

**STORY**

Samson - Judges 13-16

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, it is both a great privilege and responsibility to lead these precious lambs into the pastures of Your Word. Equip me with a full measure of Your Spirit that I may understand and apply the truths of Your sacred Word, first to myself, and then also to the hearts and lives of these children. Bless my feeble efforts, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Philistines - A nation of people who lived in the Gaza Strip area of Israel. God used this nation, as He did other nations, to chasten His people during their apostasy.

Dagon - The god of the Philistines that is believed to have been in the form of a fish (having the head and hands of a man).

Nazarite - Special laws governing a Nazarite can be found in Numbers 6. Usually a person became a Nazarite for a limited period of time (connected with a vow). He was not to eat or drink any fruit of the vine, including raisins! No razor was to touch his head.

OUTER AIM

Samson, a man blessed by God with tremendous strength, is used by God as a judge to free Israel from their enemy the Philistines.

INNER AIM

Just as God used even the prideful Samson to accomplish His plan for Israel, so He uses each of us, even in our weakness, to accomplish His plan for mankind.

BACKGROUND

The account of Samson is a good reminder of how honest the Bible is. Rather than painting him as a flawless character, we find in Samson the same sinful flesh that infects all people. Of special note to anyone teaching this story is the obvious fact of Samson's immorality. More amazing than the feats of strength which he performed with the Lord's power is the fact that the Lord chose to use Samson as His instrument. Though the children may ask, one cannot justify the sinful actions that are so evident in Samson's life; one can merely use the opportunity to teach about God's grace and mercy.

Points of Interest.

The similarities between the life of Samson and the life of Jesus are actually quite amazing. When he appeared on the scene, for example, Samson came as a savior of his nation. His birth, like the birth of Jesus, was announced by an angel. His name meant "little sun," because in the darkened days in which he lived and worked, his efforts would shine like the sun. Jesus is called, "The Sun of Righteousness" who came with healing in his wings.

With the Spirit of God upon him, He had extraordinary strength and did mighty things. Jesus is the almighty Son of God who has power over all. This man worked alone to bring deliverance from the Philistines who troubled Israel. Jesus had to tread the winepress alone in saving sinners. One day, this man met a lion and killed it with his bare hands. Jesus met the devil, the roaring lion who seeks to devour us, and Jesus

overpowered him. When this man slaughtered scores of Philistines they came after him with their army. They could do nothing against him until one of his own countrymen delivered him into their hands. Jesus allowed His enemies, fellow Jews, to capture Him. He died, and rose victoriously.

This man had been bound with two new ropes by his own brethren and was delivered to the Philistines. At the mere sight of him his enemies broke forth in celebration. But when he arrived in their camp, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and the ropes became like threads. Picking up the jawbone of an ass, he killed 1,000 of their mightiest men. When he finished, he was fatigued and overcome by thirst. He cried to God for help and God caused water to flow out of a hollow place. Jesus, emerged from the three hours of darkness when Satan and all the powers of hell assailed Him. When God cursed Him with the sins of mankind. Exhausted from the conflict, He cried out "I thirst."

This man was betrayed for 1100 pieces of silver; Jesus was betrayed for 30. This man was tortured and ridiculed, his eyes were poked out, but in his death he destroyed thousands of people who had come to mock his God. Jesus died in His saving work, but thereby accomplished our salvation. (comparisons adapted from an unknown source)

Chapter 13

The roller coaster ride of the Israelites' unfaithfulness hits another low. For a period of 40 years they are enslaved to the tiny country of Philistia. When the time is right, the Angel of the LORD appears to Manoah's wife. Though barren, she will give birth to a special child who is to be a Nazarite all his days. The promise is reaffirmed to both Manoah and his wife. During the sacrifice that follows, they realize that they have spoken with none other than the LORD Himself.

Chapter 14

Unfortunately, Samson seeks a wife from outside of his own people. He also rejects the good counsel of his parents and wants to marry a woman from Timnah. Verse 4 explains that God would even use this sinful decision of Samson to accomplish His own good purposes (do not suppose that God was responsible for Samson's sinful choice).

Our first acquaintance with his unusual gift of strength comes as the family is going toward Timnah. A lion springs upon Samson and he single-handedly tears it apart as though it were a young goat. He mentions nothing of the incident to his parents, who, perhaps, were lagging behind.

The carcass of this lion plays a role in the story which follows. The honey he finds in it becomes the basis for a riddle which he uses to challenge the friends of his Philistine bride. When unable to solve the riddle by themselves, they use his bride-to-be to solicit the answer for them. Despite his physical strength, Samson reveals himself as a man of great weakness. Losing his bet, he kills 30 Philistines for the clothes they are wearing.

Chapter 15

When Samson's first bride-to-be is given to his best man, he retaliates by setting fire to the Philistine grainfields. When the Philistines retaliate against Samson's would-be father-in-law and his ex-bride, he turns his wrath against them with a great slaughter.

Rather than viewing him as a savior of their nation, his own countrymen come to arrest him and to turn him over to the Philistines. Bound by two new ropes, he is delivered into their hands. Suddenly, the Spirit of the Lord is upon him; with the jawbone of a donkey, he kills 1,000 Philistines.

Almost incidentally, the Bible indicates that Samson judged Israel for a period of 20 years.

Chapter 16

Rather than praising God for the special blessings he has received, Samson squanders his gift with a life of sin. After recording Samson's incident with a prostitute in Gaza, the Bible directs us to the situation that will cost him his strength and his life: his relationship with Delilah.

It seems odd to us that Samson didn't catch on to Delilah's continued questioning over the source of his strength. Evidently, he felt invincible, as our flesh often does. Finally, he crossed the line. His strength left him. The source of his strength wasn't simply his long hair - but rather, the blessing of the Lord. Once deprived of this, he was subject to mistreatment by his enemies.

Samson's life ends as a testimony to his faith and God's grace (cf. Hebrews 11). The Lord heard his prayer and granted his final request. In his death Samson destroyed more Philistines than during his lifetime.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, just as You gave the special gift of strength for Samson to use in Your service, so you have given each of us special abilities that can be used in Your work. Help us to develop these gifts according to Your will and may we ever use them to glorify Your name. Thank you, above all, for the gift of forgiveness and eternal life. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Most children are best acquainted with the story of Samson and Delilah. Nevertheless, teachers should read the entire account in Scripture for their own information and should share (with discretion) parts of the entire story with their students.

APPLICATIONS

1. Samson's story is a good reminder that we shouldn't take chances spiritually.
The most dangerous time in a Christian's life is when he thinks he is strong enough to overcome temptation on his own.
2. Bad company corrupts good morals. How important is it to choose friends (and especially one's mate) wisely? The story of Samson provides a timely lesson.
3. For the older students especially, this lesson provides an opportunity to talk about using the right criteria for choosing a husband or wife.
4. Samson disregarded his parents' advice - to his own harm. Parents have the God-given responsibility to guide and instruct their young, teaching them how to make crucially important choices.

5. It is never too late, in this life, to turn back to God. God is always waiting for His wayward children to repent and is ready to forgive. Cf. The Prodigal Son
6. Do you sometimes feel you can not do anything for God? Samson was powerful, yet he was spiritually weak. God used Samson to accomplish good for Israel. God will use each of us as His tools to accomplish His will. Don't fight against God in this matter, but look for opportunities to serve Him.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

2 Cor. 12:9 My strength is made perfect in weakness.

Psalms 130:4 There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.

Middle any of the above and...

Genesis 8:21 The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.

1 Cor. 10:12 Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

1 Cor. 10:13 God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.

Psalms 130:4 There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.

Upper any of the above and...

1 Cor. 10:12-13 Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Matthew 15:19 Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies.

Romans 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

HYMN CHOICES

"Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus" TLH #409

"I Walk in Danger All the Way" TLH #413