



LESSON 12

God uses Samson to deliver Israel

JUDGES 13:1-16:31



God delivers His people even when they do not deserve it.



“Then Samson called to the LORD and said, ‘O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes’” (Judg 16:28).

Supporting Truths Objectives

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God delivers by His grace. 2. God delivers with power. 3. God delivers according to His sovereign plan. 4. Even though God delivers, those who misuse God's gifts will be miserable. 5. Jesus is the perfect deliverer. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. List three reasons why Samson and Israel did not deserve to be delivered. 2. List three times God gave great strength to Samson. 3. Explain how God used Samson's sinful desires to bring trouble to the Philistines. 4. Describe how Samson used God's gifts to pursue his own desires, and how this led to anger, suffering, and death. 5. Compare and contrast Samson as deliverer with Jesus as deliverer. |
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STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Summary

Samson is the last deliverer in the book of Judges. During his time, Israel did not even bother asking God for deliverance, and Samson used his incredible God-given strength to fulfill his own desires. While this led to ongoing slavery for Israel and to misery and death for Samson, it did not prevent God from accomplishing His purpose. God even used Samson's sinful desires to fight powerfully against the Philistines, eventually using Samson to destroy the Philistine idol and all the Philistine leaders.

Spotlight on the Gospel

God had chosen Israel as the nation through whom all nations would be restored to God, so despite Israel's sin, God kept rescuing them. And through Israel came a deliverer much greater than Samson. Like Samson, Jesus was born to an obscure family in a miraculous way. Like Samson, Jesus' greatest victory came through His own death. But unlike Samson, Jesus never sinned, and He brings complete and unbroken rest to those He came to deliver.

LAST WEEK



God uses Gideon to
deliver Israel *Genesis*
Judges 6:1–8:34

THIS WEEK



God uses Samson to
deliver Israel
Judges 13:1–16:31

NEXT WEEK



God's sovereignty in
the book of Ruth
Ruth 1:1–4:22

POSSESSION

Lesson Commentary

God delivers His people even when they do not deserve it.

The story of Samson is the last of six cycles of sin and deliverance in Judges. With each cycle, Israel became more and more sinful and divided, and Israel's judges became less and less godly. As the final judge, Samson was the most sinful. Although greatly gifted by God, Samson abused these gifts. Instead of devoting himself to Israel's deliverance, Samson let his passions control him. As a result, Samson lived a life of anger and disappointment, and his last great deed brought about his own death. While Samson's failure is a warning, the greater lesson is that God delivers His people even when they do not deserve it, even when they do not care to be delivered.

God set Samson apart to deliver Israel (13:1–25)

Like previous stories in Judges, this one again starts with Israel doing evil (Judg 13:1). So again, God brought an enemy against them, this time the Philistines. But unlike previous times (3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6–7; 10:10), Israel did not even cry out to God for help.

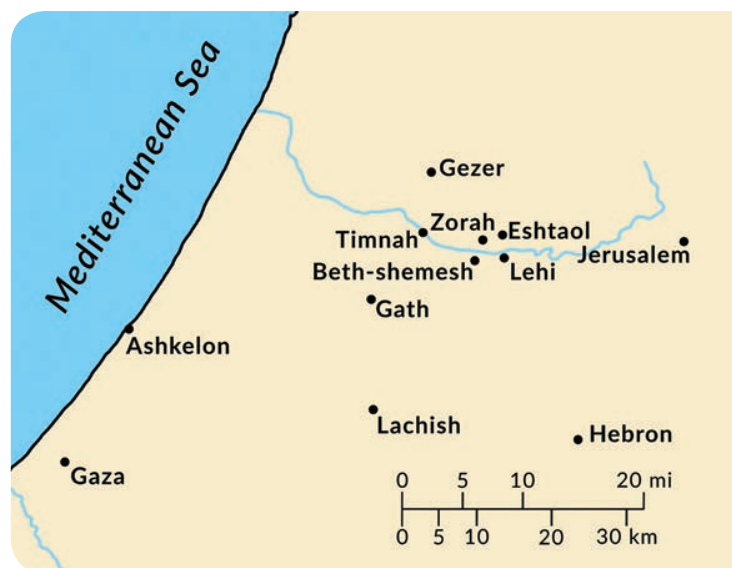


THINK ABOUT IT

This is the same pattern God would follow years later when He sent His Son, the Great Deliverer, whose birth was humble, miraculous, and planned long ago (1 Pet 1:20).

Despite Israel's unwillingness to cry out for deliverance, God acted in a powerful way (13:2–5). By choosing a child not yet even conceived, God showed that His choice is something planned long in advance, not dependent on the moment. By choosing a nameless, barren woman, God showed that He is not dependent on human help.

As one set apart for special service, this child was to be a Nazirite for life. Normally, a **Nazirite** was someone who took a vow to be specially set apart for God for a specific period of time (Num 6). A Nazirite was not to cut his hair (Judg 13:5), touch a dead body (Num 6:6), or drink alcohol or anything from grapes (Judg 13:4).



These outward actions indicated an inner dedication to God. This is what Samson was called to be for life, as one set apart to be Israel's deliverer.

When the angel of the LORD went up in the flame from their altar, Samson's parents realized that He was the LORD Himself. Manoah was afraid, and his wife was hopeful, both appropriate responses to the presence of God (Ps 2:11).

God gave sinful Samson power to deliver Israel (14:1–15:20)

When the Spirit of the LORD came on Samson (Judg 13:25), he did not go out to deliver Israel as the other judges had (6:34; 11:29). Instead of fighting the Philistines, he wanted to marry a Philistine (14:1–2). Samson was no better than the rest of Israel, doing what was right in his own eyes (14:3; 21:25). Although his parents were upset, God was secretly at work, using Samson's sinful desires to accomplish God's saving purpose (14:4).

While on the way to Timnah, God used a lion attack to show Samson what He could do through him (14:5–6). The Spirit of the LORD protected him and gave him great strength, but in the end Samson was still ruled by his physical passions, pursuing the woman (14:7) and eating honey from the dead lion's body (14:8–9).

THINK ABOUT IT

Believers are called not to allow their passions rule over them (Rom 6:12).



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Still, God used Samson's weakness to accomplish His will. He used Samson's fiancée to get the answer to the riddle out of him (14:17). Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Samson in his anger and he killed 30 Philistines (14:19). He used Samson's rekindled love for his Philistine bride to provoke Samson again, so that he burned the Philistine fields at Timnah (15:1–5) and slaughtered many of the Philistines there (15:6–8). Samson was abusing his gifts for his own vengeance (15:11b), but God was using him to destroy the enemies of God's people.

Samson was sinful, but the people of Judah were no better (15:9–11). Judah no longer resembled the tribe that had boldly led the conquest of the land (1:2–20). They preferred to remain slaves of the Philistines rather than risk a fight against them. Because of this, they treated Samson as their enemy, not their deliverer, cowardly handing him over to the Philistines (15:12–13).

Despite Samson's selfish motives and Judah's cowardice, God continued to defeat the enemies of His people. The Spirit of the LORD again took control of Samson, empowering him to kill 1,000 men with a donkey's jawbone (15:14–17). God was indeed making fools of the Philistines, since He promised to curse those who curse His people (Gen 12:3).

Although Samson spoke of being God's servant, he took credit for the victory himself, and he remained focused on his own physical needs (Judg 15:18). So the chapter ends with a phrase that normally marks the end of a judge's life: "so he judged Israel . . ." (15:20; 10:2, 3–5; 12:7, 9–10, 11–12, 14–15). While the rule of other judges produced rest from enemies, Samson's produced none.

God continued to give sinful Samson power to deliver Israel (16:1–31)

But God was not done with Samson. Again He used Samson's sinful desire for a Philistine woman (16:1). When the Philistines tried to capture him in Gaza, God used Samson to humiliate them once again. Samson

carried the city gate, the two gateposts, and the crossbar from Gaza to Hebron about 40 miles away. With its thick cedar wood and metal plating, this gate would have been incredibly heavy. Certainly, Samson's feat was not done by human strength.

Yet, Samson still continued to pursue his own desires, falling for yet a third woman, Delilah (16:4). She eventually extracted the truth of his strength, and for a massive amount of silver she betrayed him to the Philistines (16:5, 20). Samson had taken the LORD's power for granted for so long that he did not even realize when the LORD had left him.

Still, God had one final plan for Samson. Although Samson desired personal vengeance, he did acknowledge that his strength came from the LORD (16:28; Heb 11:32). So empowering Samson once more, God used him to strike a devastating blow against the idolatrous Philistines. They thought their idol had saved them from Samson (Judg 16:23–24), but God demonstrated the weakness of their false god. He killed 3,000 Philistines in Dagon's temple, crushing their idol and wiping out their national leadership.

The story of Samson teaches us that despite human sin, God is still in control and still wins the victory. He continues to deliver His people, even when they don't deserve it. We have an even greater deliverer than Samson. Like Samson, Christ's death brought defeat to His enemies, but unlike Samson, Christ lived and died without sin, and His rule did not end when He died. Because of His perfect sacrifice and victorious life, those who believe in Him are richly gifted to accomplish their God-given purpose (Matt 28:18–20; John 15:16a; Col 1:10–12; 1 Pet 2:9–12).

THINK ABOUT IT

If we squander those gifts, we can make our own lives miserable, but our human inadequacy will never overshadow God's unconquerable victory.



Lesson Outline

God delivers His people even when they do not deserve it.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God chose Samson to save Israel from the Philistines (13:1–25).
2. God gave sinful Samson power to fight against the Philistines (14:1–15:20).
3. God gave sinful Samson power to kill 3,000 Philistines (16:1–31).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God set Samson apart to deliver Israel (13:1–25).
 - God used the Philistines to punish Israel for again doing evil (13:1).
 - God caused a Nazirite deliverer to be born to a barren woman (13:2–5).
 - God confirmed Samson's calling with miraculous signs (13:6–23).
 - The Spirit of the LORD began to direct Samson (13:24–25).
2. God gave sinful Samson power to deliver Israel (14:1–15:20).
 - God used Samson's lust to make trouble for the Philistines (14:1–4).
 - The Spirit of the LORD protected Samson from a lion (14:5–9).
 - The Spirit of the LORD used Samson's anger to defeat the Philistines (14:10–15:8).
 - The people of Judah did not want to be delivered from the Philistines (15:9–13).
 - The Spirit of the LORD used Samson to kill 1,000 Philistines with a jawbone (15:14–17).
 - Samson led Israel for 20 years, but they had no rest (15:20).
3. God continued to give sinful Samson power to deliver Israel (16:1–31).
 - Again Samson got into trouble because of his sinful desire for a woman (16:1).
 - Samson escaped by carrying away the city gates (16:2–3).
 - Samson gave in to Delilah's pleas and was captured (16:4–22).
 - The Spirit of the LORD used Samson to destroy 3,000 idolatrous Philistines (16:23–31).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. What was Samson born to do?**
Samson was born to save Israel from the Philistines.
- 2. How did Samson get into trouble with the Philistines?**
He fell in love with a Philistine woman.
- 3. When the Philistines tried to capture him the first time, what did Samson do?**
Samson killed 1,000 of them with a donkey's jawbone.
- 4. After Delilah caused Samson to be captured, what did Samson do to the Philistines?**
Samson killed 3,000 leaders of the Philistines by knocking down their temple.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. Did Israel ask God to deliver them from the Philistines?**
No. They never repented. They had become used to being oppressed because of their sin.
- 2. When Samson saw God give him power to kill the lion, did Samson choose to use his power to save Israel?**
No. Samson decided to marry a Philistine woman instead.
- 3. How did God use Samson's sinful love for the first woman to deliver Israel?**
The first woman gave Samson's companions the answer to his riddle, so Samson got angry and killed 30 Philistines. When she married someone else, Samson got angry again, burned their fields, and killed many more.
- 4. What did the people of Judah think about Samson killing the Philistines?**
They were not happy. They did not want Samson to cause trouble for them with the Philistines.
- 5. How did God use Samson's sinful love for the second woman?**
When the Philistines tried to catch him with the second woman, Samson miraculously moved their city gates.
- 6. How did God use Samson's sinful love for the third woman, Delilah?**
After catching him with the third woman, Samson knocked down the Philistine temple and killed 3,000 Philistine leaders.
- 7. What does this story show us about God?**
God is able to use even people's sin to bring about His purposes. God delivers even when people do not deserve it.
- 8. Samson ignored his mission. What mission do Christians have?**
They are called to display God's glory by keeping away from sin (1 Pet 2:9–12). They are called to teach others to follow Jesus (Matt 28:19–20).

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH

Bring in various weights or heavy objects, and allow the children (under careful supervision) to lift them to see how heavy they are. Tell the children that today they will learn about a man with supernatural strength. His name was Samson. He could lift huge weights with no problem. He was so strong that he could kill a lion with his bare hands. Have the children show their muscles, and ask how they got their muscles. They got them from God. Samson was very strong because God gave him his strength.

A PROMISE

Ask the children whether they ever have made a promise (to take out the trash, to obey an older brother or sister, to clean their room, etc.). Ask them if it was easy or hard to keep that promise. Talk about how important it is to keep promises completely and not half-heartedly. Talk about the promise that Samson had to make, the Nazirite vow. This was a special promise to serve God. Tell them that Samson's promise was not just a promise to another person, but was a promise made to God.



ILLUSTRATE

CHAIN OF EVENTS

The events in Samson's life clearly showed the hand of God over every detail. Use various pictures or toys as visual aids during the lesson—for example, a bone, gate, lion, honey, a Barbie doll (to represent Samson's wives), scissors, and rope. Explain that God was in control of every detail of Samson's life, and He is in control of every detail in your life, too.

JAWBONE

Bring in a donkey's jawbone (or another animal) to use as a visual aid during the lesson.



APPLY

SAMSON LOSES HIS STRENGTH

See *Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1*.

Materials: Craft sheet, toilet-paper tubes, brown yarn, fabric, pipe cleaners, toothpicks, puffballs or marshmallows, tape, scissors, and markers.

Directions: Have the students glue fabric around the bottom of their tubes (to represent Samson's clothing). Have them draw a simple smiling face on the side of the tube. Tape pieces of yarn to the inside of the tube for hair. Punch holes in the sides with the point of a pencil, and push a pipe cleaner through it to form arms. Make a barbell from a toothpick with a puffball or a marshmallow pushed onto each end. Fold the end of one arm around the barbell. Glue the verse on.

Samson Loses His Strength
See *Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1*



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AGES 6–8



WHO'S THE STRONGEST?

Hold a push-up contest and crown a winner for the boys and a winner for the girls. Tell the class that today we're going to learn about someone who had incredible, God-given strength.

NAZIRITE VOWS

The Hebrew term behind the word Nazirite literally means “to separate.” A Nazirite separated himself to the Lord by separating himself from certain things such as wine, touching dead bodies, and cutting the hair (Num 6:1–8). A person wishing to show dedication and devotion to God could choose to take a Nazirite vow for a fixed period of time. During this time, he would be regarded as holy to the Lord. Samson was a Nazirite from birth and was supposed to live his entire life as a Nazirite.



ROTTEN FRUIT

Bring in some good, ripe fruit and some old, rotten fruit. Fruit is good if it is used before it goes bad. But it is nasty if it is not used when it should be. Explain that this is the same with the gifts and talents God gives us. Samson did not use his gifts the way God called him to use them, so his life became rotten.

ALL FOR GOD'S GLORY

Talk about the special abilities God gave Samson. Samson should have used these abilities to glorify God. Each of us has been given abilities that can be used to glorify God. Choose children to come forward and describe how each of the following abilities can be used to glorify God: public speaking, writing, singing, physical strength, cooking, etc. Also talk about how God can use us just the way we are, and how that brings the glory to Him, not us.



SAMSON DESTROYS THE PHILISTINE HOUSE

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, tan construction paper, white cardstock, glue, tape, scissors, and crayons.

Directions: Have students color and cut out pictures from the craft sheet. Form a Philistine house with the back wall, roof, and pillars from cardstock (as shown below). Tape or glue all pieces to a tan sheet of construction paper (as shown below). Glue on the verse.

Samson Destroys the Philistine House
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

LOOKS GOOD

Ask the children what the following have in common: Eve and the fruit, Lot and the green valley, Esau and the stew, Israel and the golden calf, and Judas and the 30 coins. Answer: these people all got into trouble because they wanted something they could see and feel that looked good to them. Samson did the same thing: he wanted what looked good to him (women and honey) instead of what God wanted him to do.

INCREASE YOUR STRENGTH, PART 1

Create a rope-and-pulley system that allows children to easily lift a 25-pound weight (or whatever size weight would be difficult for them to lift without the pulley system). Before class, allow the children to take turns lifting the weight by pulling on the rope.



ILLUSTRATE

KICKING AND SCREAMING

Explain that God saving Israel from the Philistines was like a parent pulling a child out of the street. The child is kicking and screaming because he does not want to get out of the street, but the parent pulls him out anyway, just in time to save him from getting run over.

INCREASE YOUR STRENGTH, PART 2

See Part 1 in “Introduce” section. During the lesson, cut the rope (or remove the pulley) when you talk about Samson’s hair being cut. Ask several children to come to the front of the class and try to lift the weight without God’s strength (without the pulley). Use this activity to demonstrate how Samson lost his supernatural strength when his hair was cut.



APPLY

DEDICATED TO GOD

Discuss what it means to be dedicated to God. In today’s lesson, we learned that Samson was dedicated to God; this means that he was specially set apart to serve God. Explain to the children that when a person is saved, he also is specially set apart to serve God. Ask them for examples of how believers can show their dedication to God. Then ask them whether God expects them to be perfect once they are saved. Explain that when a person is saved, he does not become perfect, but his desires change so that he wants to obey God. God knows we are not perfect, but He does expect us to show our dedication to Him by honoring and glorifying Him in what we do and say.