

Ladies, in Lesson Nine we looked at two women in the Bible: Abigail and Anna. We know we can learn from their lives because of what Paul wrote to us in Romans 15:4 "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

So with this in mind, let's look at Abigail and Anna from the scriptures. Abigail's story is told in 1Samuel 25:1-44 and Anna's story is told in Luke 2:22-38. While the period of time and culture which they lived in was different from each other, and from ours today, they were still women. They had hopes and dreams and personal struggles. The one thing they had in common, and which made the difference in their lives, was God. It is still God that makes the difference in our lives today as well.

The first woman we'll study is Abigail. To understand the story of her life as told in the scriptures we need to begin by learning something about the two men in her life: David and Nabal.

DAVID

Who is David? What was he like?

1. **David is known as being a man after God's own heart** (1Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22) because his desire was to please God. King Saul, however, was not like David and he did not please God so Samuel was sent to **anoint** David as Israel's next King. David, who took care of his father's sheep, was probably between 12-16 years old when Samuel anointed him. From that time on God's Spirit worked **powerfully** upon David. (1Samuel 13:13-14; 16:1, 10-13)
2. **After he was anointed David went into King Saul's service** at the palace as one of his armor-bearers. David could also play the **harp** which was soothing for Saul. However, Saul became jealous of David's popularity after David killed **Goliath**. Shortly after this, Saul began pursuing David. (1Samuel 16:16-21; 17:33-58; 18:6-9; 19-25)

Question #1 A, B; Question #3A

3. **Abigail's story begins as David is fleeing from Saul**. David and his men had just left Ramah following **Samuel's** burial. After fleeing from Ramah, which is one mile north of Jerusalem, he and his fighting men fled into the wilderness of **Paran**. We are familiar with this area because this is where Hagar and her son Ishmael fled to after leaving Abraham and Sarah. Nabal's men are also there shearing his sheep. David was low on supplies so he sent men to ask Nabal for some food. (1Samuel 25:1)

Question 3 A, B

NABAL

Who is Nabal? What was he like?

Question #2 A, B, C

4. **Nabal was from the lineage of Caleb** and therefore from the tribe of **Judah**. However, he was not godly like Caleb. Recall that it was Caleb and Joshua who encouraged the Israelites to take possession of the land of **Canaan** when everyone else was afraid.
5. **Nabal lived near the town of Maon** not far from the city of Carmel. He grazed his sheep and goats in the wilderness of Paran. He was a wealthy man, owning some **3,000** sheep and **1,000** goats.
6. **Nabal's name means "fool"** which suggests this was actually a nickname given to him because of his **foolish** behavior. He was also described as being **churlish** which means he was rude, unfeeling, uncivil, and he had a bad temper.

7. **Nabal most likely knew who David was when David's men came to him for food.** Because of his great **wealth** Nabal would have been influential in the business affairs for his region. News of David having been anointed by Samuel as their next **king** would have been common knowledge.

The story continues...

Nabal shows his foolishness by his **response** to David's men who came to him asking for food: "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?" (1Samuel 25:10-11).

Question #3B

Nabal insulted David by implying he was just a servant and ignored his anointing as future king. He was indeed a fool! He had **no** compassion for their needs. He was churlish. While David's request for food was respectful and humble, Nabal's response was disrespectful and belligerent. He insulted David.

David became angry at Nabal's refusal to give him food. After all, David had treated his sheep shearers kindly as he was hiding out in the wilderness and this was not the way to **repay** him and his men! David prepared his men for battle against Nabal's household.

A servant informs Nabal's wife Abigail of this impending disaster and this is where we meet her.

Question #4A, B, #5 A, B,

8. **Her husband's servants had already seen Abigail's sober and discreet behavior.** She was obedient and respectful to her husband in spite of his surly nature. She would remain **calm** and **serious**. Her **discreet** behavior was shown in the way she resolved the problems her drunken husband often brought upon their household. So, when her husband's servant came to her with the news of their impending doom, he trusted that she wouldn't turn him over to Nabal for speaking against his master.
9. **She listened carefully** to what her husband's servant told her and discerned that she was being told the truth. She realized lives would be lost if she didn't come up with a plan to stop it. She knew her husband would do nothing. Abigail used **sound judgment** and discernment before she took action.
10. **She didn't go to her husband and argue with him** and call him names. She used **discernment** knowing that he would not consider her words and things would only get worse. She continued to show respect for her husband when she met David. In these ways, Abigail was both loving and **obedient** to her husband.
- a. When she pleaded her case with David she only said Nabal was foolish; rather than saying more and **complaining** about him. In these ways she was respecting her husband's position in their home, and honoring God in doing so. However, she realized something must be done and she had courage to do something about it.
11. **After careful thought she arrived at a plan.** She gathered together enough food and wine for David and his men. She selected the **best** she had and placed it on asses. She sent this food out with her servants and she followed them as they went to David and his men.
12. **Abigail humbled herself for her husband's wrong doing to avert a disaster.** As soon as she saw David she quickly got off her ass and fell before David on her face, bowing down before him. She was **showing** him the respect that he did not receive from her husband. She pleaded for forgiveness as she explained that her husband is foolish. She also let David know that she had no part in her husband's decision to refuse him food.

Question #6A, B, C

13. **Abigail reminded David** that if he carried out his revenge that one day when he is king he will **regret** it. Abigail had heard how David was a godly man anointed by Samuel to be their next king, and she knew he would regret taking the lives of innocent people because of her husband's foolishness. Abigail thought **ahead**. She asked David to remember her when he is king.
14. **Because of her godly behavior David saw Abigail as a blessing.** "And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which has kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand" (1Samuel 25:32-33). With that, David called off his retribution against Nabal.

Question #7

15. **After her meeting with David,** Abigail went home to find her husband **drunk**. She **discerned** this would be no time to tell him what she had done to appease David so she waited until the next morning. When Nabal heard her news he had a heart attack and ten days later he died.
16. **When David heard Nabal had died he remembered the blessing Abigail had been to him.** So David sent for her and took her as his **wife**.

What lessons can we learn from Abigail?

These are some things I believe we can learn from her life:

1. **Heartache follows when we marry someone who doesn't value the things of God:** someone who doesn't share our Christian faith. Abigail most likely didn't choose Nabal for a husband because in her culture marriages were often arranged. But today we can choose our husbands, so we're wise to only consider someone who shares our faith.
2. **Godly women can still be faithful to God's word when they are married to a man like Nabal.** They honor God when they are faithful to his word in spite of their situation. Godly women cope by trusting God and growing closer to him in his word. They try to surround themselves with others who love the Lord when possible.
3. **Abigail did not let her circumstances make her bitter or unpleasant.** Scripture says she was a woman of ..."good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance..." (1Samuel 25:3). Her faith in God allowed her to have a "beautiful countenance". She was someone you would enjoy being around.
4. **Abigail is an example of displaying godly characteristics under difficult situations.** She displayed these five (5) godly characteristics that Paul lists in Titus 2:1-5:
 - a. Sober, discreet, love their husbands, obedient to their own husbands, and good.
5. **Abigail's name means "my father is joy" or "cause of joy".** Her source of **joy** was God and her name reflects that joy in her godly behavior.

Let's move forward approximately 1000 years from Abigail's time period to the time of Jesus' birth. It was 40 days following the birth of Jesus to Mary and Joseph. This is when we will meet Anna who is the second woman we studied in Lesson Nine. Anna was a widow and was serving at the temple when Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus arrived to follow the custom of the law. A man named Simeon

is present and he is the one holding the baby Jesus when Anna beheld the Messiah. Let's examine what Scripture tells us about this godly woman.

Who was Anna?

"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity. And she was a widow of about fourscore and four year, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:36-37).

What scripture tells us about Anna:

1. **Anna is one of only a few women in the Bible who were called a prophetess.** The other women given this title were: Miriam, the sister of Moses (Exodus 15:20); Deborah, the judge (Judges 4:4); Huldah, the wife of Shallum (2Chronicles 34:22); Isaiah's wife (Isaiah 8:3); and Philip's four unmarried daughters (Acts 21:9).
2. **Anna was the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher.** Her father's name, Phanuel, means "the face, or appearance of God". Anna's name means "grace" or "favor". It is safe to assume that Anna came from a godly family.
3. **Anna was a widow and was a virgin when she married.** After she became a widow she spent all her time serving in the Temple. When she saw the baby Jesus at the temple she was around 106 years old so she was of "great age". This age assumes she married at age 15, was married for 7 years, and was a widow for 84 years when she saw the baby Jesus at age 106.
4. **She devoted her entire life to serving the Lord at the temple after she became a widow.** She may have had a place to live inside the temple grounds, or she lived close by. What is significant is her **constant** devotion to serving the Lord after she was widowed. She spent most of her life serving God at the temple.

Who was Simeon? What does scripture tell us about him?

"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:25-26).

5. Simeon may or may not have been a **priest**. The Bible doesn't state that he was a priest, but it doesn't say that he wasn't. It simply says he was a man in Jerusalem. He was **devout** in his faith and had been eagerly awaiting the arrival of Israel's Messiah. The Holy Ghost revealed to him that he would see the **consolation** of Israel before he died.

Now the story unfolds...

"And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law," (Luke 2:27).

6. Simeon was **led** by the Holy Spirit to come to the temple that very day that Joseph and Mary would bring the baby Jesus to the temple to fulfill the **Law**. God blessed Simeon for his prayers and longing to see Messiah by bringing him to the temple so he could see the Lord's Christ. Consider the **joy** Simeon must have experienced that day as he was making his way to the temple. Today he would see the Lord's Christ! So with eager anticipation Simeon makes his way to the temple.

We have met Anna and Simeon but we need to know why Joseph and Mary were there that day with Jesus.

Why were Joseph and Mary at the temple?

"Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: than she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled" (Leviticus 12:2-4).

7. **Joseph and Mary took Jesus to fulfill the requirement of the Law.** **Forty** days had passed since his birth so it was the right time to offer a sacrifice in accordance to the Law and present Jesus to the Lord. (7 unclean days + 33 purifying days = 40 days).
8. **Jesus had already been circumcised on the eight day** so this was not the purpose of their coming to the temple on this day.

"And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest: Who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed for the issue of her blood. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female. And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for a burnt offering: and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean" (Leviticus 12:6-8).

9. **Joseph and Mary were poor** and could not offer a lamb so their sacrifice was either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Luke records their sacrifice: "And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES, OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS" (Luke 2:24).

That moment is now at hand!

"Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou has prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:28-32).

- 10. Simeon, having been led by the Holy Spirit**, was at the temple when Joseph and Mary entered. When he saw them enter he went to them, and then took the baby and **lifted** him up in his arms. He gave thanks and glory to **God** that he can now pass in peace because he has seen the salvation of Israel. Simeon, led by the Holy Spirit, prophesied that Jesus would be a light to the Gentiles and the **glory** of Israel.
- 11. When this happened, Joseph and Mary** were filled with **wonder** and astonishment. This man Simeon, then **blessed** them and told Mary "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against. Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35).

Standing off to the side intently observing and listening was Anna

"And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38).

- 12. At that very moment when Simeon held the baby Jesus** and glorified him with thanksgiving **Anna** was nearby, observing and listening.
- 13. Anna then began praising God and giving thanks to the Lord.** She undoubtedly was thanking God for Israel's consolation, Israel's Messiah, and was thanking the Lord that she was being blessed to **see** him before she **died**.
- 14. Anna "spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38).** It's important to note that Anna was prophesying about Israel's Messiah **only** to those who were **also** looking for Jerusalem's redemption. They too were looking for their **Messiah**.
- 15. Anna would have been well versed in the Scriptures** and would have known the prophecies about Israel's coming Messiah. Luke 2:36 describes Anna as a prophetess. Perhaps when she looked at the face of baby Jesus she saw the prophecies being fulfilled and by the Holy Spirit she praised God for what He had done, and was yet going to do. Perhaps, she quoted this prophecy about Messiah:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Let's consider Anna's godly characteristics...

1. **Anna was chaste.** She was a virgin when she married and she was faithful to her husband. Her language would also have been pure and free from vulgar words.
2. **Anna was sound in faith.** She believed the truth of God's word and she lived her life showing it. Her life was one of faithfulness to serving God and his people. She too had been longing to see Messiah and when she came in at "that instant" she spoke to others about how Messiah had come!
3. **Anna was patient.** She had been serving for 84 years in the temple waiting and longing to see the Messiah. God blessed her patience that day when she saw the Messiah.
4. **Anna's behavior was holy.** She spent her days and nights serving in the temple. She was devoted to the things of God.
5. Anna displayed at least 4 (four) godly characteristics that Paul lists in **Titus** 2:1-5. These behaviors are produced by sound doctrine and they are: Chaste, sound in faith, patience, and holiness.

What lessons can we learn from Anna?

1. **Age is no barrier in serving the Lord.** Some examples of **aged** saints serving God:
 - a. Moses was **80** years old and his brother Aaron 83 years old when they spoke to Pharaoh. (Exodus 7:7)
 - b. Elizabeth, was "**well** stricken in years" when she became the mother of John the Baptist. (Luke 1:7)
 - c. Sarah was **90** years old when she became the mother of Isaac (Genesis 17:17).
 - d. Aged men and women still serving the Lord is an encouragement to those younger to persevere. This also shows the **sustaining** power of God's word working in one's life.
 - e. Anna was approximately **106** years old and serving the Lord at the Temple when she saw the Messiah.
2. **Anna is an example of sexual purity.** She was a **virgin** before marriage and she was faithful to her husband. As a widow she remained **chaste**. She honored God's commands concerning sex outside of marriage. She is an example for women of all ages today to refrain from adapting the world's morality.
3. **Anna adapted to her new life as a widow** by using her time to serve the Lord. She didn't let her grief and sorrow consume her life, instead she found something wholesome and edifying to do with her time. She served daily at the temple.
4. **She is an example for us to also be looking for the Lord.** She was patiently waiting to see Israel's Messiah before she died. We in the Body of Christ are looking for the rapture "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).
5. **Anna kept herself busy, she wasn't idle,** but she served every day in the temple. As she grew older she kept serving others and didn't become self-centered. She adapted to her physical limitations and continued to do what she was capable of doing.
6. **Anna is an example of having sound faith throughout her entire life.** She lived a holy life. Her faith was a priority and she **studied** the scriptures which is how she knew the prophecies about Israel's coming Messiah. She is an example to us to continue studying the scriptures into our old age.

Ladies, I think it's important for us to step back and consider how we are handling those situations in our own lives that are similar to either Abigail or Anna – or maybe both women.

For example, as we think about Abigail we can ask ourselves how are we handling those "Nabals" in our lives? Now we may or may not be married to a man just like Abigail's Nabal, but we may be married to a man who has a few of his characteristics. Or we may have a close relative whose behavior reminds us of him. How do we handle those situations that this person brings into our lives? Do our responses reflect the behavior Abigail displayed?

When we think about Anna's life we may ask ourselves how are we handling aging or being alone in life? Are we adjusting to changes in a way that follows Anna's example? If we are young are we living a chaste life of sexual purity such as Anna did?

As we think about either of these two women, what we need to think about is are we following what Paul wrote to us in Titus 2:1-5? We are told to live a holy life, not lie about people, don't drink much wine, to teach good things, to be sober or serious, to love our husband and children, to be discreet and chaste, to be keepers at home, to be good and obedient to our husbands. Does our behavior show these godly characteristics? Are we making progress in these areas?