

Hold On

5-Day Devotional



HOLD ON (1990)

& SAMSON AND DELILAH

No one can change your life except for you.



Cold War effectively ending; Germany reunified



Capitol Crawl (March 1990) — disability rights activists crawl up the Capitol steps, catalyst for the ADA



Nelson Mandela released after 27 years in prison (Feb. 1990)



Land on: a year the world kept discovering that chains everyone assumed were permanent could actually come apart.



THE SONG'S BACKSTORY

- Released Feb 27, 1990; Wilson Phillips' first No. 1 single; Billboard's #1 song of the year overall
- Chynna Phillips wrote it from her own crossroads — struggling with drugs, "in a lot of pain," "if I don't change my course, I'm going to be in a lot of trouble... I either had to hold on for one more day or just die."



THE HUMAN CONDITION

Three shapes it commonly takes:



UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
(partner, family member, fake friend)



UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS
(addictions, habits)



UNHEALTHY MINDSETS
(anger, stuck in 'one emotional gear')

"No one can change your life except for you..."
You've got no one to blame for your unhappiness."
This applies to all three.



CONNECTION TO SAMSON

- Of the three, turning to unhealthy relationships.
- Reminder — lyric: "No one can change your life except for you" as diagnosis before the story even starts.
- Samson has unaddressed brokenness in his life and that is manifested in his relationships with women.
- Dedication to God and unaddressed brokenness can coexist — being faithful doesn't make you immune to harmful patterns.



THE PATTERN: SAMSON'S UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Mother's Nazirite vow before his birth — dedicated to God from the beginning.



Philistine wife (wedding disaster)



Prostitute in Gaza



Delilah

Two Philistine women and a prostitute, none matching his primary relationship with God.

BAD PICKER

Not bad luck, the same underlying unaddressed thing surfacing in different faces.

— Judges 16 —

1 FIRST BETRAYAL 16:4-10



- Delilah is bribed first (1,100 pieces of silver) to discover Samson's weakness.
- Asks directly; Samson lies about bowstrings; she ties him up, shouts alarm, he snaps free.
- v. 10 — she calls him the liar, the wronged party. Classic victim-blaming. He stays.
- Delilah gaslights Samson.

REMEMBER — LYRIC
"Someday somebody's gonna make you wanna turn around and say goodbye..."
Are you gonna let them hold you down and make you cry?
His answer every time is yes.

2 SECOND & THIRD ROUNDS 16:13-16



- New ropes, then the loom — same lie, same escape, same staying.
- By v. 16, she's not scheming anymore, just wearing him down "day after day" until he's "tired to death."

REMEMBER LYRIC
"Lettin' your worries pass you by..."
Don't you think it's worth your time to change your mind?
Exactly what he doesn't do.

3 THE TRUTH & THE TURN 16:17



- Tells her about the Nazirite vow, the hair — not just a tactic, his whole identity and connection to God.
- Trading his identity to someone who never had his best interests in mind.
- Symbolically, this is where he turns his back on God, not just good judgment.

REMEMBER — LYRIC
"Why do you lock yourself up in these chains?"
For Samson, about to become literal, not metaphorical.

4 THE FINAL PRAYER 16:28



- Even here, he doesn't forget who he belongs to: "Sovereign Lord, remember me... strengthen me just once more."
- A prayer—for change, a prayer for help. The same prayer we can pray when life becomes unmanageable.
- Step 1 of Alcoholics Anonymous: Recognize you are powerless and life is unmanageable. Self-awareness is the first step. The next step is to pray for help.

5 THE OUTCOME 16:29-31



- Eyes gouged out.
- Bound in chains.
- Power gone, purpose obscured.
- Freedom lost because he traded truth for temporary approval.



TURN TO JESUS — THE CONTRAST & THE ANSWER



Delilah wants something FROM Samson. Jesus wants nothing from you—already knows what binds you, isn't selling it to what's trying to destroy you.



Samson loses his eyes after a life of being "seen" only for what he could provide. Jesus sees you fully, in your brokenness, and doesn't exploit what he finds.



Freedom in Christ — He is the One who actually helps us make the change. Real freedom isn't willpower alone — it's letting go of the unhealthy relationship, behavior, or mindset WITH HIM, and finding healing and rest, not just survival.

TAKE AWAY



The song asks: "Can you hold on for one more day?"
Scripture's answer isn't willpower — it's a Person who already knows your chains and isn't going anywhere.

He offers rest, not just endurance.



HOLD ON FOR ONE MORE DAY — AND THEN LET HIM HELP YOU LET GO FOR GOOD.
DON'T FORGET WHO YOU BELONG TO.



Day 1: Set Apart but Still Struggling

Reading: Judges 13:1-5

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, so the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was childless, unable to give birth. The angel of the Lord appeared to her and said, “You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son. Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean. You will become pregnant and have a son whose head is never to be touched by a razor because the boy is to be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from the womb. He will take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”

1 Peter 2:9-10

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Devotional: God called Samson before he was born, consecrating him for a holy purpose. Peter reminds us that we, too, are chosen, royal, and set apart. Yet being called does not make us immune to struggle. Faith and unaddressed brokenness can coexist in the same heart. Many of us carry wounds, patterns, and chains even while sitting in the pews. The good news is that God does not revoke His calling when we stumble. His purpose over your life is not cancelled by your failures. You are still chosen. You still belong to Him. That identity is the foundation on which healing begins.

Reflection: In what area of your life do you feel tension between your identity as a child of God and a recurring struggle you have not fully surrendered?

Practical Application: Write down one word that describes who God says you are. Place it somewhere visible this week as a daily reminder that your identity is not defined by your struggle.

Day 2: The Pattern We Keep Repeating

Reading: Judges 16:4-17

Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, “See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels^[a] of silver.”

So Delilah said to Samson, “Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued.”

Samson answered her, “If anyone ties me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, I’ll become as weak as any other man.”

Then the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she tied him with them. With men hidden in the room, she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he snapped the bowstrings as easily as a piece of string snaps when it comes close to a flame. So the secret of his strength was not discovered.

Then Delilah said to Samson, “You have made a fool of me; you lied to me. Come now, tell me how you can be tied.”

He said, "If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I'll become as weak as any other man."

So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them. Then, with men hidden in the room, she called to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" But he snapped the ropes off his arms as if they were threads.

Delilah then said to Samson, "All this time you have been making a fool of me and lying to me. Tell me how you can be tied."

He replied, "If you weave the seven braids of my head into the fabric on the loom and tighten it with the pin, I'll become as weak as any other man." So while he was sleeping, Delilah took the seven braids of his head, wove them into the fabric and tightened it with the pin.

Again she called to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He awoke from his sleep and pulled up the pin and the loom, with the fabric.

Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when you won't confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven't told me the secret of your great strength." With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was sick to death of it.

So he told her everything. "No razor has ever been used on my head," he said, "because I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother's womb. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man."

Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Devotional: Samson did not stumble into Delilah by accident. She was the latest chapter in a long pattern of poor choices in relationships. His problem was not bad luck. It was a broken internal compass that kept leading him back to the same kind of harm. Proverbs 4:23 warns us to guard our hearts above everything else, because the condition of our heart determines the direction of our life. Unaddressed wounds have a way of making familiar pain feel like home. Until we name the pattern, we cannot break it. Awareness is not weakness. It is the first courageous step toward freedom.

Reflection: Is there a pattern in your relationships, habits, or thought life that keeps repeating itself? What might that pattern be revealing about something unaddressed in your heart?

Practical Application: Spend ten minutes journaling honestly about a recurring struggle. Do not judge what you write. Simply name it. Naming it is the beginning of changing it.

Day 3: When Manipulation Masquerades as Love

Reading: Judges 16:15-17

Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when you won't confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven't told me the secret of your great strength." With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was sick to death of it.

So he told her everything. "No razor has ever been used on my head," he said, "because I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother's womb. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man."

Romans 12:9-10

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Devotional: Delilah weaponized the language of love to extract what she needed to destroy Samson. She said, “How can you say you love me?” while actively working to hand him over to his enemies. Romans 12:9 calls us to love sincerely, without hypocrisy, and to hate what is evil. Toxic relationships often disguise control as care and guilt as concern. Many people stay in harmful situations because the manipulation is wrapped in the vocabulary of love. Real love does not diminish you. It does not use your vulnerability against you. God's love for you is the standard, and it looks nothing like what Delilah offered Samson.

Reflection: Have you ever confused guilt, obligation, or fear with genuine love in a relationship? How does God's love challenge that definition?

Practical Application: Read a description of genuine love from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and measure one significant relationship in your life against that standard. Pray for clarity about what you find.

Day 4: At Your Lowest, Pray First

Reading: Judges 16:28-30

Then Samson prayed to the Lord, “Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.” Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.

Psalm 34:18

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Devotional: Blind, bound, and surrounded by enemies, Samson finally prayed. His first words were, “Oh, Sovereign Lord, remember me.” The truth is that God had never forgotten Samson. Samson had forgotten God. Psalm 34:18 tells us that God is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Rock bottom is not the end of your story. It is often the place where we finally stop relying on our own strength and reach for something greater. You do not have to wait until you are in chains to cry out. But if you are already there, know this: He hears you right where you are.

Reflection: Have you ever reached a moment where your own strength ran out and you had nothing left but prayer? What did that teach you about God's nearness?

Practical Application: Set aside five minutes today to pray one honest sentence to God about the area of your life where you feel most powerless. You do not need polished words. Just speak the truth.

Day 5: Letting Go and Moving Forward

Reading: Isaiah 43:18-19

*“Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.*

*See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.*

Philippians 4:13

I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Devotional: Isaiah 43:18-19 declares that God is doing something new, breaking through the wilderness and making a way where there was none. The first step toward that new thing is the hardest: admitting that what you have been doing is not working. Whether your chains are relational, behavioral, or rooted in a mindset that keeps you stuck in one emotional gear, freedom does not come through willpower alone. It comes through surrender. Philippians 4:13 reminds us that our strength is not self-generated. It flows from Christ. You are not being asked to fix yourself. You are being invited to stop carrying it alone and let Him lead you forward into wholeness.

Reflection: What would it look like practically to stop relying on willpower and begin relying on Christ in the area where you struggle most?

Practical Application: Take one concrete step toward accountability this week. That might mean telling a trusted friend about your struggle, speaking with a pastor or counselor, or simply praying each morning before your feet hit the floor: “Lord, I need your strength today, not my own.”