ADULTS

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE™

Sermon Series: When Relationships Collide
To Be Used With: Session Five "Step In"
Sermon Title Possibilities: "An Unlikely Advocate"; "Grace In Action"
Sermon Text: **1 Samuel 25:14-17, 23-28, 32-35**

Introduction
In *Derailed* Tim Irwin looks at six CEO's who derailed their company. The factors that led to their downfall were not scandalous crimes or major moral failures. In fact, most of them were little things like failure to mingle with the employees or neglect of learning the company's culture. But one of the biggest factors in all of their derailments was lack of feedback. The leaders of these companies shut off any feedback loops in their personal lives and job performance. The employees under them no longer felt able to step in and offer constructive criticism and insight. The result was disaster.

Today we are considering a story where someone stepped in and kept a bad situation from becoming worse. Let's read how Abigail confronted David when he intended to kill Nabal, her husband.

[Read 1 Samuel 25:14-17, 23-28, 32-35]

Some situations, even though the circumstances do not directly involve us, need our input and involvement. Abigail is a wonderful example of one who did this with the utmost grace, gentleness, and courage. Four things stand out in this story that can help us to know how and when to step into a situation to bring about good.

1. Know that godly people can be wrong. (vv.17, 38)
Nabal no doubt deserved to die. In fact, the text goes on to tell us in verse 38 "And about ten days later the Lord struck Nabal, and he died." But did David have the right to take his life? Probably not since Abigail refers to the Lord restraining David from bloodguilt (v.26). Being the king of Israel David likely could have justified his killing of Nabal. But the text seems clear that this was not in David's best interest. He did not stand to gain anything from this and would bring more damage than good to the situation.

Godly people get it wrong. David is not perfect. We know this from scenes later in his life. Was he God's chosen king? Yes. Was he the greatest king in the history of Israel? Yes. Was he always right? No! Sometimes our reluctance to step in and influence a situation comes from our fear that the person we think is wrong has a tremendous track record. They are godly, humble, and well liked by everyone. We may be blinded by their spiritual maturity or afraid to confront them for how it will be received. But make no mistake about it, godly people can be wrong. We saw in Galatians how Paul had to confront Peter. This was the same Peter who walked with Jesus for over three years, and preached boldly on the day of Pentecost. He got it wrong!

Application: Have you been tempted not to confront someone because you know how godly they are? Where does this fear come from? Know that if David can be wrong, and Peter can be wrong, surely the most godly saints we know can as well.

2. Consider the consequences of the situation (vv.14–17)
David went with four hundred men to attack Nabal and "all his house" (v.17). But only Nabal resisted David and his men. Nabal's servants enjoyed their company and protection (vv.15–16). They were innocent in the matter but were about to suffer the consequences of Nabal's folly and David's anger. What is worse, they could not convince Nabal to change his mind about David since "he is such a worthless man" (v.17). The duel between David and Nabal would result in casualties on both sides unless something changed.

Perhaps this is the most important reason we should step in and seek to influence a situation. The indirect consequences of a bad situation can make it much worse. The conflict may not seem that bad on the surface, but often when we dig deeper we may find that far greater consequences are possible depending on the outcome. Sin always seeks to grow and become stronger. If a conflict is not resolved, someone is not confronted, or sins are not brought to the light, far greater problems are sure to follow. Ed Stetzer says, "Nothing will change until the pain of staying the same outweighs the pain of changing." Confrontation, conflict, and change hurt. But when we consider the pain that could occur if we do nothing, it should move us to action.

Application: Consider some areas where you are avoiding action that might result in further pain and conflict. Think of how difficult things might become if no one does anything. Let that move you to action and involvement.

3. Be willing to take a risk at great cost to yourself (vv.23–28)
Abigail put everything on the line to save Nabal's men. She prepared food and rode out to meet David and his four hundred men (v.18). When she met them she fell down before David and said "On me alone, my lord, be the guilt" (v.24). She stepped in at great cost and risk to herself. No doubt this surprised David as the most unlikely person offered herself up for the men he intended to destroy.

If we are going to play a role in keeping a bad situation from turning worse, it will cost us. It may cost us our time, our reputation, our money, or our status. But we must be willing to put everything on the line when it will bring glory to God and good to others. Peter Drucker said, "People who don't take risks generally make about two big mistakes a year. People who do take risks generally make about two big mistakes a year." His point is that we tend to imagine the worst possible outcomes in our minds. And while we need to be careful not the downplay the consequences of our actions, we surely need to trust in the sovereignty of our great God to uphold and sustain us.

Application: Are you avoiding entering into a situation because of the risk involved? What might you have to give up if you do? Will you trust in God's goodness and sovereignty and take the risk needed to bring about good?

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4. Seek God's glory over your own (vv.32–35).
The first thing David does when Abigail steps in is bless the Lord. "Blessed by the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me" (v. 32)! God received the glory for Abigail's actions. David even confessed his own sin when he says he was kept from "working salvation with his own hand" (v.33)!

This is the outcome that we want. Before we enter into a situation, we need to check our own motives to see whose glory and whose kingdom we are seeking to advance. We need to guard against simply wanting to be right, or to display our wisdom and insight. Our aim in all things is to build up the body of Christ to the glory of God (1Pet. 4:10–11).

Application: Whose glory are you seeking to advance when you enter into a situation? Guard against pride and false motives. Humble yourself and ask God to be glorified in all that is said and done.

Conclusion
It is hard to miss the picture of the Gospel in this story. Romans 5:8 reminds us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He entered into our desperate situation, at great cost to himself. He brought glory to God by bearing the wrath our sins deserved. Now we can be ministers of reconciliation, step in to difficult situations, and seek to bring about good.

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