Encouragement For Living

Preparing Your Child For God's Service

Sermon Series in the Book of Judges – Part 15

Judges 13

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Introduction: I love preaching a series through a book of the Bible. When you go chapter by chapter, God is the author of the subject matter at hand. Before we look at the life of Samson, the most famous of the Judges, we have a chapter dedicated to the story of his parents and how they received the news that despite the barren years, they would now have a son.

We have read the rest of the story and we know that God's hand was upon Samson and he would do mighty things. Perhaps if his parents had known how God would use their son, they may have done things differently while he was growing up.

As a parent who now has an empty nest, there are many things I wish I could do over. I stressed out over things that I should not have and I responded in ways that did not truly represent God to my children. I wished I had prepared my children more for serving the Lord. This is a hard message for me because I know of my failures.

Paul writing to young Timothy told him how blessed he was to have been taught the scriptures as a young man:

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim. 3:14-15 [NKJV]

Timothy's mother and grandmother did a great job of preparing this young man for God's service.

God sent an "Angel of the Lord" to prepare the parents of Samson to receive their first-born son. He would not only be a miracle child, but his greatest purpose would be a deliverer of the people of Israel from the Philistines. Manoah and his wife had a great responsibility to raise a child who would serve the Lord.

That responsibility is ours today as well. As Christians, God has a purpose for every one of our children. They are created for God's service. What can we do to prepare them to be the best servants they can be for Him? First we must work on self...we will talk about that kind of preparation. And then we need to do some things consistently in the life of our children.

Preparations For Self

These are things I glean from the text:

1. Be aware of the worldly values that surround you.

An important aspect of the "cycle" is missing in this story of Samson. You remember the cycle goes something like this: Israel sins against God, God allows an oppressing nation to pain Israel, Israel cries out to God, God raises up a Judge, Deliverance is won, Israel enjoys few years of peace, and then the cycle starts all over again.

What is missing here in our story is Israel crying out to God over the oppression of the Philistines. Why? Because living under the Philistine oppression was "normal" or "just life" for them. Look at Judges 15:11-12. They have "given-in" to the oppression and do not want to risk any harm in having anything different. "Samson, you are rocking the boat...we are happy with the way things are! The status-quo is okay with us!"

This is the kind of world that Manoah and his wife live. The values are not godly values. They live upon a people who have given-up and accepted the Philistine way of life.

Would these value impact the young life of Samson? Yes they would. He too just wanted to blend into the Philistine culture. Look at what God allowed to happen so Samson would take up the role of deliverer...Judges 14:3-4. Samson would have to get "mad and angry" before he would take on the Philistines.

We, too, must be aware of the values that surround us so we may teach our children what is right and pleasing to God.

A list of problem values that we must address:

Homosexuality
Same Sex marriages
Sex before marriage
Materialism
rality

2. Make decisions that will strengthen your relationship with God.

In the first part of chapter 13 we are told that Manoah is a Danite who lives near Zorah. He is a member of a small group of Danites who stayed in the original settlement when they came to the Promiseland. In Judges 18 we read a horrible story of how most of the tribe of Dan moved way north from Zorah and immediately practiced idol worship.

Imagine for a moment if Manoah had made that decision to join the rest of his tribe. It would have been a decision that would weakened his relationship with God.

You and I must be so careful about the decisions we make that we will even ask: "How will my decision effect my relationship with God…my family's relationship with God?"

EXAMPLE: I have served churches where Mom or Dad get upset about something and they move their family to another church. Those who respond in such a way will surely get upset again and then move again. What are the children learning?

Here's some lessons they learn:

1. It's not what you can do for the church (ministry) that counts, but what can the church do for me.

2. When my feelings get hurt, don't work through it, but move on to another relationship where I will never be hurt again…NOT!

3. My opinion is always right even when it is in the minority.

4. God doesn't call me to a church family. God directs my path through disagreements and quarrels.

3. Be public about your commitment to Christ.

Read Judges 13: 4. The wife is asked to observe the Nazirite vow. I am going to say more about this vow later on. To observe this vow was not only a private way of dedicating yourself to the Lord, but publicly has well. For a male, he would not cut his hair, drink wine or eat anything made from grapes, there were other dietary restrictions, and he could not touch anything dead. Well if you observe these things, you are going to stand out in a crowd. People knew you had made a commitment to God.

Parents, do your children understand that you are a Christian not only in the church house, but also out-there in the world?

Do you have the same standards?

Do you use the same language?

EXAMPLE: I try to explain to Jared the other day when we were at the St. Louis Auto Show why we could not buy him a coke for $3.75 when he said he was thirsty. There were water fountains all over, but he did not want water. I told him they cost too much. He said he knew I had enough money for a coke. I said yes I did, but I explained that God would be upset with me for buying him a coke. "Why, Pops?" Because God would know I was wasting a lot of money to buy a coke that cost 50 cents anywhere else."

I want Jared to know that God has something to say about my life even when it comes to buying a coke!

4. Understand your role as "steward" in parenting.

Read Judges 13:5. Manoah and his wife were to have a child...but this child belongs to God. God is going to use him to accomplish something in the Kingdom of God. They can raise him, love him, enjoy him...all the things that parents can do in a positive fashion...but HE STILL BELONGS TO GOD.

What's different about your children or mine? Nothing at all! They all belong to God. We are but stewards and we have a responsibility to raise our children up in such a fashion that God can use them.

Let me quickly go through the second point of the message today. Parents after you have made sure you are prepared, let me suggest three things that I see from our text:

Preparing Your Child

1. Let them know always they are a gift from God.

I underlined the word "always". I want you to circle it as well...its an important word.

Most of us do not have an interesting story to tell our children about their conception or birth. It was just the normal stuff of human life. Most parents do not have "Miracle births", angels proclaiming the birth announcements, or a pre-arranged plan for their life (like Samson did).

Yet every one of our children and grandchildren are a gift from God. Their birth may have been "normal", but the gift of life is never "common", "cheap", "accidental", or "unfortunate".

> *Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him. Children born to a young man are like sharp arrows in a warrior's hands. How happy is the man whose quiver is full of them! He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates.* ***Psalm 127:3-5*** *[NLT]*

When our kids are cute and cuddly it is easy to tell them they are gifts from God. But what about those times when they have just taken a permanent magic marker to your expensive wall paper? (What's so magical about the marker in those situations?)

Here is why the word "always" is important. We will need to instruct them and discipline them and do so while still conveying the message, "You are a gift from God".

Does it sound silly to say this: "Gifts from God do not write on the walls"? I am talking about the fact that there is a right way and wrong way to instruct and discipline our children. If you stay focused on the fact that they are God's gifts to you, then we will strive for the right way.

2. Instruct them that their life has purpose.

While the child Samson was still in his mother's womb, they knew he had a purpose in life. The Angel told them exactly what this boy would grow up and do. "He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines".

Did you notice that word "begin". Samson would just start the process. King Saul would come along and do more of the work. King David would then complete the task.

From an early age we must teach our children that God is going to use them. He created them for a specific purpose.

We must teach Ephesians 2:8-9

God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

But our teaching does not stop at verse 9; we go on to verse 10:

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.
Ephes. 2:8-10 [NLT]

EXAMPLE: When I started construction work the day after I graduated from high school, I made a lot of money. Every week I handed my check over to my mother. She used it to

provide groceries, clothing, a roof over our heads. I did not pay room and board, I gave the whole check over and receive a small allowance in return. Why did I do that? Because I had been instructed that I had purpose. I would grow up, get a job, and help Mom and Dad raise their family.

I was simply accepting my responsibility in life.

What if we did the same thing, but provided a different message, the right message to our children? What if we told them they are to grow up and discover God's place of service for them?

WE concentrate so much on telling them they must choose the right friends, the right spouse, the right college, the right career. And we should!!! But the message that should out weight them all is : "Find out what God has created you to do in His service!"

3: Consecrate them to God's service.

Numbers 6: 1-8 The Nazirite vow is something I do not completely understand and I have a lot of unanswered questions concerning the different aspects of the vow.

Yet I notice there are three main aspects that are to contribute to "being holy" or "separated" to the Lord:

1. Dietary- no grapes
2. Appearance- no hair cuts
3. Remaining clean- no approaching the dead

His parents insisted on these things while he was growing up.

What was a person doing when they took this vow?

1. Inwardly they dedicated themselves to the Lord

2. Outwardly , for all to see, there was a easily seen symbol of their dedication to God.

3. And in their actions and behavior, they were to remain pure and clean by not touching the dead.

Parents, we can help our children with the same type of consecration by insisting on the following:

-Inwardly, they must dedicate themselves to loving God. Make decisions based on their heart-belief.

-Outwardly, they should look like someone who not only loves God but also God's Word concerning modesty & cleanliness.

-Their actions and behavior while living in a sin-cursed world should be pure and pleasing unto God.

Conclusion: Samson's story is so much different than Jepthah's story. Jepthah was born of a harlot, cast out by his half-brothers, became a leader of a band of thieves. Not a good start to be a deliverer for Israel.

Samson on the other hand had parents who knew of God. From the womb he was dedicated to God and had a calling from God concerning his purpose in life. God's blessings were on him from his birth.

No one had greater potential than Samson. Yet in each of our children that potential is real. Will we do what we can to help them be all they can be for God?