

SAMSON AND THE PHILISTINES

JUDGES 13-16



KEY PASSAGE: 2 Chronicles 7:14

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Samson's great strength came from God alone. He had no power to defeat the Philistines on his own. We cannot please God on our own. Through faith in Jesus, people are saved from sin and receive the Holy Spirit, who helps them live to please God.

STORY POINT: Samson learned that strength comes from God alone.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The life of Samson showcases the downfall of a mighty hero whose story draws some similarities to Jesus. Samson's shortcomings, however, reveal the need for a greater deliverer. Only by faith in the Son of God can we please our Father in heaven and get a proper view of where true strength comes from.

What comparisons and contrasts can we make between Samson and Jesus? What can Christians glean about the source of their strength?

In Samson's story, the angel of the Lord delivered the news that a woman who was unable to conceive would have a son. This has similarities to the New Testament's even greater account of the miraculous conception of Jesus to the virgin Mary. We later read that Delilah, whom Samson loved, was bribed with silver to betray him into the hands of his enemies, just as Judas did to Jesus. Both Samson and Jesus were called to bring salvation to God's people amid the oppression they faced, though only Jesus was able to do so in a lasting way by perfectly obeying God's commands.

Samson's strength came from the Spirit of God and Samson's adherence to the angel's command that he not cut his hair. As a Nazirite, Samson was called to be set apart in holy service to God, though he disobeyed God's call to abstain from the unclean and idolatrous ways of the world. The downfall of Samson revealed the need for a greater hero who could fulfill God's commands and deliver His people once and for all.

Though Samson was an esteemed warrior, his strength was not his own; it came from God who called him to walk in holiness. Like Samson, we cannot please God on our own. We need the power of His Spirit to help us walk in His ways (Galatians 5:16). Jesus is the better Samson—our perfect sacrifice who suffered in our place to create lasting transformation amid our helpless and hopeless state. Lead boys and girls to see that when we place our trust in Jesus, the Holy Spirit dwells within us, allowing us to walk victoriously in faith.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10-15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25-30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- "Finish It" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- paper towels, 3 or 4 different brands
- various objects such as pennies, oranges, apples, marbles, etc.

Session Starter (Option 2)

- cardstock pieces, 1 per kid
- hole punch
- various colors of yarn
- various colors chenille craft stems



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- "Match the Judge" printable, 1 per group

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- paper plates, 1 per kid
- paperclips, 1 per kid
- metal brads, 1 per kid
- dry erase board and marker

Reflection and Prayer

- Bible Story Coloring Page (optional)



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- countdown video
- Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- "Samson and the Philistines" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Old Testament Kingdoms Map (optional)
- yarn (optional)

Questions from Kids

- "Unit 8, Session 4" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- "Barber Family Photo" printable

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "If My People (2 Chronicles 7:14)" song
- worship song of your choice (optional)



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “What are some qualities others have seen in you? Are you athletic? Are you kind? Are you truthful? How does hearing these things about yourself make you feel?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Finish It” activity page.

SAY “Today, we will see how God called a man named Samson to be a judge. We’ll learn that Samson was known for his great strength.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: WHAT'S STRONGER?

Before the session, gather three or four different brands of paper towels and objects to test their strength, such as pennies, oranges, apples, marbles, etc. Be sure to use the same objects for each paper towel.

Form kids into groups of three or four. Provide each group with two sheets of paper towels and the objects being used to test the strength of the paper towels. First, direct two kids to hold a dry paper towel while the other kids place the objects on top, counting how many they place until the towel rips. Invite kids to tell you which paper towel held the most items before ripping. Repeat the experiment, but this time perform it with a wet paper towel.

SAY “Some paper towels are stronger than others just like some people are stronger than others. In today’s story, we will hear about a judge named Samson who had incredible strength. We’ll see that eventually **SAMSON LEARNED THAT STRENGTH COMES FROM GOD ALONE.**”

OPTION 2: STYLE IT



Provide each kid with a piece of cardstock, markers, and scissors. Invite kids to draw a picture of their head and face on the cardstock. Then lead kids to cut out their heads. Using a hole punch, assist kids in punching holes around the edge of their heads. Provide kids with different colors of yarn and chenille craft stems. Guide kids to string the yarn and chenille craft stems through the holes to create hair. Kids may need help tying the yarn or twisting the chenille craft stems to secure the pieces of “hair.” Encourage kids to be creative and style their hair how they like, making it long or short, different colors, or even curly. Chenille craft stems can be manipulated to create curls. Invite kids to share their hairstyles with the group.

SAY “You took great care in creating your hairstyles. Today, we will see how Samson needed to take special care of his hair. God had chosen Samson to be set apart to serve Him. Because of this, Samson was never to cut his hair. Let’s see what happened when Samson’s hair was cut.”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “Welcome, kids! My name is [your name], and I am glad to see you! If you have your Bibles with you, please take them out. [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] The Bible is God’s Word to us and helps us know who God is and His plan to save people from sin. In today’s story God’s people were once again in trouble because of their sinful ways. Yet, God didn’t give up on them. He sent another judge named Samson to rescue His people.

Samson was strong and mighty! We’ll see how **SAMSON LEARNED THAT STRENGTH COMES FROM GOD ALONE**. [Display the Story Point Poster.] Let’s prepare our hearts to hear our Bible story. Pray with me: ‘Lord, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for not giving up on sinners. Help us listen and hear truth from Your Word through the story of Samson. In Jesus’ name, amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “Does anyone remember the big picture question we have been thinking about? [Allow responses.] Our big picture question is, **What is repentance?** Do you remember the answer? [Allow responses.] **Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.**

Sometimes we like to think we can do things in our own strength, but the Bible tells us that we cannot please God or earn salvation on our own. We must repent of our sin and trust in Jesus to please God. Through Samson’s story, we will see how he could not defeat God’s enemies in his own strength. In a similar way, we cannot defeat sin in our own strength. When we repent of sin and turn to Jesus, God saves us! ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “Over the last few weeks, we have seen God’s people turn away from Him and His commands. Their sin led to other nations ruling over them and attacking them. But God remained faithful and sent judges to rescue the Israelites from their enemies. We’ve learned about Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, and Gideon. Today, we will see how God gave Samson strength to rescue His people from the Philistines. ”



Worship



* Firm Foundation
* way maker
* offering



LEARN the Bible Story



1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Judges 13–16. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Samson and the Philistines.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

SAMSON AND THE PHILISTINES

“The Israelites again did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord, so He handed them over to the Philistines for 40 years.

The angel of the Lord appeared to a man from the tribe of Dan and his wife. The angel gave them special instructions to prepare for the birth of their son. The angel also said, “Never cut his hair, because he will be set apart to save Israel from the Philistines.” The man and his wife had a son just as the angel said. **They named their son Samson.**

When Samson grew up, he decided to marry a Philistine woman. Samson and his parents went to meet her. When he went to speak with her, a young lion came roaring at Samson. The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on him, and he tore the lion apart with his bare hands. The Lord made Samson very strong!

Once, Samson used the jawbone of a donkey to defeat 1,000 Philistines. The Philistines feared Samson’s strength.

Later, Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah. The Philistines wanted to know why Samson was so strong. They decided to pay Delilah to betray Samson.

Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me, where does your great strength come from?”

He replied, “If someone ties me up with seven fresh bowstrings, I will become weak like any other man.”

When he was sleeping, Delilah tied him up with seven fresh bowstrings and called the Philistines to ambush him. He snapped the bowstrings as if they were yarn. Delilah was upset, because Samson had lied to her.

Twice more, Delilah asked how Samson could be defeated, and he told her two different lies. Delilah was very upset, and Samson finally told her the truth: “My hair has never been cut because I am set apart for God. If my head is shaved, I will be weak.” She had his head shaved while he was sleeping, and the Philistines captured him.

The Philistines rejoiced and thanked their false god that Samson had been defeated. **They chained him between two pillars that supported a Philistine temple. Samson prayed, “God, please strengthen me once more so that I may defeat the Philistines.”** He pushed against the pillars with all his might, and

STORYTELLING TIPS

Map It: Point out the location of Philistia (H3) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Tell kids that the Philistines lived in this area.

Cut It: Tie some strands of yarn together to act as Samson’s hair. Cut the yarn when you describe how Samson’s hair was cut.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Samson and all the leaders of the Philistines died as the temple collapsed.

Christ Connection: Samson's great strength came from God alone. He had no power to defeat the Philistines on his own. We cannot please God on our own. Through faith in Jesus, people are saved from sin and receive the Holy Spirit, who helps them live to please God. ”

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ Before Samson was born, he was called by God to be a judge for Israel. Do you remember what the angel of the Lord told Samson's mother? **[Allow responses.]** The angel told Samson's mother to never cut his hair. The angel also gave some other commands for Samson to follow because he was set apart by God for a special purpose. As Samson grew up, the Lord was with Samson and gave him great strength. He defeated armies and tore apart lions.

But then Samson met Delilah, and he loved her. What did the Philistines ask Delilah to do? **[Allow responses.]** They asked Delilah to figure out where Samson's strength came from so they could defeat him. Each time Delilah asked Samson where his strength came from, he lied to her. Finally, Samson told her the truth: 'My hair has never been cut, because I am a Nazirite to God from birth. If I am shaved, my strength will leave me, and I will become weak and be like any other man.' Delilah betrayed Samson and had someone cut Samson's hair while he slept. Then, the Bible tells us, that the Lord left Samson. Without the Lord, Samson was weak and was captured by the Philistines.

Later, when Samson was standing between two pillars in the Philistines' temple, Samson prayed for God to give him strength one more time. What do you think Samson learned when he was able to push down the pillars? **[Allow responses.]** **SAMSON LEARNED THAT STRENGTH COMES FROM GOD ALONE.** Samson's hair never held any power. God alone had given Samson strength. Samson had no power to defeat the Philistines on his own. We cannot please God on our own. Through faith in Jesus, people are saved from sin and receive the Holy Spirit, who helps them live to please God. ”



3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

Gospel Poster

SAY “ Even though Samson was a great warrior, he was also sinful and disobedient. But the Bible honors Samson for his faith in God (Hebrews 11:32). While Samson stood in the Philistine temple, he knew only God could give him the strength to defeat the Philistines. We must also recognize that we have no power to save ourselves. Like Samson, we need faith in God to save us. God sent Jesus to save us from our sin. ”

(Tip: Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 8, Session 4” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How can we hold on to our faith when we make mistakes?
2. Why is having faith in Jesus the only way to please God?



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Display the "Barber Family Photo." Remind kids that Ricardo and Meyna Barber live in Portland, Oregon, and started a new church, One HOPE Fellowship, in 2019. Tell kids that Ricardo and Meyna have four children who all do ministry together.

SAY "One HOPE Fellowship wants to find ways to meet people's physical needs while sharing the good news about Jesus. One HOPE cosponsored a free medical clinic and helped people who needed money to pay for their rent. Helping people in the community allowed the church members to meet people and tell the people about Jesus. The Barbers hope that God will use One Hope to be a launching point for other church plants in the Portland area. We can continue to pray God will help the Barbers and strengthen them as they share the good news."

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)



Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 2 Chronicles 7:14 together.

SAY "No matter how far we have strayed from God, He always welcomes us to repent and turn to Jesus. God loves us and wants us to live with Him forever."

Lead kids to partner with a friend and direct them to alternate saying one word of the key passage at a time. Then combine kids into groups of four and go around saying the verse. Continue until you have one large group saying the verse one word each person. Then, say the key passage as a group one final time.

Lead kids to sing "If My People (2 Chronicles 7:14)." You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY "Dear God, thank You for calling us to come to You, even when we have sinned and disobeyed You. Thank You for Jesus who died for us so we can be forgiven of our sin and live to please You by faith. In Jesus' name, amen."

Transition from LEARN to LOVE





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Mediterranean Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Judges 13. Remind kids that the Bible is filled with stories about imperfect people, like Samson, who God used for His glory. Through their stories, God shows us more about Himself and how all people need Jesus as their Savior.

Consider pointing out the location of Canaan (F10) on the Old Testament Mediterranean Map to help kids understand where this story took place. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Judges 13:5 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

SAY 🗨️ Before Samson was born, God called Samson to a specific purpose: He was meant to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines. Samson might seem like an unlikely person for God to use. He was prideful, had a bad temper, and disobeyed God. But God still used him, and ultimately Samson brought God glory.

We are all imperfect, sinful people like Samson, but God loves us and wants us to turn to Jesus to be saved. When God saves us through Jesus, He also calls us to be a part of His purposes for His glory. God can use His people to share the good news of Jesus, be an encouragement in their faith, and serve one another in love. 🗨️

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY 🗨️ God gave Samson special strength. God gives His people gifts as well. What gifts do you think God has given you? 🗨️

Challenge each kid to share gifts they might have such as athletic gifts, artistic gifts, musical gifts, social gifts, etc. Discuss how God also gives followers of Jesus spiritual gifts to help build up the church and glorify God.

SAY 🗨️ Samson gave his life to rescue the Israelites from the Philistines. Who gave His life to save people forever? 🗨️

Remind kids of Jesus' self-sacrifice on the cross for our sin. Discuss how Samson's death was limited to a physical rescue as Israel was freed from physical oppression. Tell kids that Jesus' sacrifice frees or saves people from sin for all time. Discuss how faith in Jesus also leads to the gift of the Holy Spirit who helps us live to please God as we rely on His power.

SAY 🗨️ How does God give Christians strength? 🗨️

Discuss how God gives believers strength through the power of the Holy Spirit at work within them. Tell kids this is not necessarily a physical strength, like Samson, but it is a spiritual strength to follow God and His ways. Help kids understand how the Holy Spirit empowers believers to follow God, share the gospel, turn from sin, produce good fruit, and love others.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: MATCH THE JUDGE



Before the session, print a set of 12 cards from the “Match the Judge” printable for each group of two to four kids. Cut the cards from the printable. Distribute the cards to each group and direct kids to turn the cards face down in three rows of four.

Challenge kids in each group to take turns flipping over two cards, one at a time, to find a match. If kids find a match, they remove the matching cards and take another turn. If they do not find a match, the cards are set back down and the next kid takes a turn. The kid with the most matches in each group wins. Play again as time allows.

SAY “Over the past few weeks, we have learned about the judges Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, and Samson. What did God call these judges to do? [Allow responses.] God called these judges to save His people from their enemies. No judge was perfect. They all sinned. But they do point us to the perfect Judge—Jesus—who came to save people from their sins once and for all.”

OPTION 2: THE ABCD OF JUDGES

On a dry erase board, write the following letters and words: A *abandon*, B *bondage*, C *cried*, D *delivered*. Provide each kid with a paper plate and guide them to divide the plate into four sections. Direct kids to write each letter and word in individual sections of their plate. Tell kids what each word means and how it relates to the cycle we see in Judges. For example, *bondage* relates to how the Israelites were ruled by their enemies. Then provide each kid with a metal brad and a paper clip to create a spinner. The paperclip will be held to the center of the plate by placing the brad through the paper clip and pushing the brad through the plate. Invite kids to flick the spinner. Call on a kid and ask what letter he landed on. Then ask him a question regarding the letter. For example, if he landed on D, you can ask, “What judge helped deliver God’s people from Sisera’s army?” (Deborah) Repeat as time allows.

SAY “The book of Judges reminds us that all people are sinful and need to be saved. While these judges helped rescue God’s people, only Jesus can take away our sin forever.”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.