

Chapel Pointe – Morning Service  
 Pastor Daniel L. Rundhaug  
 Series: “Mirrored Image”  
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## “Only One Degree Off” Judges 14:1-20

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### Introduction (Me):

For Father’s Day, my brother’s and I went in on a new drill for my Dad. We found a good deal on the one we wanted to get from Home Depot. Melanie went to the store to pick it up and had a worker help her locate it. When she brought to the checkout line, the clerk saw that the price was mismarked, and it was priced \$40 lower than the actual sale price. The clerk said to her, that this is definitely mismarked, and the lowest price he had ever seen the drill to be, but said, “Don’t tell anyone, but I’m going to sell it to you at the sticker price.”

When we were wrapping the present, Melanie asked, “Should we tape the receipt to the box?” My response was, “Well, if he wants to take it back, it’s better for him to not have the receipt and they’ll give him store credit for the true price, and he’d come out \$40 ahead.” Her response was, “I can’t believe you’re a pastor and you’re saying that!”

In sharing the story with the staff, they agreed with Melanie’s assessment. Was my suggestion wrong? Well, although it was playing within the “rules” set by the company, it certainly wasn’t right.

### Tension (We):

So, is it okay to be just a little off? We like to justify being a little off, as no big deal. But think about things that are impacted dramatically when they’re off by just a little bit:

Little Things being one degree off:

1. Body temperature
2. Boiling water (the magical 212 degrees)
3. If a flight from NY heading to LA is off by one degree... You would land 40 miles into the Pacific Ocean
4. **Illustration: Re-entry scenario of Apollo 13.**

We go through life and we skirt through the issues of being off by just a degree...

1. Cheating on a test – no big deal...
2. Copying homework assignment...
3. Crossing the line on a date...
4. Taxes...
5. Flirtatious comments at work...
6. Gossip...
7. Temper...

Making mistakes in small things makes it easier to make mistakes in big things.

If we don't think it's a big deal to just be a little off...

1. Let me put a little sand in the engine of your car...
2. Don't wash off your vegetables that you take out from your garden that have the wonderfully fertilized soil...

The truth is, we know that being a little off can be a big deal, but too often we minimize that when it comes to our spiritual life.

**Main Point:** Our excuse for a little turns into an expectation for a lot.

**Contextualization (God):**

Series: "Mirrored Image"

Series Review... #1 – "Can You Hear Me Now?"

Today... #2 – "Only One Degree Off"

**Text (God):**

**v. 1-3 – Attracted to a Philistine**

1. "Philistine" is listed three times
2. Samson wanted this girl!
3. Samson's parents did not!
  - a. Culture allowed for arranged marriages orchestrated by the parents
  - b. What about God's commands?
    - 1) Deuteronomy 7:1-4 – "When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you."
4. Samson won the argument

**v. 4 – Does God Disobey Himself?**

1. It looks like verse 4 says, "God's rules don't apply to God."
  - a. God can use our sin to still accomplish His purposes.
  - b. So, this undesirable marriage was ultimately going to be used of God for His purposes.
  - c. "The sin of Samson must not be attributed to the Lord, but the deliverance of the Israelites by Samson was from the Lord. Remember, scriptural language frequently attributes directly to God what He merely permits. Moreover, God's blessing on one or more aspects of a person's life is no indication that everything that person does is

approved. Samson was plain bullheaded about this decision, and he refused to listen to his parents or to God. But neither Samson's foolishness nor his stubbornness would prevent the design of God from being fulfilled." – Walter Kaiser Jr., Hard Sayings, p. 197

#### v. 5-9 – Violation #1 – The Lion Carcass

1. God enabled Samson's strength
  - a. Samson probably tore it in half by pulling it in half from its hind legs.
  - b. **Illustration: Ripping rags apart in the garage when I need a smaller one.**
2. Samson knew he wasn't supposed to touch a dead body (that included killing it) because now he was unclean
  - a. Didn't want to tell Mom and Dad...
3. From dating to engagement, now Samson comes across the lion carcass again.
  - a. Inside the lion – honey... (attractive)
  - b. **James 1:13-15 – "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when by his own evil desire he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown gives birth to death."**
  - c. First time, self defense... Second time, blatant!
    - 1) We can attempt to justify time #1, but that leads to an opportunity to engage in time #2
    - 2) **\*\*Reiterate Main Point\*\***
    - 3) Samson knew he wasn't supposed to take the honey either – Don't tell Mom and Dad! (Stated Again!)

#### v. 10-18 – Violation #2 – The Beer Bash

1. Samson threw a party because that's what everyone did...
  - a. Well, it might have just been a casual get together...
  - b. **"Literally meant drinking party."** – Duane Lindsey, BKC.
2. Samson had designated friends because he was a foreigner.
3. Samson thought he was pretty smart with the riddle – he saw an opportunity to make a buck...
4. Pressure mounts...
  - a. First pressure comes from the Philistines against the woman
  - b. Second pressure comes from the woman against Samson
  - c. Samson can't handle a nagging woman in his life, so he gives in!
5. The Philistines found the answer and Samson was on the hook for a lot of money...
  - a. **"If you had not plowed with my heifer..."** – v. 18.
  - b. **"In calling her a "heifer" he was ridiculing her for her untamed and stubborn spirit."** – Duane Lindsey, BKC.

#### v. 19-20 – Wedding Crashers

1. Samson left his own wedding in an outrage!
2. Distance from Timnah to Ashkelon...
  - a. God will often use us in spite of ourselves. But that doesn't mean that He's satisfied with us being one degree off...

3. Samson went home and left his wife
4. The woman's father thought that Samson had divorced his daughter before even consummating the marriage, so the girl was given to the best man...

**Application (You) “What do they need to do?”:**

Where is the practice of engaging in small sins going to lead? What's your end game?

“Cataclysmic failures generally come from a series of small, correctable failures.” – Tim Enochs

**Illustration: Neither a marriage nor a business fails overnight.**

We can say, “Well, God still used Samson...” That's not the point. The point is that God could have used Samson to a larger degree. And, we maybe shouldn't assume that God is always going to use Samson, either!

Life is a battle of the mind. When the temptation comes to be off target from where God wants you to be, even if it's only one degree, commit today to calling that what it really is, a self-destructive pattern.

For some of us, we're looking at our lives, and we're one degree off, and we've been okay with that. But you can't look in the mirror at Samson's life and remain satisfied if you see yourself in this mirrored image. You can't allow yourself to remain okay with being one degree off, because you won't stay here. Your excuse for a little turns into an expectation for a lot.

If this is your mirrored image, you need to have some conversations this week that might be a little uncomfortable.

1. Boss...
2. Friend...
3. Confession...

The temporary uncomfortable situation is nothing compared to the long term disaster that you'll be avoiding.

**Main Point: Our excuse for a little turns into an expectation for a lot.**

**Inspiration (We) “Why do they need to do it?”:**

When you are one degree off, the long term plan is a result that you don't want to be a part of. I don't have to know your specific circumstance or temptation to know that the attractiveness of the one degree alteration is a veiled seduction by Satan to lead you to greater sins.

How do you get a hold of your life and recognize the danger and damage of being only one degree off? Remember that you can't do it on your own. But, God gives us that ability to look at this image – if this is who we see – and by His Spirit to take control and alter our course.

For some, that alteration is going to be the one degree change of accepting Christ as Savior today, because you recognize that your life is on a trajectory where you don't like the end game, and you need a mid-course correction that is only available through Jesus Christ. God's grace is there for you. Life is a journey and God promises forgiveness for those who turn to Him and look for His grace.

For others, your mirrored image is someone who's already accepted the free gift of salvation through Christ, but you've been duped into thinking that there's no ramifications for excusing a little sin in your life. But you know that Samson's mirrored image of only one degree off shows your reflection, and you need Him to give you the strength needed to stop making the excuses for little sins, because you already see the temptation mounting to do something bigger. Our excuse for a little never stays there... it only turns into an expectation for a lot.

Are you trusting in the blood of Jesus today? It's through that greatest act of love that we have the ultimate freedom, not as a nation, but as a human, to live as Christ wants us to live.