

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
OCTOBER 07 2023

consequences

Scripture Story: Judges 13–16.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 54.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Hebrews 11 celebrates some of the most amazing Bible characters as examples of people who found the courage to play a part in God's plan for salvation. Of that list, Samson is mentioned as one "whose weakness was turned to strength" (Hebrews 11:34). Samson is grouped among those who are historical anchors of the family of faith. Why? Perhaps Samson's life is a tragic lesson of someone who learns the chief lessons of life the hard way—but nevertheless learns. His story is also darkened—not solely by the way he lived but by the way he died.

Too often Samson was controlled by his own desires and passions. This inhibited his greatness and the way God could use him. "The real greatness of the man is measured by the power of the feelings that he controls, not by those that control him" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 567).

"Had Samson obeyed the divine commands as faithfully as his parents had done, his would have been a nobler and happier destiny. But association with idolaters corrupted him. . . ." (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 562) until he sought to marry a Philistine woman. His determination, against his parents' council, was "Get her for me, for she pleases me well" (Judges 14:3, NKJV). "Samson connected himself with the enemies of Israel. He did not ask whether he could better glorify God when united with the object of his choice, or whether he was placing himself in a position where he could not fulfill the purpose to be accomplished by his life" *(Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 563).

Even today Satan seeks to divert our attention from doing God's will. He will use every means, including our own desires and passions to turn us away from God and His will for our lives. Every choice we make throughout the day will lead us closer to Him or further away. "The very ones whom God purposes to use as His instruments for a special work, Satan employs his utmost power to lead astray. He attacks us at our weak points, working through defects in the character to gain control of the whole man; and he knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 568). But the good news is that God has made a way of escape—He does not leave us alone to fight this battle against the evil one. The Bible is full of promises to help us trust God to overcome sin in our lives and become more like Jesus in character. In 2 Peter 1:4, 5 we read, "By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

II. TARGET

The students will:

- *Know* the importance and relationship of everyday choices to our calling.
- *Feel* a sense an urgency to live in harmony with God's plan for our life.
- *Respond* in partnership with others to build community rather than isolation.

III. EXPLORE

The Holy Scriptures, Seventh-day Adventist

Fundamental Beliefs, No. 1: "The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. . . . The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history." (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Samson knew he was dedicated to God and that God had called him to be an example and a judge for the Israelites, but he had his own ideas about life. He was self-willed and cared more about what he wanted than what God wanted. This character weakness made him incapable of fulfilling the work God had called him to do.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

"Nikita Khrushchev, premier of the former Soviet Union, gave a major address on the state of Soviet affairs before the Supreme Soviet in Moscow. His speech broke new ground as it openly addressed the savage excesses of the Stalin era. As Khrushchev spoke, someone from the audience sent up an embarrassing note. 'Premier Khrushchev, what were you doing when Stalin committed all these atrocities?'

"Khrushchev angrily shouted, 'Who sent up this note?'

"Not a person stirred.

" 'I will give him one minute to stand up,' Khrushchev pronounced.

"The seconds ticked off. Still no one moved.

" 'All right, I will tell you what I was doing,' Khrushchev said. 'I was doing exactly what the writer of this note was doing—exactly nothing! I was afraid to be counted.'

"Afraid to be counted. Afraid to take a stand. Afraid to stand tall. It seems to me that if there ever was a time in the history of the world when God was calling us to stand tall, it's today.

"Every great hero of faith has been willing to take a stand. . . .

"Love always demands commitment. Its cost is a heart totally surrendered to the Master, the willingness to take a stand. If we are not willing to stand for what is right, we will fall for what is wrong. If we do not have the courage of our convictions to stand for principles of conscience, our hearts will be calloused by compromise. Like Pilate, Judas, and King Agrippa, our souls will be barren.

"There is a better way. Through the grace of Christ. Stand by the convictions of your conscience. You will be glad you did."—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, pp. 215, 216.

Samson failed to stand and do what was right—he was more interested in his own desires. In the end Samson learned humility and obedience, but he learned it the hard way.

What lessons have you had to learn the hard way?

Are there some lessons demonstrated in Samson's life that you can learn without having to experience them for yourself?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Although many heroes of faith were gifted by God with the qualities needed to impact the world, they failed because they did not follow God's commands. What does this mean? Samson is an example of someone who had extraordinary abilities for success, but because he allowed his sinful nature to rule his thoughts and desires, he had to suffer the consequences of his wrong choices. He had to endure the humiliation of being blinded and enslaved by his enemies whom he could have easily conquered had he relied fully on God and lived a life fully consecrated to Him.

This story is a sobering reminder that we cannot serve two masters. If we serve self and sin we cannot truly be on God's side. We cannot serve God with a divided heart. Either we serve Him by surrendering our whole heart with its desires and plans and allow His plans to take root in our hearts, or else we choose our own ways and separate ourselves from God.

Out of the Story for Teachers

Read the Into the Story section with your students.

Remind them that this is an abbreviated version of the story. Suggest to them that for them to get the full impact of Samson's decisions and how they affected his life, they should, if they haven't already, read Judges 13–16.

- How could Samson have made better decisions in the way he lived?
- What are the key points in the story of Samson?
- What was the source of Samson's power? In what way was it connected to his hair?
- In what way did the little things in Samson's life affected his life's outcome?
- What was God's purpose for Samson's life? In what ways did Samson fail? How did he succeed?
- What do you think are three valuable lessons this story teaches?

Extra Teacher's Questions

If Samson had listened to his parents and accepted their council about who he should marry, how might it have helped him in serving and obeying God? Do you think his life would have turned out differently?

Even though Samson was a judge in Israel for 20 years, he lacked spiritual integrity. Only twice does Scripture record him praying—and both times it was when he was in trouble. Yet God answered his prayer and helped him. Imagine what a spiritual leader he might have been if he had made a commitment of praying daily! By reliance on God Samson would have had the capability to control his desires and exert self-control, but he allowed his human nature to have control. From his youth he chose the wrong friends, he married the wrong woman, and he gave in to sexual immorality time and time again. Each choice takes him a step lower until his choices land him in the hands of the Philistines.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

Perhaps the problem with Samson was that his great strength also became his great weakness. Because of his physical strength he overlooked the power of disciplining himself to do the little things and recognizing that God's plan might include some humility. The Nazarite vow—avoiding cutting his hair and drinking wine—was a symbol of a fervent devotion to God. So, did Samson do God's will?

Ultimately, the Bible says: "For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines" (Judges 13:5, NASB). God would have done great things through Samson if he had surrendered his heart to Him and had done what was right.

The Philistines were enemies of God and His people. But Samson, instead of staying away from them, hung out with them and married their women. Instead of defending the Israelites from the Philistines, Samson puts himself right into their hands!

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Patriarchs and Prophets. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

What I Don't Know Versus What I Do Know

When discussing sensitive topics such as suicide, it is important to practice a principle of teaching and learning that is simply stated: *Don't let what you don't know confuse you about what you do know.* It's completely OK to admit that there are things we cannot see. Therefore, we need to focus our minds on the things we can know and do in order to respond to what God wants us to learn. Clearly, when we can't know the motives of those who end their life, we must adamantly protect students from references about whether "Samson" or "Judas" will be in heaven or not.

You would have thought that he would have gotten wise to Delilah's scheme after her doing to him the very things he told her would make him weak—three times! But his moral weakness along with his previous choices in life blinded him. Instead of protecting his secret and honoring God, he gave in to Delilah's whining.

The next time Delilah called the Philistine rulers, Samson found his strength gone. After having broken every Nazirite vow, God left Samson—he would now face the Philistines without God's blessings and protection.

The Philistines took him, put out his eyes, and made him to work as an ox or donkey by turning a heavy mill. No doubt whenever they would pass by, they would mock and tease him. During this time Samson came to realize his true condition and repented. As his hair began to grow, his strength returned.

Celebrating a great feast to their god, Dagon, the Philistines had Samson brought to the temple. Samson used this opportunity to ask God to give him his strength to honor Him by destroying the temple and the Philistines. That day, in the name of God, Samson sought to salvage all the lost opportunities and failures of his life.

In his death, he killed more Philistines than throughout his lifetime.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Have your students look up the Bible verses below to answer the following questions.

What does the Bible say about temptation? Galatians 6:7-8

What lesson does Samson's life teach us? Proverbs 3:6; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Matthew 22:37

How does God promise that He will help us remain faithful? 1 Corinthians 10:13

How can we escape temptation? James 4:7-8

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Let's look again at Judges 13–16.

1. What is the first thing we notice about Samson in Judges 13? (He was born miraculously and prophetically.)

2. What was Samson's focus in Judges 14 and 15? (Although he was devoted to God, his behavior, choices, and associations were not in accordance with God's plan for his life.)

3. What happened to Samson in Judges 16? (He was brought low by following his own sinful desires.)

4. In his final moments Samson, according to *Patriarchs and Prophets*, "learned more of his own weakness than he had ever known before; and his afflictions led him to repentance" (p. 566).

God's grace toward Samson is revealed in that he is mentioned as one of the "heroes of faith" in Hebrews 11:32. "And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets."



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 54.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
OCTOBER 07 2023

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Judges 13–16 .
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 54.

consequences



Photo © Thinkstock 2011

keytext

"Then Samson prayed to the LORD, 'Sovereign LORD, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.' . . . Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived."

(Judges 16:28, 30, NIV)

flashlight

"In suffering and humiliation, a sport for the Philistines, Samson learned more of his own weakness than he had ever known before; and his afflictions led him to repentance" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 566).

what do you think?

Agree or disagree:

How do the decisions we make about the little things in our everyday life contribute to how we will make decisions about the bigger, more important, things in life?

_____

_____

_____

_____

did you know?

What is a Nazarite Vow?" The word "Nazarite" simply means to be separated or consecrated. This commitment meant that the individual (man or woman) would, for a set time: (1) Consume no wine, grape juice, raisins—anything grape. (2) let no razor cut their hair, or (3) avoid being around or touching anything dead. A New Testament example might be found in Romans 12:1: "Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God."

INTO THE STORY

"Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, 'Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.'. . .

"So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him."

"Now Samson . . . told his father and mother, saying, 'I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.'

"Then his father and mother said to him, 'Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?'

"And Samson said to his father, 'Get her for me, for she pleases me well.' "

"And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines."

"Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, 'Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him.'. . .

"And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him . . . that he told her all his heart, and said to her, 'No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.' . . .

"Then she lulled him to sleep . . . and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. And she said, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' So he awoke. . . . But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

"Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes. . . . They bound him . . . and he became a grinder in the prison. However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.

"Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god. . . .

"They called for Samson. . . . Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, 'Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them.' Now the temple was full . . . about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed.

"Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, 'O LORD GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!' And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. Then Samson said, 'Let me die with the Philistines!' And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell. . . . So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life"
(Judges 13:2-5, 24; 14:1-3; 15:20; 16:4, 5, 16, 17, 19-23, 25-30, NKJV).

OUT OF THE STORY

Read the full story of Samson's life in Judges 13-16. You'll see that he was often determined to have life his way.

What was the source of Samson's power?

_____
_____

In what way did the choices in Samson's life impact his future?

_____
_____

What words in this story reveal God's mercy on Samson?

_____
_____

What was God's purpose for Samson's life?

_____
_____

What do you think are three valuable lessons this story teaches?

_____
_____
_____

How does the end of Samson's story teach both sadness and hope?

_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me" **(2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV).**

"And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies" **(Hebrews 11:32-34, NIV).**

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" **(Hebrews 12:11, NIV).**

"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent" **(Revelation 3:19, NIV).**

"Let God weigh me in honest scales and he will know that I am blameless—if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled, then may others eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted" **(Job 31:6-8, NIV).**

"God is my strength and power, and He makes my way perfect." **(2 Samuel 22:33, NKJV).**

"For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away" **(Psalm 31:10, NKJV).**

further insight

"None are so sinful that they cannot find strength, purity, and righteousness in Jesus, who died for them. He is waiting to strip them of their garments stained and polluted with sin, and to put upon them the white robes of righteousness; He bids them live and not die."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 52.

Sabbath

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

As you respond to the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson, what does this passage say about true strength and how we should relate to our weaknesses? How does this passage relate to Samson? Where does he seem strong and where do you see his weaknesses? In the end do you think Samson learned what Paul meant in our reading today?

Sunday

Read Judges 13–16.

What does Samson's story show us about living up to our potential and how easy it is to get off track? What does it tell us about God's grace and patience even when we sin again and again? As you read the end of Samson's story, do you sense more triumph or tragedy?

Monday

Read Judges 16:28-30.

What evidences in this verse lead you to better understand Samson's heart in the final moments of his life? What comparison can you make with Samson to the thief on the cross who also said in his final moments, "Remember me"?

Tuesday

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9.

In this week's *Flashlight* quote from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen White claims that Samson "learned more of his own weakness than he had ever known before; and his afflictions led him to repentance." Samson was not only a mighty man of strength—he was a judge. In what areas of your life do you need to have more strength? What areas of your life do you need to feel a greater sense of your weakness? Whom do you know today that is in touch with their strengths and weaknesses? How do they negotiate through life successfully? What lessons can you learn from their walk?

Wednesday

Samson had physical strength, but his spiritual weakness got the best of him. He could have accomplished much more had he learned to control his passions and let God lead.

Read the *Punch Lines* in this week's lesson and identify the passage that is speaking to you today. Why does this Scripture seem to be so relevant to you now? Continue to reflect on the passages and cooperate with God to become disciplined and open to His work in your life.

Thursday

Read Hebrews 11:32-34.

In this week's lesson we learn about Samson's life and death. His life is an example of what happens when we allow our own desires to rule instead of following God's plans in how to live. God has a plan for each of us and He will use us to do mighty things to honor Him and help others. Everyone struggles from time to time, and it is important for us to look for opportunities to reach out and help those who may be uncertain of God's leading. You might know someone who appears strong yet is having a difficult time. Reach out to them with kindness and words of encouragement. Point them to Jesus and pray with them. What Bible verse could you use to help them in their walk with God?

Friday

Read 2 Samuel 22:33.

Do you know someone that does not accept counsel nor seek advice? How does this lead to trouble? Life offers each of us many challenges. Is it possible to help someone that makes decisions based only on what they want and desire? How can you make sure that you are open to counsel? From whom do you feel comfortable asking for Godly advice?

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 54.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.