

SAMSON AND THE PHILISTINES

Judges 13-16



The Israelites again did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord, so He handed them over to the Philistines for 40 years. The angel of the Lord appeared to a man from the tribe of Dan and his wife. The angel gave them special instructions to prepare for the birth of their son. The angel also said, “Never cut his hair, because he will be set apart to save Israel from the Philistines.” The man and his wife had a son just as the angel said. They named their son Samson.

When Samson grew up, he decided to marry a Philistine woman. Samson and his parents went to meet her. When he went to speak with her, a young lion came roaring at Samson. The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on him, and he tore the lion apart with his bare hands. The Lord made Samson very strong! Once, Samson used the jawbone of a donkey to defeat 1,000 Philistines. The Philistines feared Samson’s strength.

Later, Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah. The Philistines wanted to know why Samson was so strong. They decided to pay Delilah to betray Samson.

Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me, where does your great strength come from?”

He replied, “If someone ties me up with seven fresh bowstrings, I will become

weak like any other man.” When he was sleeping, Delilah tied him up with seven fresh bowstrings and called the Philistines to ambush him. He snapped the bowstrings as if they were yarn. Delilah was upset, because Samson had lied to her.

Twice more, Delilah asked how Samson could be defeated, and he told her two different lies. Delilah was very upset, and Samson finally told her the truth: “My hair has never been cut because I am set apart for God. If my head is shaved, I will be weak.” She had his head shaved while he was sleeping, and the Philistines captured him.

The Philistines rejoiced and thanked their false god that Samson had been defeated. They chained him between two pillars that supported a Philistine temple. Samson prayed, “God, please strengthen me once more so that I may defeat the Philistines.” He pushed against the pillars with all his might, and Samson and all the leaders of the Philistines died as the temple collapsed.

Christ Connection: Samson’s great strength came from God alone. He had no power to defeat the Philistines on his own. We cannot please God on our own. Through faith in Jesus, people are saved from sin and receive the Holy Spirit, who helps them live to please God.



1 WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

• **Who is the strongest person you know? What makes him or her strong?**

2 SESSION STARTER

OPTION 1: STRENGTH CONTEST



Invite kids to spread out around the room. Provide each with a Bible or a water bottle. Tell kids that they will compete in a strength contest. Challenge kids to march in place and raise both arms over their heads while holding the Bible or water bottle. After only a few kids remain, challenge kids to complete as many push ups as they can. Congratulate kids for trying their best.

SAY “ Was it hard to challenge your strength in this way? Through our story today we will learn how a judge named **SAMSON LEARNED THAT STRENGTH COMES FROM GOD ALONE**. We’ll see how God gave Samson incredible strength to defeat Israel’s enemy, the Philistines. ”

OPTION 2: SAMSON'S HAIR

Provide each kid with a piece of cardstock, markers, and five or six strands of yarn. Invite kids to draw the head and shoulders of a man. Once kids have finished drawing, direct to punch a hole at the top of Samson’s head for his hair. Place two hole reinforcement stickers, one on the front and one on the back of the paper. Then, challenge kids to take the strands of yarn and string them through the hole, tying a knot on the back side and at the bottom of the strands. Demonstrate how kids can make Samson have long hair and then pull the yarn through the back side so he has short hair.

SAY “ God chose Samson to be set apart to serve Him. Because of this, Samson was told to never cut his hair. In today’s story, we will learn what happened after Samson’s hair was cut. ”



1 **Distribute the Learner Guides - Use the front page to help RETELL THE BIBLE STORY**

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today, we are going to hear the story of Samson and the Philistines. Through our Bible story we will see how **SAMSON LEARNED THAT STRENGTH COMES FROM GOD ALONE**. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read from Judges 13–16.

HAVE THE STUDENTS ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN THEIR LEARNER GUIDES > YOU CAN DO IT TOGETHER OR INDIVIDUALLY.

• **What does this story teach us about God?**

God had given Samson strength so that he could rescue the Israelites from the Philistines. While Samson was far from perfect or obedient to God's commands for a Nazirite, **God was merciful to give Samson strength once again so he could defeat the Philistines**. God's mercy and grace are not dependent on our performance. Rather, God shows grace to sinners because of His faithful love.

• **Why did Samson tell Delilah the truth about where his strength came from?** After Delilah asked many times where Samson's strength came from, he finally told her the truth. Samson knew God had called him to be set apart and had commanded him to never cut his hair. **But his desire to please a woman rather than God, led to his downfall**. Samson did not have the power to defeat the Philistines or please God on his own. We cannot please God on our own. Through faith in Jesus, people are saved from sin and receive the Holy Spirit, who helps them live to please God.

2

Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.



THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

1 THESE QUESTIONS ARE IN THE LEARNER GUIDE: THINK ABOUT THE STORY

- How can we hold on to our faith when we make mistakes?
- Why is having faith in Jesus the only way to please God?

2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Judges 16. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Judges 16:28. Remind preteens that Samson made many mistakes in his life, but God still used him to deliver the Israelites from their enemy, the Philistines. God was merciful to Israel and to Samson even though they had sinned. Samson was only able to do this because God was with him. Discuss how the Bible tells us that we all sin, but if we have trusted Jesus and follow Him, God will use us for His glory. Like Samson, we will never be able to do anything for God in our own strength, but when we rely on the Holy Spirit, we can live in ways that please God and bring Him glory.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Judges 16:28 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. How can we be set apart to live for the Lord?

Remind kids that Samson was set apart from birth to be a Nazirite. Tell kids that God had a specific plan for Samson's life. Discuss how God's plan for His people, those who have trusted in Jesus, means they will live in ways that show what God is like. Tell kids that believers rely on the Holy Spirit to live in ways that please God and glorify Him. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Gal. 5:22-23.)

2. Why is it sometimes hard to realize we cannot do things in our own power?

Discuss how pride often gets in the way of allowing God to work in and through us. Anytime we try to do things in our own strength, we will quickly realize that we can only accomplish what God calls us to through His strength. In fact, God's strength is on display when we are weak. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 2 Cor. 12:9-10.)

3. What does it mean to walk by the Spirit?

Tell kids that when people are saved, the Holy Spirit comes to live in them. When Christians walk by the Spirit, they surrender to God, following where He leads. Discuss how the Holy Spirit changes believers' hearts to desire to live for God and gives believers power to obey God. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Gal. 5:16.)

BIG PICTURE QUESTION

What is repentance?

Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.



THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

1 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to 2 Chronicles 7:14. Lead them in reading the key passage aloud together. Distribute one sheet of cardstock to each kid. Challenge kids to write out the key passage on the cardstock. Encourage kids to be creative as they write by using bubble letters, cursive, etc. Then direct kids to add drawings or stickers to their paper. Next, laminate each sheet creating a placemat kids can use at their tables at home. If a laminator is not available, cover each sheet in clear contact paper.

2 PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, praising God for allowing His strength to be displayed through our weakness.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

BY FAITH

Prompt kids to think about specific characteristics we believe about God. Then invite kids to share their ideas and write them on a dry erase board. For example, you may write words like *good*, *merciful*, *powerful*, etc. Then choose a volunteer to read Hebrews 11:6 aloud.

Invite kids to discuss how someone comes to faith in Jesus. Then walk through the Gospel Plan Poster. Prompt kids to discuss ways they can share their faith or invite kids to think about whether or not they have trusted in Jesus to save them.

Remind kids that Samson's great strength came from God alone. He had no power to defeat the Philistines on his own. Tell kids that we cannot please God on our own. God requires absolute holiness. When we trust in Jesus, His righteousness is given to us and God sees us as having the righteousness of Christ. Through faith in Jesus, people are saved from sin and receive the Holy Spirit, who helps them live to please God.