



Samson

By Jacquelin Thomas



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Samson Taylor has just been installed as assistant pastor at a thriving North Carolina church. He's a man of God—and most definitely no saint. Handsome and charismatic, Samson is controlled by his lust for beautiful women, a weakness that stirs up trouble, heartache, betrayal, and damaging rumors—and soon costs him his marriage, his best friendship, and even his new job. Samson loves God and tries harder than ever to keep his temptations in check. Then he meets Delinda. . . .

Beautiful, irresistibly sexy, and married to a famous Nba star, Delinda has Samson head-over-heels in love . . . in a dangerous affair that leads to a physical confrontation with Delinda's husband.

Now, the disgraced pastor begins a journey he could never have anticipated, where his heart is now his guide—not a heart of lust, but of new wisdom and a new kind of seeing. God will forgive Samson's past—but will Samson himself be able to let go of bitterness and regret, and find a new light in his life?

Inspired by the Biblical tale of Samson and Delilah, Jacquelin Thomas powerfully portrays a modern-day pastor's dance with earthly desires . . . and the faith that made him whole.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jacquelin Thomas' books have garnered several awards, including two EMMA awards, the Romance In Color Reviewers Award, Readers Choice Award, and the Atlanta Choice Award in the Religious & Spiritual category. She was nominated for a 2008 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Fiction in the Young Adult category. Jacquelin has published in the romance, inspirational fiction and young adult genres.

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CHAPTER 1

The first Sunday in June was a perfect day for the installation ceremony of a new pastor.

Samson Taylor admired his reflection in the mirror adorning a wall in his uncle's office. His suit, made just for this occasion, was tailored to complement his athletic build. He deliberately chose navy because it represented knowledge, power, and integrity.

Women loved his creamy, smooth peanut-colored complexion, his greenish gray eyes, and his neatly trimmed wavy hair. Samson's six-four height and muscular body had carried him through four years of college basketball at Duke University, from where he graduated at the top of his class, earning a bachelor degree in sociology, and on to the Duke Divinity School, where he earned a master's of divinity degree.

In a few minutes Samson would be preaching his first sermon after his installation as assistant pastor of Hillside Baptist Church in Raleigh, North Carolina.

There was a soft knock on the door. Before he could utter a word, a young woman stuck her head inside, gave him a quick once-over, and then said, "You look real handsome, Samson. I just wanted to be the first to congratulate you."

He broke into a grin. "Thank you, Pamela."

She met his gaze, then flashed a seductive smile. "I was thinking that maybe we can celebrate later."

"Maybe," he responded.

"I guess I'll see you in the sanctuary." She disappeared as quietly as she'd come.

He and Pamela had dated during their college days at Duke. She was attending law school now and had made it quite clear that she wanted to renew their relationship. Samson found her attractive, but he knew he had to watch himself now.

He returned his attention to his reflection in the mirror and checked his teeth. Samson had gone to the dentist on Friday to have them cleaned and whitened. His aunt had arranged to have a photographer take a formal picture of him, which would be placed in the lobby beside the one of his uncle Zachariah, the senior pastor of Hillside. Smaller photographs of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather—the man who had founded the original church—graced another wall in the foyer.

Over the years, Hillside had grown from a small congregation of eight to a membership of nearly two thousand. Samson would be the fifth family member installed as a pastor there, following his father, who was now deceased.

The Spirit of the Lord stirred in him, and Samson sensed that something great was about to happen. As far back as he could remember, his father had always told him he was set apart for service to God. After his dad's death, his uncle Zachariah continued raising him in the knowledge of his calling.

"Your parents would be so proud of you," said a voice behind Samson.

He turned around to face his aunt. "I really wish they could be here to see me—hear me preach this morning."

"You are a lot like your father. Elijah was an eloquent speaker, and that man knew the Word," Hazel told him. Her voice changed as she added, "He had a weakness for beauty, you know. I know that you think I need to mind my own business, but I worry about you. I see the way those fast-tail girls are always up in your face. If you're not careful, Samson, a woman can ruin everything you've worked so hard to accomplish."

Samson realized she must have seen Pamela pop in before. He walked over to his aunt and gave her a hug. "Aunt Hazel, you don't have to worry about me. I'm not letting anyone distract me from what I've been called to do. I already tried to run from my calling while I was in college, but I couldn't escape." He held her by both shoulders. "Aunt Hazel, I give you my word. No one will come between me and God. I won't let that happen."

She glanced up at him. "I pray for you daily."

"Trust me. I have everything under control," he reaffirmed with a smile. "I admit that I love the attention, but I won't let that control me or take my focus off the Lord. You'll see."

"Famous last words. I don't know why I bother to tell you men anything. You think you know everything, but you don't. Mark my words . . ."

"Honey, what are you all afire over this morning?" Zachariah asked as he walked in on them talking in his office.

"Uncle, she was just warning me not to walk the same path as my father."

Zachariah slipped on his blazer. "Well, I have those same worries, Samson. Elijah was a good man, but he let those women ruin him. It bothered me greatly when he was forced out of the church, but there really wasn't much I could do."

Samson nodded, the memory putting a slight damper on his mood. "I don't think I ever saw my mother cry as much as she did that day. When we got home, she told him that we were leaving. My mom packed us up and we left for the train station." He became quieter, lost in the awful memory. "Dad followed us. I remember they were standing outside the train station talking. My mom was still upset and standing close to the street. That truck was coming so fast—I had a feeling something was about to happen. So did my dad, because he put his arms around my mom as if to protect her just as it jumped the curb. I heard him tell her that he loved her, and then he asked God to forgive him. Those were the last words I ever heard my dad say."

Hazel wrapped an arm around him. “It was a sad day.”

Samson’s parents were killed on impact by a PET Milk truck. After it was discovered that the driver had been drinking, Samson’s aunt and uncle sued the company and were awarded over two million dollars, which they placed in a trust for Samson. The trust had come under Samson’s control on his twenty-fifth birthday, and the only luxuries he allowed himself were a couple of nice suits, the down payment on a brand-new town house, and the purchase of a Lexus SUV.

“You really think my dad would be proud of me?” Samson asked.

Zachariah nodded. “My brother and Ruby would both be thrilled to see the man you’ve become, son. And you know that Hazel and I couldn’t be any more pleased than we are right now.”

One of the ushers passing by the office paused briefly to remind them that the service was about to start. Samson and his aunt followed Zachariah out of the office and quickly made their way to the sanctuary.

After the praise and worship services, the moment had come for Samson to deliver his sermon. Confident, he walked up to the podium, carrying the Bible that had once belonged to his father in his hands. He flashed his aunt a bright smile, then said, “Good morning, Church.”

“Good morning,” the congregation responded in unison.

“The scripture references today will come from Hebrews chapter ten, verses thirty through thirty-one. The King James Version reads like this: ‘I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’”

He paused to let them consider these words. “There was a man sitting at his dying wife’s bedside. ‘Honey,’ she breathed, her voice little more than a whisper, ‘I’ve got a confession to make before I go. I’m the one who took the ten thousand dollars from your safe and spent it on a fling with your best friend. And I was the one who forced your mistress to leave the city. Also, I’m the one who reported your income tax evasion to the government.’

“This was his response: ‘That’s all right; don’t give it a second thought. I’m the one who poisoned you.’”

Laughter rang out around the sanctuary.

Samson’s uncle gave a slight nod of approval.

“My message this morning is about what happens when you sin. The first thing you should know is that there is a price to pay. Now here are two interesting facts: Our sinful nature is inherited. Ephesians chapter two, verse three, tells us, ‘Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.’

“The other fact is that sin is the result of a human choice. Now, make sure you catch this in the spirit. Romans chapter one, verses eighteen through twenty, says, ‘For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.’”

Samson's eyes darted around the sanctuary, noting the expressions on the members' faces. Pleased that they appeared engaged, he gave a brief overview of what sin does before moving on to the consequences.

"Man becomes a slave to sin, and sin places a barrier between God and man," Samson explained. "Sin ruins relationships. Sin brings guilt, it brings death, and more importantly, it is eternal separation from God."

He finished his speech to a rousing standing ovation. Several members approached him afterward, offering congratulations and words of support and encouragement.

"Man, you even had me interested today," his best friend Trey said, joining him. Trey and Samson had been friends since third grade. They were similar in features, only Trey's complexion was the color of a new penny and he had shaved his head bald. Trey's muscular build served him well as a physical therapist. "You did an awesome job. Congrats."

Trey's words meant a lot to Samson, especially since Trey was virtually a stranger to church. "Thanks for coming to support me. I really wasn't expecting to see you here."

"That's what friends are for. Right, Pastor?"

Samson laughed. "*Pastor*. Trey, can you believe it?"

"I'm still working my head around it," he admitted. "I always thought you were doing all this to please your aunt and uncle. To be honest, I never really thought you'd go all the way. Not Mr. Oh-so-smooth Samson Taylor."

"I'll always be smooth. That will never change," Samson responded with a chuckle. "It's just who I am." Trey was referring to his love for women. He and Trey shared a lot of the same interests, even when it came to women. They were both drawn to the same type of woman. Only, Samson always seemed to get to them first.

"I hear you, bro," Trey said. He lowered his voice to a whisper and added, "You know you have to change your ways now. You are a man of the cloth."

"I am still a man, Trey," Samson countered. "There's no denying that I love women, and that won't ever end, but I'm not going to do anything that will taint my ministry or stain my uncle's sterling reputation." For a second, Samson thought about his father.

A couple of women strolled by, smiling like the sun was shining down on them.

Samson and Trey both smiled back.

"Lord, deliver me from temptation," Samson muttered.

Trey laughed. "Look at you . . ."

Samson held his hands up in innocence. "Hey, I never said it was going to be easy, Trey, but I will overcome. I don't want to stand up in the pulpit and be a hypocrite." *I have no intention of being like my father.*

“You’re making it hard for yourself by becoming a pastor,” Trey responded. “You could have just stayed a regular old sinner like me.”

Surprised, Samson burst into laughter. “I wish it were that simple, Trey. The truth is, this isn’t about my family or what they want for me. This is the call that God placed in my heart and there’s no running from it. I already tried that, remember?”

Trey scanned his friend’s face, noting the subtle lift of Samson’s chin. “You’re really serious about this, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, I am. This is what I was born to do. By the way, I’m hoping to see more of you in church from now on.”

Trey shook his head. “Samson, you know me,” he said seriously. “I’m still searching for something, but when I find it, I’ll know.”

“The only thing missing from your life is God,” Samson told him.

“We’ve had these discussions before, bro. I’m not knocking what God means to you, but I’m just not where you are. I might get there one day, but for right now, I’ll just keep searching.”

“I’ll keep you lifted in prayer, Trey.”

“Hey, we should be celebrating,” he told Samson, changing the subject. “Let me take you to lunch.”

“Sounds like a plan.” He knew that Pamela was expecting to spend time with him, but Samson wasn’t in the mood for her whining. She was clingy at times, a quality that Samson found unattractive. That and her constant whining.

Hazel walked up, stopping the two men before they could make their escape. “Oh, no you don’t,” she said, wagging a finger. “We have all this food prepared in Samson’s honor. You and Trey just march yourself over to the banquet hall. You’re eating here.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Trey towered over her, and he wrapped an arm around her tiny frame. “It was your nephew’s idea. You know that, right?”

She glared sharply at Samson, who said, “Why do you always believe everything Trey tells you? Aunt Hazel, he’s the real culprit.”

She looked from one to the other. “See, that’s why I used to punish you both.”

“Man, I remember those days,” Trey said. “And then when I went home, I was punished again.”

“When you went home,” Hazel echoed. “Boy, you practically lived at our house. You went home on the weekends.”

“That’s because my mom worked nights at the hospital and she didn’t want to leave me home by myself.”

“Honey, I know,” Hazel said as she gave his hand a little squeeze. “Trey, you know that we loved having

you around. In fact, I wish you'd start coming around more—seems like the only time we see you these days is when you're picking up my nephew."

Trey pretended to be solemn. "I'll be better about that from now on, Miss Hazel."

"See that you are," she responded.

"Some things never change, huh?" Samson muttered when his aunt went off to find her husband.

A young woman sashayed past them, swinging her hips. She glanced over her shoulder to make sure they were watching her.

"Bro, you sho' right about that—some things never change," Trey said. "You just stepped out of the pulpit and look at you. I saw the way you were looking at that girl."

"I'm human, Trey. Not blind."

They laughed as they made their way toward the church cafeteria.

"Mr. Preacher Man, the ladies sure are checking you out," Trey said in a low voice. "You better make sure the only thing you're doing up in this place is preaching, Samson. I hope you can stay focused with all this attention." He took another glance around. "Bro, I don't envy you one bit. I don't know if I could handle all this temptation."

Samson shrugged nonchalantly. "Trey, I got this. Don't worry, I'm the one in control."

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Users Review

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