

God Meet Us

Printed Text • Judges 13:1–7, 24–25

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: **RECOUNT** the details of Samson’s birth and calling, **EMPATHIZE** with the emotions Samson probably experienced regarding lifestyle restrictions imposed on him by others, and **REFLECT** on some ways that unforeseen circumstances prepare people for leadership roles today.

In Focus

Aaron and Regina Brown were married many years ago.

They had tried and tried to have a baby, but it never worked. After the first year of trying, the doctor told them there was a strong possibility they were experiencing infertility issues. After many months of being poked and prodded for tests, Regina and Aaron faced the reality that they were indeed infertile. They were a young couple with no money for expensive hormone treatments, and IVF treatment was not an option they were comfortable with. However, they were a God-fearing couple, so they chose to leave their infertility in God's hands and trust him to give them the grace to bear the grief of not having children.

When Aaron chatted with his barber, Andre, about it, Andre asked, “Why not adoption?” Aaron said, “It'd be hard to convince an agency we'd be a stable environment with all the teens from our church coming and going at all hours. Sometimes, they even need to spend the night with us. Regina just seems to attract kids to her wherever she goes. She has motherly vibes like that. That's why we knew it'd be so great to have kids of our own.”

Sounds like, Andre said, “you already have more than enough kids already and a mission field to boot.”

In today's lesson, we will meet a couple who received a son from God, Samson, whom he set apart for himself to become one of Israel's judges.

Have you ever felt set apart for a specific task?

Keep In Mind

For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. (Judges 13:5, KJV)

You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and his hair must never be cut. For he will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. He will begin to rescue Israel from the Philistines.” (Judges 13:5, NLT)

Words You Should Know

Nazarite (Judges 13:5, 7) nazir (Heb.)—One who is devoted, set apart, consecrated to God.

Strong drink (Judges 13:4, 7) sheker (Heb.)—Beer or another alcoholic drink, usually made from barley.

Say It Correctly

Manoah. ma-NO-uh.

Ashkelon. ASH-ku-lon.

Ekron. ek-RAHN.

KJV Judges 13:1–7, 24–25

1 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

2 And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not.

3 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:

7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

24 And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

NLT Judges 13:1–7, 24–25

1 Again, the Israelites did evil in the LORD’s sight, so the LORD handed them over to the Philistines, who oppressed them for forty years.

2 In those days a man named Manoah from the tribe of Dan lived in the town of Zorah. His wife was unable to become pregnant, and they had no children.

3 The angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah’s wife and said, “Even though you have been unable to have children, you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son.

4 So be careful; you must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food.

5 You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and his hair must never be cut. For he will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. He will begin to rescue Israel from the Philistines.”

6 The woman ran and told her husband, “A man of God appeared to me! He looked like one of God’s angels, terrifying to see. I didn’t ask where he was from, and he didn’t tell me his name.

7 But he told me, ‘You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food. For your son will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from the moment of his birth until the day of his death.’”

24 When her son was born, she named him Samson. And the LORD blessed him as he grew up.

25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him while he lived in Mahaneh-dan, which is located between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol.

The People, Places, and Times

Philistines. One of the Aegean “Sea Peoples,” the Philistines, migrated to Palestine in approximately the twelfth century BC, and established themselves in five city-states called the Philistine Pentapolis: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath. The Philistines’ military superiority, economic strength, and administrative capabilities enabled them to dominate the Israelites (Judges 13:1). Therefore, the Israelites would need God to fight for them and give them strategies to prevail.

Nazirite. A Nazirite could be a woman or a man who vowed a consecrated life to God (Numbers 6:1-21). A Nazirite could commit to a vow for part of their life or for their entire life. The stipulations for the Nazirite included abstaining from wine and “strong drink” (an alcoholic drink made from barley), avoiding any contact with the dead (even if they were their mother or father), and not shaving their hair, unless it becomes defiled by touching a dead person. A Nazirite could marry and have children.

Background

The book of Judges describes a period in Israelite history characterized by idolatry, debauchery, sin, and rebellion, and occasional times of peace. The book spans 300-400 years before the Israelites' period of the kings. The problem the children of Israel dealt with in the book of Judges was a result of their failure to remove the inhabitants of the promised land entirely (Judges 1:19–36, 2:1–2). They were not like their forefathers, who were led by Joshua (2:10–15). Therefore, God allowed the Canaanites, Sidonians, Hivites, and Philistines to remain in the land to teach the next generation of Israelites how to war and to obey His word (2:21–22). By mixing with the inhabitants of the land, the Israelites assimilated, accommodated, and tolerated the Canaanite lifestyle and worship—idolatry, inter-marriage, rejection of God's Word—things that were contrary to the ways and Word of God. Their apostasy came with a great price because God gave them over to their enemies in the land, and they were oppressed for a time (2:14–15). The weight and pain of oppression caused the people to cry out for God to deliver them. He responded in mercy and raised up a judge to deliver them. When a judge subdued the enemy, the land experienced peace. As soon as the judge died, however, Israel would fall back into sin. They were caught in a cycle of sin (2:16–23).

At-A-Glance

1. Problem of Sin and Oppression (Judges 13:1)
2. God's Promise of Deliverance (vv. 2–7)
3. Fulfillment of the Promise (vv. 24–25)

In Depth

1. Problem of Sin and Oppression (Judges 13:1)

The lesson starts with an explanation for the oppression the Israelites will face from the Philistines: “And the children of Israel did evil again.” This indicates that God has a reason for punishing Israel. The Israelites consistently refuse to obey God and continue to turn to foreign gods. Have you ever felt that God's chastisement was unjust?

2. God's Promise of Deliverance (vv. 2–7)

In Judges 13:2, we learn about a man named Manoah from the tribe of Dan who is childless. His wife, identified simply as the unnamed barren woman, is introduced as well. In verse 3, the angel of the Lord appears to her and announces that she will become pregnant and give birth to a child. Similar to how the angel visited Mary, the mother of Jesus, he first brings the news of the pregnancy to the woman. The conception and birth of the boy are depicted as blessings from God; however, they come with specific restrictions (v. 4). The mother is instructed to adhere to a strict diet—she is to avoid wine, strong alcoholic beverages, and any unclean food during her pregnancy. The prohibition against unclean food was not new for an Israelite, but due to the spiritual condition of the people and their rejection of God, this mother needed to be reminded of His requirements (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14). In verse 5, the restrictions were extended to include postnatal care for the baby: his hair was never to be cut. The boy was to be dedicated

to God as a Nazirite. He would begin to deliver his people from the Philistines. Numbers 6:1–21 outlines the provisions of the Nazirite vow, which is usually taken voluntarily by an individual to demonstrate their dedication to God for a specific period. However, in this case, God divinely imposed the vow on the boy for his entire life.

Upon hearing the angel's announcement, the wife rushed to tell her husband what had happened (Judges 13:6). She described the angel as a man of God who resembled an angel of God. After describing this heavenly visitor, she recounted the message she had received, informing her husband that they would have a son and sharing the dietary restrictions. Their son would be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. Do believers sometimes act carelessly with the miracles that God grants them? Why or why not?

3. Fulfillment of the Promise (vv. 24–25)

At the end of chapter 13, the author emphasizes that the promise given to Manoah's wife was not just a figment of her imagination; it was truly fulfilled. She gave birth to a son named Samson. God's calling was evident in his life, as he grew up blessed by the Lord, with the Spirit of the Lord with him. In His mercy, God ensured that His people were not left without deliverance. Unlike other judges who were chosen in their youth or adulthood, Samson was appointed as a Nazirite and a deliverer for his people even before his birth. This raises an important question: How can believers be more mindful of the ministries that God has placed on children?

Search the Scriptures

1. Samson was called to be a Nazirite (Judges 13:5; cf. Numbers 6:1–21). Is this specific calling relevant to Christians today?
2. The text states that the Spirit of the Lord began to move Samson (v. 25). What types of evidence do believers have that God is present with them?

Discuss The Meaning

1. Discuss some habits that reflect a believer's dedication to God.
2. What hinders believers from maintaining a consistent life of devotion to God?

Liberating Lesson

Parents have a significant responsibility to teach and guide their children in developing a relationship with Christ. In a culture that is increasingly non-Christian, raising a godly family has become a great challenge. Parents need to find creative ways to educate their children about who God is and demonstrate how to foster a relationship with Him. While parents and children are imperfect and flawed, God can and will work through us when we pursue a relationship with Him. Parents are not perfect; neither are kids. We are all flawed. But God can and will use us when we surrender to Him.

Application For Activation

God uses a variety of elements in our lives— such as our childhood, family situations, personalities, strengths, weaknesses, talents, environments, and experiences—for His glory. Nothing that we go through is wasted; however, we must be open to allowing the Lord to use these situations to mold and shape us. This week, take some time to prayerfully reflect on your life. Identify three things the Lord may have been doing in your life that you might have overlooked. Consider the circumstances He has used to shape you and how they have influenced who you are today.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Judges 13:1–7, 24–25

1 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

The Israelites continued to do evil in the sight of God, leading Him to punish them. As a result, they faced His wrath, and God allowed the Philistines to carry out this punishment on His own people. Judges 13:1 indicates that the Israelites chose to commit sin—referred to as “evil” (Heb. ra’, RAH), which means “wickedness” or “wrong”—in the eyes of the Lord. God deemed their actions sinful and “delivered” (Heb. natan, nah-TAHN) or gave them into the hands of their enemies for forty years.

Biblical scholars describe the Philistines as a Gentile people from the Aegean Sea region. They worshiped many gods and were deeply influenced by the pagan cultures of the eastern Mediterranean, particularly Greek and Palestinian. The Philistines also relied on soothsayers, astrologers, fortune-tellers, and clairvoyants. In the eleventh century BC, when the Philistines began to attack the Israelites, they had superior weapons made of iron, making them a formidable adversary. However, it was the Lord Himself who used the Philistines to punish the Israelites, His own children, who were stubborn, disobedient, and hard-headed. For forty long years, the Israelites lived under the bondage of their enemies.

2 And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. 3 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

Just as the all-powerful, true, and living God allowed the Philistines to take the Children of Israel into bondage, He was also in charge of delivering them from that bondage. God raised up their deliverer through a barren woman— Manoah's wife—who was childless and unable to bear children. This demonstrates God's ability to do the impossible. The angel of God brought good news to Manoah's wife. Despite her barrenness, she was destined to conceive and bear a son for Manoah—an heir to carry on his name and fulfill the will of God.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: 5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

God's plan to deliver the Israelites from the bondage of the Philistines required complete obedience, especially considering the important role Samson was destined to play for God and His people. God issued three key mandates: 1. Manoah's wife must abstain from alcohol; 2. She is to follow the Nazirite dietary restrictions while pregnant with their consecrated son; 3. The couple must ensure that Samson's hair is never cut, as he was to be a Nazirite, which means "consecrated or devoted one" in Hebrew (nazir, nah-ZEER). These specifications were crucial to setting Samson apart for service to God. His parents made a vow that he would be a Nazirite for his entire life.

6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name: 7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

Manoah's wife shared the good news with her husband, relaying the details of what the messenger of God had told her. She described the figure she recognized as an angel as looking "terrible" (Heb. yare', yah-RAY), which means "fear," "inspiring fear," and "awe." At first glance, the messenger likely appeared intimidating. In fact, she did not ask him where he came from, and he did not reveal his name. In the ancient Near East, there was a common belief that sharing one's name meant disclosing one's character and could lead to being controlled by that person.

24 And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

This section of the text shows that God fulfills His promises and reassures us that He is not someone who makes promises He cannot keep, nor does He lie. The term “blessed” (Heb. barak, bah-ROCK), which means “saluted” or “adored,” suggests that Samson grew up under God’s protection and favor.

25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

God’s Spirit signifies His presence among His people. The term “Spirit” (Heb. ruakh, ROO-akh) can mean “wind, breath, mind, or spirit,” but in this context, it specifically refers to God’s presence and power active in Samson. Zorah and Eshtaol are locations in the region of Dan, highlighting the area where Samson lived and emphasizing that this was where God prepared him to deliver His people from their enemies.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Announcement of Samson's Birth to Manoah
(Judges 13:8–18)

TUESDAY

The Angel Accepts Manoah’s Sacrifice
(Judges 13:19–23)

WEDNESDAY

Vow of Separation to the Lord
(Numbers 6:1–8, 13–17)

THURSDAY

Samson Marries a Woman of Timnah
(Judges 14:1–9)

FRIDAY

Samson Conquers the Philistines
(Judges 15:1–8)

SATURDAY

In Death, Samson Defeats the Philistines
(Judges 16:23–31)

SUNDAY

Samson’s Call
(Judges 13:1–7, 24–25)