



As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

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4th of July – Did you know?

- Did you know it was actually on July 2, 1776, that the Declaration of Independence began? It started with a letter to Britain's King George to explain why the Continental Congress voted to declare America's independence.
- It was on July 4, that the final wording of the declaration was agreed.
- Three U.S. Presidents have died on July 4th. Jefferson, Adams and Monroe.
- 56 people signed the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson wrote the majority of it.
- Barbecue is also big on Independence Day. Approximately 150 million hot dogs and 700 million pounds of chicken are consumed on this day.
- The First week of July is typically the busiest travel week of the year in the United States.
- Ironically, on July 4th, 1946, the Treaty of Manila was signed in the Philippines giving them independence from...The United States.
- The Term "Sign Your John Hancock" comes from an actual guy named John Hancock. He was the president of the Continental Congress and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.
- The Biggest Blockbuster movies of the year open on Independence Day weekend.

"Words to Grow By"

LINDA LEWIS, GMI DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS

Patience

Are you waiting for God to do something in your life?

Why do you think it's important to God that

patience be growing in us?

It's because God's timing is not our timing.

He is **always** doing more than we see or know.

So, we have to trust Him on how long He takes to bring things to pass.

God perfects and refines us before He brings us into all He has for us and that takes time.

So if God is making you wait, Be prepared to receive great things.

And remember,

Patience is not simply the ability to wait...it's how we behave while we're waiting.

Psalm 37:7



Samson BY PASTOR MIKE HERNANDEZ, CHURCH OF THE HARVEST

Every month this year Pastor Mike gives us a look at a different man of the Bible.

Samson BY PASTOR MIKE HERNANDEZ, CHURCH OF THE HARVEST

This month we are going to look at one of the Heroes of Faith that is mentioned in Hebrews Chapter 11 (which many people call the "Faith Hall of Fame"). He is well known for his incredible strength and he judged Israel for 20 years. His name was Samson.

Samson was born to parents who were considered barren. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Samson's mom and told her that she was going to have a son and the son shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb and he shall begin to lead Israel out of the hands of the Philistines (Judges 13:2-5).

According to Numbers 6, a Nazirite was someone who was called to separate themselves unto the Lord. They had to follow strict rules in three areas: first, they could not drink any wine; second, they could not cut their hair and third, they could not touch a dead body. Most Nazirite vows were for a certain period of time, but for Samson, it was for his entire life.

Samson was born in a time when the nation of Israel was under the subjection of the Philistines. Samson's parents were barren and had no children. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Samson's mom and gave her specific instructions.

"For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." - Judges 13:5

Samson's mom also did not drink any wine and parented Samson to honor the Nazirite Vow. When Samson became older, he had a desire to marry a Philistine woman. His parents tried to talk him out of it, but Samson was persistent. His parents didn't know that the Lord was the one leading Samson to marry the Philistine as He was seeking "an occasion to move against the Philistines" (Judges 14:1-4).

As Samson was walking to meet the Philistine woman, he was attacked by a lion.

"And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done". - Judges 14:6

This is the first time that something unusual happened to Samson. Notice that it was the Spirit of the Lord that empowered him and gave him great strength. I am sure Samson was surprised by this strength as he didn't know what to do about it so he kept it a secret, even from his parents.

A few days later, Samson was going to visit the Philistine woman and passed by the carcass of the lion. He was surprised to see a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion. Samson took some honey in his hands and ate it.

Samson *CONT*

He then took some honey to his father and mother and gave some to them. However, he did not tell them where the honey came out of the carcass of the lion.

This was a big moment in Samson's life. If you remember from Numbers 6, one criteria of the Nazirite Vow was to not touch a dead body. Samson violated that criteria and touched a dead body, the carcass of the lion. He then hid his sin (and yes, I would call this a sin as Samson disobeyed God and broke the Nazirite Vow) and didn't tell his parents.

This is a big moment for Samson as it started a series of compromises for him that would ultimately cost him everything. I have seen this many times. Someone is serving the Lord with their whole heart then a simple compromise...maybe a drink, maybe a relationship, maybe a little lie and the compromising starts. And when I use the word compromise, what I really mean is doing something that compromises your relationship with the Lord. Sin will definitely affect your relationship with the Lord.

You can't play with sin. Sin is not your friend. Sin will keep take you further than you want to go, cost you more than you want to pay and keep you longer than you want to stay. And for Samson, breaking the Nazirite Vow was sin and once you break the vow, it becomes easier to break it.

For Samson, the chance to break the vow again came very quickly. He married the Philistine woman and at his wedding, he gave a riddle to 30 men about the honey and the lion and the bet was new garments to the winner. The men couldn't figure it out and put immense pressure on his new wife to discover the answer. The wife pestered and guilted Samson till he gave her the answer. She then told the men who then told the answer to Samson. So, Samson had to come up with 30 garments of clothes.

"Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he went down to Askelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back to his father's house." - Judges 14:19

Samson had no weapon. He killed 30 men with his bare hands. This is an impressive feat! However, how did he get the clothes off the dead men? Could he do it without touching their dead bodies? No, he had to touch dead bodies to get the clothes, so again he violated the Nazirite Vow.

Samson then returned to see his wife, except his wife was given to another man. In response, Samson burned Philistine crops. When the Philistines came to take Samson from the Children of Israel, he killed 1000 of them with a jaw bone. He then judged Israel for 20 years.

After 20 years, Samson visited a harlot in Gaza. To escape the Philistines, he carried the city gates up a hill. Why was Samson visiting a harlot? And was this the first time in 20 years that he visited a harlot? Despite his willingness to sin (having sex outside of marriage), God still gave him supernatural strength.

"Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah." - Judges 16:4.

Samson *CONT*

The Philistine leaders told Delilah that they would pay her 1100 pieces of silver to find out the secret of his strength. So, Delilah asked Samson to tell her the secret of his strength. Samson lied to her three times, but ever so subtly got closer to the real source of his strength. Each time, Delilah would follow the instructions Samson gave her to take his strength and have the Philistines ready to take him, and each time, Samson would respond by breaking free.

It is obvious from this that Samson was aware of Delilah's intention. He knew that Delilah was trying to find out the secret of his strength so she could turn him over to the Philistines. What blows me away is that he didn't care. He didn't see the danger and how he was tip toeing closer to that forbidden line. This is what sin does to us. It clouds our judgement and makes rational people irrational. I am guessing that Samson was having sex with Delilah and according to the Bible, Delilah was pestering him daily. This means Samson was either visiting every day or was staying at Delilah's place. He was living a life of sin and didn't see that this lifestyle was about to cost him everything.

Samson ultimately shared all his heart with Delilah and told her the secret of his strength. Delilah lulled Samson to sleep, had a man cut off all his hair and then awoke him.

"And she said, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' So, he awoke from his sleep and said 'I will go out as before, at other times and shake myself free!' But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him." - Judges 16:20

To me, this is one of the saddest verses in the Bible. Samson did not know that the Lord departed from him. How many times have we been caught in slavery to sin and were unaware that the Lord had departed from us? How many times does our actions have devastating consequences? How many times have we been in Samson's shoes.

The consequences for Samson was that they put his eyes out and put him in prison. Then something amazing happened...his hair started to grow again.

I am so thankful for that last line! Even when we make incredibly stupid decisions, God does not cast us aside. We have to face the consequences of our actions, but the story does not end there. For Samson, as his hair grew, his supernatural strength returned. He ultimately took his life and the lives of thousands of Philistine lords when he pushed the two pillars which supported the temple that he was in.

For all the bad decisions Samson made, he was still included in Hebrews 11. This tells me that God does not use perfect people but people who have made mistakes. This gives me hope that God can use someone like me, someone with flaws and doesn't do everything correctly. This means he can use someone like you as well. Even when we are at our darkest time, our hair can begin to grow.

Captive Canary BY BEVERLY BROWN, GMI VOLUNTEER WRITER



I recently purchased a male singer canary. I love his song. When he really cuts loose, it sounds like there are several birds in the cage with him.

As soon as I uncover his cage in the morning, he blesses me with the peeps, trills and whistles of his song. He sings with all the joy that is within him. He sings off and on all day long. He even sings around 8 or 8:30 in the evening.

His song is so loud and long it can interfere with phone calls or listening to the television or the radio.

I don't mind. I love it.

My bird is stuck in his cage all the time, 24/7. He can only flit from perch to perch, food to water and back. He cannot truly set his wings free to fly as he is meant to do. He did not choose to be put in the cage.

However, this does not affect his singing at all. He sings like he is totally liberated. He doesn't let his circumstances get him down.

His joy comes from within.

Oh, that we could be like my canary. That we could learn to sing and be happy regardless of our circumstances.

You can, you know. You can make the decision to, regardless of your situation, find joy in life and celebrate that joy. Look for things to be thankful for. There is always something we can be thankful for and rejoice over.

True joy comes from the Lord. Sometimes circumstances can take your happiness. There is a difference between happiness and joy. You can be sad over something that has happened and still have joy deep within.

Another thought about my bird. He is totally dependent on me to provide his needs—his food, water, shelter and health care. He doesn't give it a thought I'm sure. He just trusts he is going to be taken care of.

That is how you should be with the Lord. Look to Him to provide what you need – whatever that might be.

The good news is you can ask God for more than your basic needs. You can ask Him to move in your situation, whatever that may be. You can ask Him to touch people in your life. You can ask Him for healing and forgiveness.

Lastly, when I first got my bird I was thrilled any time he sang. My spirit was so happy.

As time went on, I became so used to him singing that I found myself tuning him out. What had been such a joy became so mundane I did not even notice when he sang. I took his beautiful song for granted.

Too often this happens with things in our life. Little things we were once so thankful for can easily become taken for granted. Try not to let this happen to you. Stay thankful for the little blessings in your life.

Remember each day is a gift. Look for things to sing about regardless of your situation and circumstance.

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From the Yard: Words of Inspiration from Your Brothers and Sisters on Lockdown

WHO GOD IS By: Joshua W – Hutchinson, KS

God is our Provider - Jehovah-Jireh - Gen. 22:14

If we are walking with God, He will provide everything that we need for the journey.

Gen.22 - God provided the sacrifice

Luke 10:1-16 - God provided the disciples' every need.

*JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS. GOD PROVIDED THE SACRIFICE OF HIS ONLY SON SO THAT THE WHOLE WORLD WOULD HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

God is our Peace

Jehovah - Shalom - Judges 6:24

When God sets us out to do His work, He will calm our fears and comfort us with His peace.

Judges 6 - God gave Gideon His peace when He told him that he is to go fight the Midianites and the Amalekites. God sent Gideon, who by his own confession said, why me? My family is the least significant in Manasseh. and I'm the smallest in my Father's house.

Phil. 4:7 - Paul says that the peace of the Lord passes all understanding. God stands guard over our hearts and minds.

1 Sam. 17 - God gave peace to David to overcome fear of Goliath. Gave him the courage to face Goliath. And gave him the strength to kill Goliath.

*GOD TOOK THE WEAKEST OF THE WEAK SO THAT THROUGH THEIR WEAKNESSES, HIS STRENGTH AND GLORY MAY BE SHOWN.

God is our Healer

Jehovah Rophe - Exod. 15:26

Exod. 15 - Days of walking the hot desert, the people and their animals are on the brink of death. The people grumble against God, and Moses petitions God for water. God leads him to a lake of brackish (un-clean) water and shows him a tree. Moses throws the tree into the lake and it becomes cleansed of all impurities. Israel's thirst was satisfied and God was glorified.

* JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS, AND BY HIS BLOOD WE ARE CLEANSED FROM OUR SINS AND RESURECTED FROM DEATH

God is our Banner

Jehovah - Nissi - Exod. 17:15

Excerpt from, "The Great House Of God", by: Max Lucado;

In the heat of battle, soldiers feared getting separated from the army. For that reason, a banner was carried into the conflict, and if a fighter found himself alone, the raised flag would signal safety.

When we are doing God's work and battling Satan and his minions every step of the way, Satan will try to separate us from "The Army of God" because he knows that's when we are at our weakest.

* IF GOD IS OUR BANNER WE WILL ALWAYS KNOW WHERE OUR ARMY IS AND WHERE OUR STRENGTH IS

God is our Shepherd

Jehovah Raah - Gen. 48:15

Jacob said that the Lord is his shepherd. Because He cared for him all of his life.

If God is our shepherd He will guide us in times of blessings and in times of trouble. He is our Shepherd and we are His flock.

* IF WE WILL JUST SUBMIT TO GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIVES THEN JUST LIKE A GOOD, CARING SHEPHERD, GOD WILL LEAD US AND HE WILL BE OUR GUIDE. AND WE WILL BE BLESSED

Jehovah – Jireh

God loves us and will provide for us. He is our loving Father.

Jehovah - Shalom

God is our Peace. He stands guard over our hearts when evil spirits try to evoke fear into our lives. He stands guard over our minds when we worry or have anxiety our lives problems.

Jehovah – Rophe

God is our Healer. He purifies us from our sins. He resurrects us from our death.

Jehovah – Nissi

God is our Banner. In times of trouble we can take refuge in Him. He is our shelter in the storm.



July Fourth Word Search



ADAMS
 AMERICA
 BARBECUE
 COLONIES
 CONGRESS
 DECLARATION
 EQUALITY
 FIREWORKS

FOURTH
 FREEDOM
 HOTDOGS
 INDEPENDENCE
 JEFFERSON
 JULY
 LIBERTY

NATION
 PARADE
 REVOLUTION
 RIGHTS
 STATES
 THIRTEEN
 UNITED

Write Us

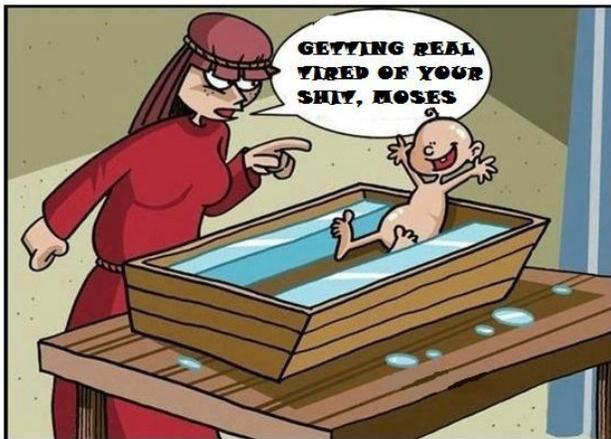
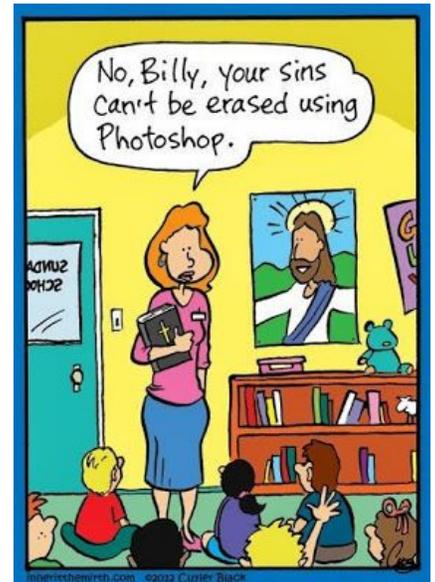
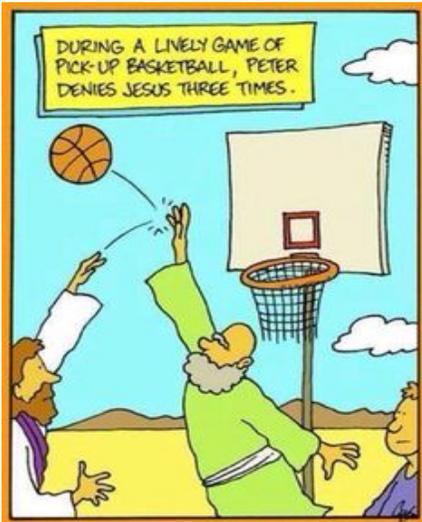
We would love to hear from you. If you have a testimony, a prayer request or a question about your walk with the Lord, send us a letter. We would love to pray or rejoice with you.

Maybe you are a writer and you have a spiritual word of encouragement for the readers of our newsletter. We would love to review your article to see if we can use it in our newsletter. We also like to share poems from the more artistic saints.

Growth Ministries, Inc., Attn: Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 4375, Olathe, KS 66063



A Little Humor



memecenter.com MemeCenter



Closing Words LONNIE JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GROWTH MINISTRIES INC**Dependence Day!!!**

On **July 4**, 1776, the 13 colonies claimed their independence from England, an event which eventually led to the formation of the United States. Each year on the fourth of **July**, also known as Independence Day, Americans celebrate this historic event.

2 Corinthians 3:5 NLT *It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own.*

Our qualification comes from God.

Being granted independence from a suppressive government, an evil tyrant, or even your parents' home, are okay forms of freedom. But one thing we never want to be liberated from is our dependence on God. We should look to Him for everything. Our provisions, our health, our sanity and most of all our salvation. All good things come from Him so depending on Him is a great thing. He created us so that we could be in relationship with Him and He could love us by providing all our needs through Christ Jesus.

I consider the day I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior "Dependence Day". What about you? Who do you depend on the most; your parents, your spouse, your kids, the Warden, the Government? None of them can love you, forgive you and tolerate your sins like God. He will meet you wherever you are and give you whatever you need. Try Him.

What must I do to be saved?

If you have never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, or if you have turned away from Him living a life of unrighteousness and wish to be connected to Him, then take a moment and say this prayer.

"Lord, I confess that I am a sinner and ask for your forgiveness. I believe that your son Jesus died on the cross for my sins and was resurrected with all power. I invite Jesus to be the Lord of my life and your Holy Spirit to come into my heart to guide me for the rest of my days. Amen."

Romans 10:9 says that *if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

If this is you, please write Growth Ministries and we will gladly help you start your new life in Christ.

Growth Ministries, Inc., Attn: Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 4375, Olathe, KS 66063