

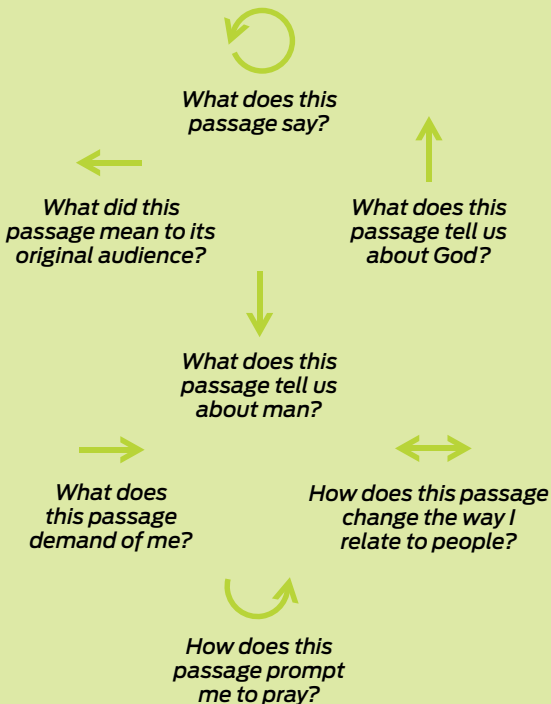
Daily Devotions



Day 1

Judges 13:1-25

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



After the angel told the woman how the boy Samson should be raised, she reported all that she was told to her husband, Manoah, who then prayed. But his prayer was not what many of us would have expected. He did not thank God for this promised gift. Nor did he ask God for strength and wisdom to obey. Instead, he asked God to send the man of God back once more to teach them what they should do for the boy to be born. In other words, Manoah prayed for the very thing his wife had just been given.

If we are honest, we have to admit that there is some Manoah in each of us. We too are prone to ask God for the very things He has given. Perhaps it is because we doubt Him and want confirmation. Perhaps it is because we secretly hope He will give us a different answer the second time. Or perhaps it is because we just don't listen well. For whatever reason or reasons, we do the same. And this is why we need to pay attention to how God responded to Manoah. He sent the angel of the LORD back again! Let us never fail to remember that God is a patient God, full of grace and mercy for His people.

What have you asked God for repeatedly, even after He answered you? Why?

Judges 14:1-20

The ending of Judges 13 is one that gives readers unfamiliar with this account great hope and excitement. The boy who had been promised was born, grew, and the LORD blessed him. Then we read that the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him (v. 25). Before this, we had read that the boy, Samson, would be the one to save Israel from the power of the Philistines. And so, as we turn the page to chapter 14, we might expect Samson to gather an army and square off against Israel's enemy. After all, that's what you do when you are stirred by the Spirit, right?

But that is not what we see as Judges 14 opens. Instead of pursuing the Philistines, Samson pursued a Philistine—a single woman that he saw and wanted to take as his wife. Samson was stirred, but instead of acting on behalf of his people, or better yet God, he acted on his own behalf for his own selfish gain. We know that in the mysterious ways of God, He was using Samson's selfishness for His own purposes. Samson's selfish pursuit led to the Philistines being overthrown later on. But we cannot miss the warning: it is far too easy for us to live selfishly rather than selflessly even when God is at work within us.

When have you found yourself intending to seek God's glory only to end up pursuing your own?

Judges 15:1-20

As you read through the story of Samson, you might miss something that is quite profound. It's easy to miss because there are so many fascinating details to this story, but when we see it, we can't help but see how telling it is. Samson does pretty much everything on his own. Unlike the other judges before him, Samson does not form an army or partner with anyone else. He goes at it alone, at least as other people are concerned: he isn't opposed to partnering with three thousand foxes.

Seeing this affirms Samson's greatest weakness: pride. It seems that the mighty Samson believed he didn't need anyone else. He could take care of things himself. Why turn to others? They would probably just mess things up anyway.

But as part of the church, the bride of Christ, let us be quick to see the folly of Samson's solitary lifestyle. We know that God did not create us for isolation, rather for integration. We are to live fully integrated with others, relying on their strengths where we are weak and lending them our strength where they are weak. And that is what Samson missed: his strength was limited. He had weaknesses and was in need of others. May we be a humble people who do not share in his mistake.

How might you be prone to drift toward isolation at times? Why?

Judges 16:1-20

The old adage goes “Fool me once shame on you; fool me twice shame on me.” We can only wonder who gets the shame for being fooled three times as Delilah had been. Three times she asked Samson the secret of his strength and each time he had lied to her. We have to ask why. We aren’t told, but we can make an educated guess: Samson may have been teasing Delilah for his own enjoyment. That surely seems to fit with his character; everything else he did seemed to be for this reason.

If this is why Samson played with fire by teasing Delilah as he did, it tells us even more about his character. Before this we are told that Samson loved Delilah. That detail is not mentioned in his first marriage, or in the account of him pursuing a prostitute just before this. Samson loved Delilah, and yet he still put his own desires above hers. Samson provides us with a wonderful example of a terrible husband.

Later on though, we encounter a different Husband in Scripture, One who put His bride’s needs before His own. A Husband who laid down His life for His bride. A perfect Husband who is in the process of perfecting His bride for her good and His Father’s glory. A perfect Husband in Jesus Christ.

How can you sacrifice your own desires, and perhaps even your own needs, for someone else this week?

Judges 16:21-31

The Philistines likely believed they were just humiliating their prisoner. Perhaps they did it for their own safety too, lest Samson regain his strength somehow. Either way, there was Samson, chained up, and blind having had his eyes gouged out. If you have ever lost your eyesight or perhaps even lost a pair of glasses, you know how humbling it is not to be able to see. It can leave you feeling helpless—vulnerable. And that is perhaps how Samson felt in that moment, leading to his awareness of his need of God.

But there is something else going on here. What had gotten Samson into trouble so many times before this? That’s right: his eyes. His eyes had been the source of his stumbling through life for so long. He had looked at a woman and wanted her to be his wife, no matter that she was a Philistine. He had looked at honey and wanted to eat it, no matter that it was in a lion’s carcass and unclean. His eyes had betrayed him over and over again. Here, as his life came to a close, God was kind to remove the very thing that had caused Samson to stumble so many times before this. The Philistines removed Samson’s eyes out of spite; God removed them out of love.

How has God taken something from you, even if it was painful, only to find out it was for your good?