



WEEK TWO: ABRAHAM AND SAMSON

Last week we learned of God's call to Noah and now we hear him calling Abraham who was a direct descendant of Shem, the second son of Noah. [Genesis 11:27-32](#) gives us the descendants of Terah, the father of Abram (as he was then called), where we learn that he, Abram, took a wife named Sarai (later becoming Sarah). It also says that she was barren.

[Read Hebrews 11:1-12](#)

[Read Genesis 12:1-9](#)

God called Abram more than once, the first time is in these verses.

- To where did God call him?
- What were God's promises to him?
- Do you think it cost Abram to be obedient to God's call?

In subsequent chapters we read how God promised him a son even though both he and Sarai were past the normal age when a child could be conceived. You may recall from a previous study how Abraham (as God re-named him in chapter 17) tried to give God a helping hand by having a child by Sarai's maid.

- Have we every become impatient in this way? We perhaps believe God has a call on our lives, but it doesn't seem to be happening. In our enthusiasm, or impatience, to see the fruition of God's call, have we ever tried to lend a helping hand?
- When you see it written like that, does it make us realise how foolish we can be?
- What lessons do we learn from the passage in Hebrews 11?
- How is faith defined in this chapter?
- Do we struggle to believe as Paul writes in Romans 8:27 *"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and who are called according to his purpose for them."*

[Read Genesis 22:1-19](#)

In this well-known passage, we come to the most difficult call to answer, when God asked Abraham to take his son to a particular mountain in the land of Moriah and offer him up to God as a burnt offering. We can scarcely believe that God would ask this and, even more remarkably, that Abraham was willing to answer God's call.

- Can we begin to understand Abraham's decision?
- What does it tell us of his relationship with God?
- What does God once again promise Abraham in the light of his obedience to this call?
- Of what other sacrifice does this call to mind?

Read Judges 13

In this account we read once again, of a woman who was unable to conceive a child. It tells how the Angel of the Lord appeared first to the wife of Manoah (we do not learn her name), telling her that she would conceive a son and giving specific instructions regarding herself and the child. She was not to drink any wine and eat nothing that was unclean. As for her son, he was to be a Nazirite. This meant he would take a vow of consecration which included:

Abstaining from wine or other intoxicating drinks

Refraining from cutting the hair

Refusing to go near a dead body for a specified period of time or for a lifetime

- What did God promise this child would accomplish?

We read that the child was named Samson and as he grew, the Lord blessed him, and the Spirit of the Lord began to take hold of him. However, in taking a Philistine wife (*chapter 14*) he went against his parents' wishes and also broke his Nazirite calling in two ways: he married a Canaanite and drank alcohol at the wedding feast. Like many a young man he tells his parents that his wife is right in his eyes, but it is interesting what we read in verse 4: *"His mother and father didn't realise the Lord was at work in this, creating an opportunity to disrupt the Philistines, who ruled over Israel at that time."* God's ways are not always what we expect, as we have previously read in Isaiah 55.

- Never make the mistake of thinking we know best!

We read in chapters 14 and 15, of the incredible exploits Samson did because of his strength: tearing a lion apart with his bare hands and later finding the honey created by a swarm of bees, (look at your tin of Tate & Lyle's golden syrup if you have one); killing thirty young men from Ashkelon and catching 300 foxes whose tails he tied together with a torch between each one. He then sent them into the fields of the Philistines,

destroying the crops. Later, having broken ropes with which he was bound as if they were nothing, he killed a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey. Despite failing his vows, he became a judge in Israel for twenty years.

- What important lesson do we learn from this?

Most of us know about Delilah and how she tried on so many occasions to find the source of his strength. He spun lots of tales and each time, when the Philistines came for him, he was able to break whatever bindings had been tied around him. Eventually, he gave in and told her that his strength lay in not having his hair cut. When the Philistines took him, blinded him, and cut his hair, Samson lost his strength and was put to work as a grinder in prison. For any of you who have read the poetry of John Milton, you will know that line: *“Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves”*. Such power as he had, disappeared : only of course, hair grows again.

- How do we react to people sowing seeds of doubt or questioning our belief in Christianity? Are we able to stand firm?

In *chapter 17* we read how the Philistines, like many people throughout history and today, totally underestimated God. Gathering together to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon they said: *“Our god has delivered into our hands Samson our enemy!”*. Bringing Samson from prison to perform for them, he asked that he could lean on the pillars supporting the temple. There were thousands of people there when Samson called to the Lord, *“O Lord God, remember me, I pray, just this once that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!Then Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So, the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.” (17:23-31).*



Prayer:

Father God, help us to listen to your voice and to act upon your request.

Amen