

17.15 David and Nabal (1 Samuel 25:1–44)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *vengeance*: paying back someone for evil he or she has done to a person
- *Nabal*: a name meaning “a fool”

Scripture: (ESV)

1 Samuel 25:1 Now Samuel died. And all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah.

Then David rose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. 2 And there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. 3 Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was discerning and beautiful, but the man was harsh and badly behaved; he was a Calebite. 4 David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. 5 So David sent ten young men. And David said to the young men, “Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal and greet him in my name. 6 And thus you shall greet him: ‘Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. 7 I hear that you have shearers. Now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing all the time they were in Carmel. 8 Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David.’”

9 When David’s young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David, and then they waited. 10 And Nabal answered David’s servants, “Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters. 11 Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men who come from I do not know where?” 12 So David’s young men turned away and came back and told him all this. 13 And David said to his men, “Every man strap on his sword!” And every man of them strapped on his sword. David also strapped on his sword. And about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.

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.”

18 Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys. 19 And she said to her young men, “Go on before me; behold, I come after you.” But she did not tell her husband Nabal. 20 And as she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain, behold, David and his men came down toward her, and she met them. 21 Now David had said, “Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him, and he has returned me evil for good. 22 God do so to the enemies of David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him.”

23 When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground. 24 She fell at his feet and said, “On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. 25 Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent. 26 Now then, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, because the Lord has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal. 27 And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. 28 Please forgive the trespass of your servant. For the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the Lord, and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live. 29 If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the Lord your God. And the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling. 30 And when the Lord has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince over Israel, 31 my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord working salvation himself. And when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant.”

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.”

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.

39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, “Blessed be the Lord who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and has kept back his servant from wrongdoing. The Lord has returned the evil of Nabal on his own head.” Then David sent and spoke to Abigail, to take her as his wife. 40 When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, “David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife.” 41 And she rose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, “Behold, your handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.” 42 And Abigail hurried and rose and mounted a donkey, and her five young women attended her. She followed the messengers of David and became his wife.

43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and both of them became his wives. 44 Saul had given Michal his daughter, David’s wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was of Gallim.

Introduction/Review:

Last week we learned that when Saul came after David in Engedi, David had a chance to destroy Saul. Instead, he only cut off part of Saul’s robe. Saul was temporarily sorry he had chased David and went back home.

Story:

At this time Samuel, the great prophet of God and friend of David, died and was buried in his hometown of Ramah.

✓Perhaps because he was so sad and surely because he thought Saul might come after him again, David moved his men way south of Engedi to the wilderness of Paran. Then he came back up to Judah to Maon, where he had been before.

Nabal’s wealth

A very rich man named Nabal lived in this area in a place called Carmel [locate; not Mount Carmel but near

the Dead Sea]. To get an idea of his wealth, consider that he had 3000 sheep and 1000 goats. There near Carmel he was shearing his sheep. With that many sheep you can be sure he had a lot of help—shepherds who cared for the sheep and then helped shear them.

When our girls raised sheep to sell at the county fair, a man used electric clippers to shear those sheep. It still took at least half an hour to shear just one animal. Without electricity and using just knives or scissors, it must have been a huge job requiring lots of help to shear in David's day. All those helpers needed to be fed; so lots of food was prepared for the occasion. ✓It was likely that there was more than enough food with some left over.

David's request

When David heard about the shearing and its opportunity for extra food, he sent ten young men to ask Nabal politely if David's men could have a share of the food. ✓David could reasonably assume that his own services on behalf of Nabal's shepherds gave him the right to ask for provisions, for all the while Nabal's men had cared for the sheep, David's men had protected them.

The ten young men went to Nabal and made their polite request, but they didn't get the answer they expected. The Bible says that Nabal, whose name means "fool," was churlish—rude and crabby and ill-tempered. Nabal ran these men off, saying, "Who is David? He is one of those servants who runs away from his master. Should I take bread, water, and meat from my shearers and give it to men I don't know? Off with you!"

David's vengeance

The men went back to tell David Nabal's answer, and David reacted in a sinful way that we haven't seen in him before. "Get your swords on!" he shouted to his men. "I want 400 men to go with me; 200 can stay here with our supplies. By morning there won't be a single male alive that lives with or works for Nabal!"

David was not trusting God but taking matters into his own hands. He reminds me of the immature "I'll-beat-you-up!" threat we sometimes hear among school children. God says, "'Vengeance is mine; I will repay' says the Lord" (Hebrews 10:30). We are not to seek revenge; that is up to God. David was doing wrong.

Abigail's mission

Meanwhile, back in Carmel, a servant came to Abigail, Nabal's beautiful and wise wife. The servant told about Nabal's rude answer to David's men and told Abigail how David's men had been so helpful to them, not taking anything and protecting them. "We are afraid David will destroy our master, Nabal," the servant said.

"Hurry!" urged Abigail, "Get 200 loaves of bread, two bottles of wine, five sheep already slaughtered, about a bushel of cooked grain, 100 clusters of raisins, and 200 cakes of figs. Put them on the donkeys and start out to meet David. I'm coming right behind you." The donkeys, some servants, and Abigail hurried to meet David.

David and Abigail's meeting

They did meet, right in a narrow place on a mountain. There was David ✓in the act of complaining: "I protected that fool Nabal for nothing! We didn't take a thing of his, and yet he repays me evil for good! We will surely slay all his household!"

Here came Abigail, ✓perhaps saying, "Ah! There's David." She quickly got off her donkey, fell to the ground before David, and bowed. "Please listen to your servant. Please disregard what Nabal did. If I had known, we would have helped you. Now, since God has kept you from avenging yourself and from shedding blood, may your enemies be as Nabal, the fool.

"I know the Lord will set up your kingdom. Your enemies will be like stones thrown out of a sling. When

you are king, you'll not want to look back to this day and feel deep guilt for avenging yourself—for shedding blood without a good cause but simply for a selfish cause. ✓Please take this food and turn back.”

David saw the wisdom of Abigail's words and said, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel who sent you. Blessed be your advice. Blessed be you, who kept me from avenging blood today, for I certainly would have slain all Nabal's household by morning.” He accepted Abigail's food and turned back.

Nabal's death

Abigail went back home, where Nabal had come. He was holding a feast fit for a king. He was so drunk that Abigail didn't tell Nabal that night what she had done. But in the morning she told him. The Bible says Nabal's “heart died within him and he became as a stone.” ✓Perhaps he had a stroke or a heart attack and lay paralyzed. After ten days he died. The Bible states, “The Lord struck him.” “I will repay,” says the Lord, and ✓He repaid Nabal for his mistreatment of David.

David later married Abigail. Actually, she became his third wife. First, was Michal, Saul's daughter. Saul, probably because of his hatred for David, had given Michal to be the wife of another man. David had also married Ahinoam of Jezreel (a place west of the Jordan River between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea). The Bible doesn't recommend the practice of marrying multiple wives, but it often took place, sometimes even in the lives of godly men.

Let's pray that we will follow God in all we do.

Lessons from This Lesson:

- We see Jesus:
“[Abigail] married [David] in faith, not questioning but that, though now he had not a house of his own that he durst bring her to, yet God's promise to him would at length be fulfilled. Thus those who join themselves to Christ must be willing now to suffer with him, believing that hereafter they shall reign with him” ([1 Samuel 25 Commentary - Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible \(Complete\) \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)).
- If you are His child, God can keep you from sinning just as He kept David from slaying Nabal.
- Be generous to those in need, especially if they have been a blessing to you.
- Nabal was a descendant of Caleb, the faithful spy in Moses' time who, along with Joshua, believed God would give Israel the Promised Land. Let's try to live up to the good name of those who have gone on before. Follow and serve their God.
- Do not pay someone back for bad things they have done to you; let God take care of vengeance.

Activities:

- Play dough: figs; sheep; bread; bottle
- Snack: Eat raisins, figs (or Fig Newtons[®]), and parched grain like wheat or barley (heated without oil in a frying pan until it “pops”).
- Show and let students handle wool from a sheep.
- Discuss the meaning of names and how they might fit the character of the person who bears the name. Here's a site for reference: [70,000+ Baby Names With Meaning, Origin And Religion| MomJunction](#).
- Review questions: (Game: A student who answers a question correctly may pull off a piece of sheep's wool from a larger amount of wool and place it on a flannel board.)
 1. What was the name of the great man of God who died at the beginning to today's story? [Samuel.]
 2. What does the name, *Nabal*, mean? [A fool.]

3. What was Nabal doing with his sheep? [Shearing them.]
4. Why did David think he might be fed by Nabal? [Because he and his men had protected Nabal's shepherds.]
5. Why did Nabal refuse David's request for food? [Because he was loyal to Saul and thought David was a rebel.]
6. What did David intend to do to Nabal and his men? [Destroy them.]
7. Who intervened to prevent David from slaying Nabal? [Abigail, Nabal's wife.]
8. What did Abigail do? [Got lots of food ready to give to David and his men.]
9. Fill in the blank. Abigail said, "After you are king, you will not want to be _____ of shedding blood without a righteous cause." [Guilty or ashamed.]
10. What happened to Nabal after Abigail told him about giving food to David? [His heart became like a stone; ten days later, he died.]

Memory Verse[s]: (KJV)

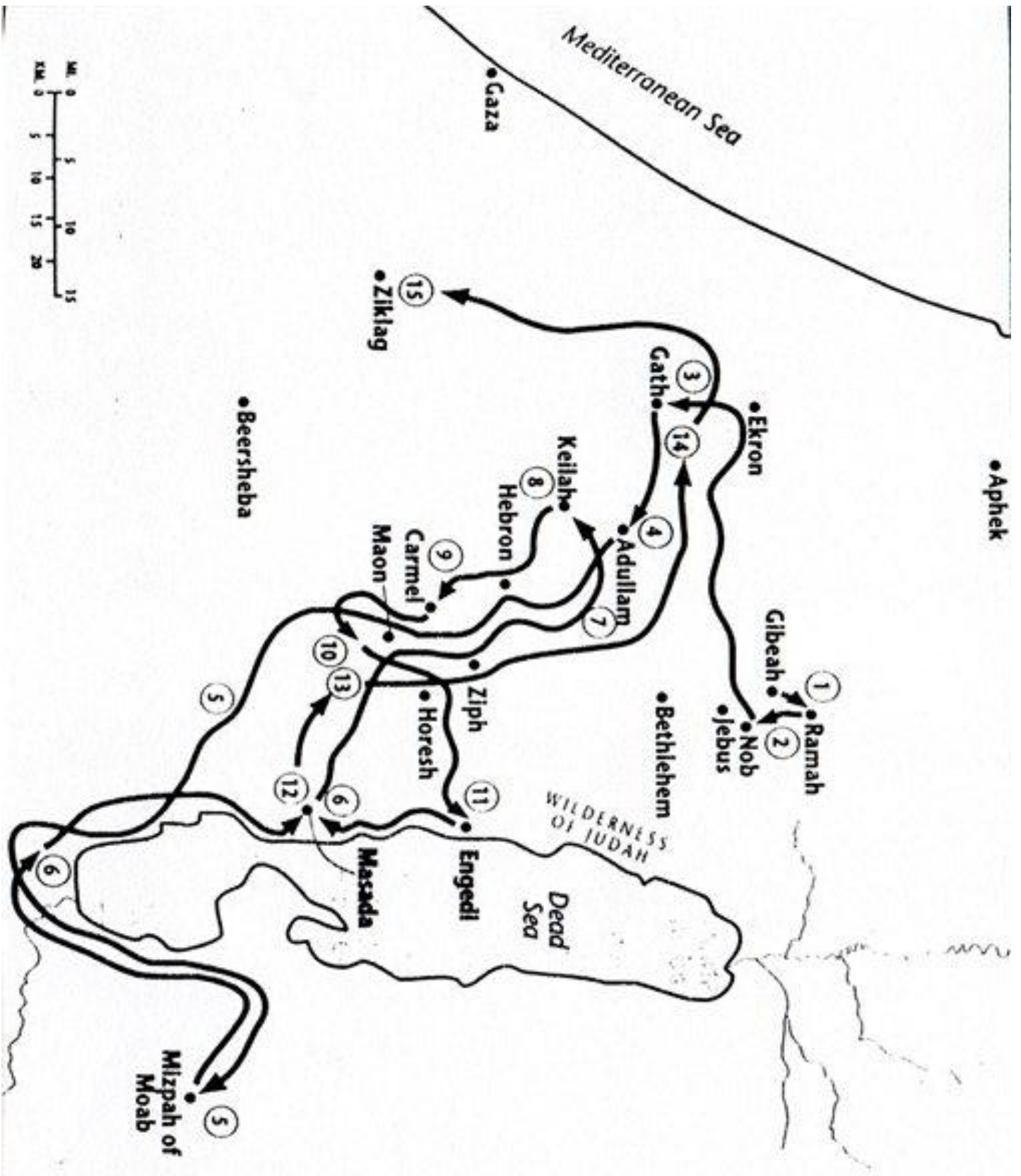
- Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Handwork:

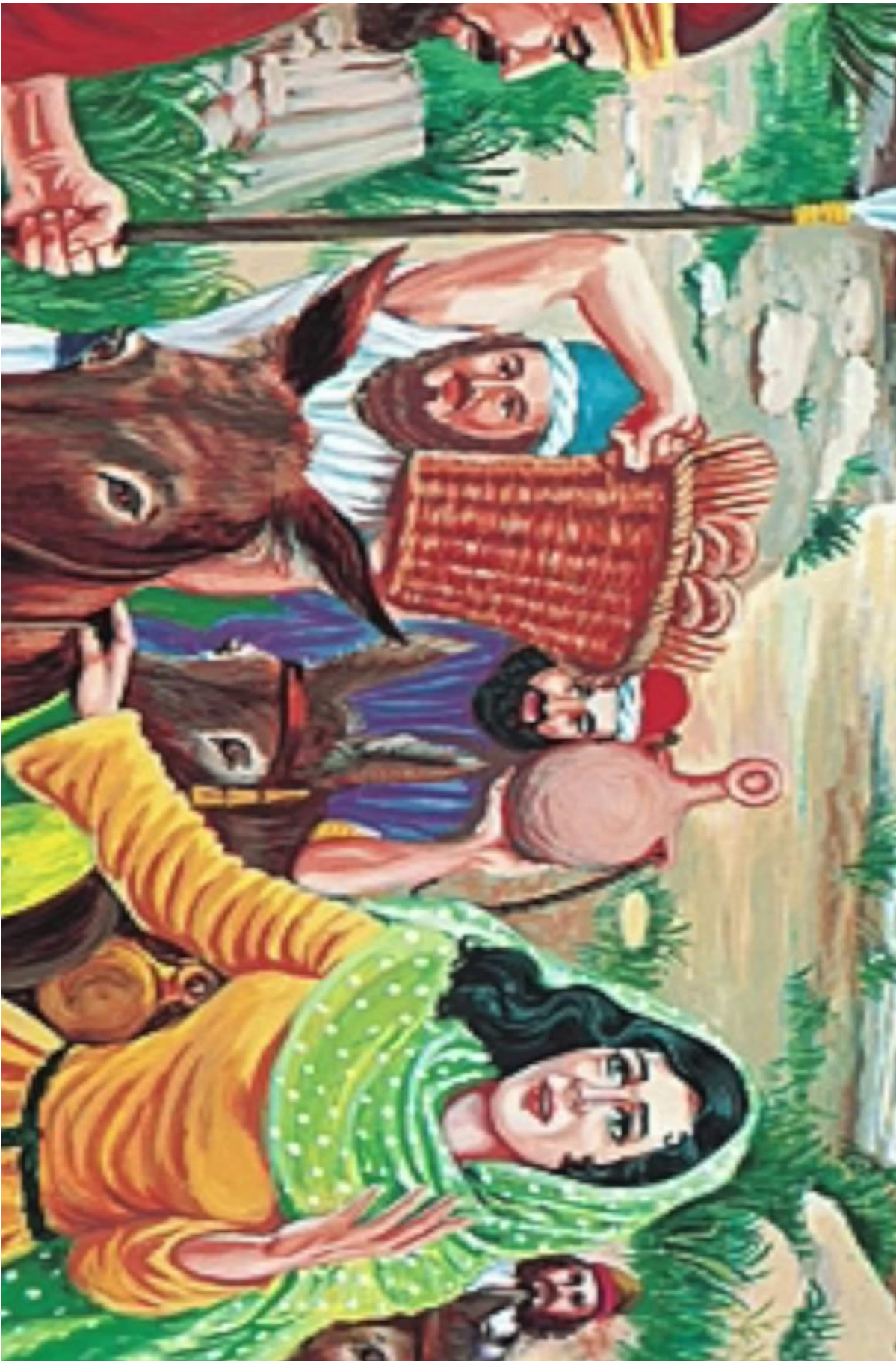
- Print the clipart basket, the verse, and items that Abigail gave found below. Students will cut out these things and glue them onto a piece of construction paper. See the picture at [bible abigail craft for kids - Bing images](#) for an idea of how the finished product should look.

vengeance

Nabal







[Historia De Abigail Y Nabal - Bing images](#)



nabal.jpg (800x600) (bibleask.org)



Abigail gave David and his men two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs (1 Samuel 25:),

