

Undisciplined Desires

Series, April 30 & May 1, 2022 | Judges 14:1-4 (Judges 14)

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HOW CAN WE GET CONTROL OF UNDISCIPLINED DESIRES IN OUR LIVES?

Samson's life blew up like a supernova.

This is the Crab Nebula. It's what's left after a supernova that happened nearly a thousand years ago. Chinese astronomers first spotted the Crab Nebula in 1054. It looked like a new star in the sky, but it was not like any other star. It was so bright that it was visible during the day.

A supernova occurs when very large stars exhaust the fuel in their cores and their gases begin to collapse. As they collapse, they heat up, eventually causing a massive nuclear explosion, blowing the star apart. Supernovas are brilliant, explosive deaths.

Samson's life and death were like a supernova.

Samson's life was massive. His birth was miraculous. His strength was legendary. He was gifted in battle and extremely charismatic. He was filled with potential and called to deliver the people of Israel from bondage to a group of foreigners called the Philistines.

Samson failed to meet God's standards for his life and to do the work God had given him. He found himself in a Philistine jail with his miraculous gifts gone. His massive life was collapsing.

Then his life ended in a brilliant, explosive death as he miraculously pulled down a Philistine temple, killing everyone inside including himself, a supernova-like life and death.

Samson's supernova was caused by a moral failure. What is a moral failure?

A moral failure happens when we break a moral standard.

We may do something that we are strongly expected not to do or fail to do something that we are strongly expected to do.

Moral failures may cost us everything.

Undisciplined desires can lead to our own lives blowing up like a supernova.

We all have desires, things we want.

Some of the things we want are wrong. They're bad for us, bad for the people around us, and bad for God's mission, but we want them anyway.

When our desires control us and we give in to them freely, frequently, and without thought, then those are undisciplined desires. Undisciplined desire blows our lives up like a supernova.

Today we will find **Three Ways to Discipline Our Desires and Avoid Moral Failure.**

We're going back to the life of Samson again.

As we continue to study Samson's life, we'll find that he was ruled by undisciplined desires.

We'll see where those undisciplined desires came from, how the Gospel confronts our undisciplined desires, and how following Jesus can change our lives and outcomes.

SOMETHING HAD TO HAPPEN

In Judges 14:1-4 we discover that something had to happen:

Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines. Then he came up and told his father and mother, "I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife." But his father and mother said to him, "Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes." His father and mother did not know that it was from the LORD, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines. At that time the Philistines ruled over Israel.

Israel was in mortal danger.

The town of Timnah was a short distance from a large, powerful Philistine city.

It was also in the heart of Israel between Dan and Judah.

Archaeological records indicate that during this period, Timnah was a Philistine city. The remains from this period are filled with Philistine stuff.

It means that the Philistines had completely taken over and displaced the Israelites.

What's worse, the Israelites didn't mind. They were doing business with Philistines, marrying Philistines, and worshipping alongside Philistines. They were gradually becoming Philistines.

Israel was close to extinction. Something had to be done.

Samson was doing only what was right in his own eyes.

Samson was in Timnah with the Philistines, and he saw a Philistine woman. He liked her looks.

Samson demanded that his parents arrange a marriage with her. He rejected their encouragement to look inside Israel, God's covenant people, for a wife.

Instead, Samson was willing to get into a marriage with an unbeliever. Doing so would certainly cause his very limited faith to fall apart quickly. Dating and marrying nonbelievers is always a dangerous move that jeopardizes our faith and the faith of our families.

But Samson said that the decision and the woman were right "in his eyes." Samson was letting his undisciplined desires dictate his actions. That's the essence of the sin of this period.

Judges 21:25, the very end of the book, says,

... Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Samson thought he was entitled to whatever he wanted. Something had to be done.

The Spirit of the Lord intervened because something had to happen.

God would not allow his people to cease to exist.

Something had to happen, so God caused Samson to be born.

Judges 13 ends with the note that the Spirit of the Lord began to stir in Samson as he became an adult, prompting him to take action and do something.

Then Judges 14:4 says that it was the Spirit of the Lord stirring in Samson to push him to act against the Philistines and to rally Israel. Samson got the specifics wrong, but his actions led him to become disenchanted with Philistines, at least some of them.

How do we discipline our desires? **1. Identify your own sense of entitlement.**

Entitlement becomes unhealthy when I expect that my needs are going to be met and that I am going to get what I want without regard to my merit or your needs.

I might expect a promotion at work I didn't earn or something that makes me feel better because life is so hard.

Entitled people think, "The rules don't apply to me." "What you think or want doesn't matter." "I get what I want when I want it."

Entitlement explodes in our lives like a bomb. Some people sometimes will go along with our sense of entitlement. Then they stop and say "No." Eventually, entitlement explodes.

We want to identify and confront our own entitled thinking *before* it blows up.

UNDISCIPLINED DESIRE TRIGGERED SMALLER EXPLOSIONS FOR SAMSON

In this season of his life, Samson was like Wile E. Coyote standing with a stick of dynamite in his hand.

Wile E. Coyote is the classic Warner Brothers cartoon character who spends much of his life in the desert chasing the Road Runner.

Frequently, Wile E. Coyote tries to blow up Road Runner. He places a bomb under a plate of birdseed, for instance.

The problem is that every time Wile E. Coyote makes a bomb or lights a stick of dynamite, you can bet the plan is going to backfire. If he is standing around with a lit stick of dynamite in his hand, you can bet it is going to blow up in his own face.

In Judges 14, Samson is like Wile E. Coyote, standing around with a lit stick of dynamite in his hands. The plan is bad. It's going to backfire. He's going to be hurt.

There are multiple warning signs in Judges 14.

Finding his hand in a corpse should have been a warning sign for Samson.

After Samson made his wishes clear, his father and mother set out for Timnah to negotiate a marriage with the Philistine woman's father.

Along the way, they came to a vineyard. Samson was separated from his family.

In the vineyard, he was surprised by a lion charging at him. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, he became supernaturally strong, and he easily killed the lion with his bare hands.

Samson never mentioned the incident to his parents. They continued to Timnah where they successfully negotiated the marriage contract and returned home.

Later, Samson and his parents returned to Timnah to celebrate the wedding.

Again, Samson found himself alone in the vineyard along the way. He came back to the body of the lion he had killed. Surprisingly, he found a colony of bees living inside, making honey.

Samson lived with a Nazirite vow. He was dedicated to God in a special way. His Nazirite vow meant that he could never touch a corpse.

However, without hesitation, Samson stuck his hand in. He pulled out the honey and ate it. Warning sign! Samson the Nazirite found his hand in the corpse.

Waking up in a drunken stupor also should have been a warning sign for Samson.

When Samson and his family reached Timnah, it was time to party.

Following the Philistine custom, Samson threw a seven-day feast.

The word used here really means drinking party.

The people of Timnah brought 30 Philistines to make sure Samson kept their customs.

The problem is that Samson the Israelite shouldn't be keeping Philistine customs.

Plus, Samson's Nazirite vow included never drinking alcohol and never even touching anything made from grapes. Samson the Nazirite shouldn't be drinking alcohol.

And Samson the Judge of Israel should not be partying with the enemy.

Warning sign! Samson woke up in a drunken stupor at a Philistine party.

Ending up back in his parents' home should have been a warning sign for Samson.

Samson thought he would have some fun with his Philistine guests.

He made a bet and told them a riddle. If they could figure out the riddle, he would give all thirty of them a new set of clothes. If they could not figure out the riddle by the seventh day of the feast, they would each owe him a new set of clothes.

His Philistine guests accepted the bet.

The Philistines pondered the riddle for days and made no progress.

Finally, they pushed Samson's betrothed to get the answer out of him.

Samson's fiancé pushed and pushed until he told her the answer. Then she told their Philistine guests who presented their stolen answer to Samson. He had been beaten and betrayed.

Samson killed thirty Philistine men, took their clothes, and gave them to his drinking buddies.

Then he went home to his father's house without his bride, angry.

We have another warning sign! A young man who planned to be married instead ended up back at his father's house. It should have gotten his attention that his plans were not going well. It should have caused him to rethink his choices.

How do we discipline our desires? 2. Pay attention when God gives you a warning sign.

God gives us warning signs when we are allowing our undisciplined desires to rule.

There are moments when we realize that we are Wile E. Coyote standing in the middle of the desert with a lit stick of dynamite in our hands.

If we are to discipline our desires, then we have to heed those warning signs in life when they come along. Pay attention when God gives you warning signs.

DISCIPLES DISCIPLINE OUR DESIRES

Disciplining our desires is part of sanctification for followers of Jesus. What is sanctification?

Theologian Wayne Grudem defines sanctification this way:

Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives. – Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*¹

The word “sanctification” is related to the word “holy.” To be sanctified is to be made holy.

That’s the essence of God’s demand of his people in the Law. God is holy. We were created to be holy, but we lost that holiness when we sinned. Now we are to be made holy like him. In **Leviticus 19:2** God says,

“... You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”

In **John 14:15** Jesus added,

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

Sanctification is the process of learning to obey God, of developing personal holiness.

Sanctification is the process of disciplining our desires so that they match God’s desires.

Sanctification is a gift to Christians. It goes back to God’s Story.

In chapter 1, Creation, God made the world and everything in it, including us. God made us perfect and sinless in the beginning. We were holy!

Then in chapter 2, Brokenness, we sinned against God. We became unholy. We chose our desires over God’s desires. We can’t become holy again on our own.

However, in chapter 3, Jesus, God sent his Son, Jesus, into the world. Jesus lived a perfect, holy life then died on the cross to pay the price for our sin. Now when we repent of our sin, everything changes.

That leads to chapter 4, Church. In this chapter, there are two arrows. The one pointing downward symbolizes God giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit. God’s Holy Spirit sanctifies us and gives us gifts for doing ministry. The arrow pointing upward, toward the cross, reminds us that we now live for God’s glory. Sanctification is a gift God gives us.

Sanctification starts in a moment.

When we repent of our sin and accept Jesus, critically important things happen.

We are forgiven of our sin, reconciled to God, and adopted into God’s family.

When we are regenerated or given new life, we are made fundamentally different from what we were before. We are declared holy. Jesus’ holiness is put inside of us when we become his followers. From that point forward, the Bible refers to us frequently as saints or holy ones.

Paul describes the transformation in **Romans 6:11**,

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Our old life is gone, and our new life begins.

Then in **Romans 6:14** he shares an implication,

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

We who were slaves to sin before are no longer slaves to sin. Now we have a choice about what we do with our desires.

That sanctification happens as soon as soon as we begin following Jesus.

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994) 746.

Sanctification also reshapes us over time.

We may be free from slavery to sin, but we also still tend to sin.

Destructive decisions may still come easily, and our desires may still be undisciplined.

The Holy Spirit continues to reshape us into the image of Christ.

In the book of Philippians, chapter 3, Paul writes about longing to live the perfect, heavenly life that we will live one day in God's presence. He acknowledges that he is not there. Yet.

He writes in Philippians 3:13-14 that he is pressing toward that holiness:

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Sanctification reshapes us for the rest of our lives.

Sanctification involves daily practices.

Dallas Willard, a great evangelical theologian and scholar of the 20th century, wrote about those daily practices in *The Spirit of the Disciplines*.

In that book, Willard talks about certain daily practices Jesus prescribes, like turning the other cheek and laying down our lives. Sanctification means living Jesus' kind of lifestyle daily.

That lifestyle is built on daily practices that we might call disciplines. Willard described disciplines like praying, studying the Bible, and worshipping. Sanctification involves those types of disciplines.

More importantly, Willard describes daily practice sessions. He writes about young athletes who want to be like their professional stars. They want to run, jump, and throw like the stars. They even imitate their stars when they play. But you can't show up one Saturday and run like an Olympic sprinter or throw like a Major League Baseball pitcher. Those stars practiced and trained every day for years. Sanctification involves that kind of daily practice.²

Sanctification requires that we discipline our desires.

1 John talks about being children of God and enjoying that fact.

1 John 3:3 tells us that when we are children of God, we will naturally and necessarily long to become pure over time,

And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

We can't just sin recklessly any longer. **1 John 3:6** says,

No one who abides in him keeps on sinning ...

1 John 3:9 adds,

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.

We as followers of Jesus discipline our desires.

DISCIPLINE YOUR DESIRES TO DEFUSE THE BOMB OF MORAL FAILURE

The book of Proverbs reminds us repeatedly that undisciplined desire sets off the bomb.

² Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 3-11.

The Proverbs remind us that undisciplined desires lead to destructive decisions.

Proverbs also points out that destructive decisions almost inevitably lead to life-altering consequences. We can lose everything—jobs, friends, spouse, family, and our ability to fulfill God’s purpose for our lives.

In a sense, undisciplined desires almost always put a piece of dynamite in our hands with a lit fuse. The blast is life-wrecking.

Proverbs 3:1-8 reminds us that disciplining our desire defuses the bomb.

I’m inviting you to memorize parts of Proverbs 3 during this series.

They beautifully articulate the thought that disciplining our desires defuses the bomb waiting to go off at the end of the pathway of destructive decisions.

Proverbs 3:1-6 (verses that some people are memorizing) make the case:

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.

Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Disciplining our desires leads to long life, peace, favor in the sight of God, success in the sight of people, and straight pathways in life. That leads us to our third and final principle:

3. Discipline your desires to defuse the bomb of moral failure.

The bomb of moral failure doesn’t have to go off in our lives.

There is an alternative.

The verses we are memorizing together from Proverbs 3 make it abundantly clear.

Proverbs 3:7-8 says,

Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

Disciplining our desires means the bomb of moral failure will not explode in our lives.

Let’s discipline our desires for God’s glory.