

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, 1\2 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. **Though we have made mistakes, God can still use us!**

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 did not.” As a Judge for Israel, Samson achieved a great military victory over the Philistines; but, Samson did not remain faithful to God.

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 subjugate his own desires nor control his passions. In our last lesson, we saw the sad consequences of his foolish choices, as Samson was carried captive by the Philistines, who robbed him of his sight and made him to grind grain. The story of Samson could have been over. Yet, in his pitiful condition, Samson cried out to the Lord.

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."

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, a deity that resembled the body of a fish with the head and hands of a man, was one of the principle gods of the Philistines.

All the people took part in this festival, singing songs of praise to the god who they thought had given them their enemy. Yet, their god did not hear their singing because he was not alive. Our God is alive and 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.

When the people were "merry," they called for Samson desiring that he make sport for them. They wanted him to put on a show—to become the fool of their games. Matthew Henry comments, "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."

How sad are the consequences of Samson's foolish sins. The Bible says sin is pleasurable for a season; but in the end, it will destroy those who give in to it. Satan had enticed Samson through his weakness and lust. He promised him pleasure in a relationship with Delilah...Now, we see Satan in the jeering crowd watching as Samson, once a mighty man for the Lord, reaps his own destruction and misery.

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!"

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 we read, "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 good to know that we can call out to God for help in our time of need! Although we do fail and make mistakes, God remains faithful and ready to forgive. In Psalm 86:5 we read, "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You." Samson asked God for strength one more time, to avenge himself of the Philistines for his two eyes.

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. **Though we have made mistakes, God can still use us!**

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.) God's judgment came upon a people who had made a

mockery of God and His servant. The shame of Samson's sin was taken away in his death; for now, the Philistines had no cause to celebrate victory over him. God in His mercy forgave and used a man whose own failures had bound Him. **Though we have made mistakes, God can still use us!**

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. Samson's 20 years of judgeship over Israel ended.

Samson's life was not one to hold up as an example of courage or virtue. Rather his failures and the consequences he suffered can be a warning to us not to allow our selfishness and lust to rule over us. Samson had little regard for the rights and property of others; he was often driven to act out of revenge; and governed by selfishness and lust, he was prey to the enemy's temptation. He had great ability and was endowed with physical power by the Holy Spirit, yet he was overcome by his weaknesses and suffered the consequences.

Yet, despite all his failures, his story does not end in failure; for he once more called upon the Lord in faith. God honored his faith and bestowed His mercy. In fact, we find Samson listed in God's "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11:32. **Though we have made mistakes, God can still use us!**

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: even though a mistake was made, the strings could still be used. This is how God works in our life. **Though we have made mistakes, God can still use us!**

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 us even when we make mistakes. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.