

How does our current technology and the wealth of information it provides affect us?

We have more information than any previous generation that has ever existed on the planet. At any moment, we could find out almost anything we wanted with a few swipes of our fingers. In previous generations, if you were a member of the aristocracy, or were a king or emperor, one of the benefits you had from your wealth was a library, giving you access to an expanse of knowledge beyond your own intuition—an exorbitant luxury that most other people alive at the time didn't possess. But now, all of us are emperors with the wealth of information we have access to. And, one would think, this must mean that our access to information has led to an unqualified good...right?

Ironically, it has not. In fact, it has actually led to many, many problems. Social media, our smart phones, all of it has—in so many ways—made us more divided, more confused, and less wise. For proof of this, see the work of Chris Bail in his book *Breaking the Social Media Prism*.

“A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion,” (Prov 18:2, cf. Prov 18:13).

Wisdom makes your life beautiful. *“She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown,”* (Prov 4:9).

When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground. 24 She fell at his feet and said, “On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. 25 Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent. 26 Now then, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, because the LORD has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal. 27 And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. 28 Please forgive the trespass of your servant. For the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live. 29 If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the LORD your God. And the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling. 30 And when the LORD has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince over Israel, 31 my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord working salvation himself. And when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant.”

- 1 Sam 25:23-31

What Wisdom Looks Like

Three characters: Nabal, Abigail, and David.

Here, we have wisdom incarnate, so to speak, in the person of Abigail and her powerful speech before David teaches us much about what wisdom, what good sense looks like. And in it we see the wisdom is marked by humility and boldness.

Wisdom is Humble

Even before she speaks, we see Abigail's wisdom displayed in her generosity. What did Nabal say to David's men? *"Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men who come from I do not know where?"* (1 Sam 25:11). Now, if that is the response of a fool, then what does wisdom look like? It looks like generosity! It looks like what Abigail does in providing abundantly for David and his men. It may seem like wisdom to hoard wealth, but that's actually what a fool does.

You may have noticed that in Abigail's speech to David she is marked by a profound humility. *"With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone,"* (Prov 25:15). This entire speech is like an enacted parable of that proverb.

When she first meets David, she bows to the ground.¹ She speaks respectfully to David the entire time, referring to him as "my lord" and referring to herself as "your servant," she doesn't even presume to deserve an audience with David, but says, *"Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant,"* (1 Sam 25:24). She acknowledges the wrong that has been done against David, she even identifies that her husband is indeed a fool, *"Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent,"* (1 Sam 25:25). She is not talking down to David, she is not scolding him. She realizes that David has been offended and her life is in his hands—even if what David is doing in response is wrong.

But, here is what is most amazing about Abigail's response: she takes the guilt upon herself! She tells David, *"On me alone, my lord, be the guilt,"* (1 Sam 25:24).

She could have just said, "David, I had no idea you were treated this way, the men of my home had no idea—we are innocent." And then she could have proceeded to scold David: "Is this really the way a king should be acting?" Or try to brush off the offense as "no big deal" and reason with David to just let it go. Or she could have thrown Nabal under the bus: "It's Nabal who is guilty, just go punish him, but leave us alone! In fact, if you got rid of him you would be saving me a whole lot of trouble." She doesn't do that. She says, "David, you're right. You have been wrongly offended, and this is a sin that should be punished. But let the punishment fall on me." She does two things: she acknowledges David's hurt, and she works to save her foolish husband's life. So she steps up as a mediator, as a guilt-bearer for Nabal and her household. But,

¹ Just like David did to Saul back in chapter 24, an unsavory comparison for David, making him look just like Saul, a murderous king who is placated through a servant's act of undeserved honor, cf. 1 Sam 24:8

why? For a good man one might risk their life, even for a mediocre man, one might even dare—but for a fool? For a worthless, evil man?

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us,” (Rom 5:6-8).

Abigail in so many ways reminds us of Christ. At the end of the chapter, when she is approached about marrying David, she responds with *“Behold, your handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord,”* (1 Sam 25:41). Jesus is the greater servant who washes His disciples’ feet; He is among His disciples as one who serves. When the disciples argue about who is the greatest, Jesus encourages them to not posture and preen like the pagans do, *“It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,”* (Matt 20:26-28).

This is what Abigail does, she is the suffering servant here who risks her life for the well-being of others. She gives what is hers freely. She takes the low place, she gives her life up as a ransom. If you notice, the only attention she draws to herself is to take responsibility and to entreat David’s favor (*remember me*). She doesn’t draw attention to her own goodness, her own station, even to her own suffering—she doesn’t say, *Do you have any idea how hard my life has been married to this fool?* She is here as a humble servant, so her attention is pulled out of herself and onto others.

This is wisdom!

Wisdom is Bold

Lest we think that wisdom comes at the expense of truth, let’s look at Abigail’s boldness. First, notice Abigail’s boldness in her quick action. As soon as she hears of what Nabal did, she prepares a large gift for David, and then we are told, *“But she did not tell her husband Nabal,”* (1 Sam 25:19). She is doing the exact opposite of her husband’s wishes—surely this is a risky move for Abigail, given the character she is married to, a “harsh man” who “does evil”, a “worthless fellow” that you can’t even speak to without being railed at. She is taking a big risk.

Sidebar: Was Abigail a Submissive Wife?

The Bible teaches that wives are to submit to their husbands. Is Abigail breaking that command by what she is doing here? 1 Peter tells wives, *“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct,”* (1 Pet 3:1-2). Many people find this teaching highly offensive today, assuming that this is just the by-product of a patriarchal age where women were second-class citizens. But this criticism fails to see how radically different the Jewish and Christian perspective on women is to the classic world.

Aristotle, writing in the 4th century BC, argued that women were deformed males who were unable to, “control themselves physically and psychologically through the exercise of reason the way men can,” (Quoted in Whaley, L.A. *Can Women Do Science?*). In the Bible, by contrast, men and women are equally made in the image of God and thus equal in their capacity for reason. In this story, in fact, Abigail is the most controlled, rational person in contrast with the two angry, foolish men! Plutarch, writing in the 1st century AD, at the same time of Peter’s letter, wrote that wives were forbidden from worshipping any other gods besides her husbands.² Peter outrightly disagrees. If a husband isn’t a Christian, Peter doesn’t say that a wife should follow her husband into unbelief, does he? Why? Because there is a limit to a wife’s submission. She is not to submit to her husband if it leads to sin. God is the only person we submit to unconditionally.

Abigail knows that Nabal has sinned against David by his action *and* she knows that if she doesn’t act, bloodshed will take place. So, no, she is not submitting to Nabal, but she is trying to save his life! Sometimes men in the church can get ahold of the Bible’s teaching on headship and submission to bludgeon their wives, to tell them that they are never permitted to question them. That is not the Biblical model of a husband’s headship or a wife’s submission. If a husband tells a wife she must lie to others about the bruises he has given her, or forbids her from attending church, she is not bound to submit to him. Abigail is a model of godly wisdom for us, and her godly wisdom led her to do the opposite of what her husband wanted.

But we also see her wise boldness in her speech to David. Remember, this is a picture of the proverb of how a soft tongue can break a bone. That implies gentleness but also boldness.

She warns David of what sin will cost him and exhorts him to stop three times, but notice *how* she does it: “*Now then, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, because the LORD has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal,*” (1 Sam 25:26) Here, she speaks as if it is already a settled fact that David will not carry out his deed. She is pronouncing a solemn blessing over David, “As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives (“may the king live forever”) *because* God has stopped you from this sin, may all your enemies be as Nabal.” Do you see how clever this is? She doesn’t make David’s sin the main target right away, but aims instead at a blessing, and loops in David’s restraint from sin as a ground for the blessing—but speaks *as if* it is already a settled fact that God has restrained David from the sin. And the blessing ends with an assumed judgment on Nabal: *May your enemies be as Nabal...as in, God is going to be the one who takes care of them, so you don’t need to work salvation with your own hand.*

² “Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions,” (Plutarch, *Conjugalia Praecepta*, 46-119 AD).

Then she presents David the offering (vs. 27), and then again breaks David's bones with gentleness, *"Please forgive the trespass of your servant. For the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live,"* (1 Sam 25:28). She asks for forgiveness, and then prophetically speaks of God's blessings upon David. God will make David a "sure house." Unlike Saul, whose dynasty was brought to a hasty end, David will never lack an heir to sit on the throne (cf. 2 Sam 7) because He is fighting the battles of the Lord—*hint, hint, David; the battle you are marching off to right now isn't one of those.* And because of that, Abigail gets close to a direct command to David with that final phrase, "evil shall not be found in you as long as you live." Of course, at this very moment, there is evil in David. She isn't making a naïve statement about David being sinless. Rather she is telling David, *"Don't let evil be found in you. Don't do this, David."*

She then reminds David of his encounter with Goliath, promising that David will be "bound in the bundle of the living," while God will sling out David's enemies, "as from the hollow of a sling," (1 Sam 25:29). *"And when the LORD has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince over Israel, 31 my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord working salvation himself,"* (1 Sam 25:30-31).

Abigail is asking David: what do you want your future to look like? Do you want to walk into the kingdom with a defiled conscience? I was speaking with Aaron about this this week and he pointed out that Abigail is appealing to David's better nature. She knows that there is part of David that is fleshly, that is sinful, and there is another part of him that loves the Lord and has a tender conscience. And she addresses that part of David and says, *Imagine how sweet it will be when you have kept your integrity, what a relief you will find in a clean conscience!*

Abigail has masterfully woven into her speech this balance of bold promises and warnings, clothed in humility. Abigail has no prior history to David, no relational capital to draw from; he is an angry military leader who has marshalled his men to storm Nabal's household. He is en route to battle, his blood is boiling, swords are drawn—if he backs down now, it could undermine his authority to his men. And yet, Abigail prevails. Her gentle tongue breaks David's bones, and he repents. He even goes so far to claim that he obeys Abigail's voice (1 Sam 25:35).

We need *both* humility and boldness. If we have humility, but lack boldness, we will become cowards. If we have boldness, but lack humility, we will become blustering fools, like David here.

A common temptation today is to be very bold when interacting with people via technology (online, texting, etc.), and to be very meek when interacting in person. Social media plays a significant role in undermining our ability to pursue wisdom today. It incentivizes whatever garners attention, and whatever garners the most attention usually isn't a display of wisdom.

How to Become Wise

Believe the Gospel:

In the gospel of Jesus Christ we are told three things:

1. God is infinitely holy and righteous
2. You have sinned against Him and deserve judgment
3. If you trust in Jesus and follow Him, your sins will be forgiven, because Jesus died in your place.

Points one and two should humble us to the ground, and point three should raise us up to the heavens. We are so sinful that the only detergent powerful enough to cleans us was the blood of the son of God, and we are so loved that God was happy to send Him. Every other religion or worldview cheapens one of those three points, and with it, they lose the benefit of the wisdom of God.

Typical secular perspectives argue that God (if there is one) isn't holy or judgmental at all, and that we are really just misunderstood, not so bad. If anything makes us feel guilty, it isn't because we are wrong, it is *the thing* making us feel guilty that is wrong. So you may be confident, but you aren't very humble.

"In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that—and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison—you do not know God at all. As long as you are proud, you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you," (Lewis, *Mere Christianity*).

But in many religious or traditional environments, you can never be certain that you are really forgiven. You sweat under the weight of your guilty and try to lift it off, but you never can be sure. So you are humble, but not bold at all.

The gospel of Jesus Christ cuts through both of those: it humbles and emboldens us, without making us arrogant or despairing. Christ is "the wisdom of God."

Join a Church

"The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise," (Prov 15:31).

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ," (Gal 6:1-2)