

Discussion Questions



Sermon Recap

This message begins a three-part series on Samson, examining how his greatest strength became his greatest weakness. The sermon challenges us to consider whether we view our gifts as something God gave **to us** (for our benefit) or **for us** (to steward for His purposes). Samson's story shows the danger of depending on our strengths rather than on God.

Key Takeaways

1. **Context matters:** By the time of Samson, Israel had deteriorated spiritually to the point where they were comfortable with their enemies and had stopped calling on God's name.
2. **God can use flawed people:** Despite Samson's many character flaws, God chose him and worked through him.
3. **Strength without dependence on God becomes weakness:** Samson never prayed for guidance, never repented, and relied solely on his physical strength.
4. **Our mindset about gifts matters:** Viewing our strengths as given "to us" leads to selfish use; viewing them as given "for us" leads to Kingdom use.
5. **Samson violated all his vows:** Despite being called as a Nazirite from birth, Samson broke every restriction—touching dead animals, eating unclean food, and eventually losing his hair.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **Read Judges 13:1, 14:4.** What does it tell us about Israel's spiritual condition that God had to "seek an occasion" to create conflict with the Philistines? What does this reveal about how comfortable they'd become with compromise?
2. **Review Judges 14:1-9.** How many Nazirite vows did Samson break in just these few verses? Why is his casual disregard for these vows significant?
3. **Look at Samson's first prayer in Judges 15:18.** What's missing from this prayer? What does this reveal about Samson's relationship with God?

Personal Reflection

4. **The sermon asked: "What is your strength?"** Take time for each person to identify and share one God-given strength, gift, or ability they have. (This could be a skill, personality trait, spiritual gift, etc.)
5. **Be honest:** Do you tend to view your strengths as something God gave **to you** (yours to use as you wish) or **for you** (yours to steward for His purposes)? What's the difference in practice?
6. **Have you ever experienced a time when a strength became a weakness?** Perhaps when you relied on your own ability instead of seeking God? Share if you're comfortable.
7. Pastor Ike mentioned that Samson never sought God's will for his decisions—he simply made them. **In what areas of your life do you tend to act first and pray later (if at all)?**

Going Deeper

8. **Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7.** How does Paul's teaching about spiritual gifts challenge or confirm the sermon's main point about gifts being "for us" to steward rather than "to us" to keep?
9. The sermon noted that "show me a church where people freely volunteer and serve, and I guarantee you will see a church that sees their strengths as for them, not to them." **How does this principle apply to our group and our church? What would change if we all truly embraced this mindset?**
10. **Samson's story shows a pattern:** strength → dependence on self → neglect of God → weakness. Where do you see this pattern in modern Christian life? In your own life?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to put into practice this week:

Option 1: Surrender Your Strength

- Identify your primary strength/gift
- Spend time in prayer specifically surrendering this gift back to God
- Ask Him to show you how He wants you to use it for His purposes this week
- Journal about what changes when you shift from "this is mine" to "this is Yours"

Option 2: Depend on God, Not Your Ability

- Identify a situation this week where you'll need to use one of your strengths
- Before acting, deliberately pray and seek God's wisdom
- Notice the difference between acting in your own strength versus acting in dependence on God

Option 3: Serve Outside Your Strength

- Volunteer for something at church or in your community that is NOT in your area of strength
- Reflect on how this experience helps you depend more on God
- Consider how this might increase your empathy and reduce pride

Option 4: Inventory Your Gifts

- Make a list of your gifts, abilities, and resources
- Next to each one, write "To me" or "For me" based on how you currently view it
- For any marked "To me," write a prayer surrendering it to God and asking how He wants you to use it

Reflection Questions for the Week

Consider journaling your responses to these questions:

1. What would my life look like if I truly saw all my gifts as given FOR me to steward rather than TO me to keep?
2. In what area am I most like Samson—depending on my own strength rather than on God?
3. What needs to change in my mindset about the abilities God has given me?

Memory Verse

1 Peter 4:10 *"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."*

Looking Ahead

Next week we'll continue exploring Samson's story and discover more lessons about character, consequences, and God's redemptive work even through our failures.