

Judges 13

Discussion Guide: Judges 13

Theme: *Set Apart — God's Calling Before Our Response*

Big Idea

God sets people apart for His purposes by His grace, not their merit—but calling without surrender leads to wasted potential.

Opening Icebreaker

- Have you ever seen someone with incredible potential who didn't live up to it? What happened?

Discussion Questions + Leader Notes

1. In Judges 13:1, what is the situation in Israel—and how long has it lasted?

Leader Notes:

- Israel again does evil
- 40 years under Philistine oppression
- This is one of the longest periods of suffering so far
- No mention of them crying out this time (important shift)

2. What stands out about how God initiates Samson's story (13:2–5)?

Leader Notes:

- God acts before Israel cries out
- Announcement to a barren woman → theme of miraculous birth
- Samson is set apart *before birth*
- This is pure grace, not response

3. What is a Nazirite, and what was Samson's calling supposed to be?

Leader Notes:

- Set apart (no razor, no wine, no defilement)
- Visible symbol of consecration to God

- "He shall begin to save Israel..."
- Calling is clear—but partial ("begin")

4. How do Manoah and his wife respond to God's message (13:6–14)?

What do you notice?

Leader Notes:

- They believe and seek understanding
- Manoah asks for guidance → desire to obey
- Contrast with Samson later

5. What stands out in their interaction with the angel of the Lord (13:15–23)?

Leader Notes:

- Worship and reverence
- Manoah fears death after seeing God
- His wife shows theological clarity and trust
- This is a strong, faith-filled response

6. What does 13:24–25 tell us about Samson's early life?

Leader Notes:

- "The Lord blessed him"
- "The Spirit of the Lord began to stir him"
- Strong start—God is clearly at work

7. What tension do you already feel between Samson's calling and what you know is coming?

Leader Notes:

- Set apart vs. coming compromise
- Great potential vs. coming failure
- This sets up the tragedy of his life

8. What does this chapter teach us about God's initiative in our lives?

Leader Notes:

- God moves first
- Calling is grace, not earned
- God's purposes are bigger than us

9. What does it teach us about the responsibility that comes with calling?

Leader Notes:

- Being set apart requires surrender
- Calling without obedience leads to misuse
- Privilege increases responsibility

10. How do Manoah and his wife model a better response than Samson will later?

Leader Notes:

- Humility
- Teachability
- Reverence
- Desire to obey God's Word

11. Where might you sense God has set you apart or called you in specific ways?

Leader Notes:

- Family leadership
- Church involvement
- Personal holiness
- Gifts and opportunities

12. Are there areas where you are called—but not fully surrendered?

Leader Notes:

- This is the key heart question
- Help them connect calling with obedience

Closing Application

- Am I treating God's calling on my life casually or seriously?
- Where might I be relying on potential instead of obedience?
- What would it look like to live fully set apart for God right now?

Gospel Connection (Leader Emphasis)

- Samson is set apart before birth—but fails to live it out
- His life shows that calling alone is not enough

Point to Jesus:

- Jesus was also set apart from birth—but lived in perfect obedience
- Where Samson failed to fulfill his calling, Jesus fulfilled His completely

A strong line:

“Samson was set apart but self-directed. Jesus was set apart and fully surrendered.”

Leader Tip

Don't let this become:

- “You have potential—do better”

Instead:

- Emphasize grace + responsibility
- Set up the tension that unfolds in Samson's life