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## WHEN BOZO SHOWS UP 1 Samuel 25

Pastor and author John Ortberg tells the true story of a man who made some extra money umpiring for recreational baseball leagues. One early spring day he was late for an important meeting and was driving a little over the speed limit when he was pulled over by a police officer. He asked for mercy, explaining he never speeds, but in this case was late for this big meeting. The officer finished writing the citation, coldly handed it to him and said, "Tell it to the judge." Only a few weeks later he had his first game of the spring. The very first batter to step up to the plate was that same police officer. When he stepped into the batter's box he looked back and recognized the umpire, who also recognized him. He sort of sheepishly cleared his throat and said, "So, uh, how did the thing with the ticket go?" The umpire paused a moment than answered, "You'd better swing at everything."

Who among us doesn't understand that? How often do you get the delicious opportunity to get even with someone who hurt you? How good does it feel to make the most of that opportunity? I've heard the saying, "revenge is a dish best served cold," but I've also heard it "revenge is a dish best served hot." That's because unlike pizza, we think revenge tastes great either hot or cold, as long as we get to have it. *Ben Hur*, both the old Oscar winner and the remake that's just come out, last year's Oscar winning, *The Revenant*, *The Italian Job*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Sting*, and many others all have something in common. They all revolve around the theme of revenge. It is such a common theme because we all feel the desire for it. We know that desire to hit back when someone has injured us, a feeling that at times seems almost uncontrollable. We know that feeling when we even think of that person who hurt us, sometimes even years later, and we dream of bad things that might happen to them. Today we're going to see David come face to face with that feeling and hopefully learn about how we can handle those feelings as we look at 1 Samuel 25.

### NABAL LIVED DOWN TO HIS NAME

David was still running from Saul, accompanied by his 600 man private army. He has gone to a new area to keep his distance from Saul. But how do you provide for hundreds of followers? What would you do if you had to figure out some way to feed 600 people every day when you already have no means of personal support? Perhaps the experience David had of employing his little army to defend the town of Keilah from marauding Philistines gave him the idea of turning them into a

private security company. This is actually still a big business as evidenced by very successful companies like Academi, which is the new name of Blackwater, the controversial PSC founded by ex-Navy Seal Eric Prince, and Triple Canopy, which is a security company made up in large part of former US Special Forces personnel.

The work of his security company brought David into contact with an exceedingly wealthy man named Nabal. We are told in verse 2 that he had 1000 goats and 3000 sheep. In the United States today there are 7 million sheep on 84,000 ranches. That works out to an average of 83 sheep per ranch! The large ranches in the west that have most of the sheep consider 1000 ewes and their lambs to be a “band” of sheep. So having 1000 goats and 3000 sheep even today would be a big operation and mean you were very wealthy.

Unfortunately wealthy and powerful does not mean wise. In verse 25 Abigail, Nabal’s wife, said to David, “Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly goes with him.” Yikes. What an indictment of her husband. She calls him wicked and a fool! I wonder how many women throughout history have related all too closely with Abigail. Too late they realize that man they thought was a dreamboat actually is an idiot, and now they’re stuck with him.

Abigail wasn’t just venting her frustration over being married to a jerk. She was trying to save Nabal’s life after his own churlish behavior had put him in serious jeopardy. However, when she said his name meant fool that was literally true. The Hebrew word for fool was Nabal. *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* described a Nabal, a fool, as “being ignoble and disgraceful, a downright boor.” He is churlish and speaks nonsense.

A good modern parallel for the name Nabal would be Bozo. As in, “what a Bozo that guy is.” Back then you'd have said "what a Nabal that guy is." This raises the question of how he came by this name. What parents name their beautiful baby boy Bozo? Maybe his parents were celebrities, since celebrities today seem to come up with weird names for their kids. Kim Kardashian and Kanye West named their daughter North, so she is legally North West. *Hunger Games* actress Jena Malone named her son Ode Mountain DeLorenzo Malone. *Avatar* actor Sam Worthington and his wife named their son Rocket Zot. Bizarre, but at least none of them came up with Bozo.

I can think of two possible explanations. One is that in ancient Hebrew words were written with just consonants, so this name would be written NBL. Later they added little dots under the letters to indicate what vowels should be used in pronouncing the word. There is another Hebrew word that has the NBL form that was pronounced “Nebel.” It had several meanings, among them an ancient harp. So maybe his parents named him Harpo, but because of his character people made a pun, pronouncing Nabal instead of Nebel, so he became Bozo. Or possibly he was such a jerk he earned the nickname Bozo, and eventually that was what everyone called him, at least behind his back. It was so common that the only written record of his name has it as Bozo.

Whatever the case, Bozo was indeed just what his name implies. He was a jerk and an idiot. Do you know what one of the most prominent traits of a true fool is? According to Proverbs it is that he is full of himself and thinks he’s always right. He knows more than anyone else so he doesn’t have to listen to anyone. At the end of verse 17 when an employee goes to Abigail to report Bozo’s latest stupid and dangerous decision he says of him, “He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him.” If you always have to be right, if you are sure you know the right way and don’t listen to anyone, if you can never admit you are wrong, look out. You are likely a Bozo.

In his efforts to find a way to feed his little army David came up with a solution to a problem that wealthy people always have. How do they protect their wealth? When wealth was on the hoof it could easily walk away, be killed by predators or be stolen. Shepherds protected against loss and predators, but weren’t a lot of help against bands of bandits. Law enforcement in that day was mostly non-existent. You were mostly on your own. It was a wilder version of the old Wild West.

David and his men guarded flocks and herds from roving bandits. Today he would make a deal with ranchers and draw up contracts specifying the details of the service he would provide and what he would be paid. But David, in a more relational time, had his men provide the service and trusted that afterward the beneficiaries would express their gratitude by sharing from their wealth.

In this case it was sheep shearing time when owners would settle up with their shepherds. David sent a group of men to Nabal to ask him if he would care to show his appreciation to them for their work protecting his herds. There are people who claim what David offered here was a protection racket. Pay up or something bad will happen to you. But that’s not the case, for David has already provided the service. He was not threatening anything.

Bozo's response was far from gracious and generous. In verse 10 he said, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days." What Nabal was implying that David was a rebel against Saul, that he was nothing but a criminal. He was essentially saying that David's men weren't the solution, they were the problem. They were a bunch of bandits who were ripping people off. We know that was absolutely not true. In verse 16 one of Bozo's shepherds reported to Abigail about David's men, "Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them." He says they never stole anything, that in fact they protected the shepherds and the sheep so that none went missing.

Wealthy and powerful does not mean wise. In 2014 Michael Lewis, best-selling author of *Moneyball* and *Blindside*, wrote an article in *The New Republic* that said rich and good are not the same thing. He reported that University of California psychology professor Dacher Keltner has been studying wealthy people. He has found that the rich are more likely to shoplift than the poor are, they give a much lower percentage of income to charity than the poor, and brain scans show that wealthy people have less activity in brain areas associated with empathy. In one experiment they invited a broad spectrum of people to come to their labs and put them through a series of tasks. On the way out when they thought they were done they had the real task. They passed a large jar of candy. The richer the person, the more likely they were to reach in and take out some candy for themselves, even though there was a big sign by the jar stating that the candy was for children that came through the departments. You can be rich and be a Bozo. Nabal was the poster boy for that fact.

## DAVID REACTED

Bozo did more than fail to be generous to David. He committed character assassination. He accused him of being a rebellious criminal. His statements created some big problems for David. If other ranchers saw Bozo refusing to share from their wealth they might be prone to follow suit. That would have ruined David's business. But beyond that with Bozo spreading word around that David was nothing more than a bandit, how was he ever going to get people to trust him? They certainly weren't going to look for opportunities to be generous to him. In addition he's implying that David is a rebel against the king, so maybe what he and others ought to do is turn him in to Saul.

I was at the intersection of La Costa and El Camino Real, waiting to turn left going north on Camino. The light turned green so I could proceed. I started across only to

encounter a young man in a pickup truck who was driving north on El Camino and ran the red light. He came flying through the intersection so I had to slam on the brakes to avoid a collision. I let him have a blast with my horn to communicate my displeasure. He responded by putting his hand out the window of his truck and communicating to me that he thought I was number one. It made me mad. That guy was a jerk. What he did was inexcusable. He was totally at fault and his only reaction was to essentially hurl a visual profanity at me. It is that kind of thing that fosters road rage. I had some road rage, I just didn't act on it.

David felt that sense of rage. He felt it on a lot of levels. So he did the normal, natural thing for a human being. In verse 13 David said, "Each of you strap on your sword." That was the ancient equivalent of "lock and load." To get the depth of his anger look at verse 34. There he told Abigail exactly what his plan was. "If you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak."

This is the human way. It started way back in Genesis with Lamech. He was a descendant of Cain, the first murderer in history, and proud of it. In Genesis 4:23-24 he boasted, "I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. If Cain is avenged 7 times, then Lamech 77 times." When Dinah, the daughter of Jacob was date raped, her brothers responded by cooking up a scheme that resulted in them killing every man in the town of the perpetrator. You hurt me, you threaten my people, and I wipe you out. I leave no doubt. There will be blood.

The shepherd that warned Abigail of the way Bozo had treated David said, "Disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household." He knew what was going to happen next, and he was much aware that his life was threatened. Bozo was so arrogant he didn't realize how dangerous his actions were. The natural human reaction to being hurt or offended is to strike back. That is exactly how David reacted.

## ABIGAIL SAVED THE DAY

Abigail had the misfortune of being born in a culture in which parents arranged marriages for their children. Her parents had done her a serious disservice. They thought they had arranged a great match for her by setting her up with a very wealthy man. He may have been wealthy, but he was also a Bozo. She was a 10 and he was a rich 0. I suspect life was pretty unpleasant for her as she made the most she could of living with an arrogant jerk. I suspect she had become adept at cleaning up Bozo's relational messes. This time she knew that her husband's

idiocy was going to cause a lot more than a few ruffled feathers. She had to act quickly or people were going to die.

She put together a huge supply of food, loaded it on donkeys and hurried out to head David off at the pass. By describing her husband as a wicked fool she was essentially acknowledging that what he had done was wrong. She was admitting that she was there because she needed to make amends for the inexcusable offenses caused by her arrogant husband.

Abigail was an amazing woman. She was physically beautiful, but she was also courageous and exceedingly wise. Her appeal to David included three tremendously important points. First she said in verse 29, “even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my Lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God.” She is telling David exactly the point that he needed to remember. No matter what Bozo might say or do, no matter what Saul might try to do, David was going to be safe because God was protecting him. His life was in God’s hands and that’s what mattered most.

Second, at the end of verse 29 she said, “but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling.” She used an image that would be familiar to the former shepherd boy. He would recall how he had killed Goliath by firing a rock from his sling. Abigail told him that anyone who sought to do him harm, Bozo included, would be like that rock fired away from the presence of God. The core of that statement is that God is just, and he will deal with wrongdoers justly.

Finally in verse 30 Abigail stated that David was going to become the ruler of Israel. Then in verse 31 she said when that happens if David has refrained from wreaking vengeance on Bozo, “my Lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself.” She was saying, “David, do you really want to be like Saul?” Did he really want to kill innocent people just because of the offense of one man? She was reminding him of what kind of person, what kind of king, he wanted to be. Surely he did not want to be another Lamech who tried to destroy people who even slightly wounded him. He did not want the guilt of that.

The humility and calm wisdom of this beautiful woman won David over. He says in verse 33, “May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day.” David received her gift and told her to go home in peace. Naturally when she got home her idiot husband, Bozo, had been partying and was falling down drunk. She didn’t tell him what she had done at that point. The next

day she did tell Bozo what had happened. When he realized how close he had come to dying he had what appears to be a stroke. 10 days later he died and everyone rejoiced. The world had just become a better place. When David learned that he had died and that Abigail was no longer married he wasted no time. He snatched her right up and she became his wife.

## IMPLICATIONS

### PRINCIPLE: OUR ANGER DOES NOT PRODUCE RIGHTEOUSNESS

James 1:19 instructs us to be slow to become angry, then verse 20 says, “Because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.” This is a huge point. We continually convince ourselves our anger is justified. We are certain that we must set things right, we must get even with others who hurt us.

Anger is a huge problem today. An article in *Esquire* magazine in January of this year reported that Americans are angrier than ever. In his book titled *By The Book*, actor and author Patton Oswalt says anger is “the hidden poison of our tight wire planet.”

We all know that anger is destructive. It causes us to inflict damage on other people and actually does damage to our own souls. Philosopher and University of Chicago professor Martha Nussbaum wrote in a recent article that anger “is a stupid way to ruin one’s life.” Our anger does never brings glory to God or blessing to anyone, including ourselves.. This is a real problem for us because there are lots of opportunities for us to be angry.

Recently Laurie’s cell phone began seriously misbehaving and it became apparent that it was about to die. What should we do? We went back to the store where we had purchased the phone from our provider. She explained the problem to the employees and they were no help whatsoever. In fact, they didn’t even try to help. Instead they tried to sell her a tablet computer! They basically told her all she could do is mail it back to the company that made the phone. This was a problem because she knew if she did that its memory was going to get wiped out and take with it all of the photos she had on there and all of her contacts. She called the company that made the phone and explained to her what she should do to make sure she saved them and so she followed their instructions. Then she mailed the phone in. Unfortunately she forgot to check and make sure that everything had been backed up successfully. When she went back to check on her photos and contacts after she had mailed the phone in she found out that her photos were not there. Mind you, these were photos mostly of our first and only grandchild. She was upset. It got worse. She called our mobile service provider to see if there was some way to save

the situation. When she talked to them they informed her that the store where we had bought the phone may have the name of their company on it but they are not actually one of their stores. She found out that the way they had handled the situation was completely wrong. Had she gone to a store that actually was run by the company the whole situation would've been different. They would've transferred her information on to a new phone. She was angry. The people at the store where we bought the phone were incompetent and uncaring. She was anxious to go all David on them and make sure that by daybreak the next day there was not a male left alive there. She didn't do that, but she felt the anger.

#### QUESTION: HOW CAN WE HANDLE ANGER?

What you do when someone has truly hurt you? Saying don't be mad doesn't solve the problem. In February *Rolling Stone* magazine published an interview with 74 year old Mike Love, one of the original Beach Boys. In it he said he meditates twice a day to help him cope with things. He has some things to cope with. His wife had an affair with Dennis Wilson, a member of that band and Mike Love's cousin. He also had a terrible falling out with Brian Wilson, also a member of the band and a cousin. A big part of the estrangement happened because Mike contributed to songs like *Help Me Rhonda* and *I Get Around* but he was not given any publishing credit. How well is meditating helping him deal with those kinds of hurts? He claims that he would tell the people who've hurt him that he loves them. But the article says that he frowns and says, "I've been ostracized, vilified." The hurt and anger still comes through. How are we supposed to deal with it when someone has hurt us that badly?

#### ***Know Our Lives Are In God's Hands***

In verse 29 Abigail reminded David that his life was bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord. David was responding out of anger and fear. But Abigail reminded him that the Lord was going to take care of him. Saul was not going to determine what happened in David's life, nor was Bozo. The God of Israel who had called David to be the king was the one who is going to determine what would happen.

Was she right? Yes, she was. Saul died before ever touching David, Bozo died within days of these events, and David went on to become Israel's greatest king prior to Messiah. David would become so great that Messiah would be called The Son of David. God did take care of David.

This is what we need to remember when we are afraid or angry, when we are tempted to seek revenge, to strike back at people who have hurt us. Those people



do not determine the outcome of our lives. Our lives are in God's hands. 1 Peter 5:7 says, "cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." In Matthew 6:26 Jesus said, "look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" When we trust that God is taking care of us we are not nearly as prone to fight against those that we fear are a threat to us. David learned the lesson. Some of the most familiar words in all of the Bible are found in Psalm 23:1 where David wrote, "the Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing."

I recently had a treatment from a doctor that was aimed at healing the torn tendon in my elbow. In this treatment they drew some of my blood and harvested platelets out of it, then injected those platelets right into the injured tendon. The idea is that the platelets will cause the tendon to heal. This doctor did an ultrasound examination of my elbow and pointed out the injury. The only problem was what I saw on the screen looked like snow on a television that's not receiving a signal. I couldn't see anything. For all I could tell he could've been pointing the places on the screen and saying here's the face of Mickey Mouse. Then came the time for the treatment. The doctor claimed he was trying to help me but he did so by sticking needles in my arm repeatedly. It did not feel good. Afterward my arm began hurting like crazy. I not only accepted all of this from the doctor, I paid him for it. I did so for one reason. I trust that the doctor is trying to do good to me and knows what he's doing. If either of those things were not true there's no way I would let him do that to me. I had to know that he knew what he was doing and second that he was looking out for my good.

No matter what other people do to us we can know that God knows what he is doing, is capable of doing it, and is looking out for our best interests. So we can say with David the Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. I don't need to get even with other people who have hurt me because God is taking care of me. And no matter how they may hurt me God is going to bring about his good will in my life and so I can trust that.

### ***Know Our Opponents Are In God's Hands***

Abigail also reminded David that his enemies, including Bozo, were in God's hands. The story is a bit unusual in this world for we see the justice of God work out in the short term. David ends up married to a beautiful woman and Bozo ends up dead. And David didn't manufacture either event.

The book of Ecclesiastes is full of puzzling passages as the writer ponders the mysteries of a chaotic world that often makes no sense. But the end of the book

concludes this way in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, “now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”

God will judge. No matter what someone else does to you they are going to answer to God for what they do. And God is both far more fair and far more effective than you or I will ever be and setting wrongs right. Romans 12:19 says, “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord.’”

There is a principle that we need to get firmly in our minds. That principle is that because God is all-knowing and all just no one ever gets away with anything. We hate the idea that maybe someone will do something wrong or evil to us and somehow get away with it. They will not get away with it for God will judge them. So we can leave them in his capable and just hands.

I was watching a football game last year on television. This game was very close. At a crucial moment a player from one team made a really dumb play and hit another player well after the whistle. It was a blatant cheap shot. The guy he hit whirled around obviously intent on hitting back. But as he did so he caught sight of the referee pulling out his penalty flag and tossing it in the air. When he saw that flag come out he stopped immediately. In his anger he could easily have felt justified in exacting his own revenge upon the perpetrator of the wrong. But he was wise enough to recognize that if he did so all he would do was hurt his own team. Seeing that flag meant he was going to get justice. The evildoer was going to be punished for his wrong. And so the victimized player wisely stopped and let the referee, the judge of the game, exact punishment.

We sometimes have a problem with just letting God handle it when someone hurts us. It doesn’t feel like enough to us to say that someday way off in the future God might make things right. We get the “yabuts.” God will judge this person. “Ya, but, do you know what he did to me?” We want that person to feel the pain of what they’ve done to us right now. But remember that David felt that same thing. In his anger his understanding of justice was skewed. He intended to wipe out all of the men in Bozo’s household. Those people were innocent of any wrong. What Bozo did was wrong, but killing him was not a just response. And killing his entire household would have been an atrocity. But David, blinded by his anger, couldn’t see that. God is the only one who perfectly sees what is just. Our perception of it is

always skewed. So it is crucial that we remind ourselves that we need to leave justice and vengeance in God's hands.

When we are offended and we feel that desire to hit back, when we are hurt and angry, we need to remember exactly what David needed to remember and that is that God is the judge and the evildoers are in his hands. It's like seeing that penalty flag come out every time we think of God as judge. It reminds us that God will deal with the person far more fairly and far more effectively than we ever could.

### ***Focus On Character***

The last thing that Abigail said to David was to remember what kind of person he wanted to be. What kind of King did he want to be? Did he want to be a violent and vengeful man like Saul, who was only about protecting himself? Or did he want to be good, godly and wise? Fortunately David reflected on that question and decided that he did not want to be a violent man like Saul and end up with the blood of innocent people on his hands just because he was angry. There is a good lesson for us in that.

Ephesians 5:1-2 says, "follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." I actually like a number of earlier versions of that translation that said be imitators of God. That verse calls on us to think about what kind of people we want to be. What God wants for us is that we would become people who have a character that is like his.

In that verse Paul used the image of children imitating their father. We have a heavenly father. He is good, patient, kind, loving, full of grace and mercy, pure and generous. When we read that we are to be imitators of him it means like children we are to seek to be like our heavenly father. We are to seek to also be good, patient, kind, loving, full of grace and mercy, pure and generous. Just as God is good and kind and patient even towards people who are rebelling against him so we are called to be people who continually are good and kind and full of grace, patient with people even those who do us harm.

It is only because of God's character that there is hope that this world can be redeemed. And it is only as we imitate the character of our God that we can redeem the situations that occur in our lives. Recently 4 police officers, 2 white and 2 black, were eating dinner at a restaurant in a Pennsylvania town when a couple came in and refused to be seated at a table next to the officers. Obviously this was pretty offensive to them. How would they respond? One officer, Chuck Thomas,

said they decided to reach out to the people. Together the 4 of them paid the couple's dinner bill of \$28, and wrote a kind note that they had the server deliver.

I read a classic story from the Christian reader that was written in by a man named B. R. Holt. He was living in Washington DC when he was driving in heavy traffic one day and watched as a young woman in a compact car suddenly pulled out in front of an oncoming car forcing that driver to stop on the brakes and swerved barely missing her. Almost immediately after that both of those cars stopped at the next intersection at a red light the driver who would had to avoid the woman was obviously furious. He got out of his car and began stomping toward the young woman clearly intent on venting his ire at her. Before he could get to her car however the young lady jumped out of her car. She was extremely attractive. She had a big smile on her face and before the man could say anything to her she ran to him, tightly hugged him, then planted a big kiss right on his lips. Then she turned, walked away, got in her car and drove off. She left the man standing there in the street dazed, confused, but no longer mad. He had every right to be angry at her, but she defused the whole situation. Perhaps we can learn from her.