

New Vision

Minor League • Samson • Judges 13–16 • 04/22/2018

Main Point

Samson was a strong man with a weak will

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Getting to know me:

We see that God gifted Samson with super natural strength. If you had this type of strength, what is the first thing you would do?

We saw that Samson was a strong man with a weak will. What is a food or desert where your will gets weak?

How would you define the word potential?

Who is an example of maximizing great potential? Who is an example of squandered potential?

We can think of many people, either in our lives or in our culture, who had great potential. Some, like Lebron James, have lived up to their potential. Others fizzle out and fail to reach the level their talent could have produced. Samson came into the world with great potential, but his pride, recklessness, and lust made him his own worst enemy.

Into the Bible

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Have A volunteer read Judges 13:1-7

Are birth announcements common in the Bible? Who else had their births announced?

What would you expect from someone whose birth was announced by an angel?

What would be difficult about a Nazirite vow? Why? What type of person is most likely to be successful with such a vow?

Birth announcements are rare occasions in Scripture. Ishmael was announced to Hagar, John the Baptist to Zechariah, and Jesus to both Mary and Joseph. Such a rare occasion and important announcement would typically bring with it great expectation. Samson came into the world with great expectations and great potential. He was called to be a Nazirite—not to touch anything dead and not to cut his hair. Such a vow required great discipline and careful attention. Nazirites had to depend on God and not on themselves.

Have a volunteer read Judges 14:1-10.

How has your weak will affected you and those you love?

Why did Samson want the Philistine woman?

In this passage we see Samson demonstrating attitudes that make strong men weak.

Read Deuteronomy 7:1-3. What had God commanded the Israelites about taking a spouse? Why do you think God commanded this?

What does Samson's decision to marry the Philistine woman reveal about his heart?

Samson wanted the Philistine woman because she caught his eye. Samson was led by his desires and made decisions as though the rules did not apply to him. Samson knew better than to take a Philistine woman as a wife, but his pride led him to do what he wanted.

Why didn't Samson follow the commands of God? Do you think Samson thought he was in control of the situation? Why or why not?

How can we discern when the Spirit of the Lord is directing us to a specific task or ministry?

As Christians, we are blessed of God and have been given spiritual gifts and opportunities. God expects us to use our abilities and spiritual gifts for His service. The Holy Spirit lives in us and empowers us to accomplish His mission in the world.

When did you first recognize the Spirit of the Lord directing you to serve Him with your gifts? How did you recognize it was the Lord empowering you, and not yourself?

Paul pointed to Christ's love for others and His humble service to God as examples for his Philippian friends. Unlike Samson, we are to live with an attitude of humility as we relate to others. With a healthy, balanced

view of ourselves, we neither think too highly nor too little of ourselves. In this way, we remain usable in God's kingdom.

Application

We see that Samson's life never brought him satisfaction. Where have you found satisfaction in life?

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What could you change so your prayers focus more on God's interests and goals than on your own interests and goals?

How will you "remember" the Lord as you fulfill your obligations at work, at home, and at church? What will you do to keep Him at the center of your decisions?

What decision are you making that our group can support with prayers for humility and wisdom?

Commentary

Judges 13:1–16:19

13:2-5. The opening of Samson's story, There was a certain man, exactly matches that of Samuel, inviting comparison of these two sons born to formerly barren women. The name of his father, Manoah, means "rest," which is what Israel lacked. A Nazirite made a vow to abstain from wine and other alcoholic beverages, to remain separate from corpses and other sources of defilement, and to leave his hair uncut (Num 6). Since the dietary restriction not to... eat anything unclean should have been observed by all Israelites all the time, it suggests that general standards of holiness were low during this period. The baby that she would bear would be called to begin to save Israel from the power of the Philistines, though others would finish the work. The Lord's design for Samson paralleled His design for Israel. Israel was intended to be a holy people, because their Lord was holy (Lv 11:45). Their subsequent history and lack of faithfulness to their calling was matched by Samson's career as he disobeyed every single one of the vows made on his behalf. From the womb on, Samson is a picture of Israel—chosen for holiness, but defiled by his sinful actions.

14:1-2. After Samson's empowering by the Spirit in 13:25, his next action should have been calling out the Lord's people to battle the Philistines. Instead, he wanted to marry a Philistine woman whom he saw in Timnah. This city was only six miles west of Zorah, Samson's hometown (13:2), but it was in the hands of the Philistines. To get there involved going down, both physically and spiritually.

14:3-4. Samson's parents asked him in vain if there were no women among his relatives whom he could marry. Intermarriage with the Philistines was a denial of Samson's calling as a Nazirite, and his choice of a bride contrasts strongly with the "ideal" wife of Othniel, the first judge, who married Caleb's daughter.

Samson said of the woman he “saw” (v. 1), I want her, which is literally, “she is right in my eyes.” In this he represented Israel, where each citizen “did whatever he wanted” (17:6; 21:25), literally, “what was right in his eyes.” Yet the Lord would use even Samson’s sinful desires to accomplish His purposes. The text literally says his father and his mother did not know that she was from the Lord.

14:5-6. On another occasion, Samson was going down to Timnah with his parents when a young lion rushed at him. This attack happened as he came to the vineyards of Timnah, an odd place for a Nazirite to be, since he was required to avoid all contact with grape products. The ease with which Samson disposed of the lion raises questions about why he had not yet begun to dispense with the enemies of the Lord—the Philistines.

16:1-3. The opening verse parallels 14:1. Samson went to a Philistine town and saw a woman. Like the history of Israel, the spiral in Samson’s life is downwards. This time he didn’t want to marry her, he just wanted to sleep with her. Gaza was the most distant city of the Philistines from Samson’s home, which symbolizes how far from God Samson had gone. When the Philistines heard that he was there, they surrounded the city and waited for him at the only exit, the city gate. Yet such was Samson’s enormous strength that the Philistines were unable to trap him. His vast show of strength in uprooting the city gate and carrying it roughly 40 miles uphill to the mountain overlooking Hebron heightens the irony of his subsequent weakness in the hands of a woman.

Judges 16:4-5,15-17

Verses 15-17. Three times Delilah asked Samson the source of his strength, and three times he lied to her (see 16:6-14). After each lie, she actually did to Samson what he said would sap his strength. He was astonishingly foolish not to realize that if he revealed the true source of his strength, she would betray him.

Delilah wasn’t about to stop trying. She nagged him day after day and pleaded with him until she wore him out. We can only assume that the combination of her nagging, his obsessing over her, and his bloated sense of being invincible made Samson utterly reckless. Not cutting his hair was the one aspect of his Nazirite vow—perhaps the only aspect—that he had kept faithfully. (See Explore More: Nazirite, below.) God continued to sustain his strength so long as Samson upheld that requirement. Samson evidently knew this to be the case. By continuing to give himself to Delilah, however, he lost the will to maintain even this minimal obedience.