

Protected
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1 Samuel 25

It was self-defense! **Why do we have a law that will let someone go free if his or her violence was in self-defense? What if someone does bodily harm to me runs away, then I chase them down and kill them? Why don't we have a "payback" law?** What some people call "justice" is really revenge. **What is the difference between justice and revenge?**

Revenge, rage, retribution, vigilante justice, you can almost hear the bloodshed in those very words. "You have wronged me, now you will pay in a painful way!"

This emotionally charged, knee-jerk reaction is the spark that lights fires from road rage, to domestic violence, to police killings, to war on a grand scale.

Big Idea (really a question): When someone treats us unjustly do we "fly off the handle" in rage, or trust God to make things right? When it comes to vengeance, taking matters into our own hands removes them from God's hands. We can leave vengeance in His hands because we too are in His hands and His protection.

- Though David was a man after God's own heart, he was as human as you and me and could fall victim to the emotion of seeking revenge.
- 1 Samuel 25 begins with the news that Samuel had died. This isn't just a historical note. It's significant that David loses his spiritual mentor just before he almost makes a sinful, reactive mistake.
- King Saul was still trying to kill David. While running from Saul, David had built a "private army." In a sense he had become a "warlord."
- We think of the term "warlord" as negative or evil. Not necessarily so in this case. In that day in a territory where there was no nearby city, a warlord like David could become the de

- facto police force to protect the innocent from evil people and maintain order. A warlord could be a hero.
- David had done just that for a rich sheep rancher named Nabal. David and his men had provided protection for Nabal's flock of four thousand.
 - One of Nabal's workers even said David's men *"were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep."*
 - David heard that it was sheep-shearing time at Nabal's ranch. Nabal would be cashing in on his flock. The money would flow and so would the food and celebration. David sent messengers to Nabal requesting his men be given some food in exchange for the protection they had provided.
 - Nabal not only said no, he was absolutely insulting to David and his army.
 - *"Who is this guy, David? The country is full of runaway servants these days. Do you think I'm going to take good bread and wine and meat freshly butchered for my sheepshearers and give it to men I've never laid eyes on? Who knows where they've come from?"*¹
 - David was ticked! He told every man to strap on his sword. David rode out with an army of 400 to wipe Nabal and his people off the face of the earth.
 - Thankfully, cooler heads would influence David before he got there.
 - One of Nabal's workers knew something needed to be done to stop the slaughter. He knew the most reasonable person at Nabal's ranch was his wife, Abigail. Verse three describes this amazing woman in contrast to her nasty husband Nabal: The woman was discerning and beautiful, but the man was harsh and badly behaved;² (Often said about many couples!)

1 Samuel 25:14–17 (ESV)

¹⁴ But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to greet our master, and he railed at them. ¹⁵ Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we did not miss anything when we were in the fields, as long as we went with them. ¹⁶ They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.

¹⁷ Now therefore know this and consider what you should do, for harm

is determined against our master and against all his house, and he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him.”

- Abigail knew the servant was right. David and his men had provided tremendous protection to the flocks and some groceries were small compensation. She also knew the servant was right about her husband. He was a jerk and no one could tell him anything. In fact, the name Nabal literally means “foolish!”
- Knowing David and the might of his army, she needed to do something fast or they would all be dead.
- She swung into action and loaded up enough food to “feed an army.” Then she climbed on a donkey and went to meet David.
- Meanwhile, David had invoked a curse on himself. Verse 22: (NLT) ²² May God strike me and kill me* if even one man of his household is still alive tomorrow morning!” (We need to be careful what we say to God in anger; but how blessed we are that He doesn’t hold us to every rash statement!)
- When David’s army approached, Abigail fell on her face pleading: *“Please listen to what I have to say. ²⁵ I know Nabal is a wicked and ill-tempered man; please don’t pay any attention to him. He is a fool, just as his name suggests. ^{*3}*
- Then Abigail made the case to David why revenge was a bad idea.
- With great wisdom she brings David to his senses: She said: *“David, the Lord has chosen you for a ‘lasting dynasty.’ Up to now you’ve never done wrong in your entire life.”*
- Verse 29 is great! Abigail tells David: ²⁹ “Even when you are chased by those who seek to kill you, your life is safe in the care of the Lord your God, secure in his treasure pouch!” (Love that language!)
- She pleaded: *“...don’t let this be a blemish on your record. Then your conscience won’t have to bear the staggering burden of needless bloodshed and vengeance. And (she added) when the Lord has done these great things for you, please remember me, your servant!” ⁴*
- What a wise woman! David WOULD remember her. Look at his response:

1 Samuel 25:32–38 (ESV)

³² And David said to Abigail, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! ³³ Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand! ³⁴ For as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male.” ³⁵ Then David received from her hand what she had brought him. And he said to her, “Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice, and I have granted your petition.”

- David backed away from revenge thanks to a woman who was courageous enough to speak truth to him when he was enraged.
- The story doesn't end there. Abigail confronted Nabal.

³⁶ And Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk. So she told him nothing at all until the morning light. ³⁷ In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. ³⁸ And about ten days later the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.

- Was it a stroke? We'll never know the physical ailment that killed Nabal. But that verse gives the true cause of death: “... *the Lord struck Nabal.*”
- David did the right thing because Abigail did the right thing, and God himself took care of Nabal.
- Oh, one last happy ending to this story. After God removed evil, foolish Nabal from the picture, David paid a call on the widow Abigail. He proposed and she said yes. David didn't get revenge, but he got the girl!
- So, what does this text have to do with you and me?
- First, let's talk about the practical realities of seeking revenge.
- In a minute we'll see what our Bible says about revenge. But before we get into “Sunday School” answers, **what are some practical reasons revenge is a bad idea? Look at verses 29-31. How can we apply what Abigail told David to ourselves when it comes to revenge? Considering our**

natural human anger, why should we never even entertain the thought of getting revenge?

- Aside from the practical realities of revenge, what does God command? In the book of Romans the Apostle Paul (quoting Deuteronomy 32:35) tells us who is in charge of both vengeance and justice.

Romans 12:18–21 (ESV)

¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰ To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- “Never avenge yourself...leave it to the wrath of God.” That doesn’t say don’t protect yourself or your family in a life threatening situation. It says don’t go after someone who has harmed you in order to get revenge.
- Nabal had returned evil for the good David and his men had done. David wanted to return evil for that evil. Paul says: “Don’t be OVERCOME by evil, but overcome evil with good!”
- You might say, “*That’s not fair! That’s not right! That violates every cowboy movie I grew up with! What about justice?*”
- Paul didn’t say there is no justice. He just said accomplishing justice isn’t our job; it’s up to God and to those to whom he delegates that job (armies; police forces; the courts. See Romans 13.)

John Piper said it well in a sermon entitled “Do Not Avenge Yourselves”:

“Do not seek vengeance. Does that mean there will be no justice? Does it mean there is no vengeance? No. Verse 19 says, “Leave it to the wrath of God.” There is vengeance. There is justice. All things will be set right. Either your adversary will pay his debt in hell. Or he will repent, and trust Christ, so that his debt was paid on the cross. All wrongs will be punished. In God’s universe forgiveness does not mean that some crimes receive no punishment. It means that some crimes are punished in the suffering of a substitute... Leave

vengeance to the wrath of God... It is written. God has spoken. This is our rock-solid assurance: justice will be done. Punishment will be meted out. Wrongs will be addressed. Vengeance will come.”⁵

- God says vengeance and justice is His job. Trusting Him with that is ours.
- Any other thoughts?

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- For a prime example of leaving revenge to God, look no further than the families of the pastor and church members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston brutally murdered in their Bible study.
- Nadine Collier, the daughter of 70-year-old shooting victim Ethel Lance, [said to the accused murderer] *“I forgive you. You took something very precious from me. I will never talk to her again. I will never, ever hold her again. But I forgive you. And have mercy on your soul.”⁶*
- When someone treats us unjustly do we “fly off the handle” in rage, or trust God to make things right? When it comes to vengeance, taking matters into our own hands removes them from God’s hands.
- Practically speaking, thirst for revenge could cause us to do things that might haunt us, and our families for the rest of our lives.
- Spiritually speaking, scripture is clear. Justice and vengeance belong to God. If someone has harmed you either they will pay for it in hell, or if they repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord, He’s already paid for it.
- It’s a hard concept to live out, but Romans 12:19 is clear: *“... never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”* Never means there are no exceptions.
- When we’re harmed we can leave justice and vengeance in God’s hands because we too are in God’s hands and He will be our protector.
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¹ Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (1 Sa 25:10–11). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (1 Sa 25:3). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Sa 25:24–25). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁴ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Sa 25:28–31). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁵ <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/do-not-avenge-yourself-but-give-place-to-wrath>

⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/south-carolina-governor-urges-death-penalty-charges-in-church-slayings/2015/06/19/3c039722-1678-11e5-9ddc-e3353542100c_story.html