

Samson (Part 2)

(Judges 16)

Pre-Session Warm Up

God has a wonderful plan and a purpose for each one of our lives. As you continue to grow up, God will reveal to you just how He wants to use your life to be a blessing to others and He will give you the strength and power to accomplish His will.

Last week we started to learn about Samson. He was a miracle child, born to a woman who had been barren. His parents were told by an angel that Samson was to be set apart for a special purpose. So, Samson's mother started preparing him for service to the Lord even before he was born.

As he grew up, the Lord blessed Samson and *the Spirit of the Lord began to stir in him* (Judges 13:25). God gave him supernatural strength and power because He wanted to use Samson to defeat the Philistines and deliver the Israelites from these terrible enemies of God.

However, as we learned last week, Samson was prideful, had a bad temper, and disobeyed God. Although Samson was not perfect, God was able to use Samson's strength to accomplish His will to wipe out many of the Philistines.

Today we're going to finish learning about Samson. We're going to find out what he did with his supernatural, God-given strength and power.

Opening Prayer

Father, today we want to learn that it is You that gives us our special talents and abilities. And we want to learn how important it is for us to always use them for Your glory. Give us ears to hear Your voice this morning so that we don't miss out on the lesson you have here for each one of us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

*For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.
(Philippians 4:13)*

Lesson

We've been learning about the period of Judges. First, we learned about a judge named **Deborah**. She was a great leader who was trustworthy, brave, fair and just. The people loved her. They would come to her for advice and she led them into battle.

Then we learned about a judge named **Gideon**, a cowardly man who did not have very great faith or trust in God. But God used him and his tiny army to deliver the people of Israel from the hands of mighty enemy forces.

Last week we learned about a judge named **Samson**. Samson had great strength and power because he had kept a Nazirite vow to keep his life pure for the Lord. As long as he didn't drink alcohol or cut his hair, the Spirit of the Lord continued to give him great strength and power. Even though he made many bad choices, God used him to wipe out many Philistines.

Today we continue with the story of Samson.

Judges 16 starts out by telling us that Samson went down to Gaza. And when the people of Gaza saw him coming, they wanted to kill him.

Judges 16:2

Word soon spread that Samson was there, so the men of Gaza gathered together and waited all night at the town gates. They kept quiet during the night, saying to themselves, "When the light of morning comes, we will kill him."

They had heard about his great strength and power and were afraid of Samson.

Judges 16:3

But Samson stayed in bed only until midnight. Then he got up, took hold of the doors of the town gate, including the two posts, and lifted them up, bar and all. He put them on his shoulders and carried them all the way to the top of the hill across from Hebron.

What incredible strength and power Samson had! The cities in those days had big walls around them. You entered through huge wooden gates. Samson went out to the city gates and lifted them, with the two gateposts, right out of the ground. He put them on his shoulders and carried them up the mountain to Hebron, a distance of 38 miles!

Judges 16:4-5

Sometime later Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek. The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, "Entice Samson to tell you what makes him so strong and how he can be overpowered and tied up securely. Then each of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver."

Samson fell in love with a Philistine girl named Delilah! You would have thought he would have learned his lesson last time he fell in love with a Philistine girl.

Delilah turns out to be a very bad woman. The rulers of the Philistines offered her a lot of money to find out the secret of Samson's strength.

Samson may have had big muscles, but he wasn't very smart.

Judges 16:6

So, Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me what makes you so strong and what it would take to tie you up securely."

Delilah tries to trick Samson into telling her what made him so strong. She begged him to tell her his secret. But he lied to her three times.

First lie: new bowstrings

Judges 16:7

Samson replied, "If I were tied up with seven new bowstrings that have not yet been dried, I would become as weak as anyone else."

First, he told her that if he was tied up with seven new strings for a bow and arrow, that would take his strength away.

Judges 16:8-9

So, the Philistine rulers brought Delilah seven new bowstrings, and she tied Samson up with them. (9) She had hidden some men in one of the inner rooms of her house, and she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson snapped the bowstrings as a piece of string snaps when it is burned by a fire. So, the secret of his strength was not discovered.

So, while he was sleeping, she tied him with new bowstrings, then called, "Wake up, Samson." But the bowstrings didn't hold.

Delilah continued to nag Samson for his secret.

Judges 16:10

Afterward Delilah said to him, "You've been making fun of me and telling me lies! Now please tell me how you can be tied up securely."

Second lie: brand-new ropes

The second lie Samson told Delilah was that they needed to tie him up with brand new ropes.

Judges 16:11-12

Samson replied, "If I were tied up with brand-new ropes that had never been used, I would become as weak as anyone else." (12) So, Delilah took new ropes and tied him up with them. The men were hiding in the inner room as before, and again Delilah cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But again, Samson snapped the ropes from his arms as if they were thread.

Again, while he was sleeping, she tied him up with new ropes. But when he woke up, he broke the ropes as if they were threads.

Third lie: weave hair into a loom

Delilah continued to nag Samson for his secret. But he told her another lie.

Judges 16:13-14

Then Delilah said, "You've been making fun of me and telling me lies! Now tell me how you can be tied up securely." Samson replied, "If you were to weave the seven braids of my hair into the fabric on your loom and tighten it with the loom shuttle, I would become as weak as anyone else." So, while he slept, Delilah wove the seven braids of his hair into the fabric. (14) Then she tightened it with the loom shuttle. Again, she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson woke up, pulled back the loom shuttle, and yanked his hair away from the loom and the fabric.

While he was sleeping, she tried that. But that didn't work, either. So, Delilah pouted and whined and nagged some more.

Judges 16:15

Then Delilah pouted, "How can you tell me, 'I love you,' when you don't share your secrets with me? You've made fun of me three times now, and you still haven't told me what makes you so strong!"

Delilah asked day after day. She thought of all the things she could buy with the money the men promised to give her if she could find out Samson's secret.

One day Samson got so tired of her begging, he told her his secret. He should never have done that!

Judges 16:16-17

She tormented him with her nagging day after day until he was sick to death of it. (17) Finally, Samson shared his secret with her. "My hair has never been cut," he confessed, "for I was dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as anyone else."

This time Delilah knew he had told her the truth. Let's see what happens:

Judges 16:18-19

Delilah realized he had finally told her the truth, so she sent for the Philistine rulers. "Come back one more time," she said, "for he has finally told me his secret." So, the Philistine rulers returned with the money in their hands. (19) Delilah lulled Samson to sleep with his head in her lap, and then she called in a man to shave off the seven locks of his hair. In this way she began to bring him down, and his strength left him.

Delilah lulled Samson to sleep, cut his hair, and God took Samson's strength away.

Judges 16:20

Then she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" When he woke up, he thought, "I will do as before and shake myself free." But he didn't realize the LORD had left him.

Samson woke up but this time his strength was gone. He thought he would still be strong without God's help; he forgot that his special strength and power was not his own; it was from God.

How sad, Samson forgot his calling from God. His desire to please Delilah overcame his desire to please God and he didn't keep his vow to keep his life pure for the Lord. So, the Spirit of the Lord left him powerless and the Philistines were able to capture him.

Judges 16:21

So, the Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes. They took him to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and forced to grind grain in the prison.

The Philistines rushed out of hiding and captured Samson. Then, they dug out his eyes. That was a horrible thing to do. They also bound him with chains and put him in prison. Day after day they made Samson grind grain into flour like an animal.

No doubt, as he sat in prison, blind and zapped of strength, Samson felt like a failure. But, day after day something was happening to him. His hair started to grow again!

Judges 16:22

But before long, his hair began to grow back.

Meanwhile, the Philistine leaders were so happy they had captured Samson, they decided to celebrate. While the party was going on, they decided to bring Samson out to make fun of him.

Judges 16:23-25

The Philistine rulers held a great festival, offering sacrifices and praising their god, Dagon. They said, "Our god has given us victory over our enemy Samson!" (24) When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, "Our god has delivered our enemy to us! The one who killed so many of us is now in our power!" (25) Half-drunk by now, the people demanded, "Bring out Samson so he can amuse us!" So, he was brought from the prison to amuse them, and they had him stand between the pillars supporting the roof.

They brought Samson from the prison and made him stand at the center of the temple of their god, Dagon, between two pillars supporting the roof. The people laughed at him! They were glad that he was blind and no longer had the strength to hurt them anymore.

Finally, Samson realized where his strength had come from. He told the boy who was leading him, to place him between the pillars supporting this temple to their false god. Then, Samson prayed to God!

Judges 16:26-28

Samson said to the young servant who was leading him by the hand, "Place my hands against the pillars that hold up the temple. I want to rest against them." (27) Now the temple was completely filled with people. All the Philistine rulers were there, and there were about 3,000 men and women on the roof who were watching as Samson amused them. (28) Then Samson prayed to the LORD, "Sovereign LORD, remember me again. O God, please strengthen me just one more time. With one blow let me pay back the Philistines for the loss of my two eyes."

The temple was filled with thousands and thousands of people. Samson asked God for one last burst of strength.

Judges 16:29-30

Then Samson put his hands on the two center pillars that held up the temple. Pushing against them with both hands, (30) he prayed, "Let me die with the Philistines." And the temple crashed down on the Philistine rulers and all the people. So, he killed more people when he died than he had during his entire lifetime.

Samson reached towards the two pillars that supported the roof, braced himself and pushed with all his might. Down fell the temple and everyone was killed. Sadly, Samson died with the Philistines in the ruins of the temple.

Samson! What a pathetic man! He had been given great strength and power by God, but he didn't use it for God's glory! He allowed himself to be tricked by Delilah. He forgot that his special strength was from God. He thought he was invincible – he didn't know that he was really weak without God's special anointing. He was full of pride.

God had given Samson supernatural strength and power. But, for most of his life he failed to use it for God's glory. He was a self-centered spoiled brat! How much more might have been accomplished through Samson's life had he remembered to live his life to please God!

But Samson's story teaches us that it is never too late to start over. Finally in the end he realized his dependence on God. And when he died, God turned his failures and defeats into victory. The lesson for us is that no matter how badly we've failed in the past, it is never too late for us to put our complete trust in God.

The book of Judges describes a sad period of time in the lives of the children of Israel. The people did not have a strong leader, so they didn't have strong faith in God. The last sentence in the book of Judges tells why they got themselves into the situation they were in.

Judges 21:25

In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.

It's important for us to have good, strong, courageous leaders who can show us the right way to live. It is also important for you and me to be good followers. How would it be if you were trying to lead some people who suddenly decided to go their own way? Good followers always listen and obey their leaders; they show their love and respect by always following the rules! They don't go off to do their own thing.

Remember that a good leader is one that is following Jesus. So, if you want to be a good leader in your family, or at school, you need to be a faithful follower of Jesus.

Closing Prayer

Father, teach us these important lessons: first of all help us to remember to use the gifts and talents you have given us for Your glory. Don't let us waste time being selfish and spoiled! Secondly, help us to be good leaders—good examples—in our homes and in our schools and in our neighborhoods by being faithful followers of You, Jesus. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Samson Figure

Materials:

Provide each child with the following:

- 7 4" pieces of string (for "hair").
- 1 wooden bead (for the "head").
- 1 ½ chenille stems or pipe cleaners (long piece for the "body"; short piece for the "arms").
- 1 4" piece of twine (for the "belt").

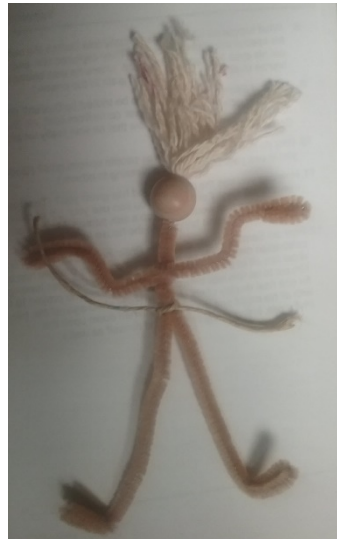
Procedure:

1. Fold the "body" in half, over the "hair".
2. Thread the "body" through the "head" (bead) "feet" first so the "hair" is sticking out the top.
3. Wrap the "arms" around the upper part of the "body".
4. Tie the "belt" (twine) around the waist.
5. Untwist or unravel the "hair" strings.
6. Bend the ends of the chenille stems (pipe cleaners) to make "hands" and "feet" and to protect child from getting poked.

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. How did Samson show his incredible strength at the city of Gaza? (He took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.)



2. What gave Samson his incredible strength and power? (As long as he didn't drink alcohol or cut his hair he had great strength. These were outward signs that he was keeping the Nazirite vow to keep himself pure for the Lord.)
3. Who was Samson's girlfriend? (Delilah)
4. Why was it wrong for Samson to fall in love with Delilah? (She was a Philistine. God told the children of Israel to not have anything to do with the heathen people that lived in the land; they were not good influences on them.)
5. When the Israelites became too friendly with the people living in the land around them, what were they tempted to do? (Forget about God and to follow their ways, worshiping their false gods.)
6. What can happen if you become close friends with someone that doesn't know and love God? (You can be tempted to do things that displease God.)
7. Why did Delilah try to trick Samson? (She was going to get a lot of money from some Philistine men if she could find out what made him so strong. They were afraid of Samson and wanted to overpower him and put him in chains.)
8. Three times Samson told Delilah lies about what made him so strong. What was one of the ways?
 - a) If I were tied with seven raw-leather bowstrings, I would become as weak as anyone else.
 - b) If I am tied with brand new ropes which have never been used, I will be as weak as other men.
 - c) If you weave my hair into your loom...
9. Why did Samson finally tell Delilah that his strength was in his hair? (Because she kept begging him.)
10. What happened when Samson finally told Delilah the truth about his special strength and power? (They captured him and gouged

out his eyes and took him to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and made to grind grain in the prison.)

11. Why did Samson allow himself to be tricked by Delilah? (He forgot that his special strength and power came from God. He thought he was invincible – he didn't know that he was really weak without God's special anointing.)
12. When the Philistines cut Samson's hair, what did they do with him? (Blinded him and put him in prison as a slave.)
13. Why did God give Samson supernatural strength and power? (God wanted to use Samson to defeat the Philistines and deliver the Israelites from these terrible enemies of God.)
14. How did Samson finally die? (The Philistines were having a big celebration over finally capturing Samson. They brought him out to show him off to the crowds. He asked the boy that was leading him out to let him rest between two pillars. Then he prayed to God for one final display of his strength. He pushed against the pillars with all his might and the temple crashed down upon the Philistines, killing many of them and himself as well.)
15. What does God want us to do with the special talents and abilities He gives us? (Use them to bless other people.)