

Lesson 8: Samson, the Big Dumb Idiot

Scripture: selection from Judges 13-16

Thesis: God even uses our rebellion for his glory

ICEBREAKER: Share some fun riddles with each other. Here are a few to get started. Answers at the end of the lesson.

1. What goes up but never comes back down?
2. I go all around the world, but never leave the corner. What am I?
3. What goes in a birdbath but never gets wet?
4. What two things can you never eat for breakfast?
5. If you drop me, I'm sure to crack, but smile at me and I'll smile back. What am I?
6. I'm light as a feather, yet the strongest person can't hold me for five minutes. What am I?
7. I have cities, but no houses. I have forests, but no trees. I have water, but no fish. What am I?
8. What can you break, even if you never pick it up or touch it?
9. Which question can you never answer "yes" to?
10. What's something that, the more you take, the more you leave behind?
11. What's really easy to get into, and hard to get out of?
12. I'm tall when I'm young, and I'm short when I'm old. What am I?
13. I can be cracked or played; told or made. What am I?
14. What word contains 26 letters, but only has three syllables?
15. Tom's father has three sons: Jim, John, and what's the third one's name?

Samson's Riddle: In Judges 14: 14 Samson offers the following riddle. See if anyone in your group can decipher the answer. No cheating!

Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet.

SAMSON INTRO: Of all the judges, Samson is one of the most famous because of his long hair and super-human strength. This makes him an ideal candidate for children's Sunday School lessons, yet Samson's story is more scandalous than we typically share with children.

- What are some things you knew about Samson before this lesson?
- Why do you think his story is so popular for children?
- Why do you think people sugar coat this story to make it kid-friendly?
- Have any of the stories in Judges shocked you? Which ones and why?
- Why do you think God includes these types of stories in his Holy Word?

SERMON DISCUSSION: As we examine the life of Samson, we discover a strong man, that is weak in faith and character.

- What are some things you learned through this week's sermon?
- What are some questions you have or items you were confused about?
- What is your impression of Samson based on the sermon?
- How did this week's sermon help you understand the cycle of sin and redemption in the people of Israel?
- What did you learn about the cycle of sin and redemption in your life?

SAMSON'S BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT:

Read Judges 13:2-8.

- Why does this story sound familiar? (See Sarah (Genesis 18), Hannah (1 Samuel 1), Elizabeth and Mary (Luke 1).
- What does it say about God, that he used barren women, to bring about his plan of redemption?
- While we are not given Samson's mom's name, she is the hero of that story, how so? Read **Faith and Obedience**, page 130, in *Judges For You*, to gain more insight in Samson's mom's response to the announcement of her son.
- What instructions are given to Samson's parents in how he is to be raised?
- How would you have felt if you were received this type of message regarding your future child.

Samson's parents were told that their son was to take on a lifelong Nazarite vow. Read Numbers 6:1-8 to learn more about this vow. Then read **You Will Have A Son**, pages 126-127, from *Judges For You* to gain additional insight into about this vow.

- When taking the Nazarite vow, what are some things you are to avoid?
- How was the vow of Samson different than that of a typical Nazarite vow?
- Do you think this would be a difficult vow for Samson to observe?

MEET SAMSON: From *Judges For You*, page 135

The story of Samson is famous for its potent mix of sex, violence, death and power—exactly the stuff of a contemporary summer action film! As Israel's spiritual condition grows worse and worse, the scene seems to be set for a great judge/leader. Instead, we find by far the most flawed character in the book: a violent, impulsive, sexually addicted, emotionally immature and selfish man. Most disturbing of all, the "Spirit of God" seems to anoint and use his fits of pique, pride, and temper.

SAMSON'S FIRST LOVE (besides himself)

Read Judges 14:1-8

- What shocking choice does Samson, Israel's judge, make? What do you think that says about him?
- How does this show disrespect to his parents, his people, and his God?
- How do you think Samson's parents felt about the choices their son was making?

In *Judges For You* section **A Philistine Woman**, read the first paragraph (page 135) and the last portion, starting with "First" (page 136-137)

What two major flaws in Samson's character does Timothy Keller point out?

- How might these flaws be damaging for Samson?
- How have you seen these flaws played out in The Cycle of the Judges and the people of Israel?
- Have you seen these two flaws in your life, and how have they caused strife and struggle for you?

SAMSON'S RIDDLE REVEALED

Read Judges 14:12-17

- What is the answer to Samson's Riddle? Pretty lame, right.
- How did they discover the answer?
- What does this tell us about Samson?
- How do we see his impulsive and unteachableness demonstrated?

But wait, there's more. Read Judges 15:1-8.

- How does Samson's impulsive behavior escalate? How does it cause pain and suffering for him and others?
- How have you seen damage from impulsive acts damage yourself and others?
- Do you think Samson learns his lesson?

For additional insight into this story read the last 2 paragraphs of **A Lion, A Bet, and A Woman** (pages 144-145) in *Judges for You*.

THE CRAZINESS CONTINUES.

In Judges 15:9-16:3 we see Samson's impulsiveness and unteachable spirit continue. It does not paint a pretty picture of Samson, but it does contain some gruesome violence and sexual immorality. During all of this we see a repeated phrase, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him." How is it God can work through such a flawed person and why does he allow his Spirit to work in and through him?

Read **The Spirit of the Lord** in *Judges For You* (pages 145-146).

- How is God at work for his people through Samson, insubtle ways, which they don't seem to realize?
- How does God's pouring out his Spirit on Samson show us his amazing grace?
- Why is it important for us, as modern followers of Jesus, to see God work through flaws and impulsive people?
- "God works the free and very flawed choices people make" (page 146). Why is that important for you and me?

SAMSON AND DELILAH.

Read Judges 16: 4-6

- Does this story sound familiar to?
- What are the Philistines trying to discover about Samson?
- What do they offer Delilah for betraying Samson?
- Read The second paragraph in **Why Delilah (And Why Samson)** (page 153) in *Judges For You* for additional insight. Does this help you understand why Delilah would betray her lover?

In Judges 16:7-15 We see Delilah trying to convince Samson to give away the secret of his strength and Samson lying to her. It gets almost comical and speaks of their dysfunctional relationship. Keller goes deeper into the both their motivations in **Why Delilah (And Why Samson)** (page 153-155) for those who are interested.

Read Judges 16:16-21 and the first three paragraphs of **His Strength Left Him**, pages 155-156, in *Judges For You*.

- Why does Samson reveal his secret to Delilah?
- What does Samson reveal his strength to be? Is that the true source?
- Why do you think God has finally left him?
- What becomes of Samson?

ONE LAST PUSH:

Read Judges 16:22-30

- Do you think Samson dies a hero? Why or why not?
- Why do you think God honor's his final prayer for strength?
- What does that say about God and, his timing, and those he chooses to use?
- After studying this story, do you think it makes a good Children's story? Why or Why not?
- What are some lessons you might take from Samson's impulsive and unteachable life?

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Samson tended to rely on his own strength and wisdom, and that often God hit him into a world of trouble.

- What are some times that you have tried to rely on your strength and wisdom which made things worse?
- How did those situations backfire?
- Where in your life do you need to rely on God's grace instead of your own strength?
- How would relying on God's strength and wisdom increase your faith and joy in life?

Reflect on these verses.

- Zechariah 4: 6 “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by strength or by might, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD of Armies.
- 2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.

Share ways that group members can pray for each other that you will not rely on your own wisdom and strength, but on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Close in Prayer

ICEBREAKER ANSWERS:

1: Your age. 2: A stamp. 3: The bird's shadow. 4: Lunch and dinner. 5: A mirror. 6: Your breath. 7: A map.
8: A promise. 9: "Are you asleep?" 10: Footsteps. 11: Trouble. 12: A candle. 13: A joke! 14: Alphabet.
15: Tom