

Samson's Strong Weakness

Sunday Plan

SCRIPTURE

Judges 13–16

MEMORY VERSE

Judges 16:20

God raises Samson as a deliverer with extraordinary strength, but Samson's divided heart and impulsive choices show how wasted potential and compromise can undermine even the greatest calling. These chapters reveal that God can still work through deeply flawed people, yet the cost of unfaithfulness is real and painful.

Welcome & Introduction

Opening Questions:

Ask students to think of all of the physical capabilities of Superman and things he can do that ordinary men cannot. Allow time for several examples to be cited.

Then ask: “What’s one weakness that Superman has that could totally trip him up if he’s not careful?” Of course, it’s kryptonite.

Ask them how he would perform all of those previous examples of strength while bound in kryptonite. Let a few share (keep it light and positive).

TRANSITION

Samson was literally the strongest person in Israel—stronger than anyone they’d ever met. But he had one weakness that kept showing up: he couldn’t control his impulses. His strength was a gift from God, but his lack of self-control, his anger, and his desire for approval and attention kept pulling him off track. Strength without character becomes dangerous, and potential without discipline becomes wasted. Judges 13–16 is the story of someone who had everything he needed to honor God—but kept giving his strength away one compromise at a time.

Born to Deliver Israel

Judges 13:1–7, 24–25

Teaching Points

- Samson is the last and worst of the major judges, and that’s the point. The book of Judges traces a moral decline in the judges themselves: Othniel is faithful, Ehud is clever, Deborah and Barak require partnership, Gideon starts well and ends badly, Jephthah makes a tragic vow, and Samson is a walking catastrophe who accomplishes God’s purposes almost in spite of himself. The judges are getting worse because Israel is getting worse. The deliverers reflect the people.
- Israel is in another cycle of rebellion, yet God initiates rescue by announcing Samson’s birth. This shows that God works even when His people aren’t seeking Him.
- The angel tells Samson’s mother that her son will be set apart from birth. This birth announcement follows a pattern God uses throughout Scripture: a barren woman receives an angelic announcement of a son who will deliver God’s people. The same pattern shows up with Isaac (Genesis 18), Samuel (1 Samuel 1), John the Baptist (Luke 1), and Jesus (Luke 1). God keeps announcing deliverers the same way, each one pointing to the one who will finally get it right.
- Samson’s early life shows God’s Spirit at work before Samson fully understands his purpose. As he grows, the Spirit begins to “stir” him. This reminds us that God often prepares and nudges them long before we see the full picture.

DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think God chose to start Samson’s story with a miracle birth and a clear calling? What does that say about purpose?
2. Who do you think of when you hear of a child destined from birth to save God’s people?
3. Samson’s parents, and later Samson himself has some guidelines he is to strictly observe. What are some “boundaries” God gives today that help protect our identity and calling rather than restrict us?

KEY TRUTH

The Nazirite instructions weren't random rules—they were guardrails meant to shape Samson's identity and keep him focused on God's mission.

Emotions Make Poor Decisions

Judges 14:1–7

Teaching Points

- Samson follows his impulses instead of seeking God's direction. He sees a Philistine woman and immediately wants her, showing a pattern of letting desire lead instead of wisdom or calling.
- Samson's parents try to guide him, but he resists their counsel. They ask if he can choose someone from among God's people, revealing the tension between parental wisdom and a teen's strong emotions.
- Samson's encounter with the lion foreshadows both his strength and his struggle. The Spirit empowers him, but he keeps the event secret—hinting at a pattern of hidden actions and divided motives.

DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think Samson let his feelings lead the way instead of listening to his parents' concerns? How does that happen today?
2. Given the context, what concerns did his parents have in their son marrying a Philistine?
3. What's the difference between God using a situation and God approving of the choices that led to it?
4. Have you ever made a quick decision based on emotion that you later realized needed more wisdom or guidance? What did you learn from it?

KEY TRUTH

God can work through imperfect choices, but that doesn't make the choices wise. The passage notes that God intended to use this situation against the Philistines, yet Samson's motivation was still self-centered. God's sovereignty doesn't excuse Samson's impulsiveness.

Riddle Me This

Judges 14:8–20

Teaching Points

- Samson keeps secrets that reveal a growing pattern of isolation. He doesn't tell his parents about the lion or the honey, showing how he's drifting from the boundaries God gave him and from the people who could guide him.
- Not only did Samson defile himself, but he exposed his parents to ceremonial uncleanness under the

law by taking honey from an unclean and dead animal carcass:

- Leviticus 11:24 — touching a dead animal makes a person unclean.
 - Leviticus 11:27 — anyone who touches the carcass of an unclean animal is unclean.
 - Numbers 19:11 — touching a dead body brings uncleanness.
- Samson's riddle becomes a symbol of pride and manipulation. He uses it to show off, not to honor God. When the Philistines cheat, Samson reacts with anger instead of wisdom, revealing how ego drives his choices.

NOTE

This demonstrates his willful disregard of his mission and the covenant. In this, he very much represents the heart of the Israelites.

DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think Samson kept so many secrets from the people closest to him? How can secrecy become a warning sign in our own lives?
2. What are some “small compromises” teens might make today that seem harmless at first but can grow into bigger problems?
3. How does pride show up in Samson's riddle challenge, and what are some ways pride can escalate conflict in friendships or relationships?

KEY TRUTH

More and more, the character of the Israelite Judges is becoming more like the rebellious spirit of the people themselves. We no longer see those like Ehud, or Deborah, but rather coarse characters such as Jephthah and Samson.

Judah Condemns Their Deliverer

Judges 15:3–15

Teaching Points

- Samson responds to hurt with revenge instead of wisdom. He feels wronged and immediately plans retaliation, showing how quickly anger can push someone into destructive choices.
- Samson's actions escalate the conflict between Israel and the Philistines. What began as a personal issue becomes a national crisis. This reveals how personal anger can spill into the lives of others.
- Israel's fear shows how far they've drifted from courage and calling. Instead of standing with Samson, 3,000 men come to hand him over. Their fear of the Philistines is stronger than their trust in God.

DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think Samson chose revenge instead of seeking a healthier response? How does anger push people into choices they later regret?
2. How can one person's conflict or drama end up affecting a whole group, family, or friend circle?
3. What does this passage teach us about God's ability to work even when our motives or emotions aren't perfect?

KEY TRUTH

God empowers Samson even in the middle of a messy situation. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon him, breaking the ropes and giving him strength. This shows God's faithfulness even when Samson's motives are mixed.

Why, Why, Why Delilah?

Judges 16:4–20

Teaching Points

- Delilah's persistence reveals the power of manipulation when someone knows your weak spots. She uses guilt, pressure, and emotional leverage to wear Samson down. This shows how unhealthy relationships can drain someone's strength long before anything dramatic happens.
- Samson treats his calling casually, inching closer to the truth each time. He plays games with his vow, giving Delilah clues instead of walking away. Compromise rarely happens all at once—it's usually a slow drift.
- Samson loses his strength not because his hair was magic, but because he broke the symbol of his commitment to God. When he finally reveals the truth, he disconnects himself from the vow that marked his identity. The heartbreaking line — “he did not know that the Lord had left him”—shows the cost of repeated compromise.

DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think Samson stayed with Delilah even when it was clear she didn't have his best interests in mind? How can emotions cloud judgment today?
2. What are some ways people slowly compromise their values—one small step at a time—without realizing how far they've drifted?
3. How can you tell the difference between a relationship that strengthens you and one that slowly drains or manipulates you?

KEY TRUTH

Samson's greatest weakness wasn't physical—it was emotional vulnerability. He falls in love with Delilah, even though she repeatedly pressures him. His desire for affection blinds him to obvious danger, showing how emotional needs can override wisdom.

Samson Brings Down the House

Judges 16:21–30

Teaching Points

- God begins restoring Samson long before the final moment. The quiet detail that “his hair began to grow again” signals hope. God’s grace starts working in the background even while Samson is still living with the consequences of his choices.
- Samson’s final prayer shows humility he lacked earlier in life. For the first time, he asks God for strength not to show off, not to impress, but to fulfill his calling. His brokenness becomes the doorway to dependence.
- God uses Samson’s final act to accomplish what Samson failed to do in his lifetime. Samson destroys more Philistines in his death than in his life. This doesn’t glorify violence — it highlights that God can redeem even the most tragic stories and still accomplish His purposes.

DISCUSSION

1. How does Samson’s physical blindness symbolize the choices he made earlier in his life? Where do people today “blind themselves” to warning signs?
2. What does the regrowth of Samson’s hair teach us about God’s grace, even after failure or consequences?
3. Why do you think Samson’s final prayer sounds so different from his earlier actions? What does it look like to depend on God instead of relying on your own strength?

KEY TRUTH

Samson’s physical blindness reflects the spiritual blindness that led him here. The Philistines gouge out his eyes, but Samson had been “blind” long before — just like his nation, ignoring warnings, boundaries, and God’s calling. His outward condition mirrors his, and Israel’s inward drift.

Memory Verses & Closing

Memory Verses

- Judges 16:20

Challenge for the Week: Samson’s story shows that strength without surrender collapses, but weakness surrendered to God becomes powerful. This week try doing the following activities that would have benefited Samson:

- Identify one area where you’ve been acting on impulse or emotion. Pause and pray before responding.
- Set a boundary around one temptation or distraction that keeps pulling you off track.
- Ask God for strength in an area where you normally try to handle everything alone.

Close in prayer.