

Relational Effect and Relational Impact

Building a Relational Tool Box—part 5

July 18, 2021

DAY 1: Definitions of relational effect and relational impact

1. A few years ago I was talking to a woman who doesn't go to our church. She had been married for eighteen years, three kids. I could tell that something was bothering her and asked what was on her mind. She hesitantly related a conflict she had recently had with her husband that not only puzzled her but heightened the wall in her heart. "Why did he get so bent out of shape over something so small? His anger was way out of proportion to the situation. His anger toward me was completely unwarranted."

What she was experiencing were two examples from today's message. The first is her relational effect and the second is her relational impact, neither of which she could see.

- Relational effect is the immediate result of your relational style.
- Relational impact is the long-term result of your relational style.

2. While she could clearly see his relational effect on her, she had no idea of her relational effect on him. Her immediate relational *effect* was annoying to him in present, real time. But her relational *impact* was seen in his apparent overreaction in the moment. His overreaction was the "tip of the iceberg" of past frustrations in communicating with her. She was aware of neither. All she could see was his "*unwarranted*" response. She could clearly see his wrong. She had no clue about her relational effect or relational impact.

3. Our relational style consists of two elements:

- Words, and
- Attitude: tone, emotions, intent, our "real" purpose, demeanor, facial expressions, etc.

4. Of course, her husband needed to be responsible for his response, but her husband's reaction was also due to an attitude he sensed in her at that moment (relational effect) that had irritated him for a long time (relational impact).

5. The bible tells us we must give thought to our ways and words.

*Prov. 14:8 The wisdom of the prudent is to **give thought to their ways**, but the folly of fools is deception.*

Prov. 15:28 The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.

Ephesians 4:29 Let no rotting word come out of your mouth but only such as is good for edifying, according to their needs that it may impart grace to those who hear.

*Pro. 15:4 The **tongue that brings healing** is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.*

Prov. 16:21 The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Abigail and David, the setting

1. There are always two conversations going on at once. The obvious conversation has a topic and words. The almost “invisible” conversation involves tone of voice, non-verbals, attitude, perceived interest, etc.

2. While we may believe we are just responding to the words we hear we are also responding to the non-verbal messages we are sensing.

3. It is these very realities that Proverbs addresses.

Prov. 18:13 If anyone gives answer before he hears it is his folly and shame.

*Prov. 10:13 Wisdom is found on the lips of **the discerning**, but a rod is for the back of one who **has no sense**.*

*Pro. 11:22 Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman who shows **no discretion**.*

*Pro. 13:3 He who guards his lips guards his soul, but he who **speaks rashly** will come to ruin.*

*Pr. 13:10 **Pride** only brings quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.*

*Prov. 10:14 The wise store up knowledge, but **the mouth of a fool invites ruin**.*

4. One of the truths these verses point to is that our “natural, autopilot” responses to people is fraught with self-interest and self-satisfaction. We foolishly believe that the people in our lives should meet our needs for acceptance, esteem, validation, significance, etc. This foolish belief is what Proverbs calls “pride.” (Prov. 13:10).

Abigail and David: the setting

5. There are three main characters in our story:

a. David is running for his life from King Saul. He has a band of six hundred men with him.

b. Nabal is a wealthy rancher who is foolish, surly, clueless about life and people, and an ingrate.

c. Abigail is the wife of Nabal, who in spite of being married to Nabal is a remarkable woman.

1 Samuel 25:3 His name was Nabal and his wife’s name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite.

6. This story occurred three thousand years ago in Israel. David’ men have been in the countryside avoiding King Saul and his army. They are doing something they don’t have to do. They are providing protection for Nabal’s herds, flocks and shepherds from marauders and thieves. Without that kind of protection ranchers were at the mercy of marauding bands. Three thousand years ago there were no signed contracts. This was a “gentleman’s agreement”.

7. We’ll pick up this story, tomorrow.

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: Abigail's relational effect begins with her approach to David

1. At the end of shearing season, David sends a few men to Nabal to ask for food and drink for his men. Nabal responds as the foolish, surly and clueless man that he is. "Who is this David? There are many scoundrels like him who want to take advantage of someone like me."
2. David is outraged when he hears this news. This is the equivalent of a contractor having a gentleman's agreement with a homeowner to do a six-month renovation on the house and then not paying a dime, not even for food for the contractor and his crew.
3. David believes a grave and injustice has occurred. He wrongly decides on vengeance. As he and his men are riding to confront Nabal and kill him Abigail, Nabal's wife hears of her husband's ingratitude and foolishness. She strongly suspects that David will come and Nabal will pay a heavy price for his folly.
4. David and four hundred of his men head to Nabals's house.

1 Samuel 25:14 One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. ¹⁵ Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. ¹⁶ Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them. ¹⁷ Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."

5. Abigail acts quickly, packing up enough food for David and his men, and then rides with the ranch hands to deliver the food and wine to David. Meanwhile David is bitterly riding through the mountains bent on killing Nabal and every male in Nabal's employment.
6. Under each of the verses below, jot down what you notice about Abigail's approach.

1 Samuel 25:23 When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. ²⁴ She fell at his feet...

1 Samuel 25:24... and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say.

1 Samuel 25:25 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. And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my lord sent.

7. Her approach was masterful as to relational effect! (a) Humble, not defensive, (b) she "joins" him as his servant (c) She appeals, not demands, (d) she is hoping for mercy, not dictating, (e) she understands the reason for his anger, not defending her husband, (f) she is not biased against him.
8. Her approach is tremendously disarming, and it begins with her attitude and demeanor, and it reinforced by the phrasing of her words.
9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Abigail's appeal.

1. Yesterday, we looked particularly at Abigail's approach. It was a masterful example of her relational effect. Today, we'll look at Abigail's appeal.

Abigail's appeal is to the man David most deeply desires to be and to his highest aspirations.

2. Under each of the verses below, jot down what strikes you about Abigail's appeal to David.

1 Samuel 25:26 "And now, my lord, as surely as the LORD your God lives and as you live, since the LORD has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal.

1 Samuel 25:27 "And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you.

1 Samuel 25:28 "Please forgive your servant's presumption. The LORD your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the LORD's battles, and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live."

3. What struck you most from verses 26-28?

4. What are David's deepest aspirations?

- a. He wants to be a man that follows God well.
- b. He wants to honor God.
- c. He has a godly desire to triumph over real enemies of the nation, knowing God must help.
- d. He wants to be a gracious man, to humbly accept the gift of grace (and food) which he did not deserve.
- e. He wants his life to count for God in the long run.
- f. He wants to be a man of integrity.

5. What struck you most from Abigail's appeal with David?

DAY 5: Abigail's arguments

1. Under each of the verses below jot down the “arguments” she makes in her appeal to David.

1 Samuel 25:29 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, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling.

1 Samuel 25:30 When the LORD has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel, ...

1 Samuel 25:31 ...my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the LORD your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant.”

2. What struck you from Abigail's arguments to David?

3. He was the kind of man that would not deliberately act in a way that brought shame upon the name of God. He longs to be a man of honor with God and with people. (In spite of the precipice is drawing close to).

4. He is a man who knows how badly self-contempt can relentlessly harangue you after you insist on your way. The bitterness of conscience can be brutal.

5. He also knows that some missteps, though repented of and forgiven can sadden the life for a long time after.

6. She appealed to his better self, or theologically, she appealed to his deeper self, the life of God planted down deep in his heart.

Abigail's effect on David:

1 Samuel 25:32 David said to Abigail, “Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. ³³May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. ³⁴Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.” ³⁵Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, “Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request.”

7. The relational effect on David is a masterpiece of relationship, in her approach, her appeal, and her “arguments.”

8. What strikes you most from Abigail?