

Don't Marry A Nabal

Introduction. A British Arctic expedition set sail in 1845 to chart the Northwest Passage around the Canadian Arctic to the Pacific Ocean. Neither of the two ships and none of the 138 men aboard returned.

Captain Sir John Franklin prepared as if they were embarking on a pleasure cruise rather than an arduous and grueling journey through one of earth's most hostile environments. He packed a 1,200 volume library, a hand-organ, china place settings for officers and men, cut-glass wine goblets and sterling silver flatware, beautifully and intricately designed. Years later, some of these place settings would be found near a clump of frozen, cannibalized bodies.

The voyage was doomed when the ships sailed into frigid waters and became trapped in ice. First ice coated the decks, the spars and the rigging. Then water froze around the rudders and the ships became hopelessly locked in the now-frozen sea. Sailors set out to search for help, but soon succumbed to severe Arctic weather and died of exposure to its harsh winds and sub-freezing temperatures. For some twenty years, remains of the expeditions were found all over the frozen landscape.

The crew did not prepare either for the cold or for the eventuality of the ships becoming ice-locked. On a voyage which was to last two to three years, they packed only their Navy-issue uniforms and the captain carried just a 12-day supply of coal for the auxiliary steam engines. The frozen body of an officer was eventually found, miles from the vessel, wearing his uniform of fine blue cloth, edged with silk braid, a blue greatcoat and a silk neckerchief — noble and respectful clothing, but utterly foolish for the conditions they faced.

In 1 Samuel 25, Nabal had an agreement with David, but he chose to recant on their deal. David and his sizable army of 400 men go to attack Nabal, but Abigail wisely intercedes. Nabal showed himself to be foolish, which, in this case, indicates someone who is intentionally perverse (cp. 1 Samuel 26:21). The account of Nabal is fascinating because we learn two great lessons about his godly wife Abigail, and these are great lessons for those seeking a mate to marry.

I. Abigail: A Good Woman Married To A Foolish Man

- A. There are multiple declarations of Nabal's foolishness in the account.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit: "the man was churlish and evil in his doings" (v. 3).
 - 2. An employee of Nabal's: "he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him" (v. 17).
 - 3. Abigail: "this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him" (v. 25).
- B. The warnings against foolishness in the Bible.
 - 1. In disbelieving God (Romans 1:20-21).
 - 2. In trusting in riches and accomplishments (Luke 12:20-21).
 - 3. In mocking about sin (Proverbs 14:9).
- C. It is foolish to marry a "Nabal."
 - 1. Despite how physically attractive he or she is.
 - 2. Despite how much security it seems to offer.

3. Despite how bad your life at home is.
 4. To prove others can't stop you.
 5. To legitimize an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.
 6. To think you can change him or her later.
 7. To escape loneliness.
- D. On the other hand, there are some traits to look for in a mate.
1. Look for someone who has spiritual goals and values.
 - a) God insists that man live by principles of righteousness and the world follows the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (Acts 10:35; 1 John 2:15-16). God demands that His people reject the world, deny themselves, and follow Christ (Luke 9:23).
 - b) Find someone who will pray for you (James 5:16) and encourage you (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Find someone who will inspire you to become a better person (Luke 10:42).
 2. Look for someone who shows signs of maturity.
 - a) Marriage is not for children. That is why almost half of teenage marriages end in divorce. Children are usually selfish and seek what is in their best interest. This can be fatal in friendships with peers, but even more so to a permanent, intimate, relationship like marriage.
 - b) Successful marriages have one secret: the indispensable quality of unselfishness (1 Corinthians 10:24; Philippians 2:2-4). Adjustments and compromise are vital to good marriages. What one mate refuses to correct, the other accepts. What one cannot accept, the other corrects.
 3. Look for someone who can offer more than physical beauty.
 - a) "Beauty is skin deep" is a fact that all humans rebel against. The fact that older men are leaving their wives for young, beautiful women shows that it is not limited to youth (Proverbs 31:30).
 - b) The warmth and intimacy of marriage does not rest on the great looks of the husband and wife (Proverbs 6:25). Marriages are not surviving today because concern for the real person is absent between companions.
 4. Look for someone who can be a good friend.
 - a) A man's best friend should be his wife, and vice versa (Proverbs 17:17; 18:24). Communication is vital for sharing each other's interests and for solving problems. Problems are not settled by ignoring them. They call for thought, discussion, and mutually accepted solutions.
 - b) It can be a long, boring life if physical lust is the basis for marriage. Give it some thought and commit to someone who is fun and comfortable, and who respects you for more than what you are physically.

II. Abigail: A Good Woman In A Disappointing Marriage

- A. She honored her marriage commitment.
1. You make a promise "... to have and to hold ..." your mate. These are words of ownership and commitment.
 - a) There is a unique sense in which you possess your mate and your mate possesses you (1 Corinthians 7:4).

- b) Your promise “to hold” meant you would grasp and not let go. It was a promise that you are committed to the relationship. It reflected the principle taught in Genesis 2:24. If you divorce, you break these promises.
 - 2. You promise to live with your mate “... for better or worse ...” You promise that you would be there in good times and in bad, regardless of circumstances — and a vow is a vow!
 - a) It is a vow for the better times — to stay by, love, and protect your mate.
 - b) It is a vow for the worse times.
 - (1) It is a vow that covers times when health fails and when your mate is sometimes unlikeable or even unbearable.
 - (2) You promised not to give up no matter what the circumstances, even the inconvenient ones. Marriage is not until you get tired of trying.
 - 3. You promise that you will live with your mate “... for richer or for poorer ...”
 - a) You promised that whatever comes, however long it stays, however tough it gets, you are in this together, even when expenses spiral and standards of living plummet
 - b) A large amount of divorces occur because of finances or a lack thereof. Why? Just because the “poorer” part of the vow may have been present longer does not give you the license to break it.
 - 4. You make a promise to stay with your mate until “death do you part,” which is a promise of permanence.
 - a) A person who buys a car to last for 20 years treats it differently than if he plans to trade every two years. It is the same with the man or woman who marries a companion for life.
 - b) Many prospective mates neither know nor believe that what God joins together, man may not separate (Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:39). More and more young people come from broken homes and have no greater respect for the permanency of marriage than their parents. Divorce tends to perpetuate itself in families. No longer can individuals take for granted that their mate means “unto death do us part.”
- B. She did her husband good.
 - 1. Abigail wasn’t sullen and angry. She made the best of the situation.
 - 2. Proverbs 31:10-31 and 1 Peter 3:3-6 discuss character traits of women who were bigger than their circumstances.
 - a) This is not to say that either of these passages deal with marriages that were “bad,” but the women in both of them were always godly.
 - b) Virtually every husband and wife will tell you their marriage is less than ideal at times. However, the godly mate always acts like a Christian!
- C. She didn’t lose faith in God.
 - 1. In her address near the end of the chapter, she mentioned the Lord seven times (vv. 26-31).
 - 2. There’s a lot of people in marriages now that cannot sustain the difficulty of ungodly mates. They want to give up. James encouraged people to keep their faith in God in the midst of trials and temptations (James 1:2-4, 12).

Conclusion. Proverbs 4:13 says, “Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.” The principles that we have examined are the will and wisdom of God Almighty. They have been revealed from heaven for the happiness of the human family. At times they seem to be idealistic and beyond the reach of ordinary men, but God intends to make extraordinary men by the power of the gospel of Christ.

Men and women who will fill themselves with the dynamic energy of God’s spiritual principles will find themselves excellent husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, and children. No one denies the challenge God’s word proposes for the family, but neither must any one deny the power available to meet the challenge. Think of the blessings it yields — the unspeakable joy and peace that fill the households of those who give and receive love after the likeness of Christ.

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