

**“Love Is Not Arrogant or Rude”**  
**1 Samuel 25**  
**July 7, 2019**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Next up in our study of 1 Corinthians 13 are two more qualities of love stated negatively. Love is not arrogant or rude. These two qualities are tied to one another as cause and effect. Arrogance is the cause of rudeness. The word for arrogance is defined as “to cause to inflate with a sense of self-importance.” It is sometimes translated as being “puffed up.” That is an apt metaphor to me of arrogance. I think of the large inflatables that people sometimes mount in their yards at Halloween or Christmas. An inflated Santa Claus looks big when inflated. But as soon as the air supply is cut, he deflates into a pile of fabric. Pride is like that, making us look big in our own eyes, while the reality is that the inside is empty. The focus is on appearance, which needs constant attention to be maintained. But it quickly deflates and becomes just a messy pile of fabric.

So arrogance arises out of emptiness when we seek to fill the emptiness with various self-centered strategies. Many have noted the mental health crisis that is growing in our nation, evidenced by increasing levels of depression and suicide. The Pew Research Center released a survey last year that captures this mood. When they asked people to describe the things that bring meaning to their lives, a shockingly large number of respondents described lives of quiet despair. Here are some examples. “I no longer find much of anything meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying. Whatever used to keep me going has gone. I am currently struggling to find any motivation to keep going.” Another wrote, “Drugs and alcohol are the shining rays of light in my otherwise unbearable existence.” Still another said, “I don’t feel very satisfied with my life. I’m a stay-at-home mom and my life is endless monotony and chaos.”

So some have given up on filling the empty place deep within and live with unbearable depression and despair. Others seek to fill the emptiness with something that will at least temporarily relieve its pain. Both responses make us self-centered, and that’s what this word captures. Self-centered people don’t love because they are primarily concerned with protecting and serving the self. It reminds me of the story of the good Samaritan. Both the priest and Levite failed to help the man in need because they asked, “What will happen to *me* if I go near?” The Samaritan, delivered from self-centeredness, asked a different question. “What will happen to *him* if I don’t go near?” I want us to look at another story that illustrates these truths. It is the story of an arrogant man and his humble, loving wife.

## I. An Arrogant, Rude Husband

Nabal is introduced to us in verse 2. It is significant that the first thing said about him concerns his wealth, because wealth was the top priority for Nabal. **“The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats”** (v. 2). What’s more, as our story opens, he is acquiring even more wealth, because it is shearing season. The harvest of wool from three thousand sheep would significantly add to his wealth. One commentator words it like this: “This way of introducing Nabal is precisely on target, because Nabal’s possessions precede his own person. His life is determined by his property. Nabal lives to defend his property, and he dies in an orgy, enjoying his property” (Brueggemann, p. 175). In case we miss the subtleties of this introduction, the name of this man speaks clearly of his true nature. His name, Nabal, is the Hebrew word for “fool.”

The story of Nabal’s arrogance unfolds when David sends ten of his young men to Nabal during the shearing of his sheep. David had gathered around him a band of 600 men by now, and they were skilled, battle-seasoned fighters. During the time leading up to shearing season, David had directed his men to protect Nabal’s sheep from such threats as wild animals and thieves. They had performed admirably, with the result that not a single sheep had been lost to Nabal. Now, when Nabal’s wealth is at a high point, David’s messengers are sent to ask for some sharing from Nabal in return for their kindness. One of the things we learn from this is how impoverished David was during this time. He had the burden of providing for these six hundred men, together with their families, and no reliable means of supply. Some commentators see David’s action as similar to mafia protection money, but I think that’s a misreading of the text and the culture. Notice that those who were closest to this, Nabal’s servants, didn’t see it this way. One of those servants came to Abigail to tell her of the foolish behavior of her husband in denying this request. Neither this servant nor Nabal’s wife viewed this as extortion. Rather, those with an abundance of wealth were seen as having an obligation to the poor, especially when the poor had contributed some work. The gleaning laws of the Old Testament are an example of this.

Nabal responded to this legitimate request with an insult. **“Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their master. 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?”** (v. 10-11). What he is saying is that David is a nobody who is nothing more than a runaway slave. His low view of David was undoubtedly affected by his greed. He wanted an excuse to keep “*my* bread and *my* water and *my* meat.”

Nabal demonstrates the central character of arrogance or pride. It is a grasping for power and a misuse of that power. In Nabal’s case, power was the

same as money. He greedily held on to it when he should have given some to David and his men. When he did decide to part with some of his money, he spent it on himself. At the end of the story, we read that he **“was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king”** (v. 36). The irony is that he had denied Israel’s anointed king, David, any use of his finances, but used his money liberally on himself to feast like a king. Arrogance is the self-centered use of power. It selfishly uses any power we may have been given to fill that empty place within. It views oneself as being godlike, deserving the things that are due God alone. Os Guinness wrote this about pride. “Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.” Lewis Smedes said, “Pride is turning down God’s invitation to join the dance of life as a creature in his garden and wishing instead to be the Creator, independent, reliant on one’s own resources.”

Let’s think of some examples of this kind of arrogance, the kind where we use power selfishly and unlovingly. Parents have power over their children. It is given them by God himself. But if a parent uses that power to fill the empty place within the parent, that is arrogant and selfish. This kind of parenting asks the wrong question. It asks, “What do I need my child to be and to do in order to make me feel better about myself.” Humility asks, “What has God made my child to be and how can I serve this child to encourage the development of that God-given talent and calling?”

All you have to do to see this in your life is to consider what power or gift God has given you, and then to ask yourself if you have used this power selfishly. It may be money that God has given you. It may be verbal ability, a good sense of humor, an attractive appearance or personality, or a good set of friends. It is not arrogant to possess this power. It is arrogant to use it selfishly. As a matter of fact, humble people are not afraid to use power. The difference is that they want power not for themselves but because there is much good one can do with such power.

As we noted earlier, arrogance leads to rudeness. It is important to understand what rudeness is. It is not the same as crudeness. The crude person is simply someone who has not learned the proper manners of society. The rude person, on the other hand, acts selfishly and inconsiderately of others. Nabal was rude to David and his men when he not only refused their legitimate request for help, but insulted them in the wording of his refusal.

When we are arrogant, we don’t listen to others, and that is rude. It’s easy to see the connection between arrogance and not listening. The arrogant person thinks he already knows what needs to be known. Further, he is too self-centered to care very much what others are thinking or feeling. Nabal did not listen well. His servant had him pegged. When he saw how Nabal treated

David's servants, he went to Abigail to ask her to intervene to save them all from Nabal's foolishness. He said about Nabal, **"he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him"** (v. 17). The normal course of action would have been for the servant to go to Nabal and explain to him how his refusal of David's men would bring harm to himself and to his family. But the servant rejected this course of action because he knew his master would not listen to him. Do you know anyone like that? Even if you want to share with them something that is in that person's best interest, you will not be heard. Nabal was too arrogant to listen to others.

## II. His Humble, Loving Wife

The narrator describes Abigail as **"discerning and beautiful"** (v. 3). She may have at this point in her life been characterized by an outward beauty, but even more attractive is the inward beauty of her wisdom and character. Her character was noticed by those in Nabal's household. Notice the action of the servant when he saw how David was treated by Nabal and realized that his master's actions had put them all in harm's way. He went to Abigail. Why? She was respected by all as a woman of wisdom, character and action. The servant didn't know what to do, but he trusted that Abigail would. So he simply stated the problem to her and let her figure it out. Then notice her decisiveness, quick action and courage. She quickly gathers the gift that her husband should have given to David, then rides out to present this gift to him. Imagine the courage it would take to do that. She puts herself, the wife of the man who has just insulted and angered David, right in David's path. This is a man gifted in battle, with four hundred of his soldiers behind him.

I'm struck by something Abigail says when she meets David. **"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"** (v. 25). In other words, she is saying that had she seen David's men, she would have made sure that they were treated properly. I think Abigail was used to covering for her foolish husband. She is the opposite of arrogant and rude. She is humble enough to rescue repeatedly a self-centered, greedy and foolish husband.

Abigail not only rescued Nabal and all the males of his household from David's retribution, she also saved David from bloodguilt. In his anger, he wanted to shed blood in retribution for Nabal's insults of him. Had he followed through on this, he would have been taking upon himself a role that God reserves for himself. Vengeance belongs only to God. The wisdom of Abigail can be seen in the fact that she kept him from this in a way that affirmed him. Listen to her words of faith to David as she spoke to him about his need to put away his sword and order his men to retreat from their attack upon Nabal's house. Calling David "my lord," she says **"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, my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord taking vengeance himself”** (v. 30-31). The heart of her wisdom is her faith. She believed that this poor wanderer, chased around the country by King Saul, was the true anointed king of Israel. Her request of David reminds us of the prayer of the thief on the cross. She says, **“And when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant”** (v. 31). The thief crucified beside Jesus had said to Jesus, **“Remember me when you come into your kingdom”** (Luke 23:42). Like him, Abigail has complete confidence that David will take the throne, and she wants him to remember her when that happens. She has eyes of faith to see that what is before her now is not the way things will always be. She wants to attach herself to this poor wanderer because he is God’s anointed king. She didn’t know at the time how this would all work out, but the text proceeds to tell us. Nabal dies suddenly and David takes her to be his wife.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Abigail shows us how to fill the empty place inside us and avoid arrogance and rudeness. She shows how to love. It comes as we recognize God’s anointed King. Jesus Christ is that King. He alone can fill the empty place inside of us and deliver us from feeling like we have to fill it ourselves. Consider just a few of the verses in the Bible on fullness and on being filled. Ephesians 5:18 says, **“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.”** Elsewhere in Ephesians, Paul says that he has not ceased praying that the Ephesian Christians **“may be filled with all the fullness of God”** (3:19). He prays for the Philippians that they might be **“filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ** (1:11). He prays for the Colossian church that they might **“be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding”** (1:9). And then there is his benediction at the end of Romans. **“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope** (15:13).

Arrogance comes from emptiness of soul. Love comes from a fullness of soul. Such fullness comes by faith in Jesus. It is a fullness of joy, of hope, of knowledge and of peace. It is having the fullness of God himself within. This is a wonderful gift from God. May you throw in your lot with King Jesus and receive his fullness!