CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 07 2023

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

consequences



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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).

key text

"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)

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?

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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?

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

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

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

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

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

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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.

connectingtolife

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.