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## WORSHIP

Suggested worship songs: Because of Your Love, Hosanna (Praise Is Rising), O How Great, Hope in the Precious Cross, Never Once

## WELCOME

What New Year's resolution for 2025 have you accomplished, or have made progress on so far?

## WORD

**JUDGES 13:1-5, 24** (READ THE ENTIRE CHAPTER OF JUDGES 16 ALSO)

Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, so that the Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years. 2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no children. 3 Then the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. 4 Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. 5 For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

24 Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the Lord blessed him.

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This is not a self-help topic, rather, we need the Holy Spirit to practice self-control. In fact, if you say you are a Christian, then self-control is a fruit of the Spirit in your life (**Galatians 5:22-23**). But the reality is, even if the Spirit convicts us, or Sunday messages remind us to practice self-control, sometimes, we still fail to do so.

Practicing self-control provides us a lot of practical benefits. If we want a secure life, we need to practice self-control (**Proverbs 25:28**). Most of our regrets result from our lack of self-control as we will see in the life of Samson.

Samson was born after the time of Joshua, and the generation he led into the Promised Land who obeyed the Lord. When that generation passed away, the Israelites started to disobey the Lord. Whenever that happened, God allowed them to be oppressed and conquered by their enemies (**Judges 13:1**). When they turn to God and cry out to Him for help, He would send someone (a judge) to rescue them. This cycle was

repeated many times! Samson was one of these judges, born to his father, Manoah and his barren wife (**Judges 13:2-3**). It is amazing how we read in the Bible that God used barren women to accomplish things in spite of their limitations! Along with the promise of a son, God commanded Samson's parents to do certain things and avoid certain practices because Samson was to be a "Nazarite" to God (**Judges 13:4-5, 7**). The command was not just for the parents; they were to model to Samson what it means to be committed to the Lord --- the Nazarite vow (**Numbers 6:2**). The parents were to practice self-control, and to teach it (pass on) to their son what it means to be fully committed to the Lord (**Numbers 6:8**). A Nazarite commits to 1- Abstain from wine; 2-Avoid contact with the dead; 3-Refrain from cutting hair.

The favor of the LORD was with Samson, and the LORD blessed him! Samson did not have any excuse for his failures because God was with him. We are familiar with how Samson failed to practice self-control. But what can we learn from Samson's story?

### 1) MASTER YOUR EMOTIONS (Judges 14:1-4)

When we let our emotions control us, they may lead us away from God. Emotions are not necessarily wrong but should be evaluated through the word of God. One of the most difficult opponents in life is our wrong desires. We see this with Samson's desire for a relationship with the wrong women (**vv1-2**). Samson's relationship with a Philistine woman would be problematic; God prohibited Israel to intermarry with non-Israelites in the Promised Land (**Deuteronomy 7:3-4**). Samson forced the issue with his parents (**v3**). Not everything that looks good to us, or seems right to us, is so! God will accomplish His purpose, whether we like it or not; either He accomplishes it with you following Him, and you are blessed, or without you, and you are cursed (**v4**).

Samson's life could have been a very different story had he obeyed God and practiced self-control. God still accomplished His plan, but Samson experienced the wrath of God. Samson's problem (and ours) is the heart (**Jeremiah 17:9-10**). David prayed for God to examine his heart and guide him according to God's way (**Psalms 139:23-24**). Worldly self-control may not help us accomplish God's purposes for our lives. A strong heart is developed through the daily practice of godly principles such as to 1-Pray; 2-Meditate on God's Word; 3- Surround yourself who love the Lord. 4- Be humble and get Godly counsel; 5- Flee from your weaknesses.

### 2) MIND YOUR WEAKNESSES (Judges 14:5-9)

You don't only flee from your weaknesses; you have to mind your weaknesses. Sometimes, we need to experience the consequences to expose our weaknesses. Samson knew his strength and used it to get anything he wanted, even if it violated his Nazarite vow to the Lord repeatedly (**vv. 5-9, 19**). But God was teaching Samson a lesson --- even with great strength, he couldn't get the wife he wanted (**v20, 15:3-5**). But despite all this, God's grace was still with Samson (**Judges 15:14-15, 20**). God was gracious because He was giving Samson

a chance to repent and do things God's way. God sends warning signs to us! If we don't deal with the red flags in our lives, it will cause more pain in the end.

### 3) MAGNIFY YOUR GOD (Judges 16)

We must make a choice --- we either humble ourselves and we receive God's blessings, or He humbles us, and we experience the consequences of our sin. Humility is important in practicing self-control. When we magnify God, we're saying, "take control over my life, Lord!". Once again, God was gracious, letting Samson escape from the Philistines (**vv. 1-2**). Samson almost died because of his weakness for problematic women, but Samson still did not learn his lesson. He fell in love with Delilah (**v.4**), and the Philistines knew about his weakness and took advantage of this (**v5**). After several attempts, Delilah eventually deceived Samson into revealing the secret of his strength and handed him over to the Philistines (**vv. 6-18**). Why didn't Samson suspect that he was being fooled by Delilah? It's so difficult to see the truth when our wrong desires control us. Saddest of all was that Samson did not even know that God already left him (**v20**). Samson became a blind slave and a prisoner of his enemies (**v21**). Even when Samson's hair grew back, he wasn't as strong as before (**vv. 22-27**). Finally, after everything else were taken away from him, Samson knew he needed God to (**vv28-29**). At the end of his life, Samson wanted to magnify God and fulfill His purpose (**v30**). The moment Samson humbled himself, God gave him the strength to fulfill God's purpose for him. Our brokenness is God's way to make us whole. Through Jesus, we can be redeemed from our past (**1 Peter 2:24**)!

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. What areas in your life are you having a difficult time practicing self-control? What are the consequences as a result of that?
2. What are the triggers that make you give in to your wrong desires?
3. What lessons can you apply from the story of Samson that can help you practice self-control?

# WORKS

## PRAY CARE SHARE

### IN ACTION

There may be people in your life who are experiencing the painful consequences of a lack of self-control. Pray for them to turn to the Lord and let Him take control of their lives. Be a Spirit-filled witness and share the gospel to them.

## WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

### I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

### II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- For legislators to promote and support bills and laws aligned with God's Word.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented.
- For the rest of the Israeli hostages to be restored to their families safely. For Israel's war with terrorists to end according to God's purpose and for His glory.
- For the civil war in Syria to end peacefully, protection for Christians and other minorities, and freedom from oppression for Syrians. Pray for the gospel to spread rapidly throughout the country.
- Pray for Sudan and persecuted Christians there; earnestly seek God's intervention to stop the bloodshed. Pray for freedom from oppression, that God's word and His people bring them comfort and hope.
- Earthquake victims in Burma, Thailand, other countries.

### III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God, and make disciples
- For elders, pastors, deacons, and families to become holy, humble, harmonious, happy, and heart-working)
- For ministries and church expansions worldwide.

### IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain (MMRC)

### V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper and intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends

## MEMORY VERSE

### Proverbs 25:28

28 Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.