



Judges: Vows and Vulnerability

Lesson 7: February 24th and 25th

Read Judges 13-14

Sermon Reflection Question: What captured your attention from Sunday's sermon?

Observation & Interpretation:

Samson, the last of the judges in this book, is famous for his long hair and his strength. But his story is much deeper and more intriguing than that.

1. This passage begins with a promise in a seemingly impossible situation. Describe the promise, instructions, and purpose given in 13:2-5?

The purpose of the Nazirite vow, laid out in Numbers 6:1–21, was to ask for God's special help during a crucial time; it was a sign that you were looking to God with great intensity and focus. Usually, the vow was made voluntarily and for a definite period of time.

2. How was this Nazirite vow different?

This is a special birth, because it is an impossible birth. So it points us to the most special of all births, over a millennium later. But Jesus' conception is not the only one that Samson's is similar to. God brought into the world through barren women Isaac, Samuel and John the Baptist. God has often worked through a child whose existence, humanly speaking, is impossible. In doing so, he shows that the outworking of his salvation is something that no human can manage; he alone "gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were" (Romans 4:17).

3. Like Samson, followers of Christ are set apart to God. How are we as followers of Christ to be set apart? Give Scripture references.

Reflection & Application:

4. How does the reminder that you have been set apart in Christ impact how you live your life daily?

Observation & Interpretation:

5. Read Judges 14:1-4. Who does Samson want to marry and why does that matter?

This verse is the key to understanding the whole story. God will use the disobedience of Samson to bring about confrontation between the two nations. As the story goes on, we'll see everyone acting out of their own ungodly character—and God using it all to ensure that the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines begins.

6. Can you think of any other examples in Scripture where God uses the sin/disobedience of humans to accomplish his purposes?

Samson, the man who is supposed to be fighting the Philistines (Judges 13:5) is marrying into them. Samson is a leader who reflects Israel's real spiritual state. He is impulsive and unteachable, and has adopted the values and views of the Philistines.

Observation & Interpretation:

7. Read Judges 14:5-20. Where in this passage do you see Samson violating his Nazirite vow?

Fasting Reflection:

RELAX: Take a moment to relax. Close your eyes and breathe deeply - inhaling slowly, then exhaling slowly. Repeat this several times as you imagine yourself coming into God's presence. As you finish and get ready to read, pray something simple like "Lord, speak to me through the words of your gospel. Amen."

READ. Read this story about Jesus two times. Read slowly, pausing at the line breaks:

John 3:1-8, 16-21

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

"How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

REFLECT. After the reading, take some time to reflect in silence on one or more of the following questions:

- What word or words in this passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage comforted you?
- What in this passage challenged you?
- What is God inviting you into?

RESPOND. Read the scripture passage one more time. Bring to the Lord the praise, petition, questions, or thanksgiving that the Word inspires in you.

REST. Soak in the moment, rest in it, don't rush through it. Do you sense anything that Jesus is inviting you to know, see, believe, or do? Pray: Thank you God for meeting with me in this time. Give me courage and faith to follow you this day.