

Samson (Part 1)

Judges 13 - 15

PPT Title

Samson (Part 1)

Main Point: God always hears and answers the cries of His people.

PPT Verse

Key Verse: *Then they got rid of the strange gods that were among them. They served the Lord. And He couldn't stand to see Israel suffer anymore. - Judges 10:16*

Props: long wig, bunch of grapes, picture of grave or tombstone; several cups, each with about a tablespoon of honey and a popsicle stick for dipping

BACKGROUND/REVIEW

Ask: Who can remember the name of the judge, or deliverer, that we studied about last week? *Gideon*

Say: Last week we learned about Gideon. God told Gideon to lead the Israelites in battle against their savage enemy, the Midianites. There were 135,000 Midianite soldiers. But God told Gideon to send all but 300 of his soldiers home. Miraculously, God caused the Midianite army to fight against themselves, and Gideon's army was victorious.

Ask: Does anyone remember why God chose to shrink Gideon's army down to only 300 men? *So the Israelites couldn't take credit for winning the battle, So the Israelites would know that God fought for them*

Say: God did not want the Israelites to think they were so great at fighting that they could win a battle over 135,000 men. God set up the battle so that it was humanly **impossible** to win. Then, when they did win, there was no mistake that God did the fighting for them. The main point of our lesson last week was: God uses our weaknesses to show His power.

Teacher Notes: ABIMELECH & OTHER JUDGES (Judges 9-12)

The Israelites wanted Gideon to be their king. Gideon wisely refused to become the king of the Israelites, saying that the Lord was the only leader they needed. After Gideon died, one of his sons, Abimelech, decided he should become king. Abimelech was a wicked man who murdered his own family in order to gain power. His reign was full of violence and he died a violent death at the hands of a woman (Judges 9).

God raised up many judges to save and lead the Israelites after their sin caused them to fall into enemy hands. The Bible tells us very little about some of these judges. We are told that after Abimelech died, God sent Tola to save Israel and he led them for 23 years. After Tola, there was Jair who led Israel for 22 years.

After Jair died, the Israelites did it again! Again, they chose to abandon God and follow the false gods that the people around them worshipped. This made God very angry. He allowed the Philistines and the Ammonites to take over the Israelites. They ruled very harshly over the Israelites for 18 years. So, once again, the Israelites called out to God for help. In reply, God gave His people a long list of the enemies He had already saved them from. Listen to what God said next:

"But you have deserted Me. You have served other gods. So I will not save you anymore. Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you get into trouble!" - Judges 10:13-14

The Israelites certainly deserved that comment!

But the people of Israel replied to the Lord. They said, "We have sinned. Do to us what you think is best. But please save us now." Then they got rid of the strange gods that were among them. They served the Lord. And He couldn't stand to see Israel suffer anymore. - Judges 10:15-16

Don't miss the heart of God in this verse. He can't stand to see His children suffer - even when it is caused by their own sinful choices. Just like a dad and his child, no matter what the child has done, the dad can't stand to see the child suffer. The Israelites certainly deserved to suffer, but God is love. He is full of mercy, and His heart breaks when He sees His children suffering. God sent another judge. His name was Jephthah. Jephthah was a mighty warrior, but he was outcast from his own family. God's Spirit was on Jephthah, and he led the Israelite armies to victory over their enemy, the Ammonites. Jephthah led Israel for six years before he died. After Jephthah, came Ibzan, who led the Israelites for seven years. Then Elon led them for ten years, and Abdon led for eight years.

We are tempted to think, "What is wrong with those Israelites? When will they ever learn?" But, we are very much like them. Because each of us has a sin nature, we continue to sin, no matter how many times we vow not to (Romans 7:19). As soon as the Israelites turned back to the Lord, He was eager to help them. Likewise, when we confess our sins to God, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and make us pure (1 John 1:9). Jesus described God, as a father who paces back and forth, looking down a dusty road, waiting - with open arms - for his wandering child to return to him. And when the child returns, God is overjoyed to have him home (Luke 15:11-32).

SAMSON (Judges 13)



Say: After Gideon died, the Israelites continued in their sin cycle. Because of His love and mercy, God could not stand to see His people suffer (Judges 10:16). He sent a deliverer to save them every time they cried out to Him for help. The Bible lists six judges who led the Israelites for several decades after Gideon. Then we are introduced to the most interesting, though not the most godly, of the judges, Samson.

Once again, the Israelites had sinned and turned away from God. This time, God allowed the Philistines to take them over. The Philistines ruled over the Israelites for 40 years.

There was an Israelite man named Manoah. His wife was not able to have children. One day, an angel of the Lord appeared to her.

*The angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife. He said, "You are not able to have children. But you are going to become pregnant. You will have a baby boy. Make sure you do not drink any kind of wine. Also make sure you do not eat anything that is 'unclean.' You will become pregnant. You will have a son. He must not use a razor on his head. He must not cut his hair. That is because the boy will be a **Nazirite**. He will be set apart to God from the day he is born. He will begin to save Israel from the power of the Philistines." - Judges 13:3-5*



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. **Show your grapes, wig, and tombstone when you mention each item.** (1) He or she could not eat or drink anything that came from the grapevine. This meant they could not drink juice or wine, and they could not even eat grapes or raisins. (2) They were not allowed to cut their hair at all. Men could not cut their beards either. (3) And they had to stay away from dead bodies and graves - even those of their family members. (Numbers 6:1-21)

Manoah's wife ran to tell her husband about the amazing messenger from God. Manoah prayed that God would send the angel back to tell them how to raise their son. Manoah and his wife sought wisdom from God. The Bible tells us that if we need wisdom we should ask God for it and He will give it to us freely. He will never be angry with us for asking for wisdom (James 1:5). So, God sent the angel back to Manoah and his wife. The angel told Manoah that his wife should not eat or drink anything that came from grapevines. She mustn't drink wine or eat anything that was considered unclean.

Manoah sacrificed a burnt offering to the Lord that day.

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

Even as a very young boy, the Spirit of God was at work in Samson's life. He had parents who obeyed God and wanted to raise their son according to God's word. God blessed Samson.

SAMSON'S MARRIAGE (Judges 14-15)



One day, after Samson had grown into a young man, he saw a woman who caught his eye.

Samson went down to Timnah. There he saw a young Philistine woman. When he returned, he spoke to his father and mother. He said, "I've seen a Philistine woman in Timnah. Get her for me. I want her to be my wife." - Judges 14:1-2

Ask: Did anyone hear where this woman was from? *She was a Philistine.*

Say: The Philistines were the enemy of Samson's people. Samson's parents were upset about this. They encouraged Samson to find a wife among the Israelite women instead. But Samson insisted that the Philistine woman was the right one for him. We come across a very interesting verse right here.

Samson's parents didn't know that the Lord wanted things to happen that way. He was working out his plans against the Philistines. That's because the Philistines were ruling over Israel at that time. - Judges 14:4

God wanted Samson to like this woman. God was going to use this situation to confront the Philistines because they were ruling over His people.

So Samson and his parents went back to the town where he saw the woman. As they approached the vineyards of the town, Samson must have been some distance away from his parents. The Bible says that 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. He did it as easily as he might have torn a young goat apart. But he didn't tell his father or mother what he had done. - Judges 14:6



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. On 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 and got some of the honey. Now, wait just a minute. Do you remember the three rules of being a Nazirite? **Hold up your props as you list them.** No grapes, no haircuts, and *stay away from dead bodies!* Samson's curiosity caused him to disobey God's command. Samson went back and joined his parents on the road. He gave them some honey, and they all ate it as they went. He did not tell his parents where the honey came from. **Hand out your cups of honey to random students.**

As was the custom, Samson threw a big party at the time of his wedding. This party was going to last for seven days! The Philistines told 30 of their young men to stay with Samson. Samson decided to make a bet with the 30 young men. 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.

Say: Just for fun, we'll try a few riddles of our own. Raise your hand if you think you know the answer.

1) What has two hands and a face, always runs, but stays in place?



A clock!

2) What is full of holes but can still hold water?



A sponge!

3) If you were in a race and you passed the person in 2nd place, what place would you be in?



2nd place!

Say: Okay, back to our story. Samson's riddle went like this:

PPT Verse

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

Of course, he was talking about the honey he ate out of the dead lion. For three days, the 30 men were puzzled. They couldn't come up with an answer. So they went to Samson's bride and threatened her. They asked, "Did you invite us here just to rob us?" They told her that she had to find out the answer for them or they would kill her and everyone in her family (Judges 14:15). Samson's bride threw herself on Samson and sobbed. She told him that he must hate her because he had given this riddle to her people without telling her the answer. Finally, after hearing her cry for days, Samson gave in and told her. Immediately, she told the young men.

*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. Filled with power, Samson went to Ashkelon and killed 30 of the men there. He took all of their belongings and gave

their clothes to the 30 young men. Samson went to his father's house. He was burning with anger (Judges 14:19).

Then, without Samson knowing it, his bride was given to another man - a friend of Samson's. Later, at harvest time, Samson went to see his bride. Her father would not let Samson go in her room.

Her father said, "I was sure you really hated her. So I gave her to your friend. Isn't her younger sister more beautiful? Take her instead."

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



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



Ask: Has anyone ever heard the phrase, "Quick like a fox"? Foxes are known for being quick. It would not take long for 150 pairs of foxes to set the whole countryside on fire.

Say: Not many of us are farmers, but we can imagine the devastation this caused. The Bible tells us this happened right at harvest time, when the wheat was being gathered (Judges 15:1). A year's worth of food had gone up in smoke. The Philistines were furious about their fields. They found out that it was Samson who had set the fires because his bride was given to his friend. The Philistines killed Samson's bride and her father. This made Samson even more angry. He swore he would pay them back. Samson killed many of the Philistines, then he hid out in a cave. A large group of Philistine men went to the Israelite town of Judah looking for Samson. At that time, the Philistines still ruled over the Israelites. The Israelite men were afraid of them, so 3,000 men from Judah went to find Samson, and hand him over to the Philistines.

When the men of Judah came to Samson's cave, they told Samson they had come to tie him up and hand him over to the Philistines. Samson made the men of Judah promise that they would not kill him themselves. So they tied him up with two new ropes, and walked him back to the Philistines. When the Philistines saw him coming, they ran toward him.



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

After the battle, Samson was tired and thirsty, so he cried out to God. God made water come flowing out of a rock. Samson was a leader of the Israelites for 20 years, but the Philistines still ruled over the Israelites.

Application: Samson seemed to have everything going for him from the very beginning. His parents listened to the Lord and tried to obey His commands. Samson was chosen to be used by God before he was even born. He was blessed by God, and God's Spirit began to work in him at a very young age (Judges 13:24-25). Yet, Samson did not

seem to put God first in his life. Samson was almost always focused on himself, and what *he* wanted. Samson is not our ideal role-model. In fact, his life was tragic, marked with pride, anger, violence, and lack of self-control. God did use Samson's flaws to overcome the Philistines, perhaps because out of all the Israelites, there was no one better to use. (Remember, each time the Israelites went through the cycle of sin, their behavior became worse than it was before.) Next week, we will see that Samson's life has a very sad ending. We wonder how his life might have turned out if he had not thought only of himself, and if he had given God the glory for his blessings.

We must not be like Samson. We must not waste the talents God has given us, or use them for selfish reasons. We must praise God for the blessings we have, and use them according to His plan. Thinking only of ourselves always leads to trouble. When we allow God's Spirit to control our lives, our lives will be fruitful and will draw others to Him.

But the fruit the Holy Spirit produces is love, joy and peace. It is being patient, kind and good. It is being faithful and gentle and having control of oneself. There is no law against things of that kind. - Galatians 5:22

PPT Main Point

Main Point: God always hears and answers the cries of His people.