

Samson: Part II — Lessons from His Life

Samson did many amazing feats. However, only three were done when “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power.” Why did God choose to empower him additionally these three times? Why not the other times? What lessons did Samson need to learn that Israel and we also need to learn? Let's look.

Stop and Pray - Lord, help me to understand why You empowered Samson when You did. Show me how You intervene in my life to direct me towards my God-given purposes.

1. Recall a time when God gave you a way out of a tempting situation so that you did not fall into sin.

Read Judges 13-16 to get an overview of the Samson story. Answer question 2 as you read.

2. List all Samson's mighty feats in Judges 14, 15 and 16. Distinguish between the 3 which were done when the Spirit came upon him in power and his other feats.

Spirit on him in power

Other feats

Reread Judges 14:1-15:20. Mark your text as instructed.

Despite the advantages with which Samson was born, including coming from a godly family, we still find him making bad decisions. In Judges 14:1-3, we see Samson demanding a bride from Timnah, a Philistine town next to his hometown.

3. a. What can we learn about Samson from verses 1-3? *Note:* “She's the right one for me” (NIV) means the same as “She is right in my eyes” (Judges 21:25).

- b. What can we learn about his parents from their words and actions in verses 3-10?
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- 4. Judges 14:4 is confusing. Be assured, God is not condoning Samson's sin. So what do you think is going on here?
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- 5. In Judges 14:5, why was this the right time for the lion to interrupt Samson's chosen path? Note where Samson was at the time, what he was heading to do, and what he had not done yet.
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- 6. God's Spirit came upon Samson in power to enable him to tear apart the lion. Let's think about why God would empower Samson at this particular time.
 - a. For a Nazirite, what were the implications of touching a dead body? (Refer to lesson 18.) *Note:* There is debate among scholars whether the sanction against touching a dead body in the Nazirite vow, recorded in Numbers 6, refers only to a human body or to any dead body.

 - b. What would the time spent fulfilling the above requirement have given Samson the opportunity to remember about himself? What was he supposed to be doing with his life and strength?

 - c. When God empowered Samson to miraculously tear apart the lion, what should he have learned about God that could have changed his following actions?

d. How is Israel similar to Samson's life at this point? Why did Israel need to learn these same lessons?

7. Is there a lesson to be learned from "the lion in the vineyard" for our own lives? I Peter 5:8 tells us to "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." For each of the following verses, answer this question: How have we been empowered by God to deal with that lion?

I Corinthians 10:13

Hebrews 2:18; 4:15-16

I John 5:18

8. Following his mighty feat with the lion, list everything Samson does and does not do in the rest of chapter 14 that shows his heart's attitude toward God?

Note: The Hebrew word for feast "mishteh" (Judges 14:10) means feast, drink, or banquet.

9. After the wedding companions solve the riddle, the Spirit of the Lord again empowers Samson.

a. Why would God's Spirit empower Samson here? Was there anything spiritually positive about the outcome, or did this all have to do with God keeping His Word?

- b. How does God's faithfulness to Samson at this point parallel God's covenant relationship with Israel (Genesis 17:7)?

- c. What lesson can we learn from this scene for our lives?

Reread Judges 15:1-20. The Spirit of the Lord does not "come on him in power" anywhere in these mighty acts.

- 10. a. Remembering the warning in Galatians 6:7 that a man reaps what he sows, do you believe Samson was acting with God's goals in mind or for selfish reasons in verses 1-9? Explain.

 - b. Do you believe Samson's reasoning is faulty in Judges 15:3 and 7, and if so, in what way? Explain.
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- 11. Contrast Samson's God-given role with what actually happened in Judges 15:9-13. What kind of an impact was Samson having on Israel?
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- 12. Samson agreed to be bound and turned over to the Philistines. What could Samson have had the time to ponder, while staying in the cave at Etam, that would have made him agreeable to this request?
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- 13. Why would the Holy Spirit come on Samson in power here?

14. List all events in Judges 15:14-20 that confirm Samson was finally beginning to understand what his God-given role was to be?

15. What lesson was God trying to show Israel and us by repeatedly empowering Samson even after he strayed? Remembering Deuteronomy 4:30-31 may be helpful. (If time allows, Luke 15:11-32 gives us an additional picture of this truth.)

16. What might keep someone from returning to God after straying from Him?

17. What will you remember from this segment of Samson's life the next time you are tempted to stray or do stray off God's path?

Final Thoughts: "Ah, if the story had just ended there it would be a story of triumph, because Samson learned at this point that God was adequate to meet any need he had, that the Spirit of God could be to him a well of water springing up to eternal life, satisfying every desire giving him the capacity to slay the Philistines right and left. After he learned this principle, he judged Israel for twenty years, and these were days of prosperity and peace, and the Philistines were held at bay.

And so it will be in our life if we discover the principle that God is adequate for all our needs, that He is slaying the Philistines (the flesh) in our life, and that He has dealt with the lion (Satan) in our life. He is adequate for every desire, every drive, no matter how strong or deep-seated it may be. And there will be peace and prosperity and victory over the enemy.

But unfortunately, although there was a period of time during which Samson reigned, he later fell back into the same old sin that plagued him at the beginning of his adulthood."
(“Samson and Delilah Character Study” - David Roper)

And that's where we will begin next week.

Pray - Lord, help me to heed Your warnings when I begin to head down the wrong path. Give me the courage to humble myself and return to You no matter how far I stray. Help me to gain all the eternal fruit that You would allow me to reap for Your glory.

Kyna Ritchie (original 2002; revised 2013)

Lesson 19 — Samson’s Lessons From His Life — Judges 14:1-15:20

Observe your text.

Mark your text. Put a red jagged line under “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily.” Put a brown jagged line under references to locations (note if they are part of the enemy’s land or Israel’s). Put a box around all time words (e.g. now, then, after, in the time of). Put a circle around all conditional words (e.g. but, therefore, so that). Underline all references, including pronouns (e.g. he, they, you, I, me):

- Samson in green
- God in red
- Israel in blue
- Manoah in orange
- Manoah’s wife in purple
- the enemy in black (including the Philistine wife, and wedding companions)

Judges 14:1-15:20 – Lessons from Samson’s life

1 Then Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines. 2 So he came back and told his father and mother, "I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife." 3 Then his father and his mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she looks good to me." 4 However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel. 5 Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came as far as the vineyards of Timnah; and behold, a young lion came roaring toward him. 6 The Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a young goat though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done. 7 So he went down and talked to the woman; and she looked good to Samson. 8 When he returned later to take her, he turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion; and behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion. 9 So he scraped the honey into his hands and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them and they ate it; but he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey out of the body of the lion. 10 Then his father went down to the woman; and Samson made a feast there, for the young men customarily did this. 11 When they saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him. 12 Then Samson said to them, "Let me now propound a riddle to you; if you will indeed tell it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes. 13 "But if you are unable to tell me, then you shall give me thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes." And they said to him, "Propound your

riddle, that we may hear it." 14 So he said to them, "Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet." But they could not tell the riddle in three days.

15 Then it came about on the fourth day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, so that he will tell us the riddle, or we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us to impoverish us? Is this not so?" 16 Samson's wife wept before him and said, "You only hate me, and you do not love me; you have propounded a riddle to the sons of my people, and have not told it to me." And he said to her, "Behold, I have not told it to my father or mother; so should I tell you?" 17 However she wept before him seven days while their feast lasted. And on the seventh day he told her because she pressed him so hard. She then told the riddle to the sons of her people. 18 So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, "What is sweeter than honey? And 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 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of them and took their spoil and gave the changes of clothes to those who told the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house. 20 But Samson's wife was given to his companion who had been his friend.

Chapter 15

1 But after a while, in the time of wheat harvest, Samson visited his wife with a young goat, and said, "I will go in to my wife in her room." But her father did not let him enter. 2 Her father said, "I really thought that you hated her intensely; so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please let her be yours instead." 3 Samson then said to them, "This time I shall be blameless in regard to the Philistines when I do them harm."

4 Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took torches, and turned the foxes tail to tail and put one torch in the middle between two tails. 5 When he had set fire to the torches, he released the foxes into the standing grain of the Philistines, thus burning up both the shocks and the standing grain, along with the vineyards and groves. 6 Then the Philistines said, "Who did this?" And they said, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he took his wife and gave her to his companion." So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

7 Samson said to them, "Since you act like this, I will surely take revenge on you, but after that I will quit." 8 He struck them ruthlessly with a great slaughter; and he went down and lived in the cleft of the rock of Etam. 9 Then the Philistines went up and camped in Judah, and spread out in

Lehi. 10 The men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" And they said, "We have come up to bind Samson in order to do to him as he did to us." 11 Then 3,000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that you have done to us?" And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them." 12 They said to him, "We have come down to bind you so that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines." And Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me." 13 So they said to him, "No, but we will bind you fast and give you into their hands; yet surely we will not kill you." Then they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock. 14 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily so that the ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds dropped from his hands. 15 He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, so he reached out and took it and killed a thousand men with it. 16 Then Samson said, "With the jawbone of a donkey, Heaps upon heaps, With the jawbone of a donkey I have killed a thousand men." 17 When he had finished speaking, he threw the jawbone from his hand; and he named that place Ramath-lehi. 18 Then he became very thirsty, and he called to the LORD and said, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant, and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" 19 But God split the hollow place that is in Lehi so that water came out of it. When he drank, his strength returned and he revived. Therefore he named it En-hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day. 20 So he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

(Judges 14:1-15:20, NASB95)