



YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH

RECAP

This week's focus: "You are often the real threat to what God wants to do."

Samson's story is a tragic one. He was gifted with superhuman strength yet lacked the personal character to match his giftedness. In many ways his story recounts the story of the whole human race. His life mirrors Israel's journey with God and if you look closely, it probably mirrors yours as well.

Judges 14 starts with Samson telling his parents that he wants to marry a Philistine woman (Israel's enemy). His parents try and cajole him into marrying within the faith, but he refuses and says "No, get her for me." That sentence summarizes Samson's weakness in one statement. The primary driver in his life is to do whatever pleases him. One author characterizes Samson as a "hot-blooded, testosterone-ridden, impulsive meathead on roid rage". Yet, in God's sovereignty, He uses him for the completion of His purposes.

The rest of chapters 14 and 15 show us Samson's impulsive, unteachable and violent nature. He continues to flagrantly violate the Nazarite vow by killing a lion with his bare hands and later finding honey in its carcass. Then, at his wedding party, he challenges thirty Philistines to a bet. If they solve the riddle, they get new clothes, if not, he gets new clothes. Anxious to solve the riddle, the Philistines coerce Samson's wife to get the answer from him. Enraged by their cheating and manipulation tactics, Samson leaves town to get even and pay his debts by killing thirty Philistines. On his return he discovers that his wife has been given to another man.

Violence and retaliation spread like wildfire as Samson gathers 300 foxes, tying them in pairs tail to tail with a torch to burn the Philistine fields. They retaliate by burning his wife and father-in-law. The cycle of revenge continues with more death and deception. In an effort to contain him and keep the peace, his own people tie him up and hand him over to the Philistines. In a show of strength, Samson snaps the ropes, grabs a jawbone of a donkey and kills a thousand men.

Samson seems to be the hero, but he continues to walk in disobedience. Chapter 16 illustrates a dangerous pattern of being enticed into extremely dangerous situations because of his weakness for women. A Philistine woman named Delilah is sent on assignment to seduce him in order to find the secret of his strength. In several attempts, Delilah uses her feminine wiles and veiled threats to trick Samson into sharing the secret to his strength; he's never cut his hair.

Delilah shaves his head while Samson confidently sleeps. His enemies enter the tent one more time. Samson again awakens to fight but he is unaware that God's power had left him. They seize him, gouge out his eyes and bind him with bronze shackles sending him to grind grain in prison.

At the end of his life, the Philistines throw a party and bring Samson out as entertainment. They placed him under the pillars that were holding up their balcony. Samson blind and in chains calls out to God one more time for strength. In one final push the pillars were toppled, killing those in the house as well as Samson himself. The bible says that in his death he killed more than in his life.

Like us Samson's greatest threat to himself was himself. We all have an internal virus that sabotages us pointing us towards the need of a Savior greater than Samson.



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SHARE (5-10 min)

1. Icebreaker Question: Who is your favorite superhero? Why is he or she your favorite?

STUDY (about 30 min) Read Judges 14-16

2. How did God speak to you through the scripture and the sermon this week? Is there anything that was unclear, or that you have questions about?
3. Read 14:1-4. Based on the text, what's wrong with Samson's request? If you had to boil down all of Samson's weaknesses into one statement, what would it be?
4. Read 14:14. Why would the Spirit of God fill Samson to do something that seems petty and vindictive? In what ways has Samson used his God-given strength for his own gain?
5. Refer to chapters 14-16. Samson struggled with a spiritual virus of self-sabotage. What do you see are his core sins? How did it impact his life and those around him?
6. Read 16:25-30. How does this final event characterize the mercy of God and repentance? In the past what has brought you to repentance?
7. Think about Samson's life. How does he point to Jesus? (i.e. the birth narrative, his strength, his betrayal...etc.). How is Jesus a better Savior than Samson.
8. Sampson is a great reminder that character is more important than giftedness. What's a proper view of God and his gifts? What do you think keeps your giftedness in check? How do you know you are trusting in your giftedness more than God?

SUPPORT (15 min)

Break up into pairs. Share your struggle and pray for one another.

Like Samson we all struggle with some core sin issues. Which of them would you say you need God's power to overcome?

1. Impulsive/pleasing self
2. Compromising
3. Unteachable/isolation from others
4. Pride