



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Samson: A Man for his Times

Tim Badal | June 1, 2014 | Judges 13



The Life of Samson | Part 1

Welcome to the [Book of Judges](#). We've just finished our long series looking at the most well-known sermon in all of human history: the Sermon on the Mount. We invested a great deal of time—both in our small groups and as a church body—looking at [Matthew 5, 6 and 7](#).

For the next five weeks we're going to dedicate our time to looking at the biography of a pretty amazing guy in the Old Testament. I'm using "amazing" both in the good sense and the bad sense. We're going to be looking at the life of Samson during the month of June. We're going to look at one of the most enigmatic characters of all Scripture. He is the flawed fighter himself: the man Samson. You can find Samson's life and biography in [Judges 13-16](#).

As we look at the life of Samson I am confident that you have heard the name of Samson before, whether you have been a follower of Jesus Christ for a long time or are brand new to Christianity and the church altogether. And if you know Samson, then you probably know his girlfriend Delilah. Samson—this great man of strength whose exploits are known to believers and non-believers alike—is who we're going to be studying.

As we explore this biography, we're going to see that Samson's story could come right out of Hollywood's biggest blockbuster movie. We're going to see a "script" filled with blood and gore, war and love, seduction and betrayal and an ending that would put the viewers on the edges of their seats.

Yet with all that being said, the story of Samson is also a great tragedy. His life begins so brightly; in fact, the name Samson literally means "shining sun." He is full of so much hope and raw potential, yet Samson will show us that even amid such a glowing start, failure after failure leads to more heartache and trouble than anyone should ever have to endure.

That's exactly what Samson is going to endure. He is given incredible super-human strength like the superheroes on our movie screens. But this man of such great strength will also be characterized by some of his greatest weaknesses. He is the proverbial weak strong man.

Many people in history have addressed this combination of strength and weakness. Some have said that Samson is the antitype of the great prophet Moses. Michelangelo chose Moses as one of his chief sculptures while John Milton used Samson as the subject of his greatest tragedy.

Samuel Zwemer helps us see the contrast in this quotation that I am going to share with you. It is probably the longest I have ever shared but I love it so much. He contrasts the lives of Moses and Samson and looks at the differences in these two men. Listen to what Zwemer says:

Moses and Samson! What a contrast in their strength, vocation, talent, character, destiny and influence on life and literature. Some would say that they had nothing in common, although both had godly parents and were consecrated in infancy. And they do present a marked contrast.

- One was the man of brain, learned in all the wisdom of Egypt.
- The other was the man of brawn, up to all the tricks and sports of a giant.

Moses' life is one long epic; Samson's a brief tragedy. Moses was the man of God; Samson was the man of the people. One was an Apollo; the other a Hercules. Moses was legislator, redeemer and leader of his people. His rod wrought miracles by the hand of God and his pen wrote the laws of Israel for all ages.

Samson appears suddenly as a grotesque figure, a solitary individual always waging his conflict against the Philistines alone and generally actuated by personal motives of caprice or humor.

Samson died with a prayer for vengeance on his lips; Moses, with a prophecy for Israel. Moses wrote the Pentateuch; Samson gave us a riddle. Moses lived 120 years, founded a nation, and his laws remain their legacy for 30 centuries. Samson's brief career ended in a local catastrophe without permanent success or memorial. The Nazirite of Dan [Samson], by his exploits, only began to save Israel from the Philistines. Moses, the Levite, was the greatest prophet of Israel and their supreme lawgiver. Moses (although he lost his temper and never entered the Land of Promise) "was faithful in all his house"; while Samson betrayed his trust and lost his power. So different are these two characters! Yet, one thing they had in common—the same faith but not the same faithfulness.

Let's stop there for a moment. We can look at this contrast and say, "Well, Moses must have had something more. God gave him something more than He did to Samson and that's why Moses was such a marked contrast." Or many of us might say, "If I only had the strength of Samson or the leadership abilities of Moses—if God would just give me those gifts—then I might be able to serve Him."

When we look at Moses, Samson, David and so many more on through the New Testament and into today we ought to realize that we have all been given the same faith. The question is, "Are we pursuing the same faithfulness?" So as we look at the life of Samson we need to understand that he was a man of his times.

What does that mean? I read many biographies. Many biographers speak of a man in human history—especially a great man—as "a man of his times." I'm currently reading a biography on Thomas Jefferson. The author Jon Meacham says in the opening passage that Jefferson was an incredible man, one of the greatest men in all of human history. Meacham says he was "a man for his times and of his times."

I had to pause and ask, "What does he mean by that?" That phrase is used by biographers to speak about great men who also have a glaring weakness. For example, let's look at the life of Thomas Jefferson. He was the writer of one of the greatest documents on freedom in all of human history. He wrote that we are endowed by our Creator with the ability for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, that no man should be enslaved or held in bondage and that all men are created equal in the sight of God.

Jefferson wrote with such flowing eloquence and oratorical skills but was a man who owned slaves himself, while speaking on the subject of freedom. Wait a minute! Meacham says that glaring weakness in his life is a reminder that Jefferson lived as a man of his time.

As we look at the life of Samson, I want you to remember that he's a man of his time. Does that mean we can absolve him of all his sins and failures? Absolutely not. But as we open Judges 13, we come to a context—a place in human history—that the Bible tells us is not a positive one.

In fact, the Book of Judges is a time of great disaster and struggle for the people of Israel. At the end of the book the author tells us that there was no king in the nation of Israel and each person did what was right in their own eyes. That's what Samson found himself doing many times.

So if we can't absolve Samson of his sins, the context should at least allow us to extend a little grace to him. It also should remind us that God has endowed us with some amazing gifts and abilities as well, and we find ourselves failing just like Samson did.

As we look to the life of Samson, we will see a rap sheet filled with all types of ugly sin, fits of rage and issues of lust and desire. You may say, "But I don't have those problems. That's not my issue or struggle." Let me remind you that even though our rap sheets may be different, each of us live like Samson. God has given us all the potential in the world to change the lives around us and to change the world for the cause of Christ and His Kingdom. But just like Samson we fail miserably at living up to that potential and being filled by the Spirit Who enables us to do great things. So we need to understand that we all have a little bit of Samson in us.

But here's the good news: amidst all the frailties, flaws and massive mistakes made by Samson in his life, our study will show us a great truth of God's grace. Despite all the terrible stuff in Samson's life, Samson is listed in Hebrews 11:32 as one of the inductees of the great Hall of Faith.

That helps me to be encouraged in the midst of my struggles, issues, and times that I've turned from God and not lived up to my potential in Him because it reminds me that God can still use me. Here's the truth brothers and sisters: God can still use you.

God can use you with all your past struggles, past issues and present dysfunctions. God can use you to do mighty things for His Kingdom. But like Samson, we must make a choice. Are we going to honor God and follow Him and His ways? Or are we going to honor ourselves and pursue things that will only affect our lives?

Now let's turn our attention to Judges 13 where we're going to learn about the birth of this amazing man Samson and the impact a visitor from Heaven has on Samson's parents. Judges 13 says:

¹ And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

² There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. ³ And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. ⁴ Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, ⁵ for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines." ⁶ Then the woman came and told her husband, "A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. I did not ask him where he was from, and he did not tell me his name, ⁷ but he said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'"

⁸ Then Manoah prayed to the LORD and said, "O Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with the child who will be born." ⁹ And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field. But Manoah her husband was not with her. ¹⁰ So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, "Behold, the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me." ¹¹ And Manoah arose and went after his wife and came to the man and said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to this woman?" And he said, "I am." ¹² And Manoah said, "Now when your words come true, what is to be the child's manner of life, and what is his mission?" ¹³ And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. ¹⁴ She may not eat of anything that comes from the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing. All that I commanded her let her observe."

¹⁵ Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain you and prepare a young goat for you." ¹⁶ And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "If you detain me, I will not eat of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD." (For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.) ¹⁷ And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honor you?" ¹⁸ And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?" ¹⁹ So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to the one who works wonders, and Manoah and his wife were watching. ²⁰ And when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the LORD went up in the flame of the altar. Now Manoah and his wife were watching, and they fell on their faces to the ground.

²¹ The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. ²² And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God." ²³ But his wife said to him, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these." ²⁴ And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and the LORD blessed him. ²⁵ And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Let's pray.

Father God, we pray for Your blessing on our time in Your Word. Teach us what to see in Your text, how to apply it to our lives, and how to make the difficult decision of ridding our lives of the things that need to be gone so that Your blessing and Your Spirit may fill us to the fullest. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

There are three key points I want to point out as we look at the birth story of Samson:

God Calls People to Serve Him No Matter the Circumstances

God Commands Parents to Shape Their Children

God Continues to Show Us His Compassion

1. God Calls People to Serve Him No Matter the Circumstances

Judges 13 does not begin like many of our fairy-tale stories, "In a kingdom far, far away, there was this wonderful king and queen and all of the subjects were happy. Everybody lived happily ever after." No my friends, Judges is one of the saddest books in all of Scripture. It was a time of great darkness and struggle.

In Judges 12 we see the absolute stupidity of a judge named Jephthah, who preceded Samson. Jephthah made an idiotic vow—something no person should ever do—which resulted in the sacrifice of his own daughter to the fire in order to save face before the pagans.

Judges took place during a time when the nation was ripe for godly leadership but instead received leadership from deeply flawed men and women. Yet the great grace of this book is that God still used those men and women to fulfill His plans and purposes.

This is also true today. We live as flawed people amidst the chaos, turmoil and trouble that fills our world. God is on the lookout for faithful men and women: people who will rise to the occasion, who are willing to stick their necks out amidst all of the uncertainty in their lives to take God at His Word and who will step out in faith.

We Are Called to Serve God Amidst Times of Disobedience

This is going to be true for Samson's parents. We don't hear much about Samson at all in chapter 13. Instead we hear about his mom and dad. Samson's parents lived in a time of great disobedience. Judges 13:1 says this clearly, "*And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.*" This sounds like a broken record; Israel finds itself once again in the pattern of sin.

This pattern started after the death of Moses and the rise of Joshua as Israel's leader. Joshua was given the job of clearing out the Promised Land and giving it to the Israelite nation. Israel was supposed to be God's shining light in the Promised Land: an example—to all the neighboring nations—of people who were loved by God and lived for Him. Then—because of that light—other nations would see the blessing of God and start to live differently.

But the opposite took place. As soon as the Israelites found themselves in the Promised Land, they began to covet the ways of the nations around them. They began to covet the pagan women, worship and way of life. Instead of being an example to the disobedient nations around them, they became like everybody else.

That same temptation is alive and well for us today in America. We have been placed in our homes, in our occupations and in wonderful places of great honor and opportunity. Will we live like everybody else around us or will we be that shining city on a hill that can be seen in a world of darkness?

Right now some of us have hidden that light under a bushel. We are not being the salt and light of the world that we should be as we learned in the Sermon on the Mount. We are like the nation of Israel during the time of Judges. Instead of being the one everybody looks to for joy, peace and life, we have looked to them for the things that we desire.

This is the nation of Israel. They are living amidst a disobedient people and are enjoying the disobedience themselves. Samson would be born into a nation filled with people who knew better but made willful choices to follow their appetites instead of following God.

God is very clear in Galatians 6:7, "God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that he will also reap." So what does God do with issues of disobedience? He addresses our disobedience and He did so in the Book of Judges as well. When they had done what was evil in the sight of God, God had an answer for them at the end of verse 1, "*So the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.*"

The Philistines were the dreaded enemies of the nation of Israel. This wasn't the first time the Philistines had encountered the Israelites and it wouldn't be the last time. We know of a great Philistine soldier named Goliath who would come and create all kinds of havoc for the nation of Israel. David would have a great opportunity for a big step of faith by slaying Goliath.

But let's talk about the Philistines during the day of Judges. They were a powerful nation but not the most powerful nation in all the land. They weren't an invading army; the Philistines didn't have much military prowess. They took over nations through business and pleasure.

Let me explain. Historians tell us the Philistines were the first nation to learn how to smelt iron. That means they were able to take iron and fashion it into weapons or tools, things needed for work and for industry. So they were the people you would turn to if you were a farmer in need of a tool or a soldier in need of a weapon. You had to go through the Philistines to get whatever you needed. They were the Wal-Mart of the day. They had all that you needed.

Yet the Philistines never told you that you had to follow them. They didn't rule with an iron fist. Instead they welcomed you into their lifestyle, "Come and trade with us. Everything you need, we'll give you. Just come." They would also extend to you the hands of their sons and daughters in marriage. They would offer you business and pleasure.

So the Philistines would say, "Okay Israelites, come and be part of our customs. Come and be part of our lives. We'll even give you our children to marry." They knew that when the Israelites married their sons and daughters, the national spirit of Israel would be diluted little by little. Then at some point in the future the nation would no longer be the nation of Israel but some mongrel race of Philistines and Israelites together.

The Philistines said, "Instead of having to invade with armies, we will slowly and consciously strangle the heart of Israel and their ways. We will choke them to death through compromise and assimilation." Israel was not enslaved by military dominance like that of the Egyptians, but by spiritual and cultural seduction.

That's the name of the world's game today. They're not dominating us from a military standpoint. They're not putting us in chains and demanding that we do things. No, they advertise with beautiful and seductive scenes on television and in magazines. They tell us, "Just enjoy yourselves. Intermingle with us. Have a good time." They know that the more we hang out with them the less they'll hear about Jesus and our morals. They'll hear less about the Scriptures and the way of life taught by the Scriptures.

The world is doing exactly what the Philistines did: not taking us over through military might but through seduction, focusing on business and pleasure. This is true for Christians today as well.

We Are Called to Serve God Amidst Times of Defeat

It was also a time of great defeat. For 40 years the people of Israel were under the rule of someone else. There was no national pride or patriotism. They were part of another nation's empire.

Don't think this was 40 years of great anguish and struggle; scholars remind us that there was not one single voice crying out for repentance or revival. It was 40 years in God's Promised Land and not a single individual rose up to say, "God wants more for His people than bondage. God wants more from His people than compromise."

That begs a question for us today. Will we be that singular voice in our schools, workplaces, neighborhoods or families? We need to cry out to the world, "This isn't God's best for you. God wants so much more that He sent His Son to die for you, that you might have eternal life, peace, joy, contentment and all that comes with a relationship with Jesus Christ."

Or—because of compromise and seduction—have we become distracted and become one with the neighborhood, one with the school and one with the family? We may have a different appointment on Sunday mornings, but we have become altogether useless for God's use and pleasure.

We Are Called to Serve God Amidst Times of Difficulty

The nation of Israel was okay with this defeat. While the disobedience of a nation and defeated situation of Israel is a story line in and of itself, the writer of Judges reminds us that there was a certain man amidst all of the geopolitical, social and cultural issues going on in that day.

With God's heavenly GPS He finds this Danite named Manoah and his wife whose name we don't know. He is from a small tribe in the nation of Israel. Jewish tradition tells us that Manoah is a righteous man. He's a good man who is seemingly unimportant within the nation of Israel.

This should remind us that God knows who we are in the midst of everything going on around us. God is intimately acquainted with us. It's easy to think, "But I'm just Tim. I'm just a bald dude from Hinckley, Illinois. I don't have much acclaim. What is God going to do with me?" You can say the same thing of yourself.

Yet I want you to know that God knows you, has gifted you and is now calling you. Amidst all the circumstances going on around you, He is looking to you and saying, "Oh, I have plans for you." The Bible makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "*What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.*" That's not some generic promise. That's a promise for every person who bows the knee to Jesus Christ. God has great things in store for us if we just follow Him, humble ourselves and submit to His calling in our lives.

The only thing we know about this couple is that they live a life of difficulty. Not only did they live during a bad time in Israel's history, but this couple had even more bad news: Manoah and his wife are without children and they're barren.

The phraseology shows that the writer wants us to know this is a hopeless case. The woman is barren or infertile and they have no children. This means they have given up hope that a child will ever be born to them.

We don't know how old this couple is—obviously old enough to know they are never going to have kids—and we see a sad picture of them. They are living in some far-off place with no kind of prominence and they're infertile.

We know that in biblical times barrenness would bring about questions of doubt and rumors of being cursed by God. Children are a blessing and gift from God. Not having children in biblical times often meant that God had cursed you because of some sin or issue in your life. Manoah and his wife—as Old Testament people—would no doubt have endured such rumors.

We know personally that the life of a man and woman trying to have kids is one of great patience and great sadness. "Maybe this is the month. Maybe this is the year. Maybe this is the decade." They never want to give up hope that God will give them a child. They know of nothing that would cause them to be cursed yet God does not answer their heart's cry.

Some of you are in that predicament. You're not cursed by God. Maybe you're there because God's ways are higher than our ways. Maybe there's a child that will come and maybe not. But amidst everything we still know that God has plans for people with kids and people without kids.

So take heart. God loves you and has a plan for you. He had a plan for Manoah and his wife. Amidst this struggling nation, God was about to send a deliverer. He was going to send one who would be gifted by God to show the nation that God was still with them, that God had not left them or forsaken them and that God could be trusted in all His ways.

But for that to happen, Manoah and his wife are going to have to be people who trust and obey. Many of us want God to rescue us. We want God to answer our prayers. Yet little do we know that many times the answer to our prayer is found in our obedience.

We say, "God, give me this. God, I want You to answer that." We never seem to think that God may be requiring something of us so that our prayer can be answered. Far too many of us just throw prayers up to God without thinking that He's requiring anything of us.

God's about to answer their prayer but it's going to come with some requirements. In order for this baby to realize fully his role in God's plan, he is going to need parents who teach and train him, who will serve and honor God faithfully.

2. God Commands Parents to Shape Their Children

Now that we understand the context of Samson's birth, we now need to focus on the parents. We see that God gives a command to Samson's parents and to us as parents to shape our children.

God's about to use Manoah and his wife in a crucial and necessary role to train up their God-given child so that he will fulfill God's plans and purposes for his life. Parenting is the greatest task that's given to any husband and wife—one that can absolutely bring you to the brink of craziness. I mean, kids are hard to raise. But it is a task we have to be part of for the sake of society, for the sake of our kids and even for the sake of our posterity. Parents must dedicate themselves to serving God well in the raising of their children.

Parents Must Be Active in Following God's Word

But how are they to do it? Let's see what Manoah and his wife did. First we see that parents—like Manoah and his wife—need to be people who are active in following God's word. In Judges 13:3-7, we are told of an angel who visits Manoah's wife and shares the good news of an upcoming pregnancy.

What an absolute time of joyous celebration this would be! This woman has been without children, it is probably later in her life and she is now given the opportunity to know the joys of having a child of her own. The curse is gone and God's blessing is on her.

This blessing comes with strings attached. This baby comes with responsibility. Now, these parents will need to do all the things we're normally called to do as parents: diapers, late-night feedings, teaching him to read and write and showing him how to function within society.

But this baby was going to be different. They were told that this baby would be totally separated for God's use. And not just for a short season of time—just 40 days or something—but for all of his life. From the point of conception, through childhood, into adulthood and even up to death, Manoah's child would be a Nazirite.

We'll talk more about Nazirites later in this series, but for now we need to understand that a Nazirite was one who took a vow of total submission to God whether for a short season of time or for long seasons of time. We can learn all about it in Numbers 6:1-8.

In that passage we learn that being a Nazirite includes things like no haircuts, no wine and no fruit from the vine. That means no eating grapes or even raisins since they are dried up fruit from the vine. You were to stay away from all of it. Also you were not to touch anything that was unclean or dead.

Why does this vow of being a Nazirite have all these odd requests from God? We see the answer in the book of Numbers as the phrase "separated to God" (*nazar Yēhovah*) is shared repeatedly. This vow was meant to separate someone from the ways of this world to do the bidding of God in his life.

In verse four we see the angel makes it clear that she even needs to be careful while the baby is in utero to not eat or drink anything fermented or unclean. All of this reminds the parents of Samson that he is to be separated unto the Lord.

That meant Samson was going to be different. He was going to be unique. He wouldn't think about taking over his father's business or about doing anything else because he was supposed to be focusing on his personal and purposeful commitment to the Lord.

Nowhere in the story do we see Samson's parents fight this. They obey. Obedience isn't easy. It wasn't easy for Samson's parents and it wouldn't be easy for us.

I love the example given in our passage. Manoah and his wife are told, "You're going to have this special child and he's going to be dedicated to the Lord." I wonder if they ever thought, "Why does our kid have to be different? Why does our kid have to have responsibility? Can't we just be like all of our neighbors and just have a normal kid to love? Can't we do normal things like enjoy life with him, feed him everything and cut his hair? I mean, this kid's going to look like a hippie."

Who wants a hippie kid? This kid's going to be viewed differently. When they're handing out grapes at school, he's going to have to say, "No, I can't. I'm set apart for God." That's not going to put him at the popular kids' table. The parents are going to sit there saying, "Why do we have to have the special kid?" But nowhere in the text do we see them say that.

This is for all of life. This isn't for a short period. Manoah and his wife obey even though they don't get it all. The plans of God are somewhat confusing to them. So Manoah says in Judges 13:8, "teach us what we're supposed to do."

Those are the magic words. Whether we're parents or not, the magic words God wants us as Christians to say are, "Lord, I'm willing but I don't get Your plans. I don't understand Your ways. I want to be humble. I want to be willing to serve You in every way but I just don't know which way to go. Is it left or right?"

James tells us that the magic words are, "Lord, show me." James 1:5 tells us, "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*" God will never be angry with you for saying, "Lord, show me the way. Help me to see." Manoah and his wife did exactly that. Instead of growing frustrated and seeing the hardship of obeying God with their child, they trusted God and did what He said.

Parents Must Be Active in Fearing God Above All Things

In verses 21-23 we see Samson's dad freak out after the angel shares the good news of all that's going to happen. The angel was there one minute, turned away a good meal of goat and then he's gone. He says, "I don't want any of that. Don't detain me. But if you'll offer that as a sacrifice, that would be good enough for me." Then the flame consumes the animal and the heavenly visitor leaves them just as quickly with all kinds of brilliance and splendor.

Then in verses 21-23 Manoah realizes, "This guy that visited us is something totally different." He recognizes the power and splendor of the heavenly visitor. So what does he want to do? He is fearful of what he has just seen and the task he's been given. He's afraid he's going to die. "I want to get this thing

right," he says. A couple of times in our passage he says, "Just tell me. What's the manner of this boy's ministry? How are we to parent this kid?"

In our world there is far too little fear of God in parents' eyes. What are we afraid of instead? We're afraid of the kid. We think, "Well, if we do this, they won't like us." We are far too worried about and enamored with our children's educations, their choices of college, their accomplishments in sports and their popularity. We're worried for our kids about those things.

Manoah and his wife are concerned about the most important thing—how do we raise this child so he will fulfill God's plans and purposes as an adult? As a parent—I have three kids, I understand—all of those things are important: education, sports and friends. But they are not the most important thing. As a Christian, if you fail to raise your kids in the fear and admonition of the Lord, even though they may be the valedictorian, a Heisman Trophy winner or the most popular kid in the nation, you have failed as a parent.

None of those things will matter if they find themselves consigned to hell. Who cares how they lived that life? Who cares of the acclamation that's given unto them? If we don't teach them the ways of the Lord, we have failed as parents.

Manoah and his wife get it right. They're worried about what God will say of them, not what their kid will say. Samson probably said at times, "But Mom, Dad, I want grapes!"

Samson's parents replied, "You can't have them."

Samson said, "You're the worst parents in the world."

They answered, "That's okay because we're good in God's eyes and that's all that matters."

I know some of you are going to use that now on your kids. We need to remember that God comes first, not our kids. Children are great things to have. They are wonderful human beings. But remember, they should not come between you and your spouse and they most definitely should not come between you and God. So teach them God's ways. Do it together as a married couple fearing God, not your child.

So what are you to teach your children? You need to teach them how to live amidst triumphs. Show what it means to do something unto the Lord when they win or do well. What about when there's trouble? Your kids are not always going to get first place. Your kids are going to have trials and tribulations in their lives. A godly parent teaches their children how to be ready for those trials, troubles and tribulations that are going to come. They teach their children to stand on the rock of Jesus Christ in those days. They teach their children to cry out to God in their trouble, to cry out for Him to come in their hour of need.

Teach them about temptation. Proverbs—which we're going to study later this summer—repeatedly has a father telling his son, "Be careful. Be careful. Be careful. There are many bad things out there and you need to be ready. You need to know how to deal with that."

Parents Must Be Active in Fervently Desiring to Honor God

So how do we do it? Manoah and his wife fervently desired to honor God. They do two things in verses 15-20: they try to make a meal for their visitor and then they worship and honor him. How do parents make sure they are raising their children well? They begin by being strong followers of Jesus Christ.

Maybe you are thinking, "I don't know if I'm doing a good job with my parenting." Let's back up a minute. How are you doing in your walk with Christ? I've told you this, brothers and sisters: My parents were not superstar parents. They had issues and struggles like everyone else. But what I saw was a man and a woman who loved Jesus. My dad's love for Jesus overflowed into his love for his wife and his love for us. I knew that I was third place after Mom and after Jesus. I also saw that love in my mom. I have no other choice but to do that now because I saw the faithfulness of my own parents who did that.

Maybe your parents weren't that way. Today is your opportunity to show your children what it means to be a fervent follower of Jesus Christ. Honor Him. Give Him the best. Show your kids how important it is to be a follower of God's and to do what He says. Even when it's difficult, you will not be disappointed.

Now, let me just clarify something: Manoah and his wife did all those things well but Samson still blew it. There are some parents here who are a little older than myself and are thinking, "I think we did everything right. We've honored God and served Him but our kids are still living like you-know-what."

Proverbs 22:6 says, "*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*" Notice the reference here is Proverbs, not Promises. It's not a promise that if you do everything right as a parent your kids will turn out wonderful.

This is why it is so important for us as parents to get on our knees and pray that God would do what we as parents can't: change the heart of a child. Remember also that it's never too late for a young man or young woman to come back to Jesus.

Maybe you're thinking, "But they're out of our house," or, "They'll never come back." A parent can't get them back but Jesus can. So pray that God would do that.

3. God Continues to Show Us His Compassion

We're going to see throughout this series that God continues to show us His compassion. Amidst all of the darkness in the life of Israel—all of the difficulty in the life of Manoah and his wife—Samson's birth is a reminder that God is not done with His people. God is completely and utterly faithful to His promises.

God Does This by Giving Us Another Opportunity for Change

How does God show us His compassion? First, He offers another opportunity for us to change. The Israelites are living how they want to live—not thinking about God—but God says, "I'm going to bring another deliverer."

This is a reminder for us that God gives us another opportunity today just as He did in the day of Judges. Maybe yesterday your life was filled with sin. Well, you're still alive today and God has given you another opportunity to repent. God says, "I'm not going to send My Son Jesus yet because My patience and longsuffering gives you another chance to repent before it's too late."

God gives the nation of Israel Samson as a reminder that He is not done with His people yet. God isn't done with each of us yet either. So we need to turn to Him, see His grace and compassion and say, "Thank You Lord for another opportunity for my heart to be softened so that I can turn to You."

God Does This by Giving Us the Obedience to Fulfill His Calling

God's compassion is seen in the obedience to fulfill God's calling. This is quite simple. God was calling Manoah and his wife to do things they were capable of doing. What He will call Samson to do is also something he is capable of doing.

God didn't say, "Manoah (and wife), I want you to jump 25 feet into the air." They aren't capable of doing that. God didn't require that of them. He said, "I'm going to bring a child into your life. You're going to raise this child and I'm going to give you everything you need to be able to get it done."

God never requires us to do something that we cannot do through His strength. The Bible says we have everything we need for life and godliness through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. If you have something in your life that God's calling you to, don't say, "I just don't have that gifting. I don't have that ability or resource." God says, "Let Me deal with that. You just be faithful and I'll give you everything you need to accomplish it."

God Does This by Sending the Only One Who Can Do All Things

Do you remember that Visitor we have Whose name is Wonderful? That's Jesus Christ. When we see the phrase "angel of the Lord" (*mal'ak Yēhōvah*) in the Old Testament it's what we call a theophany—an appearance of God.

So what we have here is Jesus Christ pre-incarnate coming and visiting with Samson's parents. It's amazing what happens here: the great Deliverer Jesus speaks about a forerunner deliverer in Samson. Jesus says, "Manoah (and wife), I'm going to take care of all these things. I'm going to give you what you need."

Jesus also does something for Samson that He did for His disciples. Look at Judges 13:24-25. It says, "*And the Lord blessed him. And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him...*" Just as Jesus did in the New Testament, Jesus comes in the Old Testament and says, "Do you know what I'm going to do for your son? I'm going to fill him with the Holy Spirit."

The same Holy Spirit Who filled the life of Samson is alive and well in us today. We have to wrestle with these questions, "Will we allow ourselves to be filled with the Spirit? Or will we be like Samson who grieved the Spirit at different times in his life, bringing all kinds of heartache, pain and struggle?"

We're going to learn more about Samson, his faults and his failings. But we're also going to learn more about how God can use people like Samson and us to change the world.

Let's pray.

Father God, we come before You and thank You for Your Word. I thank You for Your people and their diligence to hear these words and apply them to their lives. I pray that we would look to the example of Samson's parents: not perfect by any stretch of the imagination but used by You in a powerful way to minister to their son. I pray that we as parents would do the same thing.

But Lord, I pray also that we would not just consign ourselves to serving you through our parenting alone. I pray that we would serve You in all facets of life and society. Wherever You place us help us recognize that You've called us to those places as the salt and light in the world. That means we have to say no to sin, unrighteousness and worldly lusts. Sometimes we have to do what Samson was unwilling to do and turn off our desires so that we can follow You and be set apart for You and Your work.

Lord, I pray that as we go through this series, You would teach Your people and raise up modern-day men and women who will stand for You in the strength of Samson, not the defeats, so they can honor You in all that they do. Now send us forth from this place to fellowship with one another and speak of Your great renown with each other. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Village Bible Church | 847 North State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 | (630) 466-7198 | <http://www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove/resources/sermons>
All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.net).