

November 14, 2012

Samson

Judges 14-16

LESSON FOCUS

“Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.” (Psalm 119:2)

Today’s Bible Lesson:

The story of Samson begins with the words, “Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord” (Judges 13:1). This time they were disciplined by the Philistines under whose awful oppression they lived for 40 years. Here is this story, we read about Samson – the man appointed by God before birth to begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines (Judges 13:5). It is a story filled with opportunity – and failure.

In those days physical strength was often what made a leader great. In this case, God used Samson’s incredible strength to begin the deliverance from the Philistines. Everything should have been in Samson’s favor, but he entered into an unholy alliance which resulted in his downfall. The final fall occurred at Gaza. Nothing is more pathetic than Samson, blind and bound, grinding in the house of the Philistines, when he ought to have been delivering his nation from them. Samson’s failure illustrates the fact that no person who does not fear God and love righteousness can do real service.

This principle of godly obedience is the real lesson of the book of Judges. There is a phrase that runs through the book: “Everyone did as he saw fit” (Judges 17:6). We find the people repeatedly turning away from Jehovah and disobeying as they worshiped the gods of the nations around them. They forgot that God had chosen them for a purpose – to tell the world the truth – there is only one true God. The book of Judges is full of rebellion, punishment and misery.

The book of Judges begins with compromise and ends with confusion. This is what happens in every unsundered life of disobedience to God. But God hears our cry of repentance, even as He heard Samson’s cry, and restores us to favor again.

BIBLE STORY

Samson

Judges 14-16

Read from your Bible. Ask students to find it in a Bible too. Those that can read can follow along. Choose the passages you would like to read aloud. Use visuals to help tell the story.

“Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.” (Psalm 119:2)

“Once again the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord handed them over to the Philistines for 40 years.” (Judges 13:1 NIRV)

The angel visited a man (Manoah) and woman from the tribe of Dan. He told them that they would have a son who would be special to God. Their son would save Israel from their enemies, the Philistines. He would be a Nazarite. A Nazarite was someone who was set apart for God. He must follow special rules and obey God.

One rule was that he would not cut his hair. He was not supposed to drink wine. He was also supposed to stay away from dead bodies. (Judges 13:2-5)

Samson grew up and decided to marry a Philistine woman. God had instructed the Israelites not to marry people who were not Israelites. (Deuteronomy 7:3) The woman Samson wanted to marry did not believe in God. She was from the race of the enemies of Israel. Samson’s parents explained the importance of finding someone who loved God, but Samson wouldn’t listen. He chose someone who did not have faith in God. He chose to do wrong. (Judges 14:1-3)

He went into the city and enjoyed his time with her. Samson’s parents arranged for them to be married. (Remember, in those days, the parents set up who a person married.) Samson challenged the people of her race to figure out a riddle. Secretly, they went to Samson’s fiancé and talked her into finding out the answer. (Judges 14:4-17)

Samson left, huffing and puffing. He was furious. He didn’t control his anger and it became sin in his life. Later, he found out that his fiancé was given to his best friend! Samson was so angry that he burnt up all their fields by tying up torches into foxes’ tails. (Judges 14:18-20)

Samson continued to show his strength. It was strength that came from God. God kept His promise to Samson’s parents even though Samson was disobedient.

One day he fell in love with a woman named Delilah (Da-lie-la). She lived in another city and she didn’t believe in God. (Judges 16:4) Some of the kings of the other countries found out that Samson liked her. Secretly they came to her and offered her lots of silver if she would find out where Samson’s strength came from. She agreed. Her greed and desire for money was more important to her than a relationship with Samson. (Judges 16:5)

Delilah asked Samson what would make him helpless. He told her that if someone tied him up with new string, he would be weak. (Judges 16:6-7) That night she tied him up while he was asleep. The kings were in the other room ready to capture him if it worked. (Judges 16:8-9) Surprise! Samson broke the string. Delilah was upset because she wouldn’t get the money. (Judges 16:10)

Again, she asked Samson how someone could tie him up. Samson told her to weave seven braids of his hair into a loom with cloth. That night after Samson was sound asleep, she did this. But it didn't work! Samson had not told her the truth again. Now she was embarrassed again. (Judges 16:11-15) Day after day Delilah kept nagging Samson to know the truth. Finally, Samson got tired of hearing her cry. He told her all the truth. He told her that he had made a special promise to God not to cut his hair. He explained that if he cut his hair, the Spirit of God would not be with him and he would be weak. (Judges 16:16-17)

Delilah knew that this was the truth. She told the kings to be there that night. (Judges 16:18) Sure enough, when Delilah cut off his hair, he was helpless. Samson did not know that his strength was gone. Delilah's people grabbed Samson. They blinded him and made him a slave. (During this time—his hair started to grow back.) (Judges 16:19-22)

One day, they decided to have a large feast to honor their gods. The kings wanted to show off their slave, Samson. They paraded him around and placed him in between two large columns. (Judges 16:23-25) Samson prayed to God and asked for strength one more time. Samson turned back to God and God heard his prayer.

Suddenly He shouted, "Let me die with these people!" Then he pushed the columns apart. The whole place caved in. Everyone was killed, including Samson. (Judges 16:26-31) God was faithful to deliver Israel from their enemies.

Jesus Christ gives us strength. He helps us face our enemies. Jesus will help us deal with bad things. God wants us to do right. "Don't ever get tired of doing the right thing." (II Thessalonians 3:13 NIV) He will help us do what is right.

From the time he was born, Samson had been set apart to serve God. He was a Nazarite. But Samson chose to do wrong and he suffered the consequences for his sin. However, God was faithful to deliver Israel. God wants us to choose to do what is right.

Review Questions

- 1. What did Israel do?** (The Israelites did evil before God.)
- 2. What did God do?** (God handed them over to the Philistines.)
- 3. What happened next?** (God sent Samson to deliver Israel.)
- 4. What did Samson do?** (Samson chose to do wrong.)
- 5. What did God do?** (God was faithful to deliver Israel.)

Think about it — Samson chose to do wrong. He suffered the consequences. Talk about the consequences of sin.

Even though Samson chose to do wrong, God was faithful to deliver Israel. Talk about God's faithfulness.

BIBLE CHALLENGE

Read this passage from your Bible. Ask students to locate it in a Bible too. Help them learn this verse.

“Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.” (Psalm 119:2)

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Seek and Find

Supplies:

Bible and blindfold

Lead the activity:

Invite a student to wear a blindfold and instruct this student to complete a task blindfolded.

For example: “Walk to the table across the room and pick up the Bible, then find the pens on the teach cart.”

Repeat with other volunteers and additional tasks. Occasionally ask: **What would make it easier to find what you’re looking for? If you really wanted to do what I ask you to do, what would make it easier?**

Wearing a blindfold makes it difficult to find what you’re looking for. Ignoring or disobeying God’s instructions is like wearing a blindfold, and it gets us into lots of trouble. Listen to Psalm 119:2 to find what happens to people who learn about and follow God’s instructions.

“Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.” (Psalm 119:2)

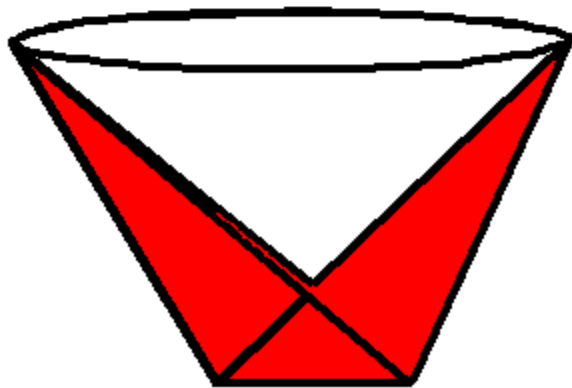
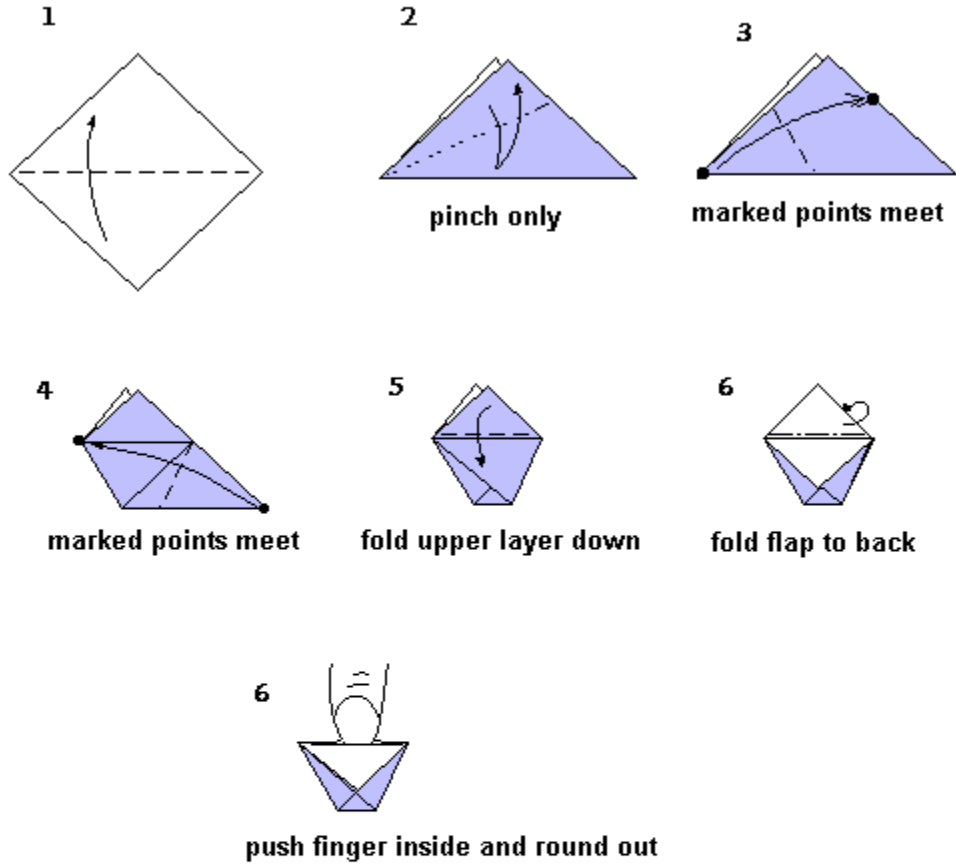
“Statutes” is another word for God’s instructions. When we seek or try to follow God’s instructions, we can find the best way to live.

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Our Bible lesson today is about someone who got in trouble because he ignored God’s instructions. We’re going to fold paper and if we follow the instructions just right, we’ll make a fun shape.

Drinking Cup

DRINKING CUP



traditional model
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GAMES

Game 1: Strong Obstacles

Bible Focus: Judges 14—16

Lead the Game

Samson kept doing things that made it hard for him to follow the instructions God had given him. His wrong actions were obstacles—things that kept him from obeying God. We're going to play a game where we form an obstacle course with our bodies.

Divide the group into two teams.

Each team plans a human obstacle course for the other team to move through. Obstacles might be a student on hands and knees to hop over, a student standing with legs apart to form a tunnel to crawl through or two students lying next to each other to jump over.

In the playing area, first team forms the course.

Volunteer from first team demonstrates how to move through the course. Then each member of the second team gets a turn to complete the course. Human obstacles are not allowed to move while a team is going through the course. After completing the course, second team forms their obstacle course for members of first team to complete.

Option

Students use classroom or outdoor objects to create obstacle courses.

Discussion Questions

- 1. When do kids your age sometimes find it hard to obey God's instructions?**
- 2. What are some obstacles (problems, people, etc.) that sometimes get in the way of obeying God?**

Game 2: On Guard

Bible Focus: Judges 16:4-22

Materials

Bibles, masking tape, measuring stick, cardboard box, scrap paper in two or three different colors

Preparation

Use masking tape to make a 5-foot square in the middle of the playing area. Place the box in the middle of the masking-tape square.

Lead the Game

Samson made some bad choices when he was tempted. God's Word tells us to be on our guard so that we won't make bad choices in tempting situations. We can ask God for self-control to help us always make the best choice. Let's practice being on our guard in this game.

Students form two or three teams. Teams stand on different sides of the playing area. Give each team one color of scrap paper. Students wad paper into balls. Invite one volunteer from each team to be a guard. Guards stand inside the masking-tape square in front of any team except their own.

At your signal, students attempt to throw their paper balls past the guard and into the box, making sure to stay behind the masking-tape line at all times. The guards try to block the paper balls.

After a short time, signal students to stop throwing the paper balls. Ask another volunteer from each team to collect their paper balls from the box, counting how many balls of their team's color are in the box. A volunteer from the team with the most balls in the box answers one of the Discussion Questions below. Students collect paper balls and play game again, choosing new volunteers as guards for the teams.

Discussion Questions

- 1. When might you find it hard to show self-control and need to remember to be on guard? Why?**
- 2. Not having self-control and not being on our guard against tempting situations often gets us into trouble. What might happen if you don't have self-control when you are tempted to?**
- 3. What kinds of good choices might you make when you depend on God for self-control?**

SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS

Samson chose to do wrong. He suffered the consequences. Talk about the consequences of sin.

Even though Samson chose to do wrong, God was faithful to deliver Israel. Talk about God's faithfulness.

Samson was a man of great strength, but all that changed when Samson stopped following God's instructions. While these experiments won't require the strength of Samson, they're still pretty fun!

Can't Lift A Finger

Put your hand on a table with your middle finger tucked way under. Don't let your middle finger move! Now lift all of your fingers (if you can!).



Can You Fold a Piece of Paper More Than 9 Times?

Did you know that it's pretty much impossible to fold any piece of paper in half more than 8 or 9 times? Give it a try!



Linked Paper Clips

Fold a dollar bill (or any piece of paper) one-third of the way, then attach a paper clip to it.



Fold the other side, then attach a paper clip to it.



Slowly pull the edges of the dollar bill apart.
The picture on the right shows the dollar bill when its edges are pulled almost all the way apart.



When the dollar bill is fully straightened out, the paper clips will fly up into the air, linked together!
Make sure to aim the paper clips away from people!



The Amazing Jumping Rubber Band

Put a rubber band over your index and middle fingers.



Then secretly close your fist so that all four of your fingers are inside the rubber band.



Now show someone the rubber band and point to the two fingers which are inside the rubber band.
As you're pointing you can say, "The rubber band is on these two fingers, right?"



Then open up your hand and say, "Wrong!"

Can you figure out how to do this with two rubber bands so that they switch places on your fingers?

