If you were with us last week, you will recall that the previous chapter (Judges 15) ended on a high note for Samson. Not only had he reconciled his relationship with God so that they were now on good terms, but the chapter ends by saying, “Samson led the Israelites for twenty years in the days of the Philistines.”

I take that to mean twenty years have passed between the end of chapter 15 and the first verse of chapter 16. Twenty years in which Samson regularly kept their enemies, the Philistines, in check. Throughout the land, the name Samson would have been synonymous with judgment. To the Israelites, he was a God-sent deliverer. To their enemies, the Philistines, he would have been a force of terror to be reckoned. To attack the Israelites would be to invite destruction because Samson already had an intimidating track record of killing a thousand armed soldiers with a donkey’s jawbone, in one single battle.

So God was with the Israelites. He was doing through Samson exactly what He raised him up to do from birth, “to deliver the Israelites from the hand of their oppressors, the Philistines.” They stay on their side; we stay on our side peacefully.

If we enter into this next chapter with that understanding, it immediately seems very odd, and somewhat out of place when the first verse of the chapter 16 starts by saying, “One day, (after twenty years of peace) Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her.” Okay, STOP right there!

Let us ignore the prostitute part for a moment. Do you want to take a guess where Gaza is? Not only is it a Philistine city, but it is their headquarters for idol worship. It is where they had the temple of one of their main deities, Dagon. You might also recall that it is the same location where Samson met his first wife in chapter 14, who by the way was burned to death, along with her father, by the men in the city. That is like Osama Bin Laden (prior to his death) coming to Manhattan to spend a night with his mistress, hoping no one would recognize him. Samson was number one of the top ten most wanted list of the Philistines.

You have to wonder, why in the world Samson would foolishly venture into a place like that to spend a night with a prostitute for that matter? Back in Israel, he would have had lots of beautiful women tripping over each other to marry him, why go out of his way to put himself in harm’s way unnecessarily?
Whatever his reasons may be, the people of Gaza inevitably find out their great enemy Samson is in town. They rally every soldier in the city and surround the prostitute’s house getting ready for a kill. But instead of attacking right away, they figure they will wait till morning when he is done with business and perhaps somewhat tired? Unfortunately for them, Samson was not looking for love; he was just looking for a one-night stand. So he gets up in the middle of the night and somehow sneaks past all the men lying in wait to kill him.

Notice however that instead of going on a bloody rampage and killing them all as he had in previous chapters, he instead steals their giant city-gate, which keeps intruders out. According to verse 3, he literally rips the gate out of the wall sockets, along with its two posts; hoists it up on his shoulders and marches it up a hill where he hides it – keep in mind this gate would have weighed anywhere from 500-700 pounds.

By taking away their gate, Samson essentially left the whole city vulnerable to intruders. In actuality, he was actually trying to send them a message, “You all can’t touch me even if you tried! I can come into your city, do whatever I want, when I want!!” Everything about this escapade smells of boredom and pride. I think the last twenty years of calm and peace in Israel have left him wanting some sort of high, so much so that he is engaging in some really stupid risky behaviors. Can you think of any men in power who have abused their position?

One would think he got his fill from that adventure and learned from it, but again, the very next verse, verse 4 starts by saying, “Some time later (after that event), he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah.” STOP! Let us ignore the, “falling-in-love-again” part for a moment. Do you want to take one guess where the Valley of Sorek is? Yup, it is in Philistine territory.

At this point, I think it is clear to us that Samson has a weakness for women, specifically, Philistine women; the very people God raised him up to put down. In case you have not been keeping count, this is Philistine woman number three he is getting himself entangled with, ignoring the fact that his first two ended somewhat violently. Interestingly enough, he is not really looking for love or someone to spend the rest of his life with. His attraction to them is purely carnal, and unfortunately, this next fling, with this woman Delilah, is going to result in his downfall.

I do not know whether it is pride, carelessness, or a foolish tempting of fate, but Samson has basically put himself in the same situation he faced in his first relationship with the first woman he wanted to marry in chapter 14. Within days of him being in Delilah’s house, the rulers of the Philistines get word that he is back again, and they want blood. So they persuade Delilah to convince him to reveal the source of his great strength because everything they have tried to this point has failed. No one and no army can defeat Samson, so it must be supernatural. To sweeten the deal, they offer Delilah a compensation package. Each ruler (five of them) will give her eleven hundred shekels of silver, an exorbitant amount that one commentary says amounts to about 500 years worth of salary for one common laborer.

Perhaps Delilah was considering a career change, a long-term vacation, or perhaps she never even liked Samson back, whatever the case was, she takes the offer and begins the long process of seducing and coercing Samson into revealing the source of his great strength.
She comes to Samson on three different occasions and asks him what the secret of his strength was. Each time, Samson makes something up, which Delilah tests out, only to find he was lying to her. By the way, in each one of those incidences starting in verse 9, the Philistines had armed men hidden in the room, waiting for Delilah’s signal so they could attack him.

What should really catch our attention in each one of these seductions is the fact that Delilah is using the same old mind trick that his first wife played on him in chapter 14. If you recall that account, Samson made an expensive bet with the Philistine locals that they could not figure out a riddle he posed to them. They however went behind his back and threatened his bride, and she in turn coerced Samson into giving her the answer. In chapter 14:16, she threw herself on him sobbing saying, “You hate me Samson! You don't really love me...because if you do, you would tell me the answer!”

Please note the similarities between that statement and Delilah’s statement here in verse 15, “…Then she said to him, ‘How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when you won’t confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven’t told me the secret of your great strength.”

16 With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death.” They must have classes in the Philistine public schools called, “The art of seducing powerful men” because it is the same old trick both women are using on Samson! Unfortunately, Samson is going to give in (again), but not just because Delilah nagged him about her request. His demise did not come because of what happened in that room, it happened much earlier on the night he came into town and slept with that prostitute.

Here is why I say that, there is no such thing as a one-night stand, or casual sex. Lust is one door that is hard to close once you open it. By its very nature, it is voracious and always craves for more. That is what makes pornography so dangerous. It creates in you a sexual appetite that is a bottomless pit of insatiable cravings which is almost never satisfied, always wants something stronger to get the next high, but always ends in shame and guilt. That one night with the Philistine prostitute left Samson wanting more, and it’s that lustful desire that led him to Delilah’s bedroom to seek more of it, and would eventually lead him to his downfall.

Starting in verse 17, Samson reveals to her that his strength comes from God because he was dedicated from birth to be a Nazarite, and no razor has ever, or is to ever touch his hair. Delilah is ecstatic that he finally told her, and sweet talks him about how much she can tell now that he loves her, and how much she truly really loves him now. The reality is that she is actually more excited about the fact that she is about to be a millionaire, as she is secretly sending a message to the Philistine rulers, who are now waiting at her door for a signal to come in and capture Samson.

At some point in their bedroom exploits, Samson falls into a deep sleep in Delilah’s lap. She then calls in a barber who comes in to cut off all of Samson’s hair, and the Bible says, at that moment, his strength left him. Just to clarify, Samson’s strength did not come from his hair. His strength was a gift from God that was to be used to defeat the Philistines. However, at this point, Samson has pretty much violated all his Nazarite vows, with the cutting of his hair crowning it all. So arguably, He himself might as well have told God to leave him alone and let him do what he wants to do, hence his physical strength leaving him.
What happens next is the saddest and lowest point of Samson’s life. As soon as his hair is cut off, Delilah calls in the Philistine rulers and their soldiers, collects her cash, and points them to Samson. Now you have to picture this scene to get how scary and sad it really is.

Verse 20 says Delilah calls his name and Samson wakes up suddenly from his sleep only to find himself surrounded by enemy soldiers. The saddest fact here is that he did not know the Lord had left him. Thinking he was still superman, he gets ready to fight and kill. Except this time, this battle is different. He throws a punch, one that in the past would have leveled three men, but his fists barely do any damage to the soldier he punches. In fact his fists seem to hurt a little after his initial swing. He picks up a sword to start swinging away, but for some weird reason, the sword feels strangely heavy in his hands. He stands confused, and in one blinding moment, the truth hits him – his power is gone. He reaches for his hair and terror strikes his heart, his hair is gone, and that is when he remembers her name, Delilah!

Before he has time to think of what to do next, some 50 to 100 Philistine soldiers are on him, punching, kicking, and beating the living daylights out of him. Remember, these men have been waiting for twenty years to get payback; everyone wants to get in a hit! This was not a simple arrest; this was downright cruelty and abuse. To satisfy their violent lust for payback, verse 21 says, “Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding in the prison.” Consider at this point the great heights from which Samson has fallen. This was the mightiest warrior in all the land; one whose name merely mentioned, struck terror in the hearts of the enemy. Now he is a simple blind prison slave. I wonder how many nights he sat up in prison and thought to himself, “How did I let this happen?” Some of us have experienced some version of this haven’t we? It is that point when we have exhausted all our rebellion and discovered that the things we were pursuing were essentially worthless.

That is a painful place to be, but it can also be a place of redemption, a place where the God who we thought left us, comes to us and says, “I never left, you just chose to ignore me, but I am here and I want to be back in your life.” I believe that is where Samson was in that Philistine prison. I have reason to believe this because verse 22 says while he was in prison; his hair began to grow again. Of course we know that his strength did not come from his hair, this is simply the author’s way of visually showing us that Samson was experiencing a spiritual internal change. So much so that on the last day of his life, he is going to accomplish the very thing God raised him up to do, he is going to destroy the Philistines.

In the concluding verses of this story, the Philistines assemble all their chiefs and rulers, along with 3,000 spectators in some sort of stadium arena. They are celebrating with wine and attributing their capture of Samson to the local deity. To really make things fun, they bring Samson out in ball and chains to come do parlor tricks for them because they are not done humiliating him yet.

Samson comes into the arena and does what they request. When they get bored, they set him aside between two giant pillars holding the arena structure up, and turn their attention to other things.

The Philistines are so confident that they have Samson under control that they assign a little boy to watch him as he stands by those two pillars. No one notices that his hair is slowly growing.
back, or that he is murmuring some sort of prayer to himself. Let me read to you how this story ends so you can hear the tragic ending of Samson. Starting in verse 25, “When they stood him among the pillars, 26 Samson said to the servant who held his hand, “Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.” 27 Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. 28 Then Samson prayed to the Lord, “O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.” 29 Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, 30 Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived. 31 Then his brothers and his father’s whole family went down to get him. They brought him back and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had led Israel twenty years.”

There are a lot of practical Biblical lessons we can learn from Samson’s life, but to conclude the series, I want to focus in on three that have been consistent throughout his story. I am going to present them in the form of a question to consider:

**which areas of your life are you repeatedly and most easily seduced?**

It is clear to us that Samson’s greatest weakness (and ultimately downfall) was women, Philistine women. He struggled with controlling his temper on occasion, but he learned to submit that to God. This other area however was one he never got a handle on. What about you? Where are you most easily and repeatedly seduced? Whatever it is, the way you overcome it is to bring it to God daily. The emphasis here is daily.

Do not bring it to God once and let it go. Be continually filled with and led by the Holy Spirit. Be on guard, and stand watch daily over your life. Practically speaking, I will sometimes start my day, or sometimes in the middle of the day tell Jesus Christ, “Lord, these seductive emotions are stirring up again. I know you have already forgiven me for all my sins and I am eternally secure in your love, but I need your strength to make it through these next twenty four hours. So I submit _______________ to you and place it under the authority of Jesus Christ. Help me be more like you today.” This needs to happen daily in many of our lives, and for some of you, you might need to come before God with a prayer like this multiple times a day depending on how great the seductions are. Second question to consider as we look at Samson:

**what is the “good work” God already begun in you?**

There are two scripture passages I want you to keep in mind as you consider this point, Ephesians 2:10, where it says, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do
good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” and Philippians 1:6 where it says, “... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Here is the deal, when you gave your life to Jesus Christ, the Bible describes that moment as being adopted into God’s family. The Bible also says in that moment, you became part of a mission that God has been carrying out on earth long before you were born. This is not a speech about you having a special purpose in life; this is about getting connected into the good work that God is accomplishing on earth.

For Samson, God’s good work for his life was to deliver his people, the Israelites, from their enemies, the Philistines. To accomplish that task, God gave him the tools he needed, physical strength. In my life, the good work God is doing in me is a calling is to equip young adult Christians with Biblical truth so they may live honorable godly lives. The tools God has given me to accomplish this task is the gift of teaching and humor. I do not say that to brag, but to point out how God works.

So what is the good work God already begun in you? The things you enjoy doing with a passion, and excel in with measurable results, are often an indication of the good work God has begun in you. Tonight, I invite you to stop wasting your life, get connected into God’s mission here on earth by using his gifts in your life to serve Him. The third question to consider from Samson’s life is this:

what promises of God are you most unsettled about?

With each chapter in this story, I kept getting the feeling that Samson never really embraced his Nazarite calling and vows. Maybe he was angry that his calling in life had been determined before he was born and he had no say in it, or maybe he could he could play the field by balancing God’s gifting in his life, and indulge his appetites?

Either way, Samson never seems to settle on his calling, even in his death where he kills the Philistines. If we are honest, that was not the most honorable prayer. He was not asking God for forgiveness, even though I would propose God forgave him. Instead he was asking that God would give him one last opportunity to get a personal revenge on the people who poked out his eyes. Still thinking of himself.

I bring up all of that simply to make the point that sometimes feeling unsettled about God’s plan for our lives can cause us to veer off His path for our lives. So let me say this then; because God’s primary goal in all He does, is to bring Glory to His name, whatever plans He has set out to accomplish in your life and through your life,

he will accomplish
Here is the secret to why that is true. It is not about you; it is about Him and what He wants to do on earth. The gift of unparalleled physical strength God gave to Samson was not about him. It was about delivering His people from an enemy nation, and preserving them so that from within them a king would rise named David; and it is from David's bloodline that the messiah Jesus Christ would come from. Through Jesus Christ, you and I are now reconciled to God. Now do you think Samson had any idea that this was what God had in mind?

Listen, whatever promises God has made to you or whatever you are believing Him for, rest in the knowledge that first of all, it is not about you. His plans for your life is part of a greater work He is doing, hence whatever He has set out to accomplish in you and through you, will be **done!!**