

**Two Important Prayers for Every Father**  
**Judges 13:1-14**

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**Introduction to the Text:** Our text today comes from the book of Judges. Judges tells the story of the nation of Israel immediately following the time of conquest of the Land of Promise. What should have been a glorious time is a period of rebellion for the nation. “Following the conquest of Canaan, Israel plunges into a 350 year period of national deterioration. A monotonous and deadly pattern develops: The people fall into sin, God disciplines them with foreign oppression, the people cry out in repentance, God raises up a deliverer, peace is restored. The cycle of sin repeats itself a total of seven times in the book. But God, ever faithful to his covenant people, extends his grace again and again by sending such leaders as Deborah, Gideon, and Samson.”<sup>1</sup> Our text today tells of the parents of Samson. It’s a powerful word to today on Father’s Day.

**Text:** The Israelites again did what was evil in the LORD’s sight, so the LORD handed them over to the Philistines 40 years. <sup>2</sup>There was a certain man from Zorah, from the family of Dan, whose name was Manoah; his wife was unable to conceive and had no children. <sup>3</sup>The Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “It is true that you are unable to conceive and have no children, but you will conceive and give birth to a son. <sup>4</sup>Now please be careful not to drink wine or beer, or to eat anything unclean; <sup>5</sup>for indeed, you will conceive and give birth to a son. You must never cut his hair, because the boy will be a Nazirite to God from birth, and he will begin to save Israel from the power of the Philistines.”

<sup>6</sup>Then the woman went and told her husband, “A man of God came to me. He looked like the awe-inspiring Angel of God. I didn’t ask Him where He came from, and He didn’t tell me His name. <sup>7</sup>He said to me, ‘You will conceive and give birth to a son. Therefore, do not drink wine or beer, and do not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite to God from birth until the day of his death.’”

<sup>8</sup>Manoah prayed to the LORD and said, “Please Lord, let the man of God you sent come again to us and teach us what we should do for the boy who will be born.”

<sup>9</sup>God listened to Manoah, and the Angel of God came again to the woman. She was sitting in the field, and her husband Manoah was not with her. <sup>10</sup>The woman ran quickly to her husband and told him, “The man who came to me today has just come back!”

<sup>11</sup>So Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he asked, “Are You the man who spoke to my wife?”

“I am,” He said.

<sup>12</sup>Then Manoah asked, “When Your words come true, what will the boy’s responsibilities and mission be?”

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<sup>1</sup> *The Daily Walk Bible*, p. 280.

<sup>13</sup>The Angel of the LORD answered Manoah, “Your wife needs to do everything I told her.

**Introduction:** You have to get a license to drive. In many fields of employment, you have to take a test to get a proper license. You even have to get a license to get married. But, to raise children, there is no license. Have you ever thought about that? I have often thought that you ought to have some kind of license to be a parent, but who could administer the test. It’s tough to know what to do sometimes, isn’t it?

Manoah and his unnamed spouse, because of her inability to conceive, or quite surprised with this announcement that they are going to have a child. More surprised, the angel of the Lord announces that he is to be set apart in special service to God as a Nazirite. The Nazirite vow is discussed in Numbers 6. The vow comes from the Hebrew word *nazir* which means to be set apart for God’s service. Another notable Nazirite was John the Baptist. God declaring Samson to be a Nazirite seems to add even greater pressure on these parents. As people of faith, they pray. Manoah’s two requests are recorded.

### **Manoah’s Two Requests:**

1. Teach us how to parent.

The essence of this prayer is Lord, help! Teach us what to do with this kid.

2. What will be his purpose?

I believe that Manoah wanted to know this in part because of curiosity, but because his wife was unable to conceive, he recognized that perhaps that God had a very specific and special plan for this child. And could I just add at this point that God has a very special plan and purpose for everyone. As parents, we ought to take great joy in helping our children find that very special and specific purpose.

Have you ever prayed a prayer like Manoah’s prayer? Maybe your prayer didn’t come out quite as eloquent as Manoah’s prayer. Maybe your prayer had even fewer words. Maybe your prayer was simply, “Help!” I believe that Manoah’s prayer ought to be our prayer for our children. Here is how we pray for our children. Notice three characteristics of Manoah’s prayers.

### **Prayers of Dependence**

Now, to be honest with you, some commentators on this passage cast doubt on the reason for Manoah’s prayer for the man of God to return. They speculate that he was jealous that his wife had this angelic encounter instead of him. There is even some speculation that Manoah doubted that the experience of his wife was real. I don’t see this in the text. I see a man who is very eager to hear what God is saying. I see a man thankful for this news and wanting to be a part of what God is doing.

I see that his prayer is a prayer of dependence. This same prayer thought is reiterated in verse 12. Manoah recognizes his dependence upon God because he recognizes something that we ought to see about every child.

**This characteristic of our prayer recognizes that each child is a blessing from the Lord.**

Manoah recognized that the child was a gift from God. We ought to turn our attention to God because He is the one who has given us children in the first place. The Psalmist declared in Psalm 127, “Behold,

children *are* a heritage from the LORD,  
The fruit of the womb *is* a reward.”

When we begin to recognize our children as gifts from the LORD, we will be more mindful of our need for total dependence on Him to know what to do with these children.

### **Prayers for Direction**

Manoah’s prayers are not only prayers of dependence; his prayers are also a prayers for direction. The implication of verse 8 and verse 12 is that we must guide our children in the choices that they make. We must prepare them for the decisions that they will ultimately make in regards to what they will do.

**This characteristic of our prayer recognizes that each child has a bent from the Lord.**

Chuck Swindoll uses this word “bent” to describe the particular personality of each child. Isn’t it amazing how different and unique each person is? Your child has a “bent.” If we try to bend a child according to a direction not associated with his or her “bent” we are going to get ourselves and our children in real trouble. That’s why we must pray for God’s direction so that we might give proper direction to our children.

But notice that in giving direction, God says that I have already given you some direction. In verse 13, the angel of God says “I have already given directions to the woman.” I think God looks at us sometimes and says, “I have already given you direction. I have already given you My Word to obey.” Unusual, isn’t it, that we live in a society that places an emphasis on seatbelts and child restraints for the car to protect physically, but neglects the spiritual protection of our children?

We live in a society that stands in line all night long to get children in their school of choice, but find it difficult to come to Sunday School and church. May it not be so in our homes! As we pray, let us pray for direction.

### **Prayers of Dedication**

And as we pray for direction, let us also pray with dedication. Let us understand that we must be dedicated to follow through as God directs.

**This characteristic of our prayer recognizes that every parent has a responsibility.**

We have a responsibility to our children to live out our commitment to the LORD. Let us never forget that our children learn more by what we do than what we say. We have many responsibilities as parents. There is the responsibility to pray, to provide, and to protect. But, let us remember that we have a responsibility to provide an example. Let us be reminded that we have a responsibility to put our children in the right position to make their own decision to trust Christ. Let us be reminded that we have a responsibility to pay attention to the spiritual development of our children.

I read that it will cost somewhere between \$200,000 and \$300,000 to raise a child these days from birth to 18 years old. If you were going to invest that kind of money in anything else, don’t you think that you would want to everything possible to make sure that your investment goes well?

Rick Husband is an American hero. He was the commander of the ill-fated Columbia shuttle mission that exploded upon re-entry scattering parts over Texas and Louisiana. His wife put his story to words in the book *High Calling*. In the book, we learn that Rick was not only a great American, but also a great husband, father, and Christian. Though his commitment to NASA was obviously great, Rick never seemed to lose sight of the right priorities. The most inspiring part of Rick's story is that he taped different devotions for each of the seventeen days of his mission for both of his children so that he would not miss a day sharing with them spiritual food.

On landing day, here is what Rick taped for his daughter:

"It's Landing Day and hopefully, if the weather's good, I'll be landing today in Florida. I'm certainly looking forward to seeing you, Matthew and Mama." Rick then read from Laura's devotional book and when he finished, he prayed for her. "OK, Laura, it won't be long before I see you! I love you very, very much...I'll see you in just a little while! I love you. Bye, Bye!"

Rick understood that his highest calling was the one given to him by his Heavenly Father. What about it, Dads? On this Father's Day weekend, isn't it time that all of us who wear the title Father spend some time re-evaluating how we are doing with the high calling God has entrusted to us?