

## Prayer

Be close to all who need Your healing power, O Lord. Be with those who deeply feel the loss of someone who is close, or those who are chronically sick with little hope of recovery. Heal those who need Your touch because there is nowhere else to go, no access to the world of medicine, and no one who will care. In Your mercy, be with them now, we pray. AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: The Environment

*We will pray this coming week about the environment. You may be aware of some issues which affect your country, but pray today for those who help us to know about the issues.*

### On-going prayers

- Give thanks for God's blessings which enrich your life
- Pray for those in hospital
- Pray to bless those people who you find difficult

## Meditation

Breathe on us, Holy Spirit; breathe.  
May we feel the rush of fresh air which comes from You,  
And breathe more deeply of the things of God.  
May we accept the unconditional peace and love of Jesus,  
Which sweeps away our troubles and fears.  
May we rejoice in the challenges of the Spirit's power,  
To achieve the impossible within this world.  
May we receive the gifts God gives us unconditionally,  
The guarantee of faith and the means of ministry.  
May we be comforted by the presence of the Holy Spirit,  
And know the healing presence of God Himself.  
May we wonder at the mysteries of the Spirit's power  
And be caught up in things greater than ourselves.  
Breathe on us, Holy Spirit; breathe.

## Bible Study - 1 Samuel 25:39-44

<sup>39</sup> When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, 'Blessed be the LORD who has judged the case of Nabal's insult to me, and has kept back his servant from evil; the LORD has returned the evildoing of Nabal upon his own head.' Then David sent and wooed Abigail, to make her his wife.

<sup>40</sup> When David's servants came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, 'David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife.' <sup>41</sup> She rose and bowed down, with her face to the ground, and said, 'Your servant is a slave to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.' <sup>42</sup> Abigail got up hurriedly and rode away on a donkey; her five maids attended her. She went after the messengers of David and became his wife.

<sup>43</sup> David also married Ahinoam of Jezreel; both of them became his wives. <sup>44</sup> Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Palti son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

## Review

Our passage today comes at the end of a long story of intrigue between David and his men, an Israelite landowner named Nabal (25:1-38) and Abigail, his wife. Abigail was an intelligent woman and had acted against her wealthy husband's directions and made a secret agreement with David's men who were seeking to establish safe areas within Judah and Israel within which David could live without fear of King Saul. Abigail's husband was named 'Nabal', which in Hebrew means 'fool' (in ancient times names bore a significant relationship to a person's character!) When Nabal discovered what his wife had done whilst he was drunk, he became seriously ill and died (25:37,38). David then took Abigail, Nabal's widow, as his own wife, and the chapter concludes with the information that David took another wife, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and that David's first wife Michal, the daughter of Saul, was now married off to another man.

The whole episode sounds very strange to us, not least because David's marriage to more than one woman. It was quite acceptable for a prominent man to take a number of wives in those days, just as Abraham and Jacob had done, but there is more to this story than mere polygamy. Why should scripture be concerned with these stories about David and his wives? There are two answers, both of which are very important to the future kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Firstly, David showed a weakness for women which characterised his descendants; those who reigned after him in Jerusalem. The two women he married, Ahinoam and Abigail came from the north of Israel (Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail from Carmel; 1 Sam 25:2,43) and these marriages gave David, a southern Judean from Bethlehem, power and influence in the north of Israel. The contacts these marriages gave him would be important when he eventually acceded to the throne, and it was common practice for powerful men, especially kings, to extend their influence by means of marriage. David's son Solomon did the same (1 Kings 3:1; 11:1ff). This became a trap to Solomon and many of his sons after him (1 Kings 11:4ff) as these wives came from surrounding nations with which the King wished either to make security pacts or commercial deals, and they brought with them the idols that they worshipped in their homelands, setting them up within Israel. The most well known marriage of this nature was that of King Ahab of Israel to the Sidonian queen Jezebel, who re-introduced the worship of Baal to the people of northern Israel in the ninth century BC (1 Kings 16:31ff). This set off a sequence of institutional apostasy within Israel and Judah which the scribes who wrote Israel's history (Joshua through to 2 Kings, and the two books of Chronicles) regarded as the main reasons for the failures of both Israel and Judah as Kingdom (see 2 Kings 17 and 2 Chron 36:17f.)

The second reason why scripture should be interested in David's wives was because of the still unresolved issue of who would be the heir to the throne after David. We might say that such an interest is somewhat premature because David had not yet become king. But retrospectively, the sons he would bear would be the ones who would eventually compete for the right to accede to the throne. Which wife would bear David his sons? God had anointed David to the throne of Israel and Judah, and would later promise him that his sons would reign in Jerusalem forever! This was no small matter. The narrative of 1 and 2 Samuel keeps us in suspense on this issue, however, sowing the seeds of an intrigue which would take years to unravel (see most of 2 Samuel) before the succession of Solomon was finally secured (1 Kings 1,2).

Sometimes we wonder why scripture seems to miss out large parts of stories that we would love to know about, and then includes details which appear to us to be of little interest.

However, everything is recorded for a reason. Similarly, the apparently trivial things that happen in our own lives can have very significant consequences, quite unforeseen from the perspective of earlier times and we only see this later. It is therefore important for us to submit everything to the Lord, each and every day. We can never be sure of the spiritual consequences of actions we take on any day, however normal and perhaps socially acceptable they may seem at the time.

The lesson of this scripture may well be that polygamy is not God's way. This is now clear to us in a way that was not in David's day. However, the greater lesson from this is that we should be sure to submit our thoughts words and deeds to the Lord on a regular basis; and then He can do His best to work through everything for the best. And if we trust His guidance and wisdom, we will not go wrong.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Read back over the rest of chapter 25 of 1 Samuel, and acquaint yourself with the story of David and Nabal.
2. Do you think that Abigail was always considering the possibility of marriage to David as an alternative to her husband?
3. Why do you think that David was unconcerned to marry several women and did not appear to have the same moral issues with this as we would today?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*I am challenged by the manner in which the characteristics of David which may have seemed perfectly normal to him were in fact counterproductive to God's will both for him and Israel. Eventually they brought the earthy kingdoms of Judah and Israel down; that is the nature of evil if it is given a chance. Now we have God's moral law fully revealed through Jesus' teaching, we have a chance to avoid this. Only Jesus can stop such things happening.*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Do you have any flaws which you feel may be a real problem in your relationship with the Lord and also with others? How are you going to deal with it? Remember, doing nothing is no real option, especially when you know something is wrong!*
- *Find someone at church who you believe you have wronged in the past, and talk to them, trying to find out whether there is a problem between you still. If there is, seek to deal with it through forgiveness.*

## Final Prayer

Great and mighty God, who hears our prayers even before they are formed in our minds; mould our lives into the pattern of your great will both for us and also for all humanity. So may we be fulfilled in our inner spiritual life, and in our relationships with others. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN