

Samson - The Flawed Hero

Lesson 03 of the series, "Heroes"

1. After settling in the Promised Land the Israelites abandoned God in favor of the cultures around them.

"...the People of Israel made themselves at home among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. They married their daughters and gave their own daughters to their sons in marriage. And they worshiped their gods." Judges 3:3-6 (MSG)

Life Application: God wants us to be lights in a dark world.

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:14-16

2. God raised up a supernaturally strong rescuer named Samson to begin getting his people back on track.

"Again the Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight, so the LORD handed them over to the Philistines, who oppressed them for forty years. In those days a man named Manoah from the tribe of Dan lived in the town of Zorah. His wife was unable to become pregnant, and they had no children. The angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah's wife and said, "Even though you have been unable to have children, you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son. So be careful; you must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and his hair must never be cut. For he will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. He will begin to rescue Israel from the Philistines." Judges 13:1-5 (NLT)

Note: God wanted Samson to be devoted only to Him for his entire life. "If any of the people...take the special vow of a Nazirite, setting themselves apart to the LORD in a special way, they must give up wine and other alcoholic drinks...They must never cut their hair... And they must not go near a dead body during the entire period of their vow to the LORD." Numbers 6:2-6 (NLT)

3. Sadly, Samson grew up to be just as self-centered and apathetic towards God as everyone else.

"In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes." Judges 17:6(NLT)

One day when Samson was in Timnah, one of the Philistine women caught his eye. When he returned home, he told his father and mother, "A young Philistine woman in Timnah caught my eye. I want to marry her. Get her for me." His father and mother objected. "Isn't there even one woman in our tribe or among all the Israelites you could marry?" they asked. "Why must you go to the pagan Philistines to find a wife?" ...Samson threw a party at Timnah, as was the custom for elite young men... Samson said to them, "Let me tell you a riddle. If you solve my riddle during these seven days of the celebration, I will give you thirty fine linen robes and thirty sets of festive clothing. But if you can't solve it, then you must give me thirty fine linen robes and thirty sets of festive clothing." "All right," they agreed, "let's hear your riddle." So he said: "Out of the eater came something to eat; out of the strong came something sweet." ...On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband to explain the riddle for us, or we will burn down your father's house with you in it." ...So Samson's wife came to him in tears and said, "You don't love me; you hate me! You have given my people a riddle, but you haven't told me the answer." ...she cried whenever she was with him and kept it up for the rest of the celebration. At last, on the seventh day he told her the answer because she was tormenting him with her nagging. Then she explained the riddle to the young men. So before sunset of the seventh day, the men of the town came to Samson with their answer: "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" ...Then the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon him. He went down to the town of Ashkelon, killed thirty men, took their belongings, and gave their clothing to the men who had solved his riddle. But Samson was furious about what had happened, and he went back home to live with his father and mother. So his wife was given in marriage to the man who had been Samson's best man at the wedding." Judges 14:1-20 (NLT)

Samson said, "This time I cannot be blamed for everything I am going to do to you Philistines." Then he went out and caught 300 foxes. He tied their tails together in pairs, and he fastened a torch to each pair of tails. Then he lit the torches and let the foxes run through the grain fields of the Philistines. He burned all their grain to the ground... "Who did this?" the Philistines demanded. "Samson," was the reply, "because his father-in-law from Timnah gave Samson's wife to be married to his best man." So the Philistines went and got the woman and her father and burned them to death. "Because you did this," Samson vowed, "I won't rest until I take my revenge on you!" So he attacked the Philistines with great fury and killed many of them... The Philistines retaliated by setting up camp in Judah... "We've come to capture Samson. We've come to pay him back for what he did to us." So 3,000 men of Judah went down to get Samson... "Don't you realize the Philistines rule over us? What are you doing to us?" But Samson replied, "I only did to them what they did to me." But the men of Judah told him, "We

have come to tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines.” “All right,” Samson said. “But promise that you won’t kill me yourselves.” ... As Samson arrived at Lehi, the Philistines came shouting in triumph. But the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon Samson, and he snapped the ropes on his arms as if they were burnt strands of flax, and they fell from his wrists. Then he found the jawbone of a recently killed donkey. He picked it up and killed 1,000 Philistines with it. Then Samson said, “With the jawbone of a donkey, I’ve piled them in heaps! With the jawbone of a donkey, I’ve killed a thousand men!” When he finished his boasting, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was named Jawbone Hill.” Judges 15:1-17 (NLT)

Note: God used Samson to display His power and bring judgment on the Philistines in spite of Samson’s sinfulness.

“His father and mother didn’t realize the LORD was at work in this, creating an opportunity to work against the Philistines, who ruled over Israel at that time.” Judges 14:4 (NLT)

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.” Genesis 50:20 (NLT)

Life Application: God wants us to be peacemakers NOT to escalate conflict.

“Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, ‘I will take revenge; I will pay them back,’ says the LORD. Instead, “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads. Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.”

Romans 12:18-21 (NLT)

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” Matthew 5:9 (NIV)

4. The Philistines used Samson’s lust to bring him down.

Some time later Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah... The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, “Entice Samson to tell you what makes him so strong and how he can be overpowered and tied up securely. Then each of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver.” ... She tormented him with her nagging day after day until he was sick to death of it. Finally, Samson shared his secret with her. “My hair has never been cut,” he confessed, “for I was dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as anyone else.” ... “Delilah lulled Samson to sleep with his head in her lap, and then she called in a man to shave off the seven locks of his hair. In this way she began to bring him down, and his strength left him. Then she cried out, “Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!” When he woke up, he thought, “I will do as before and shake myself free.” But he didn’t realize the LORD had left him. So the Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes. They took him to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and forced to grind grain in the prison. Judges 16:4-5,16-17, 19-22 (NLT)

Life Application: We must run from sexual immorality before it ensnares us and ruins our lives.

“Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man’s wife? For a man’s ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths. The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.”

Proverbs 5:20-23 (NIV)

5. The Philistines foolishly concluded that their idol god Dagon had given them victory over the Lord.

The Philistine rulers held a great festival, offering sacrifices and praising their god, Dagon. They said... “Our god has delivered our enemy to us! The one who killed so many of us is now in our power!” ... Now the temple was completely filled with people. All the Philistine rulers were there, and there were about 3,000 men and women on the roof who were watching as Samson amused them. Then Samson prayed to the LORD, “Sovereign LORD, remember me again. O God, please strengthen me just one more time. With one blow let me pay back the Philistines for the loss of my two eyes.” Then Samson put his hands on the two center pillars that held up the temple. Pushing against them with both hands, he prayed, “Let me die with the Philistines.” And the temple crashed down on the Philistine rulers and all the people. So he killed more people when he died than he had during his entire lifetime. Judges 16:22-30 (NLT)

Life Application: “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” Romans 12:2 (NLT)

Connect Group Questions

1. What stood out, challenged you or confused you from this past Sunday's message on Samson?
2. What do the following passages teach us about living as lights in a dark world?
 - Mathew 5: 14-16
 - Philippians 2:14-16
 - 1 Peter 2:12
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:5

How can your group shine brighter for Jesus?

3. Read Judges 16:1-22, Proverbs 5:20-23, 2Timothy 2:22. How were the Philistines able to subdue the strongest man in the world? Why does the Bible warn us repeatedly about running from sexual immorality?
4. Read Matthew 5:9 & Romans 12:18-21. In light of current events how can Christians apply these verses?
5. Spend some time as a group praying for spiritual awakening in our country. Why are many people apathetic about worship, reading the Bible and evangelism? What will it take to get us excited and committed to loving God more and loving others in his name?