

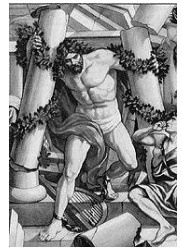
Old Testament Stories

“Samson” (Part 2)

Judges 14-16

☞ What would you like to praise God for today?

☞ Pray for God’s guidance as you study



1. Growing up what friend of yours were your parents not too thrilled about? Did you persist in seeing him or her?
2. Why did Samson’s parent’s object to his choice for a wife? (Read Judges 3:5,6; Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-4)
3. In touching a dead body (v. 8-9) and in throwing a drinking party (v. 10) what two Nazirite vows is Samson breaking (see Numbers 6:1-8)? How does Samson’s cavalier attitude toward holy vows fit in with these times that Israel had no king (Judges 21:25)?
4. What does verse 4 tell you about the providence or sovereignty of God?
5. Apparently Samson never married again after his first marriage disaster. The next significant love relationship recorded is his infamous union with Delilah. What did Delilah and Samson have going for them as a couple? What was working against them?
6. What are some possible reasons why Samson did not answer Delilah truthfully until well after her fourth query? Why did he finally give in?
7. Most compromises begin as a simple tempting suggestion. What can you learn from the life of Samson and these verses regarding playing with temptation in your own life?
8. Obviously Samson’s fall under the wiles of Delilah started much earlier. Can you identify spiritual failing that set him up for his destruction through Delilah?
9. What positively affects your spiritual strength? What is draining it? Are there relationships you need to set godly boundaries on?

Prayer: For one another

LIFE GROUPS

A safe place to build friendships and grow spiritually.

- L ♦ Learn..... applying Biblical truth for everyday living
- I ♦ Invite.....welcoming others to our fellowship
- F ♦ Fellowship.....nurturing Christ centered caring relationships
- E ♦ Evangelism..... reaching others with the hope of Christ

DID YOU KNOW?



A story is told of a carnival performer who had a trained boa constrictor. One of his most popular tricks was to let the snake wrap itself around the trainer and begin to constrict. Then at a given command from the trainer, the snake would release.

The show was presented repeatedly to the amazement of audiences everywhere. Then one day the unthinkable happened. The boa wrapped the trainer in its embrace as it had countless times. Only this time when the command was given, the snake continued to constrict. In horror the audience watched as the man was crushed to death before their very eyes.

True story or urban legend, the experience of the trainer typifies Samson's relationship with Delilah. Four times Delilah tried to weasel out the secret of Samson's strength. Four times Samson played her for a fool, escaping the traps she had set for him. Finally her nagging produced results. Delilah lulled Samson to sleep. While he slept she shaved off his hair (the last of his Nazirite vows).

When Samson awoke he thought, *"I will do as before and shake myself free."* (Judges 16:20a) Of course, this time he wasn't able to. The balance of this verse reveals, *"he didn't realize the Lord had left him."* Instead Samson was blinded, shackled, and used in place of a horse to turn the millstone at the prison to grind grain.

One of the lessons of the life of Samson is the sad tale of what might have been. He was the unexpected, God promised miracle baby. He was raised by godly parents. He was taught that God had a plan for him and enjoyed notoriety amongst his people. But Samson liked to play with temptation. It was his undoing.

James 1:13,14 explains the insidious progression of temptation to sin. Temptation begins with a thought; a concept we embrace mentally because of our innate sinful humanness. At this moment, we need to turn from that enticement. Sometimes we can remove ourselves from the temptation; distract ourselves with other thoughts. At other times we need to cry out to God or other Christian brothers and sisters to help us resist temptation. Escape is always possible. 1 Cor. 10:13 reminds us that *"no temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."*

However, many of us mistakenly think we can play with the mental temptation. After all, it is only in our own thoughts. No one can see. We aren't ACTING on the temptation, just coddling it; enjoying the "what if" mental scenarios. Like the snake charmer, we are allowing the boa to wrap itself around our heart and psyche thinking we can step out of its killing embrace whenever we want. James 1:14b--15 identifies this as sin's incubation period: *"each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin;"*

You see sin is NEVER stagnant. We are either moving towards God in His grace or away from God in our sinful independence. We need to think of sin as a living creature. Peter describes Satan as *"a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."* (1 Peter 5:8) Temptation is NOT an innocent play thing. Temptation is not a harmless idea we can hide in the closet of our mind to entertain ourselves with. Temptation is a tool of Satan, bent on destroying us.

James 1:15b concludes: *"and sin, when it is full-grown gives birth to death."* This Samson's discovery. Playing with temptation, Samson lost respect. He lost his wife and his beloved girlfriend, Delilah. He lost his position as the God-appointed defender of Israel. He lost his sight and dignity. Finally Samson lost his life.

The weeks passed for Samson as he pulled the millstone in the Philistine prison. Fully humiliated before others, Samson finally learned God's lesson of true humility. It was a festival season for the Philistines. They had gathered for revelry in the local temple of Dagon, the Philistine deity. As the party progressed the crowd began to ask for Samson to be brought from the prison, so they could taunt him. And so sightless Samson was guided to the center of the temple, placed between two pillars for all to laugh at. Playing into their ridicule, Samson asked to be guided to one of the pillars that he might lean against it for support. Poor old Samson. So frail. So powerless and feeble. The crowd roared with laughter.

It was then that Samson prayed asking God to strengthen him one last time. His prayer is still full of selfishness, but he *is* submitting. Samson places his hands on the two pillars, bracing himself. Then with a mighty thrust of God-ordained power Samson literally "brings the house down." The Bible says that in this one act, Samson does more to liberate Israel from the Philistine stranglehold than through any other act in his life. He also dies amongst them. Even for Samson temptation led to sin and sin led to death.