

## Leader's Guide

# Session 8: Judges 13

### SESSION GOALS

*Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.*

**Main Idea:** Even though his people do not realize their need for salvation, God will miraculously raise up a savior anyways.

**Head Change:** To know God will extend grace to us even when we miss it.

**Heart Change:** To feel gratitude for the grace God gives us even when we don't recognize we need it.

**Life Change:** To accept the grace God has extended to us by worshipping him through obedience.

### OPEN

**What's something a person has done for you that you didn't expect—like a surprise party, trip, or gift?**

**What was surprising about what that person did?**

God's about to do something we haven't seen so far in the book of Judges. He's going to raise up a judge from before he's born. In an unexpected move, God will bring salvation to his people through the birth of Samson.

### READ

Read Judges 13:1–25.

## **WATCH**

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in J.D.'s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

**What's missing from this round of the cycle of judges?**

**What's unique about Samson's birth?**

**What are the components of the Nazirite vow?**

Show Session 8: *Judges 13:1–25* (12 minutes).

## **DISCUSS**

Samson is one of the most well-known judges. Before we dig into what he did as a judge, we're going to investigate his origin story.

Read Judges 13:1.

J.D. pointed out that the cycle of judges circles back around again—Israel rebels and God hands them off to their enemies. Samson's story begins in verse 2. **As J.D. mentioned, what key component is missing from the cycle of judges?** (Israel's repentance is missing.)

This isn't the first time God has brought deliverance to Israel without their repentance. God continues to extend his grace to Israel though they neither deserve it nor ask for it. **Why do you think God continues to be gracious to Israel?**

**What's one tangible way God has shown his grace to you as you've followed him?**

Read Judges 13:2–5.

**What are the significant details surrounding Samson's birth we learn from these verses?** (Samson's mother was barren, an angel announced Samson's birth, Samson would be a Nazirite from birth, and Samson would begin to save Israel from the Philistines.)

## **GO DEEPER**

*Read more about God's intervention with barren women in the following passages: Gen. 18:1–15; 21:1–7; 25:19–21; 30:1–2, 22–24.*

These passages highlight the stories of Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel. **What about each of their stories highlights the power of God?**

Each of their sons played a significant role in the history of Israel—Isaac was the child of promise, Jacob fathered the heads of the twelve tribes, and Joseph saved his family and brought them to Egypt. **What significance might someone who grew up hearing the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob anticipate from Samson after learning about his birth in Judges 13?** (They might expect Samson to play a pivotal role in Israel and her history. They might also expect a divinely appointed leader.)

The literary clues in Samson's birth story point back to the other moments in Scripture when God blessed a barren woman with a son who bore significance for Israel. God's moving as he has before and will bring Israel deliverance.

Samson has unique parameters set on his life—he is to be a Nazirite. **According to this passage and the details J.D. provided, what did it mean to be a Nazirite?** (It meant not cutting your hair, approaching dead bodies, or partaking in anything from the fruit of the vine.)

It's evident that the child promised to Manoah and his wife will be significant. He's being set aside for God from birth. But his parents still don't quite understand what's going on.

Read Judges 13:6–14.

After the angel visits her, Manoah's wife tells her husband everything she heard and saw. Instead of believing her, Manoah asks God to send the messenger again. **What do you think Manoah's prayer shows about how he views God?**

Manoah exhibits a weak faith. In a way similar to Gideon, he asks God for another sign. After he confirms the angel is the same one who spoke to his wife, he asks about his child's mission and life. Instead of getting an answer, the angel repeats what he told the wife. **Why would God not provide Manoah an answer? What's the more important point that Manoah seems to be missing?** (He's missing what the angel said about the parameters set on his wife, which are also the parameters set on Samson.)

## **GO DEEPER**

*Learn more about the Nazirite vow in the following passage: Num. 6:1–21.*

**What are the key components of the Nazirite vow?** (The rules for the Nazirite included: no fermented drink or fruit of the vine, no cutting hair, and no contact with dead bodies.)

**What do all the rituals surrounding the Nazirite vow tell you about the seriousness of the vow?** (The rituals show that this vow isn't something to be taken lightly—it's a serious choice and should be handled carefully.)

**What would you expect from someone who took the Nazirite vow? Would he or she be flippant about it? Why or why not?**

As we look into the life of Samson, we'll see how lightly he took the Nazirite vow. The only part of the vow he kept until the end was not shaving his head. Throughout his story, we never see a sign or reverence to God, which is a key element of upholding the Nazirite vow. It goes to show that God chooses sinful people to accomplish his purposes.

On the surface, the angel's answer seems to be about Manoah's wife. But since he already announced that Samson would be a Nazirite, the rules he's setting for the wife are also applied to Samson. He will be a Nazirite from before birth, which means his mother must also observe the requirements as she carries her son. He's supposed to avoid the fruit of the vine, unclean food, and he's to observe all God's commands. Manoah still doesn't quite understand who he's dealing with.

Read Judges 13:15–20.

**What about Manoah's request to prepare an offering for the angel shows he doesn't understand whom he's speaking to?**

The angel redirects Manoah to give an offering to God instead. Manoah tries to figure out how to honor his prophetic guest by learning his name, but he still doesn't understand that it's God who deserves all the honor for Samson. **What are some examples of situations we experience that we sometimes forget or diminish God's role in orchestrating?** (Some examples could include: getting a new job, finding a house, a healthy birth, healing from a sickness, or finding a church.)

Manoah didn't realize God was the one at work to bring Samson into the world. When they offering and the angel are taken up to heaven, the couple finally understands.

Read Judges 13:21–25.

It hits Manoah that he's seen an angel of God. He starts to panic, but his wife reassures him. **What about her response in verse 23 reflects faith in God and understanding of his character?**

Manoah's wife recognizes God's hand in the encounter with the angel and the prophecy he delivered. Just as the angel said, she conceives and has a son. **In what ways is God's grace on display throughout the story of Samson's birth?** (Some examples include: he extends his grace by ordaining Samson's birth, by acting even though Israel didn't repent, by being patient when Manoah didn't believe, etc.)

**In what circumstances is it easiest to forget God's grace towards you? Why do you think that is?**

**What looks different in someone's life when they truly believe in and apply God's grace?**

**Would you say it's easy or difficult for you to accept the grace that God extends to you? Why is it difficult or easy?**

We see God's grace on display through salvation narratives. In Samson's story in particular, we witness God extending grace both to Samson and Israel for the sake of Israel's deliverance. **What about what we've studied in Judges so far has shaped the way you understand God's grace?**

## **LAST WORD**

God extends his grace to Israel through Samson. They didn't cry out to God in repentance for their sin, but God sends a deliverer anyways. Even throughout the story of Samson's origin, God is gracious to Samson's parents as they struggle to believe and understand what God tells them through his angel.

God gives us the same grace, though we often have a difficult time understanding it or living like it's true. This week, reflect on the grace of God that he's extended to you. Pray about what it means to accept his grace. Thank God for the ways he's been gracious to you.

## **LIVE IT OUT**

**Pray:** Pray God would continue to remind you of his grace throughout the next week. Take a moment each day to thank him for the grace he's given you.

**Praise:** Find a worship song or two that talks about God's grace to us. Sing or listen to those songs throughout the week as a reminder of God's grace.

**Reflect:** Take ten minutes this week to reflect on the ways you've seen God extend his grace to you over the past year. Write down the things you think about and thank God for moving in your life.

## **READING PLAN**

**Leader:** *The reading plan picks up Samson's story in 15 and concludes it in 16.*

### **Judges 15:1–16:31**

**Day one:** 15:1–8

**Day two:** 15:9–20

**Day three:** 16:1–12

**Day four:** 16:13–22

**Day five:** 16:23–31