

Volume 4
SUMMER

ALL together NOW



for **ages 4-12**

**13 Sunday school lessons
when you have kids
of all ages in one room**



LOIS KEFFER

Author of **ALL-IN-ONE SUNDAY SCHOOL**

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All Together Now

Volume 4 — SUMMER

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Introduction

Dear Friend in Children's Ministry,

Ah, summer—time for adventure! There's no better place to begin than *All Together Now, Volume 4*. This summer quarter is packed with Old Testament adventure from start to finish.

We kick off things with Joshua, a mighty man of God, and his strong and courageous leadership into the Promised Land. Having received the reins of leadership from Moses, Joshua stays true to the commands of the Lord God of Israel and leads the people to do the same. Wise both in matters both military and spiritual, Joshua leads the army of Israel through the land of Canaan, conquering its kings and city-states and preparing the land for occupation by the 12 tribes of Israel.

For the young nation, as their obedience to God goes, so go their fortunes. When they become entangled in worship of the Canaanite god Baal, we find them destitute and preyed upon by bandits. It's Deborah, the wise judge, who forms a surprising coalition to defeat an oppressive Canaanite king and bring 40 years of peace to Israel.

The Israelites *demand* to have a king like other countries. The Lord relents and gives them Saul for a king. They cheer tall, handsome Saul, until he sins against God and madness overtakes him. Enter the extraordinary David. Chosen at a young age to be the next king, he spends years evading King Saul's jealous attacks, resisting opportunities to take revenge on Saul when the opportunity arises.

When he and his hungry men are refused food by a selfish rich man, David is about to take revenge when the lovely and wise Abigail stops him by offering food herself. Her selfish husband dies in a fit of anger and David takes Abigail as his own wife.

David's shows the power of perseverance, of pursuing God even while evading those who would kill him. Throughout the hair-raising escapes and great victories of his life, David remains exemplary in his intimacy with God, penning psalms that still speak to our hearts today.

Generations of kings after David refused to remain faithful to the Lord. So the Lord calls the great prophet Elijah to challenge priests of the false god Baal to a fiery showdown on Mount Carmel. After Elijah's tremendous victory, Queen Jezebel's threats send him running and he learns how to hear God's still, small voice of encouragement.

We wrap up our summer adventures with the rule of a young boy king, Josiah, who finds the book of the Law and, with his devotion to God, turns his lost country on its ear. Young Josiah's reforms lead Israel back to her covenant relationship with the one true God. He leads his people in the first Passover celebration in many years. God once again blesses his people with his mighty presence—all because of what an 8-year-old boy started.

Your kids won't want to miss one week of this action-packed summer with Israel's heroes—men, women, and even kids. Prepare for young lives to be changed as you lead them in meeting the people whose courage and obedience formed the nation of Israel and set the stage for Jesus, the Messiah.

Lois Keffer

Abigail Saves the Day

Lesson 9

LESSON AIM

To help kids know that ★ *God sends wise people into our lives to guide us.*

OBJECTIVES

Kids will

- ✓ play a game of Follow the Who?,
- ✓ hear from Lady Abigail about how she met David,
- ✓ make thank-you notes to share with wise people who've guided them, and
- ✓ commit to following wise spiritual leaders.

BIBLE BASIS



1 Samuel 25:2-42

This account of David and Abigail gives us everything—the foolish, repulsive rich man, the angry warrior-prince, a bit of suspense, a wise woman hastening to make amends for her boorish husband, and finally, a touch of romance. We have here many of the archetypes of great storytelling, and your kids are going to love it.

David and his hungry men mingled among the shepherds of the rich Nabal during the annual sheepshearing, a time of great feasting and celebration in Israel. It was also a time when marauders could easily swoop in and steal a year's worth of profits from the owner of the sheep. In this case, David's men struck up a good rapport with the shepherds and guarded them.

You'll need...

- ☐ volunteer to play Abigail
- ☐ Bible-times costume with colorful scarves and gold or silver bracelets
- ☐ copy of "Abigail's Script" (pp. 104-106)
- ☐ beautiful cloth to cover Lady Abigail's chair
- ☐ copies of the "Bouquet of Thanks Card" handout (p. X108)
- ☐ scissors
- ☐ colored pencils
- ☐ glue sticks
- ☐ optional: 4x5-inch envelopes

Knowing that celebration would ensue in Nabal's household, David sent young men as messengers to Nabal with friendly greetings, information about how David's company had provided protection for the shearers, and a polite request for food.

Nabal, whose name means *fool* or *boorish*, responded in the most insulting way, calling David and his company runaway servants and implying that David himself was nobody. In a warrior culture, this kind of insult called for an immediate response—and David was God's anointed, thus Nabal had not only insulted David but God himself.

David immediately ordered his men to strap on their swords and prepare to march on the wealthy Nabal's home, swearing that no male of that household would survive.

Enter the brilliant and beautiful Abigail. One of Nabal's servants got word to her of her husband's foolish insolence toward David. Abigail knew of David's great service to the shepherds and probably feared he was preparing to march against her home. Wasting no time, Abigail prepared a generous food offering for David and his men, loaded it on donkeys and had the donkeys and servants precede her so that she intercepted David.

Upon meeting David, she bowed before him, as one would when addressing a king. She then addressed him as "my lord" ("adonai") and called herself a lowly servant even though she was a wealthy and influential woman. She delivered a brilliant speech to the affronted king-to-be. Abigail encouraged David not to sully his coming reign with needless bloodshed. She even prophesied that he would be the founder of a dynasty.

David was totally taken in by her gifts, her wisdom, and her beauty. He praised God for sending her to stop him from needlessly spilling blood.

Abigail didn't tell her boorish husband of her actions that night because he was rolling drunk. The next morning she did, however. Nabal's heart froze because he realized how close had been his brush with death. He suffered a stroke and died 10 days later.

On hearing of Nabal's death, David sent messengers asking Abigail to become his wife. Once again she acted quickly, gathering her five maidservants and belongings. The wise and beautiful Abigail married her handsome prince and all her wealth became David's. Now that's an amazing story!

Rabbinic tradition makes Abigail one of the most remarkable women in Jewish history. Her actions may well have turned the course of history, calling out the nobility in David rather than allowing vengeful bloodletting to stain his reputation.



Hebrews 13:17

God graciously provides wise people to intervene in our lives at important times—if we're attuned to God's guidance and listening to the Holy Spirit. Mentors may appear in the way of friends who will come alongside us and speak into our lives for years. Or someone may drop a bit of wisdom on social media that is just the thing we need to hear. In the case of David and Abigail, God sent Abigail like a giant flashing red light on the freeway. *Stop, David! Think about what you're about to do!*

And the mighty warrior prince humbled himself and listened—to a *woman!* It was certainly not the norm in ancient Israel for a man of power to listen to a woman.

Therein lies a great lesson for us. Be on the lookout for wisdom when God puts it in our path. Be humble and ready to receive that which rings true with God's Word.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

I'll confess, with the spiritual frauds we've seen in the headlines, with those who would take advantage of children, it's harder for me to write about entrusting kids to wise spiritual leaders than it used to be.

Our current church does a thorough background check on each person who wishes to be part of children's ministry. If yours doesn't, introduce the idea to your church leadership. Children's ministry is truly an area where we need to follow Jesus' advice about being as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16).

Review your guidelines for safe care of children from sign-in to sign-out, for visitors who want to have a look at your children's ministry, and for what to do in case of emergency. All this is not to be paranoid, but to be practical.

And now to the glorious, overarching truth of this lesson: God *will* send spiritual leaders into the lives of your kids at just the right time and place. Much of this will happen at church, some beyond its walls.

I've been especially grateful for the spiritual leaders God has sent into my own children's lives during their sensitive teenage years, during college years and military service, during courtship, and now young parenthood. At just the needed moment, someone always appeared through God's gracious providence to offer a nudge in the right direction. Seeing that pattern emboldens me to believe the same will happen for the beloved children in your spiritual care.

ATTENTION GRABBER

Follow the Who?

Give kids a warm welcome, and tell them you hope they're up for a challenging game.

Have everyone form a large circle. Ask for one brave child volunteer to leave the room for a moment. That person will be the Guesser.

Have the remaining kids decide who'll be the Leader. The Leader will initiate a motion for everyone to follow, such as clapping hands, marching in place, swinging arms, hopping on one foot, tapping heads, touching noses, or whatever creative idea kids come up with. Throughout the game, the Leader will change motions. The rest of the kids will follow what the Leader is doing.

Here's how to play. The Guesser comes back into the room and stands in the middle of the circle while the kids in the circle are already doing the first motion. At some point the Leader changes the motion and all the kids in the circle begin doing the new motion. After a few seconds, the Leader changes the motion again and the rest of the kids follow suit. The Guesser's job is to figure out which person in the circle is the Leader. The kids in the circle will try to keep the Leader's identity secret by not making eye contact or looking at the Leader too long.

Give the Guesser two chances to guess the Leader. Whether the Guesser guesses correctly or not, send the Leader outside the room to become the next Guesser. Choose a new Leader and continue the game for about 10 minutes.

After the game, invite everyone to sit.

Ask:

- **Describe what you think was fun about being the Leader.**

- **Tell what was it like to be the Guesser.**

- **Explain why you'd rather be a Leader or a Guesser.**

Say: **Sometimes life can leave us guessing! Should we do what we feel like doing, even though it might be a little wrong? Should we follow what others are doing? Or should we try to find a strong leader who might help us figure out what to do?**

If you've ever been confused about what to do, wave your hand at me.

Wave your hand at the kids to indicate that you, too, have felt confused about what to do.

Prep Box

Be prepared to share a time God sent a wise person into your life to help you make an important decision.

Say: **It's good to know that ★ God sends wise people into our lives to guide us. Once this happened to me.**

Tell about a time God sent a wise person into your life to help you make an important decision.

Say: **Today we're going to learn that even David, the future king of Israel, needed guidance from a wise person to keep him from making a terrible mistake.**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Abigail Saves the Day (1 Samuel 25:2-42)

Say: **Normally a prince of Israel would only take advice from a select few people—and they would only give advice if he asked for it. But that's not what happened in today's Bible passage. This important advice came to David from someone he wouldn't normally listen to at all. Furthermore, this person stopped David when he was in full battle mode and made him listen!**

Ask:

- Describe what kind of person you think could stop David and give him advice when he didn't want it.
- Tell what you think this person might look like.

Say: **Well, I'm not giving you any more hints, because I've invited someone from David's royal household to tell the story. This person, being royal, is always treated with great respect. Are you ready to respectfully meet a member of David's royal family? Be sure to show every courtesy!**

Go to the door and open it just a crack so kids can't see who's outside. Bow respectfully, then make a sweeping gesture, inviting Lady Abigail into your room. When she approaches the kids, set out a chair for her and cover it with a beautiful cloth. Then back away and take a seat with the children to listen as Abigail speaks.

Prep Box

Ask a woman volunteer to play the role of Abigail. Give your volunteer a copy of "Abigail's Script" (pp. 104-106) early in the week. Have her dress in a Bible-times costume. Because Abigail was wealthy, she might wear colorful scarves and gold or silver bracelets. Encourage your volunteer to carry the script inside a scarf or scroll. Have your Abigail waiting outside the room for you to open the door and introduce her.

Abigail's Script

Enter the room regally, giving a nod toward the children. Take a seat in the chair the teacher provides.

Shalom! Thank you for inviting me to your class, young servants of the living God.

I'm Abigail, wife of David, warrior of God, prince of Israel. The day I first met Prince David I had no idea of marrying him. I was already married, in fact, to a wealthy but evil man named Nabal. No, when I met David I was thinking of nothing but saving my family and everyone in my household from David's anger. He and most of his men were in full battle mode, marching toward my home, intent on killing everyone in it.

You've probably learned that David was a great man of God who showed mercy. He was all of those things! But my husband, Nabal, was not. You see, it was sheepshearing season, a time of celebration and feasts and sharing. My wealthy husband owned flocks in every direction. While our servants sheared the sheep, David's men watched over them so that no harm came to them by day or night. We didn't ask David to do this—he did it out of the kindness of his heart.

Finally, when the shearing was done and the feasting began, David sent messengers to my husband, asking if he would share food from the feasting. David had over 600 men living with him in the wilderness. It would have been common courtesy for Nabal to pack several donkeys with food and send them off to David in thanks for watching over our men and our sheep.

But my husband was never courteous. He was proud and spiteful. Rather than sharing food with David, he sent an insulting response, calling David an outlaw. David was no outlaw! He'd been anointed by God to be Israel's next king! To insult God's anointed was like insulting God himself.

My husband's terrible response stirred deep anger within Prince David. David wouldn't stand for someone to insult him or God. The kind of insult

my husband sent to David demanded a response, and David was ready to deliver one—by sword! He told his men that by nightfall the next day not one male in Nabal’s household would be left alive. He and his men strapped on their swords and set out for my home, ready for battle.

I didn’t know what had happened until one of our male servants came rushing to me in a panic and told me everything. He was scared to death. Everyone knew that David and his mighty men had never been defeated in battle. And we were no army! We were just a large, wealthy household run by a foolish man.

I knew I had to do something and do it fast. I got all my servants busy in the kitchen. Before long they were loading donkeys with gifts for David and his men—200 loaves of bread, raisins, fig cakes, and sheep meat all ready for roasting—all the good things my kitchen could produce.

I sent the loaded donkeys ahead of me, led by servants. Then I followed on the last donkey, ready to throw myself on David’s mercy, to make apologies, and to plead with him to spare our household.

God gave me the courage to set out to meet David and his men that night. If you tried, you could not imagine fiercer-looking warriors. Once there was a time when David and his men set out to fight our enemies, the Philistines. Just the sight of David and his men made our enemies run away—and those were armed, trained Philistines! I was just one woman, facing down the fiercest warrior of our time. My heart was in my throat. With every step my donkey took, I prayed for God to fill me with courage beyond any human courage I’d ever known.

I barely looked at David’s face. When I reached the great leader I slipped off my donkey and bowed all the way down to the ground. “My Lord,” I said, “please forgive me. I didn’t know of your young men who came to my house or of my husband’s foolish answer. Please receive these gifts and show mercy to my household, for God will make you and your family great on the throne because you are fighting the Lord’s battles. Don’t shed blood today and let it be a bad mark on your record!”

I held my breath, waiting for David to answer...

Finally he said, "Praise the Lord, the God of Israel for sending you out to meet me today! Thank God for your good sense! You've kept me from shedding blood. Now return home in safety. No one will hurt your family."

I was so relieved! I bowed again before the future king, then took my servants and went home. I found my husband in the middle of a great feast. He had no idea how close danger had come. But he had drunk too much, so I didn't tell him until the next morning.

When I told my husband everything that had happened with David, he had a stroke. He could not speak or move, so we put him to bed. He died 10 days later. It was not a sad death—he was mean and stingy and everyone in my house had been afraid of him.

I was surprised to see messengers arrive from David a few days later. You'll never guess what they said—David wanted me to become his wife! I had to catch my breath. *David wanted me to marry him?*

I quickly gathered my things and five of my maidservants and traveled back with David's servants. In my wildest dreams I never thought of marrying the warrior prince. I had met him only once—when I was begging for the lives of everyone in my household! But this time I was traveling to meet my groom!

Praise God, who is faithful to those who love him! I dared to challenge a prince, knowing he would not want blood on his hands the rest of his life. God took the life of my stingy, sinful husband and placed me in the household of the king! I will forever tell of God's faithfulness and of the kindness of my husband, Prince David!

Exit the room.

Ask:

• What did you think about the person God sent to guide David?

• Why do you think David listened to Abigail?

Say: David was chosen by God and anointed to be the next king of Israel. He didn't *have* to listen to anyone but God. But he *chose* to listen to a woman named Abigail. David realized that ★ *God sends wise people into our lives to guide us.*

Ask:

• Why was it was a good or a bad thing that David chose to listen to Abigail?

Say: God's guidance may not always come from a teacher or leader. Sometimes it might come from a friend, or even from a younger brother or sister. God can use people's words to remind us of the truth taught in the Bible.

Even a great leader like David could humble himself to listen to wisdom from someone else—that means we can, too.

LIFE APPLICATION

Thankful Listeners

Say: Let's talk about people who've given you wise guidance.

Ask:

• When have you ever received wise guidance from someone you didn't expect it from?

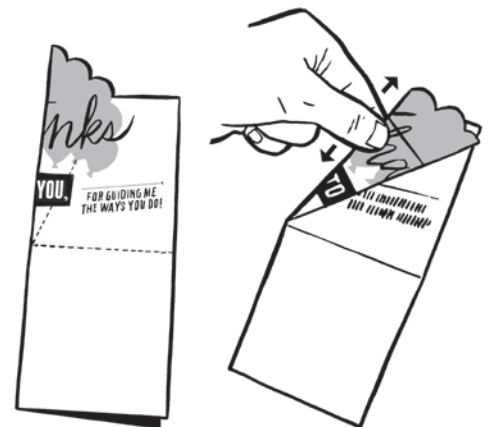
Say: ★ *God sends wise people into our lives to guide us, and we never know just who those people might be. I bet some of those people who regularly guide us might enjoy getting a thank-you. They might even be happily surprised and encouraged!*

Lead kids to your craft area. Lead kids through these simple instructions for cutting and folding the card.

- ✓ Cut out the card on the solid line. Fold it in half vertically so the print shows.
- ✓ Fold the pop-up section back and forth on the dotted lines; then open the card and lay it flat.

Prep Box

Prepare a "Bouquet of Thanks Card" as a sample for kids to see and handle. Set out copies of the "Bouquet of Thanks Card" handout (p. 108), scissors, colored pencils, and glue sticks.



Bouquet of Thanks Card

Make this happy balloon bouquet of thanks pop-up for someone who has guided you!



- ✓ Fold the card in half horizontally so the pop-up section faces you. As you fold the card closed, pull the pop-up section toward you.

Note: The card will be folded at the bottom and open at the top.

Have kids use colored pencils to finish the balloons with a bright color scheme. Once the cards are finished, have kids sign their names and then use glue stick to seal the edges of the card together, being careful to leave the pop-up section free.



COMMITMENT

Cards to Go

As kids work, brainstorm with them who might receive their cards. If kids are making cards for people in your church, encourage them to deliver their cards before they leave church today.

As kids finish making their cards, have them clean up the craft area. Then gather everyone in a circle with their finished cards.

Say: ★ **God sends wise people into our lives to guide us.**

Sometimes those wise people come from surprising places.

Ask:

• **How can we remember to listen for the guides God sends our way?**

Say: **Remember, God is always looking for people who are willing to listen to him. Keep your heart open to God. Check in with God just by listening a few times each day.**

Ask:

• **When are times you can check in with God with a silent listening prayer?**

Affirm their ideas and encourage them to do pray to God every day.

CLOSING

Prayer for Guidance

Pray: **God, thank you for ★ sending wise people into our lives to guide us. Help us to be ready to listen like David was willing to listen to Abigail. Keep our hearts open and tender toward you. In Jesus' name, amen.**