

1 Samuel 25:1-44 | “Dealing with Mean People”  
*Preached on April 10, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 25 this morning. *[pause]*

In his book *Fuzzy Memories*, Jack Handey writes...

“There used to be this bully who would demand my lunch money every day. Since I was smaller, I would give it to him. Then I decided to fight back.

I started taking karate lessons. But then the karate lesson guy said I had to start paying him five dollars a lesson. So I just went back to paying the bully.”<sup>1</sup> *[pauseeee]*

How do you deal with someone who is mean to you?

We all respond to mean people in different ways.

Some of us are just plain mean back to them, as we think that our meanness will make them stop being mean, but what happens?

It usually doesn't work, does it?

It just causes things to intensify. *[pause]*

Another way that people try to handle mean people is simply to cut them out of their lives, but this doesn't always work if you work with the person or see them all the time.

You can't cut someone out of your life that you work next to! *[pause]*

Another popular way to handle mean people is to pretend to be kind to them, only to go and talk to people behind their back.

We may *look* like we are kind, but deep down, we aren't genuinely being kind to them. *[pause]*

And the last way that I wanted to share is the passive aggressive method.

In this way, we don't want to come across as being mean, but we *are* being mean back, in a passive way. *[pauseeeee]*

People are mean to us sometimes and we respond in different ways.

And if each of us were honest, *we* have been the person who was mean to someone else.

All I have to do is ask your co-workers, your brothers or sisters, your children, or your spouse...

...And out of all of those people, if they answered honestly, at least one of them would admit that you have been mean to them at some point in your life. *[pause]*

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<sup>1</sup> Found at: <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/11656/supernatural-by-william-neel>.

So the question that I want to pose this morning is this: how do you handle people who are mean to you? *[pause]*

Our story will show us what happens when David encounters a mean person, and it will teach us some very important things.

So let's see this in God's Word. *[pauseeee]*

Saul has been pursuing David to try to kill him, and David just did an amazing thing, for he refused to be vengeful with Saul when he had the chance.

Now as we enter into our story this morning, we will find that Saul isn't in the story.

Instead, David will encounter another mean person named Nabal, and we will see how David handles *this* man. *[pause]*

So the first part of verse 1 tells us that Samuel has died, and now the story picks up in the second half of verse 1, as it tells us what happens next with David.

Let's START READING. [read verses 1b-13]

So we are introduced to a man named Nabal, and his wife named Abigail. *[pause]*

Nabal is this harsh, unkind, cruel guy who is evil in his dealings with others.

He's a rich Calebite, so he comes from a prestigious family, he's wealthy, and he has this amazing wife.

So he has a lot going for him.

But his name actually means "foolish" and what you find is that his name is very fitting for how he acts.

He has so much going for him, but he ends up squandering it all because of his folly. *[pauseeee]*

He's married to this woman named Abigail.

And these two people are extremely mismatched as a couple.

Nabal is mean and nasty, while Abigail is a beautiful, intelligent, and discerning woman. *[pause]*

So Nabal is sheering his sheep nearby where David is, and David sees this as an opportunity to feed his men.

You see, the story points out that David seems to have voluntarily used his men as a security force for Nabal's shepherds.

David has been protecting Nabal's business, and now David seeks for Nabal to show kindness in return by giving some food to his men. *[pause]*

David sends messengers and his message to Nabal is very respectful and kind, as David seems to want to continue this business relationship. *[pause]*

And David's probably thinking, "Hey, if someone is protecting your business, why not give back in gratitude?"

But how does Nabal respond?

Nabal basically says, "Whose this David guy? There's lots of servants who run away from their masters. Should I just give my food to random people?" *[pause]*

Ouch, that's such an insult.

He knew who David was.

He was the anointed one, who was promised the kingship, as we will find out later that even Abigail knew who he was.

And Nabal also knew that David had protected his shepherds out in the fields, but he just didn't feel like sharing his food with him.

He was selfish and mean. *[pauseeee]*

At this point of the story, you're thinking, "Ok, how is David going to react to this?"

Well, not so good, as David becomes outraged, and rashly calls his men to strap on their swords to fight.

David is ready to kill. *[pauseeee]*

*Stopping there, what does this inciting incident of the story show us?...*

### **I. Unkindness can stir up strong, rash thoughts of revenge in us. (1-13)**

Nabal was extremely unkind to David.

David had done good to Nabal by protecting his shepherds, yet Nabal repaid David with evil. *[pause]*

This is actually the opposite of what happened in the story from last week.

In the story last week, David repaid Saul's evil with good.

Well in this story, we see that Nabal repays David's good with evil.

So it might even be possible that David has become frustrated.

It's like, "Man, Saul was mean to me and I did him good, and then I'm kind to Nabal, but what do I get in return? A slap in the face." *[pause]*

Have you ever felt that way?

It's like, "I keep being nice to people, and then they are just mean to me!"

It can be frustrating. *[pause]*

In David's mind, Nabal's unkindness was so unjust.

Out of the kindness of his heart, he risked his men's lives to protect Nabal's shepherds, and instead of getting thank you gifts, he's getting insults. *[pauseeee]*

It's easy to get upset when we feel like our efforts go unnoticed by others.

And David's didn't just go unnoticed, but he got offense in return. *[pause]*

Imagine going out of your way to help someone, only for them to be rude to you.

Your sense of the injustice becomes so very clear, anger rises, and rash thoughts come into your mind. *[pauseeeee]*

And I find it interesting how David could refuse to take vengeance on Saul in the last chapter, but then is so quick to seek revenge on Nabal.

I mean Saul had been trying to kill him, and he won't seek revenge, but Nabal refuses to show gratitude, and David is ready to decimate everyone connected to him. *[pause]*

But isn't that just like us? Inconsistent.

One day, we are so kind and nice to others, but the next, we lash out at every little thing.

One day, we are content and full of joy, the next, we are miserable complainers. *[pause]*

You see, even David was inconsistent at times.

He could be restrained and restrain others,<sup>2</sup> yet not long after, he had to be restrained by another person. *[pause]*

We are often inconsistent, but the key is that we are learning and growing through those moments, as we will see happen in David's life. *[pauseeee]*

Unkindness can really stir up strong emotions in us, can't it?

Especially when we have been kind and good to that person.

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<sup>2</sup> See 1 Samuel 24.

And when your emotions are stirred up into a frenzy, it's hard to be calm and remember truth.

Our strong emotions make us passionate and sometimes those strong emotions cause us to make rash decisions. *[pause]*

David didn't even think through his response, but his emotions got the best of him, and he immediately chose to avenge.

But these rash decisions are often decisions that we will regret, and are unwise, and ungodly.

And our revenge is usually more severe than the offense, as seen in what David wants to do. *[pause]*

Since when have your thoughts of what you want to do in revenge been equal to or less severe than what happened to you?

Rarely. Instead, we want our revenge to be harsher against them to send a message that we are *not* happy.

We are standing in the place of the judge, deeming our judgment and punishment to be 100% just for the offense committed. *[pauseeee]*

Even David experienced strong, rash thoughts of revenge, but the important part is what happens next. *[pause]*

What have you done when you felt those emotions and thoughts in the past?

Maybe it's happening in your life *now*, as someone has been unkind to you, even though you did so much for them - how is it going for you?

Where's your mind at? What have you done? What do you want to do?

Well let's let the rest of the story teach us something important for how to handle that type of situation.

Let's CONTINUE READING, starting back up in verse 14...[\[read 14-44\]](#)

What a change of trajectory in the story!

David was mad, he was ready to do some damage, he had his sword ready, and his blood was really pumping.

He was convinced in his mind that he was going to take care of Nabal, even making an oath.

But that all changed when God worked through Abigail, as she went and kindly talked David out of something that he would have regretted. *[pause]*

*And so we see from this story that unkindness can stir up strong, rash thoughts of revenge in us...*

## II. But God can use situations and people to restrain, teach, and grow us in these moments. (14-44)

That's what we see happen in David's life.

He was all primed and ready to slaughter Nabal, yet God used Abigail to restrain, teach, and grow him. *[pause]*

God was the ultimate worker in this story, as both David and Abigail made very clear.

Abigail says that the Lord restrained David from bloodguilt and saving with his own hand.

David mentions that God sent Abigail to him, which held him back from something he would have regretted.

And mentions the Lord's restraining work, even two more times after that. *[pauseeee]*

Praise God that He restrain us from doing so much more damage to our lives than we already do ourselves!

Praise Him that He doesn't say, "You're on your own buddy," but He graciously puts "stop signs" in our way to help restrain us.

In His work, God sometimes operates using "preventive providence,"<sup>3</sup> and we would do well to notice his work more like David did. *[pauseeee]*

Just think of how much more sin we would have committed in our lives if it wasn't for God's active working in us. *[pause]*

God, of course, uses the Spirit to help us live for Him, but we also see in this story that God uses His Word as one "stop sign".

In this story, Abigail pointed David to truth, and it made the difference.

She pointed him to the sin and guilt that he would incur through revenge.

She pointed him to what God had promised him about his future kingship.

She pointed him to who God was and what He does in caring for David, fighting his battles, and defeating his enemies. *[pauseeee]*

Think back upon your life.

Isn't one of the main reasons why you haven't given into sin at times because of what Scripture says?

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<sup>3</sup> I got this phrase from: Davis, D. R. (2000). 1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart (p. 255). Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.

Let's take the sin of lying, and let me show you how the "stop sign" of God's truth can prevent us from lying. *[pause]*

So the most common way that you think of God's truth being a stop sign is in the direct commands of Scripture, and that's true.

You desire to lie about something, but then you remember how God tells us not to lie,<sup>4</sup> and you think, "Yeah, I definitely shouldn't do that. It's wrong." *[pause]*

But there are other ways.

There are examples in Scripture that show us that lying brings regret and causes issues, and we remember those examples.

But also, remembering the promises of God can help us avoid lying.

If you are about to lie because you are fearful that you won't get something if you don't, then you can remember the promise of God to always take care of you.<sup>5</sup> *[pause]*

Also, remembering who God is can prevent us from lying as we remember how powerful and good that He is, so we know we can trust him in this situation, and we don't need to lie. *[pause]*

You see it?

Truth is a powerful "stop sign" that God uses in our lives, but will we see it and heed it? *[pause]*

Another stop sign that God uses is other people to point us to that truth.

So it's not just *us* knowing the truth, but *other people* speaking truth into our lives that helps restrain us from sin. *[pauseeee]*

God clearly used Abigail to speak truth to David and restrain him from making a bad choice. *[pause]*

Really, she was reiterating to him that revenge is not worth it.

It will lead to sin and regret, and doesn't make sense, since God is with him and would defeat his enemies for him. *[pauseeee]*

We need other people speaking truth into our lives, who God can use to help restrain us from sin. *[pause]*

I think of times when I got angry with someone for what they said to me.

I was like David - having strong, rash thoughts of revenge.

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<sup>4</sup> See Colossians 3:9 & Exodus 20:16 as examples.

<sup>5</sup> See Philippians 4:19 as an example.

But God used my wife to remind me of truth, and it calmed me down, and led me to make a wise choice. *[pause]*

So don't despise God's gracious providence in providing people who share His truth with you when your emotions are out of control.

Their wise, godly speech like Abigail's can defuse tense situations, packed with fiery emotions. *[pause]*

David was like a ticking time bomb, ready to go off on Nabal, but Abigail's speech, which was seasoned with salt, disarmed the bomb, and brought great results.

That's the power of what can happen when other believers are speaking truth into our lives, especially when our anger is rising. *[pause]*

And guess what? You can be that kind of person for others!

God can use you speaking truth to help others keep from doing things that they will regret.

But will we do it out of love? *[pauseeee]*

Are there people in your life that are speaking God's Word to you? Reminding you of things? Encouraging you? Challenging you?

Are you the kind of person who is doing that for others? *[pauseeee]*

This morning, I want to be that person for you, as I base this challenge off of today's text: revenge is not worth it.

It leads to sin, and it shows a desire to take matters into your own hands and work out something by your own power.

And let me tell you this: it will lead to regret. *[pause]*

When you say those mean things back, when you do something wrong to make them feel bad, you are going to feel the grief of regret later.

Don't put yourself through that.

Don't let yourself follow your momentary, fleshly desires, but take the long-term view.

Remember the regret it can lead to. *[pauseeee]*

David could have gone through with his revenge, but Abigail reminds him that later on he would regret it, for he would have bloodguilt on him.

He would have "grief or pangs of conscience" later.



You don't want that. *[pauseeee]*

God graciously and providentially puts “stop signs” in front of us to help restrain us from sin.

He gives us the Spirit, yes, but He also gives us His Word and other people speaking His Word to us.

Will you ignore the love-placed “stop signs” or will you blow through them and experience regret for your foolishness? *[pauseeee]*

As I think about my past, I see God's gracious “preventive providence” restraining me and preventing me from going down some wrong paths.

It hasn't been perfect, as I've blown past some of his “stop signs” and I'm sure you have, too.

But I'm thankful, and I can look back and say, “Wow, that would not have been good if I did that, but God helped me avoid that route.” *[pauseeee]*

So God can use situations and people to restrain us, but also, he uses these things to teach and grow us. *[pause]*

David thought that what he did for Nabal was for no purpose, as he says, “Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness.”

Yet in the end, David learned and grew from this event. *[pause]*

God was preparing and maturing him for his future kingship.

Would David as king kill whole villages based on every little offense? Is that really how a king should be acting?

In fact, this story is right before another time that David will have to show restraint in not killing Saul.

So it's like this event is even further preparing him to hold back from killing Saul, possibly as he remembers this situation. *[pauseeee]*

So often we show contempt for the trials and hardships of our lives.

And certainly, they aren't fun or easy, but do we see what God may be doing through them?

Do we see how God may be preparing us for something that we will face in the future?

Do we see how God may be maturing us and making us more like Christ?

Do we see how He's using those moments to implant His Word even deeper into us? *[pause]*

God is the master worker, who teaches and grows us even in the times when people are mean to us for no reason.

But here's the thing: will you be *teachable*? [pause]

Look at the difference between Nabal and David.

Did you see what it said in verse 17 about Nabal?

His servant is talking to Abigail about him and he's like, please do something because "he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him." [pause]

No one was able to confront Nabal.

If you confronted him, he would probably ignore it, but most likely, chew you out and make you feel like dirt. [pauseeee]

It is a very bad sign if people feel like they can't talk to you about issues.

It shows that we aren't being humble, we aren't being teachable listeners, and we aren't being kind in how we treat others.

Do people around you feel like they could bring things up and talk to you about anything and not get their heads bitten off? [pauseeee]

This character of Nabal is totally opposite of David, who is humbly teachable.

He was able to be corrected.

In that day, it would be rare for a woman to correct a man of the status of David, yet David was so humble and teachable that he was open to being called out by Abigail.

He saw God's hand in sending Abigail because she was sharing truth with him. [pauseeee]

Are you teachable and able to be corrected by others?

Are you able to admit that you were wrong?

David wisely admitted what he wanted to do was wrong, and chose to refrain from doing it - now that's wisdom! [pause]

He used this moment as a teaching, growing, and maturity moment in his life.

When we are teachable, we are opening up the door for ourselves to grow and mature. [pause]

I wonder how many of us see this benefit of being corrected by God's Word?

Do you see it as a good thing when you are convicted by His Word?

Do you see it as a good thing when someone challenges you with what the Bible says? *[pauseeee]*

David learned that he needed to patiently wait on the Lord, and not to seek to avenge himself.

He could leave vengeance in God's hands...

...And he saw that it was worth it, for by restraining, he kept himself from regret, and God dealt with Nabal, killing him shortly after. *[pause]*

God was showing David, "See! Look how easily I took care of Nabal, yet you were going to take matters into your own hands."

Now, we know that God doesn't always deal with our enemies that quickly, but he will take care of it someday.

And we can rest in that, and we can leave vengeance with him. *[pause]*

So will you patiently wait on the Lord?

Will you trust Him with it, or try to foolishly and regrettably seek out vengeance? *[pauseeeee]*

*So as we interact with and handle times when people are mean to us...*

**Let's live by faith, not by fleshly impulse!**

In order to not give into our fleshly impulses, we must live by faith in Jesus Christ, who died for us and rose again.

We remember how He didn't exact vengeance on us for our great sin, but He took our punishment upon Himself.

So if he did that for us, why can't we show love towards those who are mean to us? *[pause]*

And he gives us the empowerment to do this, as he empowers us by the Spirit.

We remember that we can't do this on our own, but we rely upon His powerful working in us. *[pause]*

So looking to Christ and relying upon the Spirit - give your situations to God, and don't be driven by your fleshly impulses!

Your fleshly impulses will drive you to do things that are wrong and things you will regret, but God's way is always best.

Trust that He is good, just, and that you can give your situations to Him.

Trust that He can use your tense situations for teaching and growing you. *[pause]*

When you go through those future times that you will have strong, rash thoughts of revenge, will you remember what Christ did for you?

Or maybe for you, you are *currently* experiencing some thoughts of revenge against someone who has been mean to you, or done something to you.

Will you let the “stop sign” of God’s Word this morning help restrain you from taking vengeance on that person?

Will you humbly be willing to listen and grow through this?

Will you see that vengeance isn’t worth it, but hand it over the Lord?