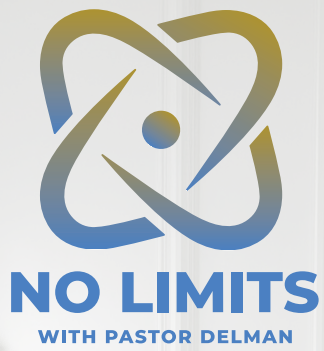




I'M
Starting
WITH *Me*

S E R M O N G U I D E

NO LIMITS WITH PASTOR DELMAN

I'm Starting With Me

Judges 16:1-22

INTRODUCTION

There is an old fable about a dog carrying a bone across a bridge. As he looks down, he sees his reflection in the water and is startled by what appears to be another dog with a bigger, better bone. In his greed, he opens his mouth to grab the reflected bone, only to lose the real one he was carrying. In chasing a shadow, he lost the substance and walked away with nothing.

This story mirrors a deep human tendency. We often lunge at reflections of what we think we want: the perfect relationship we see on social media, the idealized partner, or the life that seems more desirable than our own. We become experts at the external, asking about credit scores but not character, what someone drives but not what drives them. We show up well-groomed but spiritually wounded, impressive but emotionally immature, and wonder why our connections fail. The truth is, the most important piece of any relationship puzzle is you. Before we can build anything healthy with someone else, we must begin the sacred, and sometimes slow, work of becoming whole ourselves.

KEY POINTS

1. Identify and Heal Your Unhealthy Patterns

Samson's issues did not begin with Delilah. Long before chapter 16, he had a habit of going where he had no business going, touching what he had no business touching, and tasting what he had no business tasting. He developed a pattern of compromising his anointing for what looked sweet, even if it was found in a dead place (*Judges 14:8-9*). He was strong enough to kill a lion but not to master his own appetites. This self-ignorance was his downfall. We must recognize that we are the one common denominator in all our relationships. If we keep finding ourselves in the same dysfunctional situations, the problem may not be the dating pool, it may be the person in the mirror. We carry old wounds, insecurities, and appetites into new connections, and then wonder why they break down. We must have the courage to ask, "What's clogging my connection?"

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2. Be Clear About Your Wants and Your Needs

Both Samson and Delilah lived lives defined by other people. Samson's calling as a Nazirite was declared before his birth; there is no sign he personally embraced it. Delilah was pressured by community leaders to seduce Samson for money. When you are unclear about what you want for yourself, you will morph into what you think someone else wants you to be. There is a danger in living a life that was handed to you but never honestly accepted by you. When you do not know who you are or what you need, you will bypass your own boundaries and allow people to mistreat you. The greatest gift you can bring to any relationship is clarity. When you can say plainly, "This is what I need, this is what I value, this is what I will and will not accept," you save yourself and others from months of confusion and years of pain.

3. Strengthen Your Relationship With God

The saddest line in this story is, "...he did not know that the Lord had left him." Samson spent his life performing religious duties without cultivating a personal relationship with God. He knew the language of faith, but he did not have sacred intimacy. Long before he lost his hair, he lost sight of God. This is a warning for all of us. It is good that your mother prayed for you, but at some point, her faith must become your own. Borrowed faith will be exposed in the fight. Knowing Scripture is not the same as knowing the God of the Scripture. Things will come up in your life that you cannot handle on your own, and you will need to know God for yourself. David's faith was personal when he declared, "The Lord is *my* light and *my* salvation" (*Psalms* 27:1).

A personal, transformative relationship with God is the engine for a life of mission and witness. It is what empowers us to live differently, to challenge injustice, and to offer a broken world a vision of hope and healing. Our goal is not just to get people into a church building, but to introduce them to the living Christ who can transform their lives from the inside out. This can only happen when our own faith is real, tested, and deeply personal. God's glory is the ultimate goal, and that glory is revealed through lives that have been genuinely changed by His presence.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What recurring “sweet stuff in dead places” (unhealthy patterns or compromises) do you find yourself drawn to, and what is one step you can take this week to begin the work of “unclogging your connection?”
2. In what area of your life are you living out someone else’s expectation instead of your own God-given desire? How can you gain clarity on what you truly want and need for your own journey?
3. Samson knew about God but did not seem to know God personally. What is one specific practice you can commit to this week to move beyond religious routine and cultivate a more personal, intimate relationship with God?
