

SAMSON

1. a. What is your first thought when you hear the name, Samson?

- b. Without reading the text, write down what you remember to be true of Samson.

Read Hebrews 11:32-34.

2. What is your initial reaction at finding Samson listed among the heroes of faith in chapter 11?

Read Judges 13 - 16. Now re-read this section asking the Holy Spirit to teach you as you do so. Make a note of any comments or questions you have about this passage.

Some have called the period of the judges the Dark Ages of Israel. It was a period of religious, moral, social, and political decline. During this time there were recurring cycles of apostasy (abandoning one's faith), judgment, repentance and deliverance. Over and over the people of Israel would forsake the Lord and He would respond to their disobedience with judgment. This would result in their crying out to Him for deliverance. Then in answer to their prayer the Lord would raise up a judge to deliver His people.

3. a. What part of the above cycle is missing in Judges 13:1-5? (For help you may want to contrast with Judges 3:7-9.)

- b. What does that say about the environment and people among whom Samson lived?

- c. What do we learn about God from the fact that He responded anyway?

Read Numbers 6:1-8 and Judges 13:1-7.

4. What was the purpose of taking a Nazirite vow? For the duration of the vow, what prohibitions were to be observed?

5. a. Why do you think the angel of the Lord appeared to Samson's mother instead of his father?
 - b. For what reason had Samson been set apart? (verse 13:5) What is a key word in this verse and why is it significant?
6. Summarize the following verses of chapter 14:
 - a. verses 1-4
 - b. verses 5-9 (Comment on his violation of his Nazirite vow)
 - c. verses 10-11 (Note the Hebrew word used here is "mishteh" meaning drink, banquet, feast. This was a week long celebration of eating and drinking.) What is significant about this, considering Samson's vow?
 - d. verses 12-19 What would Samson have to do in order to "strip" (NIV) the bodies?

Re-read Judges 15:1-20.

This story does not have a "they lived happily ever after" ending.

7. In your own words retell the events of 15:1-8.

Re-read verse 14:4.

8. a. We can be sure that this marriage was not God's will for Samson because it violated His law; yet He used it to accomplish His purpose. How?
 - b. What do you learn about God from this?

9. a. Verses 15:9-13 are a sad commentary on the condition of Israel at this time. Explain.

b. Contrast Samson's behavior to that of his fellow countrymen.

It has been said that God and one are a majority. Never has this been more true than in this battle in which one man, Samson, miraculously kills a thousand Philistines.

10. Who gets the credit in verse 15:16? _____

God has just affected a great miracle through Samson. You would think that Samson would be jubilant. Instead we see an overwrought, lonely man crying out for water.

11. a. In his prayer (15:18) to whom does he give credit for the victory? _____

b. How does God respond to this prayer?

c. What are your thoughts concerning both Samson's prayer and God's response?

Re-read Chapter 16 of Judges.

12. If there was no strength in Samson's hair, why would shaving it make a difference? (verses 16:16-20)

13. In verse 16:21 Samson's eyes are gouged out. What is ironic about this?

In contrast to verse 16:20 which is quite tragic, verse 16:22 is wonderful. Your answer to the next question will be pure supposition.

14. Besides the growth of Samson's hair, what else do you think happened during his imprisonment?

15. a. Using verses 21-27 write a description of Samson when he performed his last and greatest feat.

b. How does this description of Samson contrast with how he might have been described before his captivity?

Verse 16:28 contains the only record we have of Samson praying before performing a feat involving the use of his strength. Read it many times.

16. a. For what does Samson ask?

b. What does it seem that he has finally learned?

c. Have you grasped this truth for yourself? Write a statement personalizing it.

17. After this brief study of Samson's life, why do you suppose he is named in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews?

18. How do you deal with failure in your life?

The dictionary defines failure as "falling short". There is no doubt about it, considering all the potential Samson had, he fell short. However, Samson is not the only man of God who has ever experienced failure. Hebrews 11 is full of people who knew failure.

19. What do we learn from Samson's life concerning God's view of failure?

20. a. Is there an area in your life in which you feel as if you have failed? Identify it.

b. How should we deal with our sins and failures? (See I John 1:9.)

c. Be honest. Do you ever find it hard to believe that God forgives you?
Elaborate.

d. Do you believe that God not only will forgive you but that He has wonderful plans for the rest of your life?____ Do you believe that He can even use your failures?____

Like Samson, pray that God will strengthen and remember you. Ask Him to use you, whatever your circumstances, to accomplish His will. Ask Him to use your strengths, gifts, abilities, and even your failures.

"We tend to judge others by their failures, but God by their faith."

Rosetta Lane/lp