

🌱 **Goal:** To use positive words and actions to make a difference.

Connecting with the Biblical Text

This is the second of three stories about wise women in the Old Testament. Wanting to be like the nations that surrounded them, the people demanded a king, and the prophet Samuel anointed Saul as the first king. This story introduces the rise of David who would later become king and his interaction with Abigail, a prophet, peacemaker, and wise woman who eventually became David's second wife. As you read this story, notice the following: the actions of Nabal (whose name means "fool"); David's response to Nabal; and Abigail's argument with David to defuse the potential violence between David and Nabal. The *CEB Study Bible* notes that Abigail's speech is widely regarded as one of the finest examples of effective argument in the Bible and secures Abigail's place as a wise woman in contrast to her foolish husband" (p. 461).

Connecting with the World

- 🌱 Think about a wise woman that you know. What makes her wise?
- 🌱 Think about wise women in history who, like, Abigail, have made a difference with their speech. Who would be on your list?
- 🌱 Watch the YouTube video "The Story of Ruby Bridges Read Aloud!" (bit.ly/GLRubyBridgesStory, 7:58). Notice the contrast in the words of the people in this story.
- 🌱 Read a story about the power of words, such as *When God Gave Us Words* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, or watch the YouTube Video "When God Gave Us Words, by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso" (bit.ly/FMWordsSasso, 9:11).

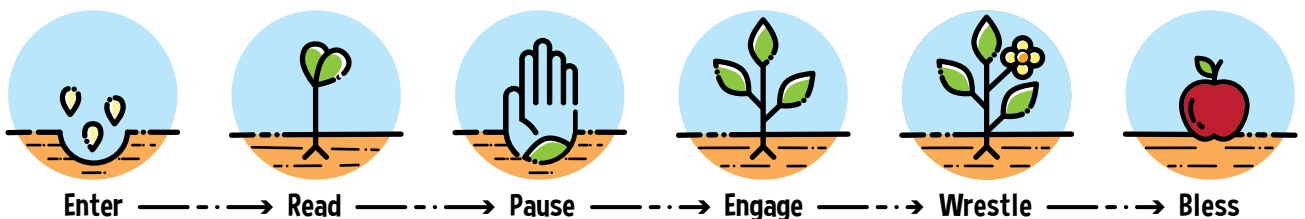
Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

As soon as a child understand language, a world of expression opens up. A deaf child learns to communicate with signs, and voice-enabled talkers make speech possible for some children. With the help of adults and siblings, a child learns how to use their speech for expression. With the help of a parent or other adults, a child learns how they can connect with others, using speech in good and kind ways and using words to make a positive difference. A child grows in their life of faith when we help them learn how their words can make a difference to others and in our world.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

One of the prominent characteristics of this story is Abigail's wise understanding of people. She knew just the right words to say to defuse the potential violence that could have taken place between David, his men, and Nabal. Occasionally, during the prayer of confession in worship, we acknowledge how we often say hurtful things to others or fail to use words wisely in a tense situation. The assurance of God's forgiveness reminds us that even when we fail to say the right thing or step up and do something, God forgives us. Likewise, we grow in our faith when we acknowledge our failures and when we, like David, learn how to choose an alternative way to speak or act. Hearing Abigail's story, we are inspired to listen well and speak wisely.

God, teach me the power of words and how my words may be used to bring about peace and healing in the world. Amen.



Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Carpet squares and/or cushions
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Drawing supplies
- ✓ Internet-connected device
- ✓ Two sheets of prepared newsprint (see below)
- ✓ Yarn or string
- ✓ Watercolor paints
- ✓ Music player and upbeat music
- ✓ Raisin bread and/or fig cookies
- ✓ Small plates and napkins
- ✓ Cups and water

Preparing to Lead

Begin by exhaling deeply, releasing any concerns you are carrying with you. Take a few deep breaths and pray:

Holy Mystery of Love, fill me with wonder and awe as I encounter your Word today. Be with me as I teach of your justice and faithfulness to the children whom you created and love. Amen.

Read 1 Samuel 25:2–42. Note things that stand out or surprise you in the text. List any questions this passage raises for you. Then read “Nabal, Abigail, and David” in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 78). Reflect on the following questions:

- ✓ Why do you think Nabal refused to share what he had with David's servants?
- ✓ Have you ever sought to take justice or vengeance into your hands when you felt wronged?
- ✓ What personal risks did Abigail take in this story? What gave her the courage to intervene in this conflict?

Recall the names and faces of the children you will lead. Pray for them by name as you prepare to learn together.

In large letters on the top of one sheet of newsprint, write “When I'm angry . . .” Then make three columns with the following headings:

- I feel this in my body:
- I think these thoughts:
- I look like:

In large letters on the second sheet of newsprint write, “When I feel angry, I can calm myself by. . .”

In another room or separate space, make a large web, using string or yarn, about six inches off the ground. Place chairs throughout the space. Use the chair legs as anchors for the web. Make the spaces between where string or yarn crosses different sizes, leaving enough room for one or several children to step through.

Obtain raisin bread and/or fig cookies. Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.

Before the children arrive, arrange a comfortable seating area with carpet squares and/or cushions in a circle. Have the battery-operated candle and *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* nearby.



Enter into sacred space together.

As the children arrive, greet them by name. Welcome them and share that you are glad they are here today. If possible, squat down or sit on a chair, so that you can talk to the children at their eye level.

Invite the children to sit in a circle on the floor. Welcome them again and introduce yourself by name.

Draw attention to the candle and turn it on. Explain that the candle reminds us that God is present as we learn together. Begin with the conversation starter “High, Low, Buffalo.” Going around the circle, invite each participant to share their name and one “high” (something good), one “low” (something sad or challenging), and one “buffalo” (something random or crazy) about their week. Offer a moment of reflection and then demonstrate by going first. After everyone has had a chance to speak, thank them for sharing.

Invite the children to close their eyes and take a deep breath, exhaling slowly. Repeat two more times. Open with this prayer or one of your choosing:

Loving God, open our ears and our hearts as we read today's story. Help us to hear your Spirit speaking to us today. Amen.

Leading



Read a story of God's people.

Tell the children that today's story is about a wise woman named Abigail who used her words and actions to prevent violence. Read "Nabal, Abigail, and David" from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 78).

After reading the story, ask the questions on page 79.



Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Invite the children to a time of quiet reflection. Tell them that you will watch the clock for one minute as they quietly reflect on this story. Encourage the children to think about how Abigail may have felt as she went to speak to David.



Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Tell the children that Abigail's courage, wisdom, and quick thinking help to diffuse a potentially violent situation. She risked her life to share her wisdom with David in a way that he could understand. Encourage the children to consider how they can utilize their words and actions to step in and help diffuse situations that involve increasing anger or aggression and encourage peaceful resolutions to disagreements.

Choose one or both options:

- Wondering Together with the Children.
 - Reflect on the story using these prompts:
 - I wonder why Nabal refused to give David and his companions anything.
 - I wonder why David's reaction was to fight Nabal.
 - I wonder why Abigail decided to intervene in the conflict between David and Nabal.
 - I wonder if Abigail was nervous to talk to David.
 - I wonder why David had a change of heart.
- Illustrating the Story
 - Reread the story. As you read, invite the children to draw a part of the story that stands out to them. Give the children a few extra minutes to finish their artwork. Then invite them to share what they drew and why.



Wrestle with our place in God's story.

Tell the children that when Nabal's servants tell Abigail about the escalating situation between Nabal and David, they ask her to "think about what [she] can do." Abigail uses her wisdom and words to intervene and persuade David not to commit violent actions that he will regret later.

Comment that they may occasionally find themselves caught in the middle of disagreements between friends. When one friend is mad at another, the situation can escalate into gossip or bullying. When children are angry, they can react like adults, in anger, saying or doing things that they may later regret. Suggest that this story invites them to think about how they can use their words to intervene in disagreements between friends so that the situation does not escalate further. It also encourages them to reflect on how they deal with their own sense of anger at another person.

Choose one or both options:

- Recognizing Anger, Practicing Calming Responses
 - Sit in a circle and ask the children to tell about a time when they felt angry at another person.
 - As a group, discuss what it feels like to be angry. Display the first prepared sheet of newsprint and invite children to respond to the prompts about feeling angry.
 - Tell the children that anger is an emotion that we all feel. Remind them that in today's story, David felt angry. He was mad at Nabal for not being kind to him, his soldiers, and his friends. His anger made him want to hurt Nabal so that Nabal would feel bad too. Luckily, Abigail stepped in. She used her wise words to help David calm down so that he did not react in anger and do something he would regret later.
 - Display the second prepared newsprint sheet and talk together about ways someone can calm themselves when they feel angry. Write their suggestions on the second sheet of newsprint.
 - Practice these two calming exercises together.
 - Breathing Exercises
 - Explain that when we focus on our breathing, it can help to calm our minds and bodies so that we feel less angry.
 - Lead the children through one or more of these breathing exercises found at bit.ly/GLTakeABreath.

Leading

- Moving Anger Out
 - Suggest that when we are angry, walking away from the person or situation that's making us mad and moving our bodies can help to calm us down. Walking, running, jumping, or dancing are all good ways to release our anger so that we do not say or do something we will later regret. After we are feeling calm, we can reconnect with the person who upset us to share our feelings and work on resolving the issue together.
 - Invite the children to think of a time when they were angry. Play upbeat music and invite them to walk, dance, or jump out their anger.
- Learning to Solve a Challenge Together
 - ✎ Tell the children that Abigail taught David how to use his words and actions to solve a problem. Invite them to work together to solve a challenge using their words and actions. Show the children the string or yarn web you have prepared. Explain that, as a group, they must get from one side of the web to the other without touching the string or yarn. To do so, they must think of the best way to get through the holes and help one another. If someone touches the string or yarn, the entire group must start over. Encourage the children to help one another and be affirming of each other's efforts. If someone is negative or makes a hurtful comment, stop the action and wonder what could be said that would be encouraging.
 - ✎ At the end of the game, discuss the strategies and cooperation skills the children used to solve the challenge.



Bless one another with God's grace.

Form a circle. Invite the children to share one takeaway from today's session.

Lead the children in the following prayer or own of your choosing. Invite the children to repeat after you or simply listen.

Dear God, /
help us to think kind thoughts, (*touch head*) /
to speak loving words, (*touch mouth*) /
and to practice peace in all we do. (*rotate folding
palms together*) /
Help us to remember that you love us (*hug
yourself and hold until the "Amen"*) /
and are always with us.
Amen. /

As you conclude, turn off the candle. Thank the children for being part of today's session.



Grow with more.

Invite the children to set the table with plates, napkins, and cups of water. Provide raisin bread and/or fig cookies. Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.

- ✎ As the children eat together, wonder why Abigail brought food to David. Discuss other Bible stories that involve food, hospitality, or peacemaking.