

Consumed Part 1

Controlled by the Present

It was like a prison to her: cold and dark, filled with painful memories of past hurts and lost dreams for the future. By her own choice, Michal spent the remainder of her married life locked inside the confines of her heart, alone, in bitterness and contempt.

For Abigail, it was a place of freedom, filled with patience and mercy, forgiveness, humility, generosity, and faith. Unlike Michal, Abigail chose to rise above her pains and sorrows and allow God to use them to develop her into a wife of noble character. In the end, she was honored by both God and men for her willingness to patiently endure suffering.

Michal and Abigail were unable to control the difficult circumstances that entered their lives, but they *were* able to control the attitudes of their hearts. Just like Michal and Abigail, the attitudes we choose to cultivate towards our husbands during painful and trying circumstances will either imprison us or liberate us.

Concealed unforgiveness and resentment toward your spouse will not only consume your thoughts, it will destroy your marriage and your relationship with God. In the next **four** lessons, you will come to understand that no matter how you have been sinned against, Christ demands an attitude of patient endurance, mercy, and forgiveness towards your offender. Matthew 18:32-35 says, *“I forgave you tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you? Then [he] sent the man to prison... That’s what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters in your heart”* (NLT).

Michal

It wasn’t always that way. In the beginning Michal loved David. She loved the way he soothed her father as he played his harp. She loved his good looks and confidence on the battlefield. She loved his prudence and wisdom, and most of all, she loved his devotion to his God.

In order to understand how Michal’s great love for David turned into deep-rooted contempt, we must attempt to gain an understanding of the people and circumstances that shaped her decisions. Let’s begin by reading 1 Samuel 18:1-30.

Why did the people love David? What could they have seen in him that was not apparent in Saul? _____

How did Saul feel about David? _____

According to verses 17 and 21, why did Saul seek to make David his son-in-law? _____

How did David respond to the king's request (v.23)? _____

Saul knew that David was unable to offer the customary dowry for a king's daughter. In its place, what did he require of David for Michal's hand in marriage? _____

David agreed and soon returned, unscathed, with twice the required payment.

We are not told whether Michal ever witnessed her father's malicious outbursts toward David, but she could not have been ignorant of his feelings while living in his household. Why do you believe Michal was willing to be caught in the middle of her father's devices?

Let's continue reading in 1 Samuel 19:1-17.

It was not long until Michal found herself answering to her father for the deliverance and protection of her husband, as if David were *her* enemy! According to his statement in verse 17, what role did Saul expect her to play in her marriage? _____

What attitude(s) was he encouraging? _____

What was Michal's response to his interrogation? Why do you believe she chose to answer him in this way? _____

David fled that night with intentions of returning to Michal *and* the throne. But when months turned into years, and David never came back for her, could she have convinced herself that she had been abandoned?

Consider the definition of "abandon": "To give up to the control or influence of another person; to withdraw protection, support, or help from; to cease from using."¹

How would David's absence have affected her physically? Emotionally? Spiritually? _____

Read 1 Samuel 25:44. We do not know whether it was Michal who lost hope of ever rekindling her relationship with David and requested to be married again, *or* if it was her father who forced her to marry another man in an effort to keep her from David. Either way, Michal entered into an adulterous relationship.

David wasn't so innocent himself. If we back up and read verses 42 and 43 of 1 Samuel 25, we discover that David had also taken another spouse—two in fact—Ahinoam *and* Abigail.

What was happening to David and Michal's relationship? _____

Torn

Read 1 Samuel 31:1-10.

After Saul's death, David was anointed king over Judah (2 Samuel 2:2-4), and Saul's son, Ishbosheth, was made king over Israel. In the years that followed "*there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker*" (2 Samuel 3:1, NKJV).

Soon, Ishbosheth's general pledged his allegiance to David, creating an opportunity for David to claim the throne of Israel. To confirm the general's loyalty and to make a public announcement of his assertion, David insisted that Michal be brought back to him.

Why would the return of Michal strengthen David's claim to the kingdom? _____

Read the heart-wrenching account in 2 Samuel 3:13-16.

Michal was used as a pawn to bring David into power. How must she have felt? _____

Go back and read 2 Samuel 3:2-5. How many wives had David taken in addition to the three (including Michal) he already had? _____

What additional grievances could this have created in Michal? _____

It had been approximately 10 years since "*Michal let David down through [the] window.*" Perhaps Michal's contempt for David began during his long absence, perhaps it began here. For the second time in her life, Michal found herself separated from a spouse at the hand of another, only this time it added to the grievances she already bore.

Despised

The next time Michal appears, David is king. Second Samuel 6:16 says, "*Now as the ark of the Lord came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart*" (NKJV).

What does it mean to despise someone? _____

Contrast what Michal loved about David in the beginning to what she despises about him now? _____

To despise is "to look down on with contempt or aversion; to regard as negligible, worthless, or distasteful." Webster's Dictionary lists "contemn" as a synonym. This word "implies a vehement condemnation of a person... as low, vile, feeble, or ignominious."²

What she once loved about David now repulsed her. As a judge upon the throne of her heart, Michal condemned his actions and declared him unworthy of her respect.

Read 2 Samuel 6:14-23.

With blessings in hand, David stepped over the threshold to meet Michal's mockery. With a single flick of her tongue, she reproached him with insolence and ridicule.

What did she mock him for? _____

It's not likely that David's exuberant celebration was the cause of Michal's contempt. It is more likely, however, that her hatred resulted from a lifetime of unforgiven and unforgotten pains and sorrows.

What was the consequence of her bitterness toward David? _____

In the end, Michal was consumed by the contempt she meant for David. (Much like her father!) Ironically, in the days to come, it was not David who was seen as vile and feeble, but Michal who was viewed as such...for to die childless and alone in the king's palace was a great dishonor.

Michal was a victim of powerful men. But as you will see, even victims have the power to choose the attitude of their hearts...

In closing, read 1 Peter 2:18-3:1.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What is your initial reaction to the circumstances that transpired in Michal's life? How would *you* react in similar circumstances?

Do you feel that she is justified in her condemnation of David? Why or why not?

2. In the beginning Michal confidently expected David to return. But when weeks turned into years, her hope began to dwindle. How do prolonged seasons of difficulty in your marriage lead to a loss of hope?

Are you guilty of setting a time limit on God's redemption of *your* relationship?

What did 1 Peter 2:18-3:1 reveal about patiently enduring hardship and unfair treatment?

Do you continue to trust in God's ability to transform your husband into a man after His own heart, *or* has your weariness over a lack of change led to hopelessness? Explain.

3. Hopelessness can cause you to question the love you once had for your spouse. What is the danger in allowing this to happen?

4. Physical, emotional, and spiritual distance can exist between two people living in the same home. Wives commonly “punish” their husbands for wrongs inflicted upon them by withholding physical intimacy, by refusing to be emotionally vulnerable, or by acting spiritually superior. In what ways have you punished your husband?

5. Let’s turn the table. Naturally, women long for attention and affection—tangible companionship. We can assume that Michal’s second husband, Paltiel, met those needs.

In what ways has a lack of attention and affection caused you to resent your husband? (Consider your feelings toward his job, hobbies, friends, etc.)

How have you attempted to satisfy these needs in *someone* or *something* else?

6. Unforgiveness is the catalyst of a condemning and critical spirit. How is the fruit of unforgiveness evident in your speech?

7. A wife with a critical spirit sets standards that will expose the faults of her husband. When he does make a mistake, she is quick to point it out, judge, and sentence him. She further breaks his spirit by adding this mistake to a list of past grievances. In what ways have you passed judgment on your spouse?

8. Michal watched David worship the Lord with great skepticism and cynicism. Perhaps she thought, “How can your relationship with God be real after *you* have done *this* to me?” In what ways have the wounds you’ve received from your husband caused you to resent his expressions of worship toward God?

9. It is questionable whether Michal ever had a genuine relationship with the Lord. In addition to her contempt for David, 1 Samuel 19:13, 16 revealed Michal’s use of an idol to deceive her father’s troops, aiding David’s escape. Is there evidence in your life that points to a lack of genuine dedication to the Lord?

10. Alan Redpath suggests in *The Making of a Man of God*³ that the great sin of David’s life—committing adultery with Bathsheba—began with Michal’s mockery. How can our condemnation and critical behavior push our husband away... into the arms of another woman?

¹ Merriam-Webster, Inc: *Merriam-Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*. 9th ed. Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1985, c1983. 43.

² *Ibid*, 344.

³ Redpath, Alan. *The Making of a Man of God: Lesson from the Life of David*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1962. 198.