



SESSION SNAPSHOT

A SUREFIRE WAY TO WRECK YOUR LIFE

NARRATIVE PASSAGE:

Judges 16:21-31

GOSPEL FOCUS:

Hebrews 11:33-34

TAKEAWAYS:

- God will accomplish His plans in spite of our sin
- We should depend on others to keep us accountable

LAST WEEK'S READING:

- Judges 6-7
- Judges 13-14
- Judges 15-16
- Ruth 1-2
- Ruth 3-4

KNOW THE WORD

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

The Israelites have proven to be disobedient to the commands of God yet again by not taking control of the land they were promised, rejecting the kingship of the Lord, and turning to the gods of the Canaanites. Even so, God raises up judges to continually rescue them from their oppressors. The last in the line of these judges is Samson, who is a picture of Israel and who highlights our need for accountability while pursuing God's call on our lives.

COMMENTARY AND STUDY MATERIALS

Samson's story takes place over four chapters in Judges. Here are some of the key moments in his life:

- 13:15 God tells Samson's parents how He is going to use Samson right from the beginning: Samson is to "begin to save Israel" from the Philistines, who were in power. We will see God keep His word throughout these chapters.
- 14:3-4 "I want her" is, literally, "she is right in my eyes." This calls to mind Paul's language in Romans 1, where he discusses how God gave people over to their sinful desires. God was not tempting Samson or making him break the law; rather, he was sovereignly working out His own plan through Samson's wickedness. He has done this before, like in the life of Joseph: "You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result--the survival of many people" (Genesis 50:20).
- 14:19 Rememembr that God has been using Samson all along to judge the Philistines. Here, God does that in a rather direct way by taking control of Samson's body to kill thirty men.
- 15:16-18 After the Spirit empowered Samson to again punish the Philistines, Samson immediately takes credit for the feat, composing a song of praise to himself. He turns around and receives water out of the ground in a parallel to the arrogance of Moses in Exodus 17.
- 16:4 The name "Samson" resembles the word for "sunlight." "Delilah" resembles the word for "night." The number of red flags that should have popped up in Samson's mind during this encounter are numerous.
- 16:28-30 The final request Samson makes of God is bittersweet. On the one hand, he dies fulfilling the reason God gave him power in the first place. On the other hand, he asks for strength so that he can exact personal vengeance.

STUDY THE WORD

Samson's life is a sad one, but one that illustrates an important point: God accomplishes His plan regardless of how badly we tend to mess them up. In today's session, we're going to take a big-picture view of Samson's life in order to see how God remains faithful even when we are not.

OUT LOUD, READ JUDGES 13:3-5

Pay attention to the expectation that Samson's parents had for what Samson's life was going to be.

When you were growing up, did you feel like your parents put any expectations on you? How did that affect you?

Do you think that being born for a specific purpose (like how Samson was born to save Israel from the Philistines) would be easy or hard to deal with?

Almost all of us grow up with expectations of some sort--some more difficult to attain than others. But for most of us, those expectations don't look like the ones put on Samson when he was born. Samson's purpose came from God, but that didn't stop him from going out of his way to disrespect the people holding him to it. Look at one example of how Samson disrespected his parents:

OUT LOUD, READ JUDGES 14:8-9

As you read, remember that one of the expectations of Samson was that he would avoid anything unclean--and eating from the carcass of a dead lion certainly qualified as playing fast and loose with the avoidance of unclean animals.

How do you think Samson's actions here demonstrated disrespect toward his vow? Toward his parents?

Why do you think that respect, especially for your parents, is so important to God? What does this kind of respect look like?

God directly commanded His people to respect their parents. But what Samson did is the exact opposite of that. In Judges 13, both of his parents took the Nazarite vow, which prohibited them from, among other things, touching a carcass. By giving them honey from a carcass killed in Philistine territory, he made them break their own vows. This kind of behavior demonstrates where Samson's heart was focused: directly on himself.

OUT LOUD, READ JUDGES 15:1-8

Remember that Samson's wife at this time was a Philistine woman, and she represented the people Samson was sent by God to judge. By continually associating with the Philistines, he was going against God's command for his life.

God gave Samson incredible power to accomplish a specific task: to defeat the Philistines. Part of the deal is that he had to take a Nazarite Vow, which prohibits him from touching dead bodies (like he did in 14:8) or anything that comes from a grape vine (like he did in 15:5).

Instead of following through with his vow, though, Samson spent the majority of his time falling in love with, hanging out with, and marrying people he was commissioned to free Israel from.

Why is it important to pay attention to the kind of company you keep?

When is a time you've been influenced by those around you--either for better or for worse?

How has the Lord used people around you to bring you closer to Him?

OUT LOUD, READ JUDGES 16:23-31

By this point in the story, Samson has married the Philistine woman Delilah and has given her the secret to his strength--or what he perceives to be the secret to his strength. He was arrested and brought before the Philistine rulers, the judge sent by God being judged by those he was sent to destroy.

If anyone was set up for success, it was Samson: he had a clear-cut calling in his life, he was equipped with the right upbringing to give him a good start, and he had a supernatural toolset to make it all happen. But at every turn, he used his gifts for his own gain rather than for God's glory.

Samson was given amazing tools to accomplish great things for God's glory, regardless of whether he did that or not. What tools have you been given, and how can use them for God's glory?

APPLY THE WORD

Even though Samson decided to discard it, God eventually did accomplish what He said He would through Samson--but not before Samson suffered heavily and, eventually, died. Fortunately for us, it is never too late to evaluate what path we are on, where we are headed, and what we can do to use what we have for God's glory.

Before you close your time in prayer, encourage those in your group to take a few minutes when you are done to answer the following and share updates next week:

Take a look at your friends. What are they like? Are they pursuing God or are they pursuing something else?

Take a look at your actions. If you keep doing what you're doing, where do you think you'll end up?

Take a look at the gifts God has given you. How are you using them to bring glory to God?

PREPARE FOR NEXT WEEK

Next Week's Reading:

- ***1 Samuel 1-2***
- ***1 Samuel 3; 8***
- ***1 Samuel 9-10***
- ***1 Samuel 13-14***
- ***1 Samuel 15-16***