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Judges 13

*“Forbidden Vineyards and Rotten Honey”*

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The succeeding judges in Israel after Jephthah were Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, and Samson, who was probably the most well known. It’s sad that he’s known for his hedonism, and not heroism. You might say he was a he-man with a she-problem. He’s such a complicated character that this is the first of two message series Pastor Gary will share on the life of Samson.

Samson has more chapters written about him and the details of his life go back farther than any of the other judges of Israel. When we meet each judge he or she was already an adult, but in Samson’s case, we learn about him before he was born. Samson was one of just a few people in the Bible, along with John the Baptist and Jesus, whose life was announced by an angel before conception. We know that his father’s name was Manoah (of the tribe of Dan), and his mother, who is unnamed, was barren and not able to have children. However, an angel of the Lord came expressly to announce that he was to be born, and at that time it was made known to his parents that he was to be set apart as a Nazirite for life.

In this study, we’ll take a look at the ways Samson completely violated or seriously compromised himself concerning every condition of the vow that was supposed to set him apart. We’ll also learn more about the dangers associated with a life of compromise, which is the word that best describes Samson’s life, because it was one “small” compromise after another that led to his capture and death.

## Who/What Is A Nazirite?

1. **Numbers 6:1-8** - *“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of separation to the Lord as a Nazirite, he must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or from other fermented drink. He must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. As long as he is a Nazirite, he must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins. During the entire period of his vow of separation no razor may be used on his head. He must be holy until the period of his separation to the Lord is over; he must let the hair of his head grow long. Throughout the period of his separation to the Lord he must not go near a dead body. Even if his own father or mother or brother or sister dies, he must not make himself ceremonially unclean on account of them, because the symbol of his separation to God is on his head. Throughout the period of his separation he is consecrated to the Lord.’ ”*
2. A man or a woman could take a vow of separation (from the world) and dedication (to God), although there is no biblical record of a woman taking the vow.
3. In Hebrew, the word is nazir, which means, “to separate or consecrate.”
4. Requirements of a Nazirite vow:
  - a. No eating or drinking anything from the grapevine (wine, grapes, grape juice, raisins).
    - i. This was mainly about anything fermented, however, the entire grapevine was off limits to eliminate any possibility of being intoxicated.
  - b. No cutting of the hair.
    - i. This was an outward sign and a continual reminder to the person that he or she was under a vow to God.
  - c. No contact with any dead body.
    - i. A person under a Nazirite vow was not even permitted to go near a dead body, even if it was a member of his family; this eliminated the possibility of being contaminated.
  - d. The vow would end by the cutting of the hair and the bringing of different offerings to the Temple.
  - e. The vow was usually set for a predetermined amount of time.
    - i. The Jewish Mishnah indicates the vow was typically taken for 30, 60, or 100 days.
    - ii. The Bible doesn’t specify the length of the vow.
    - iii. In Samson’s case, the vow was intended to be for a lifetime.

5. A Nazirite vow was basically about separation and dedication versus intoxication or contamination.

### Samson's Story

6. Most people know two things about Samson: he was physically strong and he had a romance with Delilah.
7. Most people would say that it was his relationship with Delilah that led to his downfall, but the fact is that this relationship was really the final culmination of a long series of smaller compromises in his life.
8. It's not the big things that bring us down; it's the little things along the way that compromise us toward the big thing!
9. Samson had three major struggles in his life: lust, entitlement, and anger.
  - a. Lust and Anger – Next week!
  - b. Entitlement
    - i. **Judges 14:1-3** – *“Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. When he returned, he said to his father and mother, ‘I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife.’ His father and mother replied, ‘Isn't there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among all our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?’ But Samson said to his father, ‘Get her for me. She's the right one for me.’”*
    - ii. You can see how great his sense of entitlement was when you consider that two times he told his parents to *“get her for me.”*
    - iii. The question his parents asked is a good one; because the Philistines were enemies of Israel, and they were the very people Samson was supposed to fight against, not join!
      1. The Philistines were wicked, idol-worshiping, pagan, worldly people – everything Samson was not supposed to be – and God strictly forbid the Israelites from intermarrying with them.
      2. **2 Corinthians 6:14** – *“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”*
        - a. We need to take warning from the Scriptures in this area, because when we become involved in a business partnership or a romantic relationship with someone who doesn't share Christian values or Christian

worldview, we will sooner or later experience a disastrous downfall.

10. **Judges 14:4** - *“(His parents did not know that this was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel.)”*
  - a. Even though this verse seems to be a contradiction to God’s instructions, we need to be careful not to jump to conclusions, because God allowed the whole thing to take place as a set-up against the Philistines.
    - i. In the end, Samson didn’t “marry” her, because before the marriage was consummated God saw to it that she was given to another man.

### Compromise #1

11. **Judges 14:5-6** - *“Samson went down to Timnah together with his father and mother. As they approached the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat. But he told neither his father nor his mother what he had done.”*
12. Although it’s not spelled out in the text, it’s obvious that he wasn’t with his parents at this point in their journey to Timnah, because no one could kill a lion without someone knowing about it!
13. What’s implied is that *“as they approached the vineyards of Timnah,”* he left his parents on the road and ventured off into the vineyards,
14. It’s as though he said, “You keep walking, while I explore the area a little bit. I’ll catch up, so don’t worry about me.”
15. The reason he didn’t want his parents to know he killed a lion was because, according to the Nazirite vow, he shouldn’t have been in the vineyards to begin with!
16. The Bible doesn’t tell us whether or not he actually ate any grapes, and it could be that the lion was sent by God to get him out of the vineyard before he did.
17. The fact is that simply strolling through the vineyard was compromise.
18. Samson may have justified his actions by saying to himself: “I like walking through vineyards, and it’s really not a big deal because I don’t eat any grapes.”

19. Our flesh becomes a master at justifying compromise as we “stroll through forbidden vineyards.”

### Compromise #2

20. [Judges 14:7-9](#) - *“Then he went down and talked with the woman, and he liked her. Some time later, when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to look at the lion’s carcass. In it was a swarm of bees and some honey, which he scooped out with his hands and ate as he went along. When he rejoined his parents, he gave them some, and they too ate it. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the lion’s carcass.”*

21. Samson had rejoined his parents as they made their way to Timnah, because he wanted to marry this girl, and as they were walking down the road, *“he turned aside to look at the lion’s carcass,”* because he was curious to know what happened to the lion he killed.

22. Once again Samson left the road and went looking for it, and when he came upon the carcass, he noticed that bees had used the carcass to make a hive and there was honey!

23. Samson ate some of the honey he scooped out, and he also gave some of the honey to his parents, but he didn’t tell them where he got it, because after all, who would want to eat honey that came out of the innards of a dead lion!

24. The bottom line is that Samson has compromised his Nazirite vow in order to get the honey, because he had to reach inside of the carcass to scoop it out, which is another reason he didn’t tell his parents where the honey came from.

25. Pastor Gary said, “I don’t care how sweet it is, if you have to compromise your standards or your relationship with God to get it, it’s not worth it!”

26. God called Samson to a life of separation and dedication, just as he does with us, but Samson’s willingness to enter into compromising situations led him to capture, regrets, and death.

27. The Lord is calling us to be separated from the world, while we live as aliens and strangers in the world.

a. [1 Peter 2:11-12](#) - *“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing*

*wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”*

28. **Psalm 101:2-4** - *“I will be careful to lead a blameless life - when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart. I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil.”*

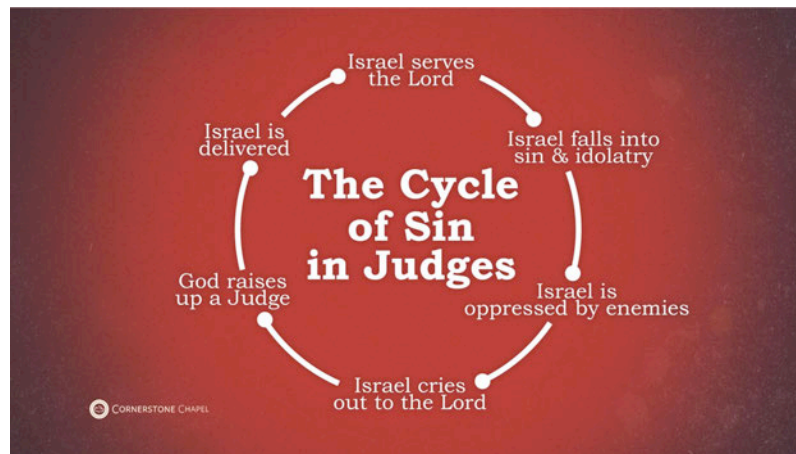
### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Judges 13:1-5, 24** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Spend time talking about the illustration Pastor Gary shared concerning the tragedy of the space shuttle Columbia.<sup>1</sup>
  - a. What are some of the short-term and long-term effects you’ve experienced when you compromised yourself?
  - b. Would you say it was a series of compromises that led to the “crash”?
  - c. How has the Lord helped you resist the temptation to give in to the so-called small compromises in your life?
4. Read and discuss: **1 Corinthians 15:33** and **1 Thessalonians 5:22**.
  - a. Use Pastor Gary’s illustration to get the discussion started: “If a German Shepherd runs with a pack of wolves, will the wolves become domesticated or will the German Shepherd become wild?”
  - b. **1 Corinthians 15:33** - *“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’ ”*
  - c. **1 Thessalonians 5:22** - *“Abstain from all appearance of evil.”* (KJV)
5. Spend time discussing Pastor Gary’s comment about a Nazirite vow being about separation and dedication versus intoxication and contamination.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.history.com/topics/columbia-disaster> - On February 1, 2003, the space shuttle Columbia disintegrated upon reentry to earth from outer space, killing all 7 members of the crew on board. It was later determined that a small piece of foam insulation had broken off during takeoff, which resulted in a six-inch gouge to the underside of Columbia’s left wing. Upon reentry that small gouge allowed hot atmospheric gases to penetrate and destroy the internal wing structure, and when that happened, everything else disintegrated, which means a 230,000-pound aircraft (122 ft. long and 56 ft. high, with a wing span of 78 feet) was completely destroyed because of a small, six-inch tear that compromised the entire aircraft.

6. What are some of the ways a person can separate and dedicate himself or herself to the Lord?
7. Read and discuss [2 Corinthians 6:14](#).
  - a. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences of being unequally yoked in personal relationships, business, etc.
8. Read and discuss [Psalm 101:2-4](#).
  - a. What are some of the characteristics of living “*a blameless life*”?
  - b. How has the Lord helped you mature in your faith so that you can say your desire it to have “*nothing to do with evil*”?
9. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: purpose in their heart to live a separated and dedicated life unto the Lord; rely on the Spirit to help them avoid the temptation to enter into compromising situations; stop and consider the danger of “strolling through forbidden vineyards”; “*be careful to lead a blameless life... [having] nothing to do with evil.*”



\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).