

# Discussion Questions



This week we explored how Samson's strength became his weakness through the cycle of self-deception. We learned that self-deception follows a pattern:

1. **Self-betrayal** - Acting against what we know we should do
2. **Self-justification** - Making excuses for our actions
3. **Self-deception** - Distorting reality to believe our own lies

## Key Takeaways

### 1. A Strength Can Become a Weakness

When we depend on our gifts more than on God, even our greatest strengths can lead to our downfall.

### 2. Self-Deception is Hard to See in Ourselves

By its very nature, self-deception blinds us to our own faults while making us hyper-aware of others' shortcomings.

### 3. Self-Deception is Contagious

When we're self-deceived, we often gather people around us who reinforce our distorted view of reality.

### 4. God Wants Authenticity Over Performance

God would rather we bring ourselves as we are—struggles and all—than present a fake version of ourselves.

## Discussion Questions

### Understanding Self-Deception

1. **What is your strength?** What gift, ability, or talent has God given you? How might you be tempted to depend on that strength rather than on God?
2. **Do you view your strengths as gifts God gave TO you or FOR you?** What's the difference, and why does it matter?
3. The sermon defined self-deception as "allowing oneself to believe that a false feeling, idea, or situation is true." Can you think of common examples of self-deception in our culture today?

### Recognizing the Pattern

4. **Self-betrayal starts when we know what we should do but don't do it.** Can you share an example (without naming others) of a time when you knew the right thing to do but chose not to do it?
5. **Self-justification involves making excuses for our actions.** What are some common justifications you hear (or use yourself)? Examples from the sermon included:
  - "I didn't have time"
  - "At least I'm not as bad as..."
  - "If they would just..."
6. **How does self-justification lead to self-deception?** Walk through the progression as a group.

### Learning from Samson

7. **Read Judges 16:6-20 together.** What warning signs did Samson ignore? Why do you think he stayed in such an obviously dangerous relationship?
8. The sermon asked: **"Why not just leave?"** What are some areas in our lives where we might be "sick to death of it" but refuse to leave? Consider:
  - Unhealthy relationships
  - Social media habits
  - Addictions

- Secret sins
- Toxic work environments

9. **Samson fell asleep on the lap of his deceiver.** What does this image teach us about how comfortable we can become with our own self-deception?
10. **Verse 20 says Samson "did not know that the Lord had left him."** How can we get so caught up in self-deception that we don't notice God's absence? What are the warning signs?

## Personal Application

11. **The sermon stated: "We can get so caught up in our own self-deception that we assume that we are the source of our strength and the solution to our problems."** Where in your life might you be relying on yourself rather than God?
12. **What's the difference between self-confidence and God-confidence?** How can we tell which one we're operating from?
13. **Self-deception often involves two extremes:**
  - "I'm not good enough" (false humility)
  - "That won't happen to me" (false confidence)

Which extreme are you more prone to? How has this shown up in your life?

## Breaking the Cycle

### Reflection Exercise (10-15 minutes)

Give everyone time to quietly reflect on these questions. You may want to provide paper and pens.

1. **Self-Betrayal:** What is something I know I should do (or stop doing) but haven't?
2. **Self-Justification:** What excuses have I been making for this behavior?
3. **Self-Deception:** What false belief have I been telling myself to make this okay?
4. **Repentance:** What would it look like for me to bring this honestly before God and break this cycle?

---

## Practical Applications

Choose 1-2 of these to commit to as a group this week:

### Individual Actions:

- **Daily Self-Examination:** Each evening, ask yourself: "Did I betray myself today? Did I justify something I knew was wrong?"
- **Identify Your Strength:** Write down your God-given strength and pray about how God wants you to use it FOR others, not just for yourself
- **Accountability Check:** Set a reminder to ask yourself: "Am I depending on my strength or God's?"
- **Scripture Meditation:** Memorize Psalm 139:23-24 - "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."