

Part 2, Judges 13:6-14:3

I love this description of a grandmother, written by a third grade student.

What Is A Grandmother?

A grandmother is a lady who has no children of her own. She likes other people's little girls and boys. A grandfather is a man grandmother. He goes for walks with boys and they talk about fishing and stuff like that. Grandmothers don't have to do anything except be there. They're old, so they shouldn't play hard and run around. It's enough that they drive us to the market where the pretend horse is and they have a lot of quarters ready. Or, if they take us for walks, they slow down past pretty things like leaves and caterpillars. They never say, "hurry up." Usually, grandmothers are fat, but not too fat to tie your shoes. They wear glasses and... can take their teeth and gums out. Grandmothers don't have to be smart, they only have to answer questions like, "Why isn't God married?" and "How come dogs chase cats?" Grandmothers don't talk baby talk like visitors do, 'cause it's hard to understand. And when they read to us, they don't skip pages.

"Everybody should try to have a grandmother, especially if you don't have a television, because they're the only grown-ups who have time"—quoted by Charles Swindoll, Women's Ministry Seminar, Multnomah School of the Bible, Portland, Oregon, 1984.

What impact grandparents can have! I remember very fondly all my grandparents, who had a profound influence on my life. The truth is, any parent or grandparent who has the time to be with their children and grandchildren will make an indelible mark on their lives. Children may see the oddities and idiosyncrasies of their parents and grandparents, but they will also see their character, faith, values, and sins.

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Written by Bob Stone

As we will see here, in an ideal family situation God intends His instruction to be modeled before it's taught. To illustrate the need for godly parents and grandparents as models, let's turn to Judges 13.

In [Part 1](#) we began our study of Samson's life by reading and reflecting on Judges 13:1-5. The children of Israel had every advantage, every instruction, but verse 1 informed us of the sinful condition of the Israelites at the time of Samson's birth. "Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, so the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years." In the midst of this disappointing scene we were then introduced to Samson's family through a conversation with an angel

2] A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was sterile and remained childless. 3] The angel of the Lord appeared to her and said, "You are sterile and childless, but you are going to conceive and have a son. 4] Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean, 5] Because you will conceive and give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

Two interesting points emerged from this initial conversation:

Samson was to be a Nazirite from birth--v. 5. We talked a great deal about the implication to us as believers today, by showing the connection between the Nazirite vow that Samson and his mother took, and the word sanctification. Both mean "to be set apart for righteous ends."

The angel of the Lord had the following statement about Samson: "and he will begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines" (v. 5b). As we discovered, Samson never fully delivered the Israelites, because he never fully delivered himself. There was a partial, but never complete victory, because Samson never could, or never would, deal with one particular area in his life, as we will see in a moment. We also saw that Samson never fully delivered Israel, because its people never cried out for a deliverer, a judge to release them. Israel was content to leave things as they were!

Returning to Judges, we pick up Samson's parents' response to their initial encounter with the angel in vv. 2-5.

The Conduct of Manoah's Family

6] Then the woman went to her husband and told him, "A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God, very awesome. I didn't ask him where he came from, and he didn't tell me his name. 7] But he said to me, 'You will conceive and give birth to a son. Now then, drink no wine or other fermented drink and do not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite of God from birth until the day of his death.'"

I love the next verse, because the parents' reaction—quite a contrast with the norm for the people of Israel—is a great model for us. After the conversation with the angel, Manoah responded instantly to the news by praying for his son, Samson. His prayer is very instructive

The prayer of Manoah

8] Then Manoah prayed to the Lord: "O Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born." God heard the prayer of Manoah and very quickly the angel appeared again. We pick up the story in verse 12.

The request of Manoah

is a model to all parents. 12] So Manoah asked him, "When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule for the boy's life and work?" If we add verse 12 to verse 8, we see a wonderful prayer and question for all parents: 8] "Oh Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born." The angel's response to this question is not what we might expect:

The response of the angel

13] The angel of the Lord answered, "Your wife must do all that I have told her. 14] She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything I have commanded her." It's interesting that the angel didn't really tell Manoah what they were to do with the boy. The response was, "Do all that I have told her" and "She must do everything I have commanded her."

The response of Christians today

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Is there something here that parents should pick up on? The angel's words translated for today's parents might be, "Mom and dad, your priority is to obey the Lord. You are to show your children the reality of the life I am calling them to." Stated in a principle form, here are a number of fundamentals for parents.

1. The way children are going to know how to live is the way you live.
2. Our children will live with us the way we live with them.
3. Children will follow models, not words. Parents can say, "Do this!" or "Do that!" until they are blue in the face, but if they do not do it, neither will the child. Unless children see in their parents a picture of the adult world as it ought to be, they will grow into the adult arena with great difficulty. Parents, therefore, must show their children at every age how to live—even when they are adults.

1. Show them you have a high regard for your own spiritual development, e.g., devotions.
2. Show them you have a deep and meaningful relationship with your mate, e.g., hugs, kisses.
3. Show them you take care to develop your own intellect, e.g., mom learning to read.
4. Show them you are seeking to use the gifts and talents the Lord has given you with joy.
5. Show them you love God with all your heart, soul, and strength.

Why was Samson's mother asked to be a Nazirite too? So Samson would be guided by example. So the "parental priority" is for us to obey God, and then out of the context of obedience, we are able to instruct our children. Some children are getting mixed signals, so be consistent!

Let me discuss the "[Family Table Theory](#)" with you. (please read [Appendix](#)). This theory, which in a nutshell contends that our past and present family situations impact our present family and church interactions, has this exception. Parents, you should know that you are not always responsible for your children's actions; e.g., Samson's parents seem to have been good parents of an inconsistent son. Sometimes your children wander from the faith for a considerable time, but we believe they will eventually come back in answer to our consistent prayer and example.

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Sometimes children take a detour because of the influences of friends, mates, and their culture, etc. (e.g., Samson). Swindoll states the sad reality:

"Sensuous children can be born of spiritual parents... A godly biblical home life is no guarantee against sensuality, as Samson's life progressively illustrates. He was a child born of prayer. . . came as a direct result of an angelic appearance and announcement. . . raised by a family that was sensitive and obedient to the Lord. . . was blessed by the Lord. . . and was uniquely visited by the Holy Spirit. But take notes with indelible ink—if Samson's life teaches us anything as parents, it teaches us that even children with a spiritual head start can plunge headlong into carnality." Charles Swindoll, *Old Testament Characters*, 1986, p. 2.

I believe that plunge will not be ultimate or lifelong, but it may yield terrible results and heartache.

Let's go on into chapter 14 where we pick up Samson's life as a young man. Samson grew up and wanted to get married.

The pattern of Samson's life revealed—14:1-3.

1] Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. 2] 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." Note: Probably not a method of engagement that would go over really big today. 3] 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." Background: Now Timnah was a little town about four miles from where Samson was living at Zorah.

This is the first indication of Samson's spirit, and one of the problems that plagued him throughout his life. We see he's spoiled, selfish, and wants what he wants *now*. These statements may reveal he was used to getting his own way, was overprotected, or just personally out of control.

The problems with Samson's relationships are obvious. We can see three problems with the relationship between Samson and the woman from Timnah.

First, it is obvious he didn't really care for this girl.

He simply saw her and wanted her. She was an object to him. He didn't recognize her as a person with needs, of worth or value. The first recorded words of Samson are, "I have seen the Philistine woman." Three times in this passage Samson refers to the Philistine woman in visual terms. Not once does he mention her internal qualities. If we are going to gauge our orientation and view of others, we need to ask ourselves, "Do I look exclusively on the exterior of a person, or do I also look for internal qualities? Peter warns, "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment. . . Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (and should be of great worth in our sight)!

Second, he knew this marriage was prohibited.

The Old Testament had made God's prohibition of intermarriage very clear. Deut. 7:3 says, "Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, 4] for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD'S anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you." Why was God so strict? Why did He isolate the children of Israel from the Canaanites? Couldn't they influence the Canaanites for good?

God was so strict because He loved them. His restrictions are really a loving expression of His provision for us. He knew if they intermarried with the people of the land, that Israel would turn to idolatry. "The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 6] They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods. 7] . . . they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs." (Judges 3:5-7).

God knew heathen wives would pollute the houses with their idols. He also knew these wives would be miserable. God knew to be unequally yoked would be a hassle for both parties. Even in the New Testament, God has commanded believers not to intermarry with unbelievers.

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? 15] What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16] What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 17] "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." 18] "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my

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sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6:14-18

The following words reveal why an unequal relationship is not good: ". . . *common*. . . *fellowship*. . . *harmony*. . . *common*. . . *agreement*. . ."

When we are yoked together with unbelievers, there is:

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No commonality—sharing, communion, partnership

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No fellowship—partaking with participation

-

No harmony—agreement or unison

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No agreement—the word is borrowed from those who bring the same opinion; put their ballots together into the urn; to vote with, to assent to.

On the other hand, these words taken together give us a wonderful description of a relationship between two Christians: a sharing of two in partnership, both partaking together in agreement, harmony, unison and communion. Being equally yoked, however, there is no loss of individuality because there is a diversity of gifts in a spirit of communion and unison.

So what's the potential if we disobey the commands from the Old and New Testaments? Our hearts will be drawn away from God, and we will miss, or severely lessen, our relationship with God and others. Love, lust, sex, or financial gains will not be enough to override the deficits of an unequal yoke. Some of us don't believe that. Some of us like Samson are still saying, "Hey, I know better than God, and it doesn't matter if I marry a non-Christian. I'll make my own choice; he or she is right for me." "Hey, I can be in partnership with a non-Christian. I'll have more

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influence on them than they will have on me." Like Samson, we show no respect for this command and choose to go our own way. But we should know, the price is very high for that decision. Do you know how many broken marriages, businesses, and partnerships I've seen because people have not obeyed God's command?

He disobeyed his parents and their clear instruction as well.

The Scriptures make it clear that to obey parents means "long life" (Eph. 6:1-3). Samson lived a short life. His parents were trying to save him from disaster, trying to instruct him from the principles and commands of the Law. There is no more powerful instruction.

I had lunch once with one of our high school guys. He said, "Every time I think of doing something wrong, I hear my mom's voice." So why wouldn't he obey? Because of the principle I laid on you in the beginning: he would not deal with his own uncontrolled lust, which ultimately brought him defeat. Undisciplined power can quickly corrupt, and we see that in Samson!

Samson disregarded the commands of God and the pleading of his parents, and chose to go his own way. But notice the next verse; it is really confusing. Verse 4 says, "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." There are two ways of looking at v. 4:

1.

The first way to look at this verse is that God initiated the action in Samson's heart. In other words, God wanted Samson to marry this Philistine woman. We might conclude that God is saying, "Samson, regardless of the law, regardless of what is going on, I want you to break the law and go down and get this woman, because I am going to use this as an occasion against the Philistines." I have a problem with that! There's another way to look at this verse.

2.

God overruled evil with good. This is what I believe. I don't believe the writer is condoning Samson's rebellion, but he is saying that God overruled in this situation for a good purpose. God never condoned Samson's sin, or the desires of his heart. Write this down: **God never breaks His law in order to accomplish His purposes!**

That would violate who He is and certainly be an inconsistent model for us!

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When God has a plan, He uses good people and imperfect people to accomplish His overall purpose, without violating His character of righteousness and holiness. Now that doesn't mean He condones *our* sins or imperfections. Some have missed this and said, "Well, God is using me. I guess it doesn't matter about my sin." Oh yes, it does! There will be a reaping even if we repent, but God can bring a blessing out of our circumstances as well.

A few years ago I had a dream where God took me through my whole life and showed me some key times... times I had forgotten about... and how He had protected me from myself during those particular events. I paid a price for my disobedience, but it was amazing to be shown how many times God had intervened and saved me from myself, or made something good out of my failures. I woke up stunned and thankful!

The Lord isn't through with Samson yet, and He isn't through with us either. Next lesson, we'll see the consequences of Samson's disobedience and untamed passions.

Application

The Problems in Samson's life have great application to us and to our families.

Parents

You need to pick up on the prayer of Samson's parents: "What is to be the rule for the boy's life and work?" and "... teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born." The application is obvious: "Mom and dad, your priority is to obey the Lord. You are to show your children the reality of the life God is calling them to. The way children are going to know how to live is the way you live. Your children will live with us the way you live with them. Your children will follow models, not words.

Examine your family table (see [Family Table Theory](#)). Are there any sins, or negative or selfish attitudes that are being passed on to your children through your life from previous generations? What are you modeling from your parents that will benefit your children and their children? Try

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to picture your children's table 20 to 30 years from now. If it is God's will they marry and have children, what spiritual legacy will you be leaving for your grandchildren and your children's mates that will show up at the dinner table?

Single or married and not serving God at this time

You may choose to go down a wrong path, but God's mercy and love is intervening in your life even now, to bring you to the point where you will see your error and come to your senses. No matter what failure you have experienced, God can bring something good into your life if you will cooperate with Him. Remember Jonah? He was bent on disobeying God, but God brought a little pressure on him... like the stomach of a big fish. Wherever you are now, or how you have chosen to live your life up to this point, if you will repent and allow His Spirit to work in you, He will take the negatives in your life and transform them into positives

Let's hear some stories of our imperfect attempts to obey God and

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How He bailed us out

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How He enabled us to complete the task in His strength, supernatural wisdom, etc.

-

How He teamed us with someone else to complete the task/ministry/project

-

How He used a failure to get our attention

-

How He has used our repentance and healing to bring greater ministry into our lives

-

How He made it clear a relationship was not pleasing to Him, and the outcome of our obedience to His will

Principle: Out of great healing comes great ministry!

Appendix

The Family Table Theory

To test the dramatic effects of previous generations on your present family unit, I would suggest you do the following exercise. I think it has some value in helping us to view

1.

what was passed on to us from our parents

2.

what we are passing on to our children

3.

what they might pass on to their children

4.

how our past and present family system might be affecting the church we attend, the small group we are part of, and to some extent, even the workplace or our education process.

It's called "**Family Table Theory.**" In the negative, it is based on the Scriptures that say the sins of the parents can be passed on to the third and fourth generations—Ex. 20:5; 34:5-7; Prov. 15:27. In the positive, it is based on the positive promises of Scripture concerning family—Prov. 22:6; Ex. 20:6; Deut. 5:9-10 (esp. v. 10). It is also based on the theory that the family table is a microcosm of our family's structure and relationships.

Family Table While Growing Up

To begin the exercise, draw a square or rectangle that represents your family table when you were growing up. Pick a year and/or season you remember, when all or most of the family was present.

1.

Go around the table and write down all the names of the family who are present. Put them in the places you remember them sitting, if they sat in a regular spot. Where did mom and dad sit most of the time

2.

Describe in a few sentences the kind of family table you had. Was it quiet, argumentative, joyful, reflective, everyone talking at once, etc.? Make a list, or write a few sentences that summarize your average family table experience.

3.

What kind of topics did you discuss at the table? Was it politics, issues, family business, everything and anything, etc.? Did you participate, mostly listen, stay aloof, maintain distance, etc.? Why?

4.

Describe the relationships exhibited between various members of the table: the relationship between your father and mother, you and each of your siblings, your siblings with each other, your siblings with each of your parents, etc. Of course if you had no siblings or came from a single parent family, describe what you talked about with your family, and the kind of relationship you had with those present. If you didn't sit at the table on a regular basis, describe the interaction and relationships at the table on special occasions, e.g., Sunday dinner, holidays, birthdays, etc. You might want to draw a dotted line from each person to the others in

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the group, and describe in one or two words the kind of relationship they had—angry, distant, dependent, warm, affectionate, serious, mixed, changeable, etc. As you viewed those relationships, how did you feel about them? (angry, happy, jealous, etc.).

Present Family Table

1.

Now draw a square or rectangle to describe the place each of your present family sits when you are at the dinner table. Again, if this is not a regular occasion, describe the special occasions when it does happen. If your children are no longer in the home, then describe the table you have now.

2.

What are the negatives you can see that you may have brought to your present family table from your parent's table? List them. "I'm distant like my dad." "I argue when I don't need to, because that is the way we did it at my home." "I let everyone else talk and I just listen." "I hate the table now, just like I did when I was at home."

3.

What are some of the positive qualities/values that you bring to your present table from your original family table? "We talk a lot about the needs of people and how we might help." "It's the time of the day when we get caught up on each other's life like we used to in my home." "I brought the joy and laughter of my family table to my present table." "The values of our family are often rehearsed as they were at home." "We use the time after dinner to discuss any problems we are having in our life, just like my mom and dad did with me." "Family table is not an option."

4.

What are the things you bring to your current family table that are different and/or better than what you had at your parent's table? "More affirmation." "We discuss a broader range of subjects." "We are more verbal and fun-loving." "We talk about anything anyone wants to, and we don't leave the table until we are through." "We don't allow senseless arguments or discussion just for the sake of argument." "We encourage everyone to participate."

Church Family Table

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This table is a little mystical, because there is one table we can all get around, at least in this life. The premise here is that our church is a family, and there are times in small groups, at special classes, retreats, programs, committees, boards, staff meetings, ministry teams, training sessions, department meetings, planning sessions, etc., when we operate very much like a family.

1.

What do you bring to your church family in the way of unfinished business, negative attitudes, suspicions, which are sometimes played out in your relationships with people in the church? "I was abused and I continue to be resentful of/suspicious of authority." "I saw my parents talk one way at church and live another way at home. I'm inclined to do the same thing in my life as an adult Christian." "I never saw my parents pray about anything, even in crisis, so I have a hard time praying with my family as well." "I never saw my parents serve, and I have followed the same pattern." "My parents were always looking for others to help them with their finances, or to help them out of a problem in our family. I am also more inclined to ask, 'What is the church going to do for me?' than 'How can I contribute?'" "My parents never gave consistently to the church, nor gave money to any charitable organization. I have a hard time thinking it matters that much to God or the church." "At home, I often heard my parents criticize those in authority/the pastor(s) of my church. I have continued to do the same." "My bad relationship with my present family often fuels my emotions about similar issues/relationships in the church."

2.

What do I want to bring to the church from my parents and my immediate family that is positive?