

Samson and His Women: The Foolishness of Lust



SABBATH—AUGUST 4

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Judges 14–16.

MEMORY VERSE: “Here is what people who belong to this world do. They try to satisfy [give into] what their sinful natures [hearts] want to do. All of this comes from the world. It doesn't [does not] come from the Father [God]” (1 John 2:16, NlrV).

THE STORY OF SAMSON TROUBLES THE MINDS OF MANY MODERN READERS. A lot of things happened that just seem hard to understand. This only goes to show that, as Paul said, we see through “a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12). Only after Jesus returns will we understand things that we do not understand now. But we understand enough of the story to learn a few good lessons from Samson and his wife and from Samson and Delilah.

Delilah was never the wife of Samson. But the experiences Samson had with the woman he married earlier were much the same as experiences he had later with Delilah, the woman he later fell in love with. (1) Both women were Philistines. (2) The Philistine leaders asked both women to trap Samson. (3) At first, Samson would not let the women trap him. But in the end, Samson gave in to both women. Samson did not marry Delilah, but it is her name, not that of his nameless wife, that we remember when we think of Samson.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY UP CLOSE: God gave Samson great gifts and a calling to serve Him. Samson was also a man of great passions (feelings and desires). Samson's story is a sad one. It shows us how Samson let his passions get in the way of serving God.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 5**GOD CALLS SAMSON TO SERVE HIM (Judges 13:5)**

In Judges 13 Manoah and his wife are given special work to do. How did they know God was calling them to do this work? What were they asked to do? What were they told not to do?

Judges 13 makes it very clear that Samson was to have great power in Israel. God planned to use this man to do a special work. Samson was to begin to “deliver” Israel from the Philistines (Judges 13:5). The Hebrew word for “deliver” comes from the word *ysha*. The name “Jesus” and the Hebrew word for “Savior,” *Moshiah*, come from this word.

Samson clearly had a great work to do! But, working for God does not make a person perfect or free from sin.

What do Judges 13:24, 25 tell us about Samson?

What do Judges 14:1–3 and Judges 16:1 tell us about Samson?

Samson had a great work to do. But Samson showed some dangerous weaknesses. Samson’s feelings for women were guided by how beautiful the women were. He said to his parents, “ ‘I’ve seen a Philistine

woman in Timnah. Get her for me. I want her to be my wife’ ” (Judges 14:1, 2, NIV). Later, Samson saw a prostitute¹ in Gaza and went to spend the night with her (Judges 16:1). At this time Samson should have been doing God’s work. He should have been true to God. But he let his desires have power over him. And the women he desired were Philistines, the enemies of Israel. How strange! Samson is called to “deliver [save]” Israel from the Philistines. But he marries a Philistine instead.



Samson let his desires for the wrong women overpower him. He told his parents to plan his wedding to a woman who did not believe in God.

What has God “called” you to do? What weakness in your character² stops you from doing that special work? What promises can you claim from the Bible to help you do whatever God has called you to do?

1. prostitute—a person who earns a living by taking money for sex.

2. character—who you are; all the things that a person does, feels, and thinks are what a person is made of; your character is the sum of the choices you make, such as a choice to be honest or to cheat.

MONDAY—AUGUST 6**SAMSON'S WEDDING DAY
(Judges 14)****What mistakes did Samson make
in Judges 14?**

Samson often went to the Philistine towns west of his home. He desired the women there. He desired them even though they were Philistines. The Israelites looked down on the Philistines. They called them uncircumcised.³ It is the same as calling the Philistines heathen⁴ (1 Samuel 14:6). The Philistines ruled over Israel at that time (Judges 14:4). Samson's desire for non-Israelite women caused his parents a lot of concern (worry). This is because of Samson's special birth and the work God called him to do (Judges 14:3, 4).

Also, from the time before the Flood, godly men had been interested in beautiful ungodly women. As a result, the godly men fell into wickedness (Genesis 6:1–5). King Solomon, too, married many foreign wives who worshiped other gods. These wives came from nations God had warned Israel about (1 Kings 11:1, 2). Solomon's marriages were not just to gain wealth and power. Solomon is said to have “ [held] fast to them [his wives] in love’ ” (1 Kings 11:2, NIV). While these wives turned his heart to other gods, Solomon still worshiped

Yahweh (God), but not with his whole heart (1 Kings 11:4–6).

**What do the actions of the
Philistines tell us in Judges 14?
What kind of people were they?**

Here is an example of just how the wrong influences⁵ can be dangerous. Take a weak believer and put him or her in a place where people do not follow God. Then the results can be very painful for everyone.

**Look carefully and prayerfully at
the influences around you. Are
they helping you grow close to
God? Or are they pulling you away
from Him? What changes must you
make?****TUESDAY—AUGUST 7****SAMSON STRIKES BACK
(Judges 15:1–15)**

Samson's marriage seemed to go from bad to worse. Samson's wife turned against him, but it is easy to see why she did so. For example, look at the evil things her own people threatened to do to her and her family (Judges 14:15). No wonder she was afraid of the Philistines! Perhaps she should have told Samson what happened and asked him to help her and keep her family safe. Anyway, this bad marriage did not last long.

3. uncircumcised—when the foreskin of a male's penis is not cut off or not removed; to be uncircumcised also was a sign in Bible times that a person had not separated from sin and had not agreed to serve God.

4. heathen—a person or people who worship false gods or idols and do not believe in God.

5. influences—power to affect or change persons or things.

Samson became angry and left his wife. This opened the way for the suffering that was to come.

Why did Samson return to his wife in Judges 15:1? What does this tell us about Samson?

No matter what Samson's reasons were, Judges 15:1 seems to show that he was more interested in satisfying⁶ his lust than in making peace with his wife. Whatever his reasons, Samson was not pleased to find out that his wife had been married off to another man. Marriage seems about as difficult back then as it often is today.

What do Samson's answers in Judges 15 tell us about his character?⁷

Samson became very angry after his wife was married to another man. Clearly, he had a terrible temper. And maybe, too, Samson really loved his wife and became angry that she was with another man.

Next, Samson's killing of the Philistines might have come also out of love for his wife. Or maybe he acted out of guilt, because he believed that his burning of the field led to the murder of his wife and her father. A great deal of suffering took place that did not need to take place. If only Samson

had not let his anger control him.

Angry at his wife, Samson walks out on her right away. What would have happened if he would have shown her some mercy, kindness, and forgiveness? How different things might have been! Spend some time at the foot of the cross to understand the forgiveness given to you through Jesus. Now, give that same forgiveness to the next person who makes you angry.

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 8

THE SAD STORY GETS SADDER (Judges 16:1–3)

Judges 15 ended with Samson killing 1,000 Philistines. Ellen G. White wrote, "After Samson's victory, the Israelites made Samson judge. He ruled Israel for twenty years." —Adapted from *Patriarchs and Prophets*,⁸ p. 564. We learn a little of how Samson was to "begin" to deliver (save) Israel (Judges 13:5).

What other leaders in the Bible showed almost the same weaknesses as Samson showed in Judges 16:1–3? What did their mistakes cost them and others?

It was bad enough for Samson to go to a prostitute.⁹ But he dared to go

6. satisfying—meeting the needs or demands of something.

7. character—who you are; all the things that a person does, feels, and thinks are what a person is made of; your character is the sum of the choices you make, such as a choice to be honest or to cheat.

8. patriarchs and prophets—patriarchs were early Bible leaders, such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders, such as Moses; prophets are men and women sent by God to warn us about what will happen in the future.

9. prostitute—a person who earns a living by taking money for sex.

to one in the land of his enemies.

This was really Samson's way of bragging that he was better and smarter and stronger than his enemies. "Samson did sin, but God did not forget him."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 565. Samson escaped with his life. But would he learn his lesson?

What does Judges 16:4–6 tell us about the kind of relationship¹⁰ Samson had with another woman?

Samson really loved Delilah. But Delilah did not seem to return his love.

What does the story in Judges 16:5–20 tell us about the power of love to blind the heart and the mind? What should have been clear to Samson from the beginning? Why did he fail to understand it?

Samson was very foolish to get involved with another Philistine woman. He should have known early on that this woman was not out for his good. The power of "love" was so strong over Samson that he would not stop spending time with Delilah. It was very clear that he should have fled right from the start.

How carefully do you guard your emotions (feelings) and your pas-

sions?¹¹ How many "good" people ruin their lives and the lives of their loved ones by not guarding the emotions? What is the best way to protect yourself from this trap?



Delilah nagged Samson until he told her the secret of his strength. Delilah had Samson's hair cut off while he slept.

THURSDAY—AUGUST 9

BLINDED BY LOVE (Judges 16:16–31)

If you could get a spiritual¹² lesson from the story in Judges 16:16–31 that would have meaning for us today, what would it be, and why?

God made men and women and planned for them to be married. Marriage is to be a symbol¹³ of the unity¹⁴ and closeness He wants to have with His church (Revelation

10. relationship—your connection (tie) to another person and how deep your feelings are for that person.

11. passions—strong feelings and desires.

12. spiritual—having to do with God; holy.

13. symbol—object, mark, sign, or person that stands for, or means the same thing as, another object, idea, or thing.

14. unity—two or more people or things joined together as one; two or more people in agreement in ideas, feelings, and so on.

21:2). The best marriage or friendship or relationship¹⁵ should bring each person closer to God and not drive one or the other away. So, we can see clearly how spending time with the wrong kind of person can lead someone away from the Lord.



Samson, now blinded and in chains, lost his strength.

“What a change came over him [Samson] who had been the judge of Israel!—now weak, blind, in chains, and trapped in the lowest form of slavery! Little by little Samson had broken the principles¹⁶ of the holy work he was called to do. God had been very patient with him for a long time. But when Samson gave himself over to the power of sin and told Delilah his secret, the Lord left him. There really was no power in his long hair. His long hair was just an example of his trust in God. So, when the symbol of his trust in God was sacrificed¹⁷ for lust,

Samson also lost his strength.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*,¹⁸ p. 566.

What strange lesson do we learn from the fact that Samson was blinded?

In reading the story we can see that Samson made many mistakes, but he had not lost his faith even though his faith was imperfect. And God was still able to use Samson to fulfill His goals. How much better it would have been if Samson had been faithful¹⁹ to the truth he knew. Samson made many mistakes. But God was still able to fulfill His plan. This does not excuse Samson’s mistakes. But God works His will no matter what we do. How much better it would be if we would let God work His will through us.



Samson made many mistakes, but God still worked through him.

15. relationship—your connection (tie) to another person and how deep your feelings are for that person.

16. principles—laws or rules upon which other laws are based; the Ten Commandments.

17. sacrificed—when something or someone is given up to get something else that is wanted.

18. patriarchs and prophets—patriarchs were early Bible leaders, such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders, such as Moses; prophets are men and women sent by God to warn us about what will happen in the future.

19. faithful—true and loyal; being someone that others can trust and count on.

Samson is listed in Hebrews 11:32 as a faithful follower of the Lord. What does it tell us about God's grace?²⁰ What hope does this lesson give you?

FRIDAY—AUGUST 10

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, "True Love or Infatuation,"²¹ pp. 50–54, in *The Adventist Home*.

"The story shows how foolish and stupid Samson was. At any time Samson could have put a stop to Delilah's nagging by leaving her and returning to his home. But Samson's chief fault was not stupidity. Samson's chief fault was lust. The most important lesson the story teaches us is how Samson's spiritual weakness²² brought shame to him and caused him to lose God's gift to him of supernatural²³ strength."—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 398.

"God watched over Samson that he [Samson] might be prepared to finish God's work. At the very start of life Samson was given God's gift of physical [body] and mental [mind] strength and purity. But under the influences²⁴ of

wicked friends, Samson lost his hold upon God, which is the only thing that keeps the sinner safe from sin. And Samson was swept away by the tide of evil. Those who are doing important work for God may be sure that God will protect them. But if people stubbornly put themselves under the power of temptation,²⁵ they will fall, sooner or later."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*,²⁶ p. 568.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ What can you do to help someone who seems to be letting his or her lusts overrule good judgment?
- ❷ What can you do as a church to help and encourage those who are being tempted? What changes need to happen in the church so that those who need help can find people who care and understand and who will not judge or make them feel bad about themselves?
- ❸ As a class, take time together to pray for your church leaders. Pray that God will help them not to make the same mistakes that Samson did.

20. grace—God's mercy to us.

21. infatuation—false selfish love.

22. spiritual weakness—having no strength against the power of sin.

23. supernatural—coming from a source that is outside or beyond us.

24. influences—power to affect or change persons or things.

25. temptation—anything that tries to turn us away from God and tries to get us to do, think, feel, or say what is wrong.

26. patriarchs and prophets—patriarchs were early Bible leaders, such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders, such as Moses; prophets are men and women sent by God to warn us about what will happen in the future.