

SAMSON PULLS DOWN A TEMPLE
Judges 16:22-31

MEMORY VERSE

JUDGES 16:28

“Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, ‘O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray!’”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Two bowls, several large towels and 2-3 paper or Styrofoam cups.

A few bananas, a heavy bowl, _ cup of plain yogurt, a teaspoon of sugar, cinnamon and one other fruit (apples, grapes or pineapples).

Several 24” long pieces of string or yarn and a few 12” long pieces.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Paper Cup

Bring 2 bowls and several large towels.

Fill one bowl with water and let someone demonstrate how he can put the water into the other bowl with a paper cup. Then poke a hole in the cup and have someone demonstrate again. What is the difference? Can it still be done? Yes, but it’s a lot harder!

Next, put your finger over the hole in the cup and begin to fill the bowl again. Can it be done now? Is it easier? Explain that this is how God works in our lives when we make mistakes. If we only ask for forgiveness God will cover our mistakes with His grace, just like covering the hole in the cup. **God can still use us, even when we make mistakes.**

LESSON TIME!

This week we will again take a look at Samson. As we saw last week, Samson was the man who “could have, should have, but didn’t.” As a Judge for Israel, he was at his best when he had his great military victory over the Philistines.

But as we saw, his downfall was his love for a Philistine woman named Delilah. Though he killed a lion with his bare hands, carried city gates away, broke the bonds of his enemies, and burned up the crops of others, he could not kill his own desires or control his passions.

In our lesson today we discover that even though we may fail or make mistakes it doesn’t mean that God is done working with us. We can and do make mistakes, but we will learn today that **God can still use us, even when we make mistakes.**

JUDGES 16:22-24

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, and to rejoice. And they said: "Our god has delivered into our hands Samson our enemy!"

When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said: "Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy, The destroyer of our land, And the one who multiplied our dead."

We are told here that Samson’s hair began to grow again after it was shaved. It is interesting that the Philistines did not cut his hair again, knowing that it was a sign of his strength. Perhaps they

thought he could work harder for them if he was stronger, yet they did not fear his strength because he was blind.

These people had no fear of God, as we see by their joyous celebration of Samson's capture. They believed that it was their god, Dagon, who delivered Samson into their hands. So they had a great and joyous sacrificial festival in honor of their god.

Dagon was one of the principle gods of the Philistines and was worshipped at Gaza, Ashdod and in the rest of the Philistine towns. It was a fish deity and in shape resembled the body of a fish with the head and hands of a man. Isn't it rather funny the gods men make? What a glorious God we serve!

All the people took part in this festival, singing songs of praise to the god who had given them their enemy. Yet their god never heard any of their songs, because he was never alive. We can always know that our God is living and hears our praise. In fact, we know that He delights in the praises of His people.

JUDGES 16:25-27

So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may perform for us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars.

Then 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 of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there; about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed.

Now when the people are “merry” they call for Samson, to make sport for them. They wanted him to put on a show for them. Having sacrificed to their god, eaten and drunk on the sacrifice, they wanted to play. Samson must be made the fool for their games. As Matthew Henry said, “It was an instance of barbarity to trample thus upon a man in misery, at the sight of whom a while ago they would have trembled.”

In verse 27 we see that the “house was full of men and women who watched while Samson performed.” It is interesting to note who was there at the temple, particularly “all the lords of the Philistines.” Though they made a mockery of God and of His servant, judgment would certainly come upon them.

Satan’s tricks are very bad, and we need to understand how he works. He enticed Samson to sin through his desires. The Bible says that sin may be pleasurable for a season, but in the end it will destroy us if we give in to it. There may be things in this world that are tempting to us, but when we give in to it we will find that it is really hurtful.

Then do you think Satan will help those who have been destroyed because of sin and bad choices? No way! Satan then laughs at those who are hurt and points his finger at them and accuses them of being terrible. But one day everything will turn around on Satan. That is what is about to happen in our story. God’s enemies are laughing at and ridiculing God’s chosen servant. Let’s find out what happens.

JUDGES 16:28

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!"

Here is a very important verse, for it tells that Samson “called unto the Lord...” Samson was not a type of man that we would look up to; in fact, his life was marked with failure. But when he called out to the Lord, the Lord heard him. In Psalm 66:19-20 it says, “but verily God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer or His mercy from me.”

How we need to call out to God for help in our time of need. Even when we have made mistakes we need to still go to the Lord. He loves us no matter what. Samson asked God for strength one more time, to avenge himself of the Philistines for his two eyes. In that he asked God for the strength, we see that he is acknowledging that the strength he had for all he had done was not his own, but it was from God alone. **God can still use us, even when we make mistakes.**

Smashed Banana Salad

Show your class a couple of nice bananas and tell them they can help you a few at a time to make the snack. As you are talking, put the bowl heavily on the bananas. Oh No! You have made a mistake! Now what can you do? Well you make smashed banana fruit topping.

Mash the bananas the rest of the way in the bowl, and add about 1/2 cup of plain yogurt, a teaspoon of sugar (optional), and some cinnamon. Put the fruit of your choice (apples are great or grapes, pineapple, peaches etc.) into individual Styrofoam cups. Add some topping and serve.

Explain that even though you made a mistake by smashing the bananas something good could still come out of it. God’s forgiveness works the same way. **God can still use us, even when we make mistakes.**

JUDGES 16:29,30

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 on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.

After Samson had prayed to the Lord for strength for this last great feat, He embraced the two middle pillars on which the building was built and leaned on them. With his right hand on one pillar and his left hand on the other he said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" He then bent the two pillars with force and the house fell on the princes and all the people who were there.

God granted Samson's final prayer and the temple was demolished, killing more people in Samson's death than he had killed while he lived. Before this event, he had killed at least 1,030 Philistines. Thus in his death the Lord proved that the shame of his sin was taken away from him, and that the Philistines had no cause for victory over him.

Samson gained the greatest victory over his foes in the moment of his own death. Through this last act of his he brought back the honor of the God of Israel, against Dagon the idol of the Philistines." "The dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." **God can still use us, even when we make mistakes.**

JUDGES 16:31

And his brothers and all his father's household came down and took him, and brought him up and buried

him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years.

Here we are told that Samson's brethren and relatives came to take Samson's body away for burial between Zorah (his birthplace) and Eshtaol in Manoah's tomb. Thus was ended Samson's 20 years of judgeship over Israel.

Samson's life was not one to hold up as an example of courage or virtue. Samson's life can be a warning to us for what not to do. Although he worshipped God, passion and selfishness governed him. He had little regard for the rights and property of others; he was driven to some of the things he did by revenge and finally died by the same. He had great ability and was endowed with physical power by the Holy Spirit, yet he gave into temptation several times and suffered the consequences. What a warning to be heeded by those who tend to follow the paths of the flesh.

Yet in spite of all his failures we must remember what was real in the man was his mighty faith in the Lord in a time of doubt and being at the lowest point in his life, all by his own doing. We see God in his mercy helping Samson at the very end. What hope it gives us in our times of failure. God honored this faith, for we find Samson listed in God's "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11:32. **God can still use us, even when we make mistakes.**

String Tug-O-War

Form pairs. Give a 24" long piece of sting or yarn to most pairs, but to some give two 12" pieces. Oops! By mistake you must have cut some in half. Oh well, tie them together and play anyway! The rules of the tug-o-war are that you can only use the thumb and index finger of one hand. Using masking tape, mark two lines in front of each player and a piece of tape in the center of the string. Whoever can get the marker across their line is the winner.

Use this as an illustration that even though a mistake was made the strings were still able to be used. This is how God works in our life. **God can still use us, even when we make mistakes.**

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving that He can make all things work together for good for His purposes in our lives. Thank the Lord that He will continue to use even when we make mistakes. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.