

## "What Are You Becoming"

What will your life be like in ten years? What will your character reveal about you? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're thinking about the future. Stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We know the Bible is God's message for us today. It has promises and blessings for those who take time to study it. It tells us of the glory and beauty of being in heaven with God. We want you to have those blessings and enjoy those promises. And this is why we turn to our Bibles. We can do nothing more important, more needed, or more valuable than studying the Scriptures. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Thirty years ago I visited a remarkable man named Claire Annis. In our first visit he sparked my interest in a question he had heard, but he kept me waiting anxiously for thirty minutes before he revealed what that question was. Now it's a question that still after all of these years haunts me. Claire was a very driven man for the Lord, mailing out more than ten million gospel tracts or brochures all over the world to anyone who asked, and he did it at his own expense. These brochures reached thousands of souls and helped establish many churches. He wrote them and printed them himself out of his garage. He was a man who put the Lord first and sacrificed.

Now before he told me the question, he said that this question had burned in his heart for days. Well, I really wanted to know what that question was and I nearly begged him to tell me. He said it had only four words: "What are you becoming?" The fact is that we're all in the state of becoming something.

We can easily lose sight of what our lives are becoming. Some grow better, while others grow bitter. Some grow more loving, and some grow more selfish. What are you becoming?

Now each week we offer our studies free, and we'd love to send you a copy of today's lesson. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Judges 16, verses 18 to 21, and that we'll explore the question, "what are you becoming?"

Our reading today is about the mighty man Sampson, who had a weakness. It comes from Judges, chapter 16, verses 18 to 21. "When Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, 'Come up once more, for he has told me all that is in his heart.' Then the lords of the Philistines came up her, and brought the money in their hands. And she made him sleep on her knees; and called for a man, and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair; then she began to afflict him, and his strength left him. She said, The Philistines are upon you, Samson. And he awoke from his sleep, and said, 'I will go out as at other times, and shake myself free.' But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him. Then the Philistines seized him, and gouged out his eyes, and they brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with bronze chains; and he was a grinder in the prison ." That's a story of a good man who became something he didn't want to be. Let's pray together. Father, we're thankful for Your love, and we're thankful that You open Your heart to us even when we fail. And Father help us as we live our lives to become better and not worse. Father may Your will be done in our lives each day, just as it's done in heaven. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

Life is full of changes. Some bless us, while others challenge us. Some help us become better people, while others tear down our resistance to evil. Things rarely stay the same for long periods of time, you know even when there's a conscious effort to keep them the same. Changes in the things around us can and do bring changes in our hearts and sometimes our character. Some of these changes are for our good, while others not so good. Because changes take place slowly, they aren't easily perceived. People can mindlessly drift to lifestyles that they would never have chosen earlier. They slowly become what they never intended to be.

Now in this study, we'll look into the life of Samson, a man who underwent some drastic changes and became what he didn't want to be. Judges 16 verses 4 to 19 tells the story: "After this he (that is Samson) loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, 'Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we'll each give you 1,100 pieces of silver.'

So, Delilah said to Samson, 'Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you.' Samson said to her, 'Well if they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.' Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. Now she had men lying in ambush in an inner chamber. And she said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' But he snapped the bowstrings, as a thread of flax snaps when it touches the fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

Then Delilah said to Samson, 'Behold, you've mocked me and told me lies. Please tell me how you might be bound.' And he said to her, 'If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I shall become weak like any other man.' So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' And the men lying in ambush were in an inner chamber. But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread.

Then Delilah said to Samson, 'Until now you've mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound.' And he said to her, 'Well if you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and fasten it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.' So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web. And she made them tight with the pin and said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' But he awoke from his sleep and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web.

And she said to him, 'How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you've not told me where your great strength lies.' And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death. And he told her all his heart, and he said to her, 'A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man.'

When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and she called the lords of the Philistines, saying, 'Come up again, for he has told me all his heart.' Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her, they brought the money in their hands. She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him."

God gave Samson the gift of strength and up until this time Samson had served God and judged Israel for twenty years. His desire for the ladies though got him into trouble. He loved Delilah, who sold

him out to his enemies. She doggedly searched for the secret of his great strength to subdue him. She used her charms and whined until Samson revealed his secret. You'd think Samson would get wise to her tricks. You'd think he'd send her away and tell her nothing. Three times she said, "The Philistines are upon you"; but he didn't pay attention. Her persistence was greater than his common sense or his moral strength; she ruined him.

Now after his strength left him, Judges 16 verses 20 to 21 says: "And she said, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' And he awoke from his sleep and said, 'Well I'll go out as at other times and shake myself free.'" But he didn't know that the Lord had left him. And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. And he ground at the mill in the prison.

Samson lost more than his hair my friend. Samson became what he never intended to be or wanted to be. He was now blind, a prisoner, and out of favor with God. How did this happen? Well sensuality had gradually dulled his resistance to Delilah's charms, so he told her the secret. The pleasure of sin my friend dulls our commitment to righteousness and causes us to forget God.

Samson was not like Joseph. Now you'll remember Joseph was constantly pressed by Potiphar's wife to sin. Genesis 39 verses 8 to 10 says, "But he refused and said to his master's wife, 'Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He's not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then (Joseph says) can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he wouldn't listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her." Joseph resisted temptation.

Now like Delilah, the devil looks for our weak spots. We must be alert and strong. 1 Peter 5 verses 8 to 9 says, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world." We can overcome the devil if we stay close to God like Joseph did. James 4 verses 7 to 8 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."

Now Samson had a cavalier attitude. He took for granted his physical strength, and that would always save him; but he deceived himself. God was the true source of Samson's strength. 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 12 reminds us, "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." Samson fell to sin, and it can happen to you or to me. A thought can become an act, an act can develop into a habit, a habit can shape a character, and our character determines our destiny.

Now change may come about so gradually one may not realize what's happening. An alcoholic will hardly admit he's an alcoholic. He thinks he's in control, when he isn't. A Christian who's overcome by moral error will think he's all right. And he doesn't know the Lord has departed from him. Hebrews 3 verses 12 to 13 warns Christians: "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

People can move from the spiritual to the fleshly, from the loving to selfishness, from being careful to being careless, from being committed to being indifferent, from being holy to being ungodly, from being involved to getting distracted, from being wise to being foolish, from having faith to having doubts, and then losing all faith, and from being responsible to being irresponsible.

What are you becoming? Because of Delilah, Samson became spiritually empty, unfit to judge Israel, and he disgraced himself.

Hebrews 2 verses 1 to 3 says, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we've heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?"

Now if Samson's story ended here, it would really be tragic, but something happened to Samson to bring him back to God. You know, stories don't have to end without hope! Judges 16:22 says, "But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved." Samson came back to God and learned to depend on Him! Hebrews 11:32 lists Samson as a hero of the faith. What Samson became in the end is the reason why!

Judges 16 verses 23 to 30 says "Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, 'Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand.' And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, 'Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us.' And when their hearts were merry, they said, 'Call Samson, that he may entertain us.' So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars. And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, 'Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them.' Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained. And then Samson called to the LORD and he said, 'O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.' And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. And Samson said, 'Let me die with the Philistines.' And then he bowed with all of his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life."

Samson prayed for strength, while listening to the blasphemies of the Philistines praising Dagon and mocking the Lord God. God answered his prayer. Samson lost his sight, his freedom, his relationship with God, and his dignity. But it was at the bottom, where he learned to depend on and trust in God. Sometimes it takes hard things to move us back to God! To grow closer to God takes conscious, meaningful effort on our part! It takes courage and discipline.

The most successful people frequently don't know they're successful; they simply keep on doing what they have always been doing and make a powerful impact on the lives around them. Some people who find success easily don't realize how vulnerable they are to the influences of the world. To be a great servant of Christ, that takes time and effort! What are you doing with your life? What are you becoming? Let's pray together. OH Father help us to become worthy children who love You, who care about You, and who listen to You. And may Your will be done in our lives as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

The question my friend asked me is the simplest of questions, found in the soul of every person from a little child to the wisest elder. "What will come of what I am doing today or tomorrow? What will come of my whole life?" Well the Bible answers this question. Romans 2 verses 6 to 11 says, God "will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality."

So, I ask you, "What are you becoming?" What will God say to you when this life is over? Now if you keep going the spiritual direction that you're going right now, where will you be in five, ten, or twenty years? Will you be closer to God or farther away? Will you be obedient to His will, or will you ignore Him, or will you rebel against Him? What are you becoming? Your direction will not change until you decide to change. If you let others influence you in the wrong direction, you may end up sliding down a path that you'll regret. And how sad it would be to wake up lost and not know the Lord had left you! Do you need to get right with God?

If you wish to become a Christian, believe with all your heart in the Lord Jesus Christ as a Son of God, turn from your sins in repentance and turn to the Lord, confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Do it today!

We hope that today's study about Samson has stirred you to consider your future. Now if you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

Please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.