

Bible Story Time 5 - Sampson

Judges 13:2-7; 24-25 (pg. 108)

2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. 3 And the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. 4 Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, 5 for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines." 6 Then the woman came and told her husband, "A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. I did not ask him where he was from, and he did not tell me his name, 7 but he said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'"

24 And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and the Lord blessed him. 25 And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

- Sampson's birth is foretold by an angel, however he must take a Nazarite vow
- Nazarite Vows include: (Numbers 6)
 - Drinking no alcohol
 - Not cutting your hair
 - Separate themselves for the Lord and never do anything to make them unclean like going near or touch a dead body, even if someone dies suddenly in from them
 - Make special sacrifices and offerings to God
 - If the vow is broken they are supposed to cut their hair and repent before they can resume the vow

Judges 14

- The Philistines are continually enemies of God and His people. It is not clear that Sampson's strength was intended to be used in fighting them
- However, it is easy to speculate that Sampson's actions against them were out of obedience to God, but many of Sampson's actions were also clearly disobedient to God and his Nazarite vows
- Sampson marries a Philistine girl so he can gain the trust of the Philistines
- On the way to make his marriage proposal a lion attacks him and he kills it with his bare hands
- A few days later when he was going to the wedding he notices a beehive now inhabits the carcass of the lion and he - This is a problem because of his Nazarite vow
- During the feast he proposes a riddle and wagers if they can figure it out

10 His father went down to the woman, and Samson prepared a feast there, for so the young men used to do. 11 As soon as the people saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him. 12 And Samson said to them, "Let me now put a riddle to you. If you can tell me what it is, within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes, 13 but if you cannot tell me what it is, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes." And they said to him, "Put your riddle, that we may hear it." 14 And he said to them,

*"Out of the eater came something to eat.
Out of the strong came something sweet."*

And in three days they could not solve the riddle.

15 On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband to tell us what the riddle is, lest we burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us here to impoverish us?" 16 And Samson's wife wept over him and said, "You only hate me; you do not love me. You have put a riddle to my people, and you have not told me what it is." And he said to her, "Behold, I have not told my father nor my mother, and shall I tell you?" 17 She wept before him the seven days that their feast lasted, and on the seventh day he told her, because she pressed him hard. Then she told the riddle to her people. 18 And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down,

*"What is sweeter than honey?
What is stronger than a lion?"*

And he said to them,

*"If you had not plowed with my heifer,
you would not have found out my riddle."*

19 And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town and took their spoil and gave the garments to those who had told the riddle. In hot anger he went back to his father's house. 20 And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.

- It is likely that the feast included alcohol, which would have been against Sampson's vows.
- Sampson poses a riddle using his recent lion experience as inspiration
- The men, not wanting to lose the wager, get Sampson's new wife to find out the answer
- She consents and tries to manipulate Sampson into telling her the answer
- Sampson tells her after seven days of nagging, however he seems to know she was operating on her behalf
- "The Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him" this tells us the source of his power is from God
- However, the problem for Sampson is he continually uses his power to violate his vows, killing the 30 men, making him unclean according to his Nazarite vows, same as the lion.

Judges 15

- A few days later Sampson continues his one man war against the Philistines by tying torches to 300 foxes and setting them loose in the grain and food stores of the Philistines.
- In retaliation the Philistines send out 3,000 men to capture Sampson, they set up camp outside of the town of Judah and demand they deliver Sampson or they will attack the town
- Sampson has the people of Judah bind his hands with new ropes and take him to the Philistines
- When the Philistines take him he breaks free of the ropes and kills 1,000 of the men with the jawbone of a donkey

Judges 16

4 After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5 And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver." 6 So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you."

- Sampson finds a new woman who ultimately betrays him.
- Sampson has been terrorizing the Philistines and they come to Delilah to learn his weakness so they can defeat him
- She is told 1,100 pieces of silver would be her reward, this is a great sum of money, for context Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

7 Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." 8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. 9 Now she had men lying in ambush in an inner chamber. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he snapped the bowstrings, as a thread of flax snaps when it touches the fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

10 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Behold, you have mocked me and told me lies. Please tell me how you might be bound." 11 And he said to her, "If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." 12 So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And the men lying in ambush were in an inner chamber. But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread.

13 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and fasten it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." 14 So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web. And she made them tight with the pin and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web.

- Sampson tells Delilah three lies about his weakness and she tests him each time
- This should have been a red flag to Sampson about Delilah's intentions

15 And she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where your great strength lies."

16 And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death. 17 And he told her all his heart, and said to her, "A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man."

18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up again, for he has told me all his heart." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. 19 She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." But he did not know that the Lord had left him. 21 And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. And he ground at the mill in the prison. 22 But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

- Sampson finally gives in to Delilah's nagging and tells her the truth... sort of
- His strength came from God as a result of his Nazarite vows, the main out sign was that his hair never being cut.
- Delilah exposes his weakness and brings the Philistines in to capture him
- When Sampson attempts to fight them, he finds his great strength is gone because "the Lord had left him" symbolized by his hair being cut.
- Cutting his hair was the final and complete breaking of his Nazarite vows. God finally takes away his strength because of Sampson's continual disobedience.
- Sampson is bound and taken away
- However the text mentions that his hair began to grow again, a sign that God had not abandoned him.

The Death of Samson

23 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand." 24 And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, "Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us." 25 And when their hearts were merry, they said, "Call Samson, that he may entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars. 26 And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them." 27 Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained.

28 Then Samson called to the Lord and said, "O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes." 29 And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. 30 And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life. 31 Then his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had judged Israel twenty years.

- Sampson is ridiculed and mocked as a war trophy
- In his final moments he seems to renew his faith in God calling on Him to renew his strength in this final act against the Philistines
- Sampson is clearly not a model of faithful obedience to God, however, despite this God responds to this final moment of faith and uses Sampson to destroy a great number of Philistines.

Discussion Questions

- What do you think is the most interesting thing about Sampson's story?
- In what ways was Sampson disobedient to God and his vows?
- Sampson missed a lot of "red flags" that could have kept him out of trouble, what were some of these things that should have been warnings to him?
- Do you think Sampson didn't notice them or chose to ignore them?
- How do people today miss clear "red flags" around them?
- Why would someone choose to ignore a red flag?
- How could Sampson have better responded to the red flags in his life?
- How does God show himself to be faithful to Sampson despite Sampson's unfaithfulness to God?
- How have you seen God work in a similar way in your own life?
- In what ways do you make similar mistakes that Sampson made?
- What does the story of Sampson teach about how God responds when we mess up?
- How does this story show us how we should respond when we mess up?