

# TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY



## Abigail A Word to the Wise

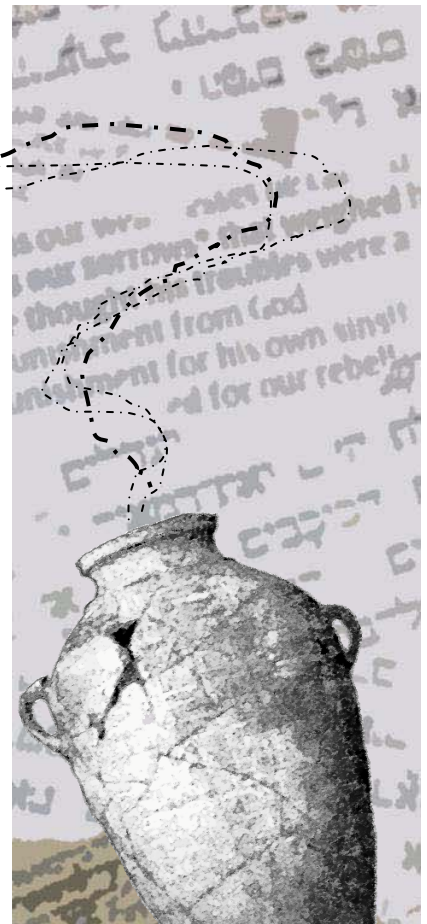
If you have ever stood between two males engaged in an escalating power struggle, you can begin to understand the position that Abigail found herself in. With a husband far short on the social intelligence scorecard, I'm sure it was not the first time this sort of thing had happened. I can't begin to imagine how many times Abigail must have suffered embarrassment over Nabal's foolish or drunken behavior. How many times had she been called on to smooth over a conflict that could have been avoided? How many friendships had been lost? How many times had she herself borne his wounding words? This time, it was about more than embarrassment or annoyance. This time, there would likely be bloodshed, and there was no doubt who the loser would be. How could Nabal be so stupid? Couldn't he see how costly his rash and arrogant words would be?

But instead of flying to Nabal with a barrage of indignant accusations, this discerning woman did something much more productive. She realized that with Nabal it was time for silence, and with David it was time to speak. Proverbs 1:7 reminds us that fools despise wisdom, and I'm sure that is exactly what Abigail had long ago discovered about Nabal—especially when he had drunk in far too much of the sheep shearing celebration. David, on the other hand, was wise enough to be able to recognize, and listen to, Abigail's wisdom. Abigail moved quickly and expediently to avert the impending disaster. Theodore Roosevelt said "nine-tenths of wisdom consists in being wise in time." Had Abigail fearfully hesitated to approach David, it would not have mattered how wise she was! Her bold action not only saved her husband and her household, it also saved the future king of Israel, and ancestor of the Messiah, from being a lesser self.

Just a chapter before, we find David refusing to harm Saul even though surly Saul is making every effort to kill David. Without the presence of God's Spirit, Saul acts with blatantly evil intent against David, while David responds to him with great integrity. In 1 Sam. 25, however, we see a much different response from David toward Nabal's insulting disregard toward him. When David was in danger of taking vengeance into his own hands, Abigail reminded him not only of who he was, but of who he was to become. She reminded him that God had big plans for him, and that needless bloodshed wouldn't be helpful on his background check, nor in his character formation. It wasn't just Nabal's household that was in danger, but also David's integrity.

How did David respond to Abigail's words in 1 Samuel 25:32?

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*"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."*

*2 Corinthians 4:7*

### READ:

• 1 Samuel 25

## Living Right in a World of Wrong

One person's sin can throw us into a world of wrong where choosing to do what is right doesn't even seem like an option anymore. When that person is in a position of authority over you, it gets even more complicated. How can we choose to live right when we have been mired in a world of wrong? Abigail, in her marriage to a foolish and mean spirited man, provides us with a good example.



1. **Do good.** We don't see Abigail whining, we see her shining! She did the good deed for David and his men that Nabal had failed to do. She did not waste a minute in gathering a generous gift of food for them. The first order of business was to meet the physical needs of these men. As we minister to those in our broken world, a right attitude finds its expression through a servant hands.
2. **Humble yourself.** Admit your own wrongs. Abigail had ample reason to complain about her spouse. While she did not deny that Nabal was a fool, she also took responsibility for the situation. She asked for forgiveness for the wrong that had been done. Perhaps in a world that has been hurt by others in the household of Christ, we need to admit our wrongs and ask for forgiveness. According to 1 Peter 5:6, what will the result of humbling ourselves be? \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Bring out the best in others.** Help them see themselves the way that God sees them. We are at our best when we bring out the best in others. What did Abigail remind David about who he was? \_\_\_\_\_

**"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."  
Rom. 12:21**

4. **Choose your battles.** Abigail didn't waste time trying to reform her husband, or tell him how hurt she was about how he had been behaving. She invested herself and her words in what really mattered, not only to herself, but to others as well.

5. **Watch out!** What warning are we given in 1 Peter 5:8-9? \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways had Abigail been prepared for this encounter with David? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Know that good character shines brighter in dark surroundings, and trust in God's faithfulness. What promise is given in 1 Peter 5:10-11? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do trials serve to form character in some, and not in others?



## Abigail's Challenge (from *Through the Bible in a Year*)

Have you ever been the one to patch up a big mess that wasn't even your fault? Did it all fall on your shoulders to take care of things? I think that probably happened to Abigail a lot. Her husband was known for being foolish and mean. When his poor judgment got them into a dangerous predicament, the servants knew they had better take the problem to Abigail. They could trust her to know the right thing to do, and we can be sure this wasn't the first time. What was her life with Nabal like? From the little description that we are given of him, I doubt that it was pleasant or easy. But he was her husband, and she was his helper. Granted, women of that day had little alternative but to stick with their husbands, but I think Abigail has a lot to teach us in a day of disposable marriages. According to a Barna poll, "born-again" Christians have a higher rate of divorce than nonbelievers and those who call themselves "fundamentalist Christians" have the highest rate of all. Why is that? A Christian friend of mine once justified her affair to me by saying that she was sure that God wants her to be happy. Do we really understand that to be our largest goal in life? Is the divorce rate higher among Christians because we somehow think that God has endorsed our right to "happiness"? Or, is it because we sought God to start with thinking that He is going to make our lives smooth and easy and surely He will use our spouse to accomplish that for us? Whatever the case, we are missing the mark. We are too often sacrificing holiness for the sake of a temporary and inferior happiness. What God desires of us is that we become more and more like Christ and better at glorifying Him. We are to be His ambassadors, and the training for that position is a rigorous one. I think Abigail's difficult marriage to Nabal is exactly what she needed to develop the skills that we admire in her thousands of years later. She wasn't passive, she didn't ignore wrong, and she took action contrary to her husband's wishes. Sometimes a spouse's sins have to be opposed and there are even times that it may be impossible to preserve the marriage. But what we see in Abigail is that she did not run from the difficulties, she acted promptly with great wisdom and helped to save the hide of a husband that didn't even want her help. In the process she stayed right with God. Marriage gives us the opportunity to see the stuff that we are made of. It helps to refine and mold us into the kind of person that we desire to be.

What encouragement would you give a friend that is married to a Nabal? \_\_\_\_\_

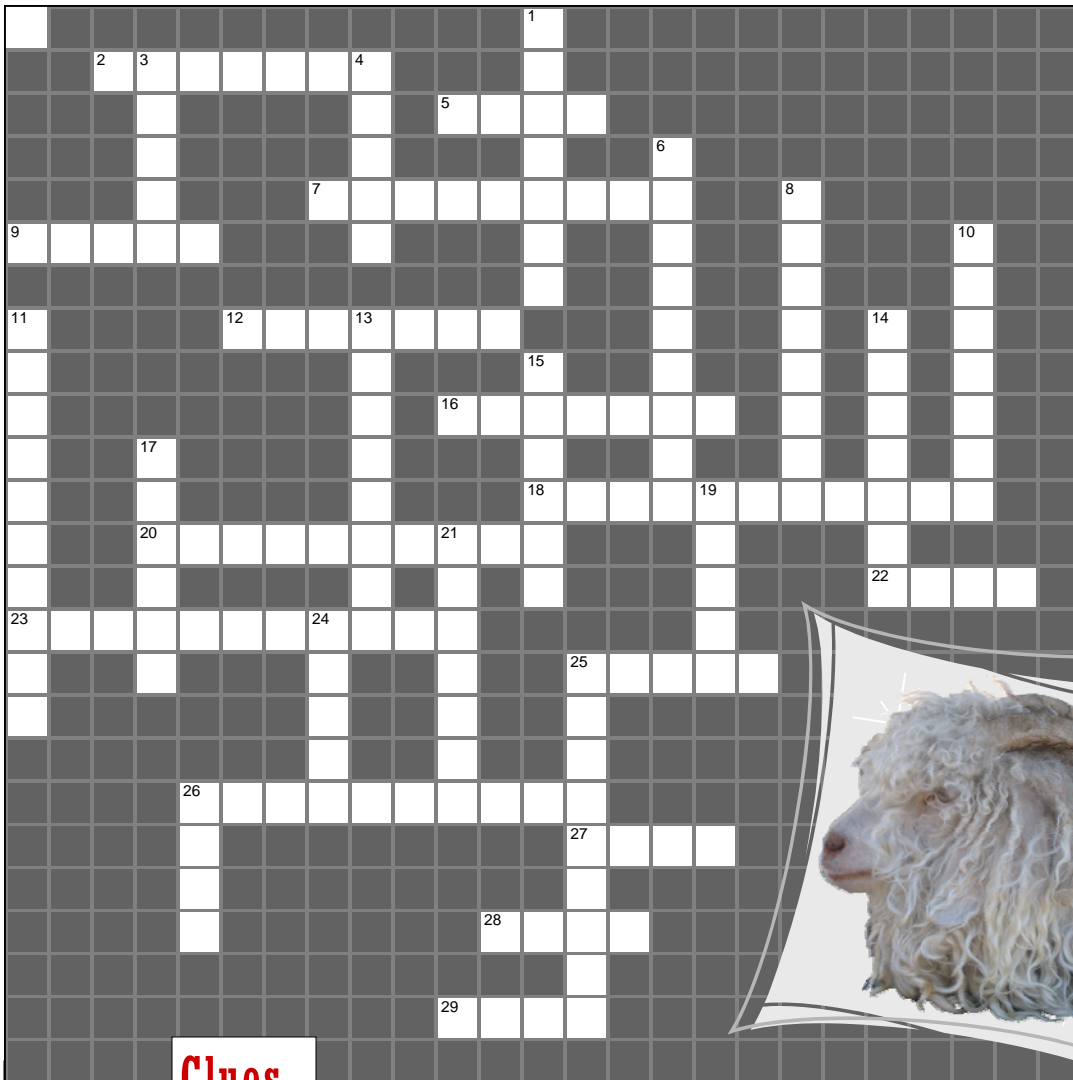
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Does your own marriage sometimes try your patience, test your kindness and demand your self-control? Then be sure and thank your spouse for the fruit of God's Spirit that he is helping grow in you!

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# PUZZLE PAGE



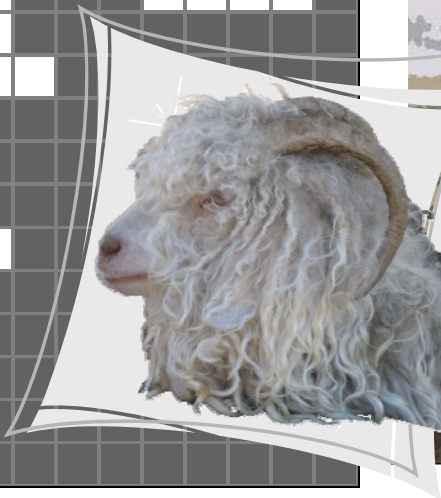
## Clues

### Across

- 2 what Nabal gave David's men (7)
- 5 what we would call her husband (4)
- 7 Abigail was (9)
- 9 Nabal was (5)
- 12 Abigail acted \_\_\_\_\_ (7)
- 16 Nabal was (7)
- 18 what she offered herself as to David (11)
- 20 David's was kept clear (10)
- 22 struck Nabal dead (4)
- 23 Abigail was (11)
- 25 failed Nabal (5)
- 26 David sent ten of these to Nabal (10)
- 27 Nabal's payment for David's good (4)
- 28 her desert home (4)
- 29 she made a generous gift of \_\_\_\_\_ to David (4)

### Down

- 1 she asked David to do this (7)
- 3 didn't know what his wife was doing (5)
- 4 it was time for the shearing of these (5)
- 6 David was saved from this (9)
- 8 hanging over Nabal's household (8)
- 10 David granted Abigail's (7)
- 11 David was saved from this (10)
- 13 Nabal was one (8)
- 14 became another wife to David (7)
- 15 where the shearing was done (6)
- 17 Nabal was (6)
- 19 she didn't talk to Nabal until he was \_\_\_\_\_ (5)
- 21 what she told Nabal before daybreak (7)
- 24 there were one thousand of these (5)
- 25 she saved the males of Nabal's \_\_\_\_\_ (9)
- 26 Nabal was (4)





## Map



Carmel (now called Kermel) and Maon (probably the present small heap of ruins called Tell Main) are towns recorded in Joshua 15:55 as being part of the inheritance of the tribe of Judah, in the hill country. (Ungers 214, 814)

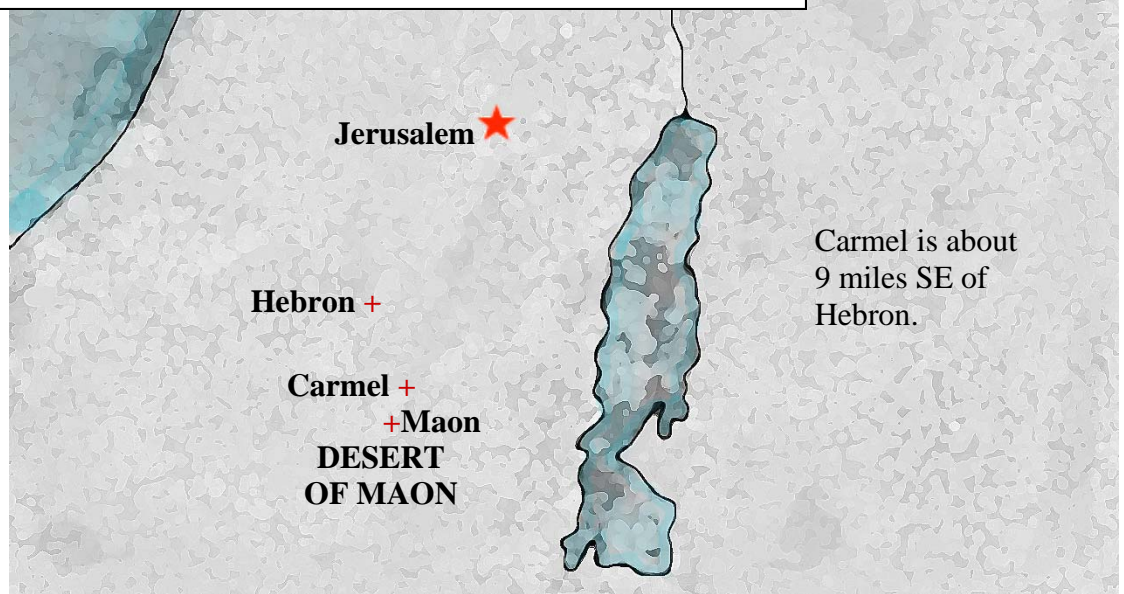
What had Saul done in Carmel after his victory over Amalek in 1 Samuel 15:12? \_\_\_\_\_

According to 2 Samuel 23:35, who else was from Carmel? \_\_\_\_\_

What was taking place in Carmel in 1 Samuel 25? \_\_\_\_\_

In 1 Samuel 23:24-25, what was David doing in the Desert of Maon? \_\_\_\_\_

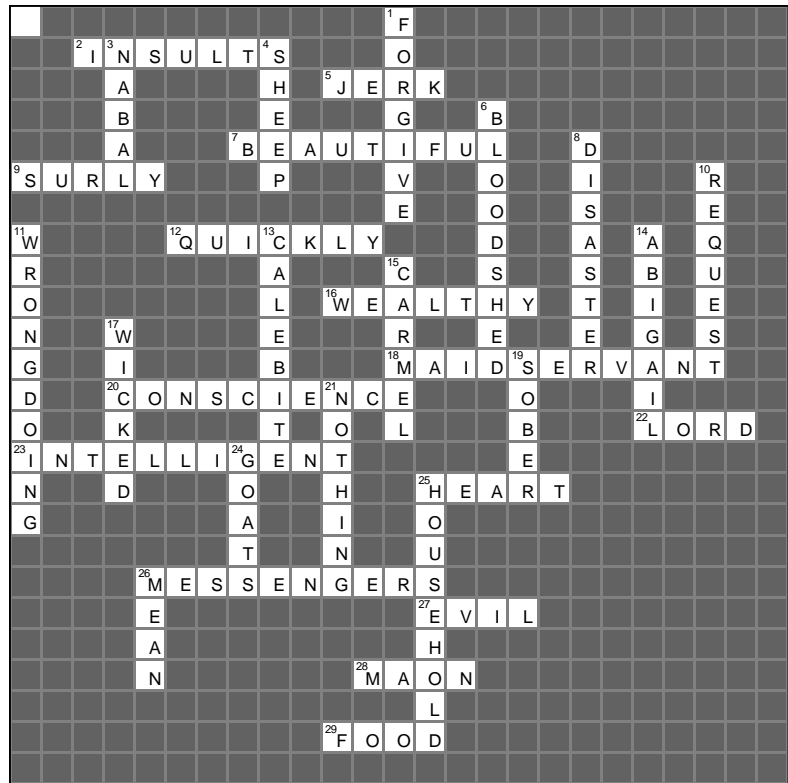
Who was Maon according to 1 Chron. 2:45? \_\_\_\_\_



## Puzzle answers:

### The rest of the story...

Many of the retellings of the story of Abigail make the ending sound like a fairy tale. God struck down her mean spirited husband and she was swept away by the handsome young prince David. Did she really live happily ever after? I'm not so sure. She did lose her evil husband, but she gained a man on the run, not a man on the throne. All was not ease and comfort and romantic love. She became battle plunder for the Amalekites and one of a couple handfuls of wives and concubines for David. David's marriage to Ahinoam is recorded a scant single verse after his marriage to Abigail. We don't hear much more about Abigail, or her son, Daniel (1 Chron. 3:1). How did she fare?



*“Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”*

**1 Peter 3:9**

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### Sources:

The New Ungers Bible Dictionary. The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1988. 214, 814. Print.

### Suggested Reading:

Silvious, Jan. *Fool-Proofing Your Life*. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 1998. Print.

Thomas, Gary. *Sacred Marriage*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000. Print.

