

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-23 Family Issues: Parent-Child Disagreement

How would you define the word ‘family’? The term often refers to a father, a mother, and their children. This varies from culture to culture. God placed each of us in a physical family—some more extended than others. He planned that we would love, help, and defend each other. Some of our longest and closest relationships will be with a family member.

Some people, however, are in family situations that require a younger person to take an adult role in the family. The parents work and a child becomes the “parent” at home. Or, a parent is unable or unwilling to take their role in the family. One of the children must step up to cover that position. As children are forced to take on mature roles, they still have growing up to do. Their immature ideas of life, religious beliefs, and friends may not agree with those of the parents.

Counselors and pastors often meet such family situations. A parent is disagreeing with a child’s choices, or a child is rebelling against a parent’s choices. Sometimes it involves faith—one or the other has become a Christian. Parents may disown a child who accepts Jesus as Savior. Sometimes Christian parents are trying to force their new Christian values on a wayward child. They may be trying to reach a family member who is comfortable in a certain lifestyle.

Family issues such as these can be difficult. Take a few minutes and think about the roles you were required to assume when you were a child. What are you responsible for in your family now? Have you received support and help from family members when it was needed? Who listened to you when you cried?

The Bible tells the story of a man and woman who had no children. They were Israelites, living under the bondage of the Philistines for over 40 years. Being in slavery usually means you spend most of your time working for your oppressors. In spite of their situation, this couple prayed for a child of their own. They were devout Jews. One day the angel of the Lord appeared to the wife of Manoah to tell her, “You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son. . . . The boy is to be . . . set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines” (Jud 13:3-5).

When the boy was born, they named him Samson. He grew and the Lord blessed him. The Spirit of God began to stir him at times. As Samson became a young adult, he found a young woman among the Philistines, whom he fell in love with. He asked his parents to help him get her for his wife. His parents 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?” (Jud 14:3). Against their wishes, he did marry this woman.

The Bible said that Samson’s parents did not know that Samson’s marriage to this woman was part of God’s plan. They loved Samson, but they wanted him to do what they told him. The LORD, Yahweh, “was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel” (Jud 14:4). Perhaps they were too afraid of their enemies. It seems that they obeyed God in making Samson live a dedicated life. But, they had forgotten or did not really

believe what God had said about their son delivering Israel. They didn't want to change their ideas on what a good Jewish boy should do.

This is not unusual—misunderstanding between what a child wants to do and what his or her parents want. Pastors often have to pray with them, listen to both sides, and ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and discernment in the situation.

After Samson's marriage, he had a quarrel with his wife's family and people. Samson became angry and set the grain fields of the Philistines on fire. The blaze destroyed their vineyards, grain, and olive groves. The quarrel ended with his wife and her father being killed by the Philistines because of what Samson had done. Then the Philistines sent men to take Samson prisoner and punish him as revenge for the destruction of the fire. They camped in Judah.

So, 3,000 men from Judah went to the cave where Samson was hiding. They were aware of Samson's strength, but they didn't come to support him. They wanted to capture him and turn him over to the Philistines. Even with the large force, they did not attempt to tie him up without his consent. The tribe was apparently content to accept the Philistine rule. His family tried to talk to Samson and tell him that he was causing trouble for all of them. They wanted him to stop what he was doing and try to get along with the Philistines. His people had gotten used to being in bondage. Samson agreed to have the Jews tie him with ropes and hand him over to the Philistines.

When Samson was delivered to the Philistines, they rushed toward him shouting. The Spirit of Yahweh came upon Samson in power. He broke the ropes that bound him—the ropes his family and friends had tied him with. And with a jawbone of a donkey, he struck down and killed 1,000 Philistines. He freed his people that day. Samson led Israel as their judge for the next 20 years (Jud 15:7-15).

Families are important and are a part of God's plan for each of us. It was Samson's family's willingness to tolerate bondage that kept them where they were. Their fear of the Philistines was greater than their trust in God. No one loves bondage, but anyone can become comfortable with it. The known can become more comfortable than the unknown. Change is hard. It is when the Spirit of God gives you strength that the ropes of bondage can be cut.

This lesson is **important** because so many people deal with parent-child problems. They need to understand that God has a plan for each child. As counselors, we must help parents seek God for direction for their children. And in turn, we encourage both children and parents to discern any kinds of bondage they may have become comfortable with. God wants to free them.

The **main truth** of this story is that God has a plan for each human family to be a part of the larger family—the family of God. He guides individuals, step by step, as they seek to know him and do his will. Samson's parents forgot God's promise and Samson had issues of anger and rebellion. God, however, used this family to accomplish his larger plan for Israel.

Review the lesson with these questions:

1. Who bound Samson with ropes and delivered him to the angry Philistines? [Pause]

- A. If you answered, “His family and friends bound Samson,” you answered correctly.
2. With the help of the Spirit of God what did Samson accomplish? [Pause]
- A. If you said that he broke the ropes his people had tied him with, killed 1,000 Philistines, and freed Israel from their oppressors, you are right.
3. Why did Samson’s family ask him to stop making trouble with the Philistines?
- A. If you said, “Because their fear of the Philistines was greater than their trust in God; and the known was more comfortable than the unknown,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it several times, until the meaning of the story is clear and you can retell it accurately. Tell the story to someone who has a child. Discuss with them any disagreements they have with that child. Pray together and ask God to show you what his plan is for the family. Perhaps that child is the Samson in the family, to deliver them from bondage. Seek God for his direction in using you to free people around you from the bondage they have become comfortable in.