get along. I asked him where the true place of worship was. Then, I couldn’t believe my ears. He basically told me that the time had come when it didn’t matter where we worshipped. He basically told me I could worship God standing right there at that well under the hot sun!

I had never heard anyone say such things. No one would dare to say such things – either Jewish or Samaritan. But, he did. And, he knew *me*. I began to wonder if this was the man we had waited for so long. Now I know that I was indeed in the presence of the Messiah. Then, I couldn’t believe that the Messiah would treat me so kindly, waste time on me. He treated me better than anyone had ever treated me.

Soon, his disciples came up and clearly did not like that he was talking to me. So I got out of there before things got ugly. I was so excited, though, that I ran right into town. I ran right into the middle of all the people I worked so hard to avoid, and I told them everything he had said. I told them that he knew things he shouldn’t have and that I wondered if this was the Messiah. And, do you know what? They listened. They actually listened to me, and they went to see him for themselves.

That day I began proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. That day people started listening. It is a gift from God that I could never find words to describe. He knew me! He knows you, too.

### **Discussion Suggestions (Woman at the Well):**

Make three columns across a chalkboard or large sheet of paper. Label the columns:

Woman avoids villagers

Jesus' surprising words and actions

Woman proclaims good news

Fill in the columns as women discuss the transformation of the woman at the well from one who avoided contact with the people in her village to one who eagerly invited the villagers to come and see the Messiah for themselves. Why did the woman want to avoid the villagers? Why did Jesus' words and actions surprise the woman so much? How did Jesus' words and actions enable the woman to share her good news with the villagers? What difference did it make that Jesus knew her and accepted her?

Invite women to put themselves in the woman's story and discuss the following:

Who do we discover ourselves to be? How are we like the woman at the well?

Who do we discover Jesus to be? When have we experienced Jesus' acceptance even when others may have rejected us?

What do we hear Jesus speaking to us? How have Jesus' words come to us in unexpected times and places? What is Jesus' call to us for such a time as this?

What about our personal experience with Jesus can we share with others? What difference does it make in our lives that Jesus knows and accepts us? How can we invite others to see for themselves the Jesus who knows us?

Invite each woman to picture herself with Jesus in a setting from her daily life. As women imagine spending time with Jesus, guide them in silent prayer:

Be assured that Jesus knows you just as you are, accepts you, and loves you.

Bring your questions and concerns to Jesus knowing that he cares about you and your concerns.

Reflect on Jesus' call to you for such a time as this. How will you respond in mission, service, and outreach?

Think of a person who needs to experience Jesus' acceptance and love. Ask God to help you invite that person to come and see Jesus for herself or himself.