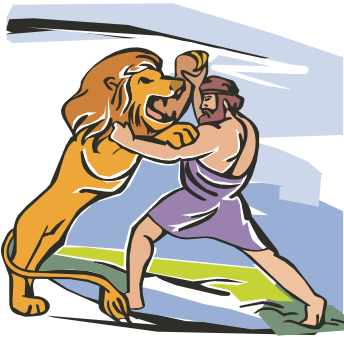




Samson (part 1)

FAMILIES IN TRUTH

Judges 13 - 15



Samson was the last judge of Israel. We know more about Samson than any other judge. The Bible tells us the story of his life from beginning to end. Samson was set apart from birth to serve God, yet seemingly, he spent his life serving his own sinful desires. God is in control of all things, and He could even use a man like Samson to accomplish His purposes.

Day #1: Samson

After Gideon died, the Israelites continued in their cycle of sinning, suffering, repenting, and starting all over again. The Bible tells us that **God could not stand to see His people suffer** (Judges 10:16). Each time His people turned back to Him, God sent a deliverer to rescue them.

We are told of six judges who followed Gideon. Because the Israelites continued to rebel against God, God allowed the Philistines to take over the Israelites. The Philistines ruled over them for 40 years. There was an Israelite man named Manoah. His wife was not able to have children. One day, an angel appeared to her. The angel told her she would have a baby boy, and that boy would begin to save the Israelites from the Philistines (Judges 13:5). He would be a **Nazirite**. A **Nazirite** was a person who was set apart to serve God. There were three rules a man or woman had to follow to be a Nazirite:

(1) They could not eat or drink anything that came from the grapevine. This included juice, wine, grapes, and raisins. (2) They were not allowed to cut their hair at all. (3) And they had to stay away from all dead bodies and graves (Numbers 6:1-21)



Later, the woman had a baby boy. She named him Samson. As he grew up, the Lord blessed him. The Spirit of the Lord began to work in his life. - Judges 13:24-25a



As we see the sin cycle repeat, do not miss God's heart toward His people. He was deeply saddened to see His people in misery. That is why He warned them so many times not to follow false gods (Deuteronomy 32:16, Joshua 23:16). And that is why He promised to send a rescuer every time they turned back toward Him (Exodus 34:10-11).

Day #2: God's Plan

Get a piece of paper, a marker, and some crayons. Have a parent, brother, or sister make marks on the paper with a marker. It might be one mark, or several marks; squiggly or straight. Now, take what they have done and use the crayons to make a picture out of their marks. (Example: a big squiggle might turn into a snake; many dash marks

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might turn into stars in the sky, etc.) Now look at your masterpiece. You have turned something messy into a masterpiece. Let's see how God can do this.

God blessed Samson from the very beginning of his life. Even as a boy, the Spirit of God was at work in Samson's life, and Samson soon became famous for his great strength.

One day, after Samson had grown up, he saw a beautiful woman and he was attracted to her. She was a Philistine. Samson told his parents that he wanted to marry her. His parents did not want their son to marry one of the Philistines. God had told His people not to marry any of the people from the land of Canaan (Joshua 23:12-13). This included the Philistines.



But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me. She's the right one for me." - Judges 14:3b

Though Samson had no regard for God's law or his parents' advice, God was going to use this situation for His own purpose. God was working out His plans against the Philistines because they were ruling over the Israelites (Judges 14:4).



God can even use the wrong choices people make to bring about His purposes (Genesis 50:20). Sometimes people around us make wrong choices. When this happens, pray that God will make something good come from it - something for His glory.

Day #3: Riddled with Pride

Play a Riddle Game. Look around the room. Without saying what it is, pick something in the room. Think of 3 words to describe it. Say, "I am thinking of something that is ____, ____, and ____." Let your mom or dad guess what it might be. Take turns playing this riddle game. Today we will look at a riddle that Samson made up.

Samson and his parents went to visit the woman that he wanted to marry. Along the way, a young lion suddenly came roaring toward Samson.



Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Samson with power. He tore the lion apart with his bare hands. - Judges 14:6a

Then Samson went and talked to the young woman. He liked her very much. Samson went home, and some time later, he returned to her town to marry her. Along the way, he turned off the road to look at the dead body of the lion he had killed. Bees had made a beehive in the lion's skeleton. The hive was full of honey. Samson stuck his hand inside, got some of the honey, and ate it.

At the time of his wedding, Samson threw a big party. It was going to last for seven days! Samson decided to make

Day #3 continued:

a bet with 30 Philistine men at the party. He said he would tell them a riddle. If they could solve the riddle at the end of the seven day party, he would give them 30 linen shirts and 30 sets of clothes. If they could not answer the riddle by the end of the party, they would have to give him 30 linen shirts and 30 sets of clothes. The men accepted Samson's challenge.

Samson's riddle went like this:

*"Out of the eater came something to eat.
Out of the strong came something sweet."
- Judges 14:14a*

What was Samson describing? (The honey in the lion.) It was Samson's wedding week and he was trying to trick his wedding guests. It seems Samson was trying to prove that he was smarter than these men. Surely he pictured himself strutting around town in the new clothes, proud that he had fooled 30 men. Then, everyone would know how clever he was. The Bible says it is wrong to love praise from people more than praise from God (John 12:43).



At times we are tempted to "prove" something. We would like to think we are smarter or better at doing something than someone else, because this will make us feel important. However, as Christians, we must find our value in the Lord. You are worth much because God made you (Psalm 139:13). You are valued because God loves you (1 John 4:10). And you are priceless because of the price that Christ paid for you (1 Corinthians 7:23).

Day #4: Wrong Motive

For three days, Samson's party guests could not figure out the answer to his riddle. So the men went to Samson's bride. They threatened to harm her and her family if she did not tell them the answer. Samson's bride begged and pleaded for Samson to give her the answer. Finally, he did. She told the men immediately.



Before sunset on the seventh day the men of the town spoke to Samson. They said, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" - Judges 14:18

Samson knew his bride had given them the answer. He was furious that they had cheated. Filled with power, Samson went to another town and killed 30 Philistine men there. He took all of their belongings and gave their clothes to the 30 men at the party. Samson went to his father's house. He was burning with anger (Judges 14:19).

Some time later, Samson decided to return to his wife. But when he went to her father's house, he learned that her father had given her to marry another man.

Her father said, "I was sure you really hated her. So I gave her to your friend." - Judges 15:2a

Samson said to them, "This time I have a right to get even with the Philistines. I'm going to hurt them badly." - Judges 15:3

It is true that Samson was sent by God to destroy the

Day #4 continued:

Philistines. But Samson did not battle them to bring glory to God's powerful name. Each time Samson attacked the Philistines, it was because of his own pride. Tomorrow we will see what Samson did next.



Before he was even born, God said that Samson would deliver God's people, the Israelites, from the Philistines. And God gave him the ability to do it. Yet, Samson did not pray or ask God to guide his steps. Samson followed what seemed right to him - even sinful things. We must never take God's calling for granted, or use the gifts He has given us for our own selfish reasons.

Day #5: Seeking Revenge

Have you ever been so angry with someone for hurting you that you wanted to get back at them? Doing something to get back at someone is called **revenge**. The Bible tells us not to take revenge, but let God take of things (Romans 12:19). Today we will look at what Samson did to get revenge on the Philistines.



So he went out and caught 300 foxes. He tied them in pairs by their tails. Then he tied a torch to each pair of tails. He lit the torches. He let the foxes loose in the fields of grain that belonged to the Philistines. He burned up the grain that had been cut and stacked. He burned up the grain that was still growing. He also burned up the vineyards and olive trees. - Judges 15:2-3

This action completely destroyed the Philistines' crops. A whole year's worth of food went up in smoke. When the Philistines found out that Samson was the one who had burned up their fields, they killed Samson's wife and her father. This made Samson even more angry so he killed many Philistines and then he hid in a cave.

More Philistines came looking for Samson. Because the Philistines still ruled over Israel, the Israelites were afraid of them. The Israelites, Samson's own people, found him and handed him over to the Philistines.

Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Samson with power. The ropes on his arms became like burned thread. They dropped off his hands. He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey. He grabbed hold of it and struck down 1,000 men.

*Then Samson said, "By using a donkey's jawbone **I've** made them look like donkeys. By using a donkey's jawbone **I've** struck down 1,000 men." - Judges 15:14b-16*

Notice that it was **God's Spirit** that gave Samson power, yet what did Samson say? **I** have done it. Samson took all the credit. Again, in his pride, Samson did not turn his thoughts toward God. Samson had a wrong view. He thought too highly of himself, and not highly enough of the Lord.



We must be sure to always let others know when God has worked in our lives. When we take credit for what He has done, we are stealing praise from God (Acts 12:23).

But as for me, how good it is to be near God! I have made the Sovereign Lord my shelter, and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things You do. - Psalm 73:28 NLT