

I have slain
 with a domkey's strength
 I have killed a thousand
 When he finished speaking:
 the jawbone; and the place
 which he left
 Because he was very
 out to the Lord,
 and this great victory
 thirst and fall into the
 conquered? Then God

...sounds like the Hebrew for ...

tour
ur strength

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We step into the life of an original super hero. A man who could tear apart a lion and carry away the gates that protected a city... Yet Samson had an Achilles heel, not just his hair, but a whole life that had lost perspective on true strength...



This booklet breaks the life of Samson into five parts.

Dwight bobble head, will organize each thought with a quote from Samson's encounter with Delilah. These five quotes connect to a period in Samson's life, so that we cover his entire biblical life over the study (do not stress, it is only four chapters!). [Why Dwight?, well, Samson is bit of a goof and as Dwight says, "I am faster than eighty percent of all snakes."]

Then I provide a story and a detail on the scripture. Next, there is passage from Judges to read, which is the important part—*So take time to read the passage! It is more valuable than anything I might write!*

Finally, Jesus Bobble Head, will give you a few questions to ponder and answer. [Why Jesus?, from Sunday School you should know Jesus is *always* the answer, but here is a response to Dwight's quote, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the son of man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." ~ John 3:14-5]

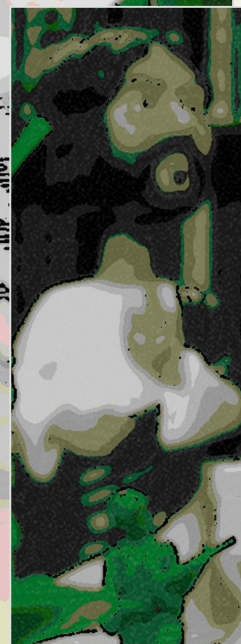


...

As the intro said, perspective is everything. We all have different skills and talents, but we use *our gifts* for different results. This difference often comes down to focus. Some focus on *OUR gifts*—others focuses on *our GIFTS*. This change of perspective may seem minor, but it is the difference between what will support and what comes crashing down!

For Samson, God's blessing became HIS gifts and everything he did was selfishly motivated. Overtime Samson's world came crashing down (literally at the end). In the same way, if we take God's blessing and use them only for ourselves we will find the power of blessing fail... while we are not abandoned by God, we can no longer accomplish His works.

But if we treat the blessings of God as our GIFTS and use them to further the kingdom. Then we will become more powerful than Samson ever dreamed. As Jesus reports, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (Jn 14:12)



conclusion

The interesting thing about the story of Samson is the Philistines were constantly trying to figure out the source of his strength. So he probably was not ripped beyond belief—early Arnold style (I say early, because the new California commercials, “you’ll be back”, have him looking like someone I could take... well, most people could take him). So set aside your children’s Bible pictures, because if Samson was built like Goliath no one would question his strength.

The new perspective I have of Samson—with average guy build—changes everything. Imagine Dwight (or even me) ripping gates from their hinges or being able to take Arnold. That would be an exciting gift from God...

And this perspective casts even more darkness onto the story. How could someone abuse such a gift? How could he become so selfish?

...



intro

perspective



Underneath the house the work looked good. A load bearing wall had created havoc on our floors, forming an ever increasing

crack. In my dreams the crack would open up to pull us all into the abyss. So after the night terrors we paid a company to set piers to support the wall. When they were done everything looked great from the crawl space. Of course they could not fix the floors, so we invited in a floor company and they revealed the picture I took below. You can see the load bearing wall and that the new support was not lined up either under the wall, nor did it run the length of the wall. From this new perspective, a good job became... well, a waste!

Our book’s cover is another example: Both pictures above were taken from the same angle, but when the focus changes the picture changes. In the same way, our perspective on life changes everything. We all have different skills and talents, but we use *our gifts* for different results. This difference often comes down to focus. Some focus on *OUR gifts*—others focuses on *our GIFTS*. This change of perspective may seem minor, but is the difference between what will support and

what comes crashing down!



1

destiny



If anyone ties me with seven fresh thongs that have not been dried, I'll become as weak as any other man.

- Judges 16:7

Judges 13

Take time to read Judges 13, the birth of Samson. Pay attention to his mom and what she does to prepare for the birth of her son!

Dwight Connection:

Samson's lie in 16:7 centers on the perfect number of seven. Which points back to Samson's seemingly perfect beginning!



Staring angrily at Phoebe's half finished 1st birthday present—a Cozy Coupe—brought flashbacks to my childhood. My dad could fly off the handle about two things: when I talked back to mom (and I deserved the

whipping) or when we worked on the car (and I am not sure the car ever recovered from the abuse). So when pieces refused to fit, I found myself trying to rant the plastic Flintstone style car together... a cozy moment.

When Phoebe sits in her chair food drops into her seat. So it was no surprise to find that a drool melted Cheez-it had left an orange square mark! In the same way we are stained by our parents—for good and for bad. ~ Samson's beginning seemed perfect. His birth was announced by an angel. His destiny to become a Nazarite. And before Samson arrived his mom took on part of a Nazarite vow (abstain from alcohol) to prepare the way for his birth...

Star Gazer * *

* Questioning the speaker...
In HS the camp speaker was

comparing the Philip in Acts (one of seven to serve widows) to his life as a disciple. But a note in my bible said how the Philip in Acts was not the same person as the disciple Philip. So I went up and told the speaker. He told me not to trust everything I read... of course at the end of camp, the speaker—who left early—had a message read, that a certain student was right... Long story, to say, test what a speaker says and ask Christ if is the truth. A speaker will have degrees and experiences, but NO one has greater access to the throne than YOU!

* * Blessings... Following Samson's lead we often define the presence of God based on blessings. When things are good, God is close. When things are bad, we cry, "Why would God abandon us?" But the reality is that God is near no matter the circumstance and He hears our cries...

1. Did God actually leave Samson?... Why did Samson feel abandoned?
2. 16:31 declares that Samson led Israel twenty years. How was Samson a leader? Where was he leading Israel?
3. Why is Samson remembered?

regrow



But the hair on his head began to grow again after it has been shaved.

- Judges 16:22

Judges 16:21-31

Take time to read Judges 16:21-31, Samson's redemption.

Notice that it seems to begin even before he prays...

Dwight Connection:

This is not a quote, because for the first time Samson is not able to act on his own desires... and here he finds redemption!

As a student I went with the youth group to a big event. The packed crowd listened to the speaker and he told a story I have never forgotten. He spoke about being invited to a friend's house who was in a crisis. They asked him for advice, but they also asked him to pray. As prayed, he said, the words came out of his mouth and floated up towards the ceiling. Only to bounce off and drop back to the ground. Popped like Ivy's balloon that was caught by the ceiling fan!

The speaker explained that his own life was also in crisis. Not from an outside event, but because he was not following Christ. Therefore God would not hear his words... Right when I heard this story, I doubted the speaker.* Surely God has not left us—surely He hears our prayers...

For Samson, when his hair was cut, it seemed God left him. While it felt to Samson as if he was alone, God did not really banish him. Instead God had removed the blessing.** So when Samson cried out, God heard the cry. And God answered the cry. And in grace restored the blessing.

Who? What? Nazarite?

The vow of the Nazarite is outlined in Numbers chapter 6.

It was available to anyone—male or female—who chose to consecrate themselves to the Lord for a certain time.

The Nazarite Vow had three requirements: 1) abstain from alcohol; 2) do not come in contact with a dead person; 3) do not cut your hair. When the vow was over "the Nazarite must shave off the hair that symbolizes their dedication" (6:18).

For Samson it seems his hair was the central symbol of his vow to God. As you read the story he kills others and attends wedding parties without mention of avoiding alcohol (and alcohol may help explain some of Samson's later actions...). Still, letting his hair grow from birth must have created a crazy, split end mess!



1. How did your parents prepare for you? - How have they raised you to live your life?
2. Why would God call Samson to live as a Nazarite? - What is the value of these acts to God?
3. DEEP: With such a birth how could Samson go wrong?

choice



If anyone ties me
securely with new
ropes that have
never been used,
I'll become as weak
as any other man.
- Judges 16:11

What kind of fool?

For three times Samson sticks with the strategy of lies, but at her constant nagging he finally caves. Did she drive him crazy—probably, but the situation was also different. Notice verse 18, for the first time she has to send word to the Philistine rulers. They were not there, ready and waiting. Samson may have thought the trouble was past... Plus he may have known his danger, because for the first time Delilah can not perform the task. She had tied the ropes and tightened his hair with the pin. But this time he sleeps on her lap, while someone else cuts his hair...

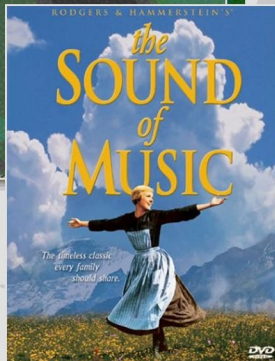
This does not take away the reality that Samson acted as a fool. He trusted his own strength, to the point that he no longer cared about decisions he made. In some ways it was as though he wanted to provoke the Philistines. As if Delilah was also a pawn in Samson's game to best the Philistines. But the root of a fool is to trust what can not be trusted. Our gifts are useless without the Gift Giver.

Judges 14-

Take time to read Judges 14-15, Samson's marriage and the ensuing chaos. There is a lot of action, but pay attention to the emotions that drive Samson to action!

Dwight Connection:
Samson's lie in 16:11 has already been tried in 15:13!

1. Why was Samson in this situation and why did he keep going back to Delilah?... (He is Samson, he could have found other girls!)
2. Verse 20 is haunting: but he did not know that the Lord had left. How did it make you feel? - Did God abandon Samson? - Could God abandon you, our church?...



Our lives do not have sound tracks—music to warn of danger or announce triumph, but it would be wonderful. If the hills were alive with the sound of music. We could remember our favorite things and see beyond sixteen going on seventeen to find our true love. We would know that doe was not just a female deer, but we are one step from a drop of golden sun (ray)... In reality ominous music does not precede danger, for that matter the crucial moments of life pass and we do not even realize the significance. When we choose to watch our sister's favorite movie who could guess we would still remember the lyrics, but choices leave lasting marks and blaze the way into OUR future. We consider these to be innocent actions. And as one decision, they cause little change. Just as one KFC double down, with fried chicken for buns, does not immediately cause obesity. But eat one everyday for years and you will eventually have to buy one plane ticket for each cheek!

So it was with Samson, who started by noticing a cute Philistine girl...

cut off



If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.

- Judges 16:17

Judges 16:4-20

math Lehi.
Because
and to the Lo

Take time to read Judges 6:4-20, Samson's downfall with Delilah. Play close attention to verse 20, it is haunting!

Dwight Connection:

Samson's first truth happens in this passage. Still his words project beyond his hair and even his strength, because he has been cut off from God.

Growing up we were always exploring and a favorite spot was a dirt path into the woods

(soon to become a subdivision). One time when we were there two things happened. First, at the path's end we found shotgun shells all over the place. I thought this was really exciting, until my friend began to tell the story of a clown that lived in the woods. He would lure children into his house... At first I joked until I remember there was an abandoned house in the woods. I still played brave and we dared each other deeper and deeper into the woods. Then we heard a branch crack and I panicked—threw down my bike and ran! Of course I had to come back for my bike, and later we laughed (or at least I was laughed at)... Fear is a funny thing. As children we were afraid of so many things, but as we grow up we become brave. That is until we are alone. In community we are tough, but alone—a snapped branch still gets our heart racing!

And Samson stood up to use his strength and only then did he realize... God had left and he was all alone.

People of the Sea

The name Philistine points to their origin from across the sea and their arrival into the area of Canaan brought a shift in power. In part because the Philistines arrived with new technology, iron. So they brought the transition from the Bronze Age into the Iron Age.

Their nation was centered in five city states (Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, Ashkelon, Gaza), each ruled by a separate leader and each the home to a separate god (they took on gods of the area, rather than transfer their own). The five kings came together and lead the nation as a council. As we see later in the text, they unite to pay Delilah and defeat Samson.

The Philistines were eventually defeated by David, so their reign was not long, but their influence continues. The name Palestine—used today—derives from the Latin word for Philistine (*Palestina*).



1. In 14:3, why did Samson not follow his fathers wish to marry a Jewish girl?
2. When confronted what is Samsons choice? (14:19/15:15) Is this a good reaction? What motivates Samsons choices: himself or the community?
3. Judges rose up to lead Israel, does Samson lead?

entangled



If you weave the seven
braids of my head into
the fabric on the loom
and tighten it with
the pin, I'll become as
weak as any other man.
- Judges 16:13

Judges 16:1-3



Take time to read Judges 16:1-3,
Samson and a prostitute from
Gaza. Consider how Samson
controls his desires...

Dwight Connection:

Samson's lie in 16:13 invites his hair to
be weaved, in the same vein, sin has
weaved its way into his life!

Splash ~ Every Spring, as the weather turns, I
find that my pond attracts suicidal lizards.

And this year is no exception with two lizards meeting their demise
and the ponds power is expanding. Now I have found a bird and
what looked like a tiny possum—smiling even at the end...

I doubt that their life had become so pointless that suicide was the
only answer (since animals are wise enough to know that life is never so
pointless!). Instead they came for a drink of water and slipped into the
pond. The walls were too slick to climb out...

No matter our parents our destiny is not marked out by their hopes
and dreams. Instead our choices decide our fate. And choices are
entangling—both good and bad. Whatever we step into becomes a
part of life and we will find it constantly tempting us. And we find that
we want more and more—so the deeper we sink...

For Samson, a look became a lust and soon destructive addiction...

Morals Anyone?

Imagine a story about a leader
from today that began "One
day..." and ended with him spending the night with a prostitute... People would
freak and never make it to the gate ripping conclusion! But the author of Judges
does not bat an eye. And morality in the Old Testament is often a little off kilter.
There is Tamar who pretends to be a prostitute and is justified (Gen 38). And
do not forget that every husband seems to have more than one wife...

Keys to reading the Old Testament: First, the authors have not spruced up the
story. This is life as it happened and parts are not how God intended. Second,
the life God intended was lived by Jesus Christ. So He must be the guide for our
interpretation (both His Spirit and the His story in the New Testament). Third, the
stories point to God's graciousness. He uses the imperfect to bring His plans. So
we find in Matthew's genealogy, that it was through Tamar's child that Christ
would be born. REMEMBER the hero in the story is God—not humanity!!!



1. How would you describe
Samson's life at this point?
What motivates him? ... Why is
he still blessed with strength?
2. If Samson was not selfish what
good could he have accomplished?
3. Why do characters in the Bible
often seem morally challenged?
