

The Man Who Was Very Strong

Overview



Materials You'll Need

- large lollipops
- frosting
- black licorice
- raisins
- plastic spoons or knives
- cellophane or plastic wrap
- elastic or rubber bands



Scriptures

Judges 13-15

Bible Truth Objective(s)

God wants us to listen to and obey His commandments

Behavioral Objective(s)

To obey God by following His commandments; to obey our parents by following their instructions

Memory Verse

"The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him." (Jdg 14:6)



Bible Knowledge

The Philistines

The Philistines lived on the west side of Canaan, along the Mediterranean seacoast. From Samson's day until the time of David, they were the major enemy force in the land and a constant threat to Israel. The Philistines were fierce warriors; they had several advantages over Israel: they were greater in number, they had more tactical expertise, and they knew the secret of making weapons out of iron (1 Sam 13:19-22). But none of that mattered when God was fighting for Israel.

Samson

Samson was the last of the judges. He was set apart to be a Nazirite, a person who took a vow to serve God, even before he was born (13:3-5). A Nazirite vow was voluntary (Num 6:2) and had limited duration (Num 6:5, 8, 13, 20), but in Samson's case, it was for life. As a Nazirite, Samson could not cut his hair, touch a dead body, or drink anything containing alcohol (Num 6:3-8).

Even though Samson had been set apart for

special service, he made many careless mistakes, both big and small, throughout his life. He seemed to have little regard for following God. Samson impulsively used the special strength God gave him for selfish purposes. He was proud and boasted only of his own strength. Over time, he ignored his vow of devotion and depended more and more on his own power. Eventually, he broke all three Nazirite provisions. His hair was cut off (Jdg 16:17, 19), he had contact with the dead (Jdg 14:6-9) and he drank at his wedding feast (Jdg 14:0-20). It is important to note that Samson's true strength did not come from his long hair, but rather from the "Spirit of the Lord" (Jdg 14:6).

Samson's parents objected to his marrying the Philistine woman for several reasons:

- 1) It was against God's law (Ex 34:15-17; Deut 7:1-4).
- 2) The Philistines were Israel's greatest enemies. Marriage to a hated Philistine would be a disgrace to Samson's family.

Samson's own words, "Get her for me for she pleases me well," pointed to his selfish attitude.



Understanding Your Students

Your students will likely understand that they must listen to and obey their parents. But it is important to explain what obedience means. The Bible tells us to honor our parents. This means being polite, having a good attitude, and showing respect, even when we disagree with them. It's okay for the children to say how they feel about something as long as it's done in a nice and respectful way, and it's not done out of habit. Many times, children resort to whining, complaining, crying, or saying mean things to their parents when they disagree on something. This is very much against what God wants His children to do.

Take this opportunity to remind your students how much their parents do for them. Read to them Ephesians 6:1-2, which says, "Children, obey your par-

ents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise." The promise is that we will have a long life, full of blessings. Teach your students that when they honor their parents, they are following the commandments of God.

Your students may also wonder if Samson was actually a good or bad person. Explain to them that Samson served God and wanted to please Him. However, he wasn't perfect. Samson did some great things, but he did some foolish things too. Like all of us, Samson had to make many decisions about right and wrong. Some of his decisions were right, and God was pleased with him. But some of his choices were poor ones, and they upset God greatly. Point out the fact that we can learn a lot from a person's good deeds as well as his bad ones. The most important lesson we can learn is what we can do to please God.



Vocabulary

Judge

to help another tell the difference between what is right and what is wrong

Philistines

the neighbors and enemy of the Israelites

Dedicate

to give something specifically to another person

Nazirite

a person who has been set apart to work for God; he has to follow special rules

Revenge

to get even, to hurt someone who has hurt you



Before You Teach

If we review the life of Samson, it seems that each major event in his life climaxed with some form of destruction of the Philistines. First, he killed thirty Philistines to obtain the thirty sets of clothing as a result of the riddle. Then he killed more of them when his wife and father-in-law were slaughtered in retaliation for the burnt fields. After he was bound and delivered to the Philistines, he broke free and killed another thousand. His most famous and final act of vengeance was when he pushed the pillars down and died along with many of the Philistines.

If we look at Samson's life, he certainly did kill many Philistines, and the Bible records that God had chosen him to deliver the Israelites out of the hands of the Philistines. But was God only interested in hurt-

ing and killing people? Not likely. Though Samson did end up getting rid of some of the enemy, he did so without any regard to his chosen status. He engaged in many careless adventures and ultimately broke many of the commandments. He did not seem to care at all that he had a special mission. Therefore, his life ended in great tragedy.

Though we may not have been set apart before birth as Samson was, we are God's chosen people. Today we also have a special mission to spread the gospel to every corner of the earth. Do we take our status seriously? When we make decisions in our life, do we first look to God and pray to understand His will? Do we take the time to seek His guidance? Samson is famous for his strength because he did not cut his hair. But his long hair was not the real source of his strength. God is the one who gives the real power. Let us remember to trust God in all that we do so that we can be filled with His Spirit.



Bible Story

The Judges Help God's People

In the last lesson, we learned about a man called Gideon. God called him to help the Israelites fight off the Midianites, who kept taking their food and other belongings. God gave him many signs to show him that He would help him win the battle. Do you remember if the Israelites won or not? Of course they won. Gideon took only three hundred men with him and they scared away their enemy because God was with them.

Do you also remember that Gideon was living at a time when the Israelites didn't really have a leader, like they used to? A long, long time ago, there were people like Moses and Joshua who would help the Israelites. But now that they were dead, God used other special people called judges. Gideon was one of those judges. Today, we are going to learn about another judge God chose to help His people.

The Birth of Samson

A long time ago, the Israelites had neighbors called the Philistines. Even though they were their neighbors, they were not nice to God's people. They were always fighting with them. The Philistines were a big enemy of God's people. God wanted to help the Israelites so He chose another judge to become the next helper. This is how he was born.

There was a man called Manoah. Manoah and his wife did not have any children. But one day, an angel of the Lord appeared before Manoah's wife and told her, "Right now, you do not have any children. But later you will have a son and this son is going to be special." The angel continued to tell her that her son was going to be set apart for God from his birth because God had great work for him to do. God wanted him to save the Israelites from the Philistines. This person was going to become a Nazirite. A Nazirite was a person who was dedicated to God. A Nazirite had to follow special rules: he could not drink wine, he could not touch any dead bodies, and he could not cut his hair.

Samson's Special Gift

After some time, what the angel told Manoah and his wife came true. The woman had a son and

named him Samson. As Samson grew up, the Lord blessed him. That means God was with him. The Bible says that God's spirit was with him. God also gave Samson a very special gift, or talent. Samson became the strongest man that ever lived. He grew to be so powerful that no one was stronger than him. He was even stronger than a lion. One time when Samson was walking to town, a young lion came roaring towards him. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson in great power and Samson tore the lion apart with his bare hands. Can you imagine how strong Samson was? He used only his bare hands to kill a lion and he wasn't even hurt. But in order to stay strong, Samson could not cut his hair.

Samson Wants to Find a Wife

Samson had a strong body, but he was also selfish. That means that he always wanted things for himself. He didn't care what other people thought, even his own mother or father. That meant that he cared more about himself than anyone else. When Samson grew up and was old enough to be married, he fell in love with a Philistine woman and wanted to marry her right away. He told his father and mother, "Get her for me as my wife." What do you think his parents said?

His father and mother answered, "Can't you find a wife among your own people? Why take one from our enemies?" Remember that the Philistines were always fighting the Israelites. Samson's parents didn't want him to marry someone from the enemy. But Samson would not listen.

"She is the right one for me," Samson insisted. So he married this Philistine woman and it led to a lot of trouble.

Samson's Wedding Feast

During the wedding feast, Samson was very happy because he had found a wife. When we are happy, sometimes we have happy thoughts. We might think about things that make us happy. Well, as Samson was eating, drinking and having a great time, he remembered the day he had passed by the lion and killed it with his bare hands. He smiled when he thought about it because he was proud that he was so strong. He also remembered that after some time when he passed that way again, he saw the lion's dead body. Inside the dead lion's body was a swarm of bees and some honey. He had scooped out

some honey and ate it. The honey was very sweet. As he was thinking about all this during the wedding feast, it gave him an idea for a little bit of fun for his guests. Among the guests were thirty young Philistine men, and Samson told them, "Let me tell you a riddle. If you can solve the riddle by the seventh day, I will give you each new sets of clothes. But if you cannot solve the riddle, you will give me thirty new sets of clothes. Okay?"

The thirty men thought about it for a moment and they agreed. "Okay! Tell us your riddle," the thirty guests replied.

So Samson told them the riddle. "Out of the eater, came something to eat; and out of the strong came something sweet." Do you know the answer to Samson's riddle? It has to do with when he killed the lion.

Samson's Wife Wants to Know the Answer

For three days the guests could not figure out the riddle. They didn't want to give Samson any clothes so they went to Samson's wife and asked her to find out the answer from Samson. She agreed to help since they were her own people. She went to Samson and she cried to him.

She said, "You hate me! You don't really love me, because you haven't told me the answer to the riddle."

"I haven't even told my parents the answer," replied Samson. "Why should I tell you?"

But Samson's wife cried and asked Samson for the answer every day. Finally, on that seventh day Samson told his wife the answer. She went quickly and told her people, "I have the answer to Samson's riddle!" The people went to Samson right away. "We have the answer to your riddle," they said. "What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?" Samson was surprised that they had guessed the answer. But then he found out that his new wife had told them the answer. Samson was very angry. But because they had told him the right answer, he had to keep his promise and give them thirty new sets of clothes. With his power, he went into town and killed thirty Philistines. Samson took their belongings and gave their clothes to the thirty men who had explained the riddle. Was this a good way to get the clothes? No, but Samson was so angry, he wanted to hurt the Philistines. Later, Samson went to his father's house to calm down. After a while, when he felt better, he went back to his wife. But he found out that

she had married someone else! His wife's father thought that Samson hated her and wanted nothing to do with her, so he gave her to someone else.

Samson's Revenge

Samson became very angry again and really wanted to hurt the Philistines to get revenge. To get even with the Philistines, Samson caught three hundred foxes and he tied the foxes together, two by two, by their tails. He also tied a torch to every pair of tails. Then he lit the torches and let the foxes run loose in the fields of the Philistines. Those foxes had their tails on fire so they ran this way and that way. And everywhere they ran, they put everything on fire. Everything was destroyed.

When the Philistines saw their black fields burnt by the fire, they asked, "Who did this?" When they found out Samson did this, they wanted to get even. Do you know what they did? The Philistines killed Samson's wife and father-in-law. Now when Samson heard this news, he wanted revenge again. This time, he attacked the Philistines and killed many of them because he was so strong. After that, Samson went and stayed in a cave. The Philistines found Samson and surrounded the area. The Israelites asked the Philistines why so many of them were there.

"We have come to take Samson prisoner," the Philistines replied. "He has killed many of our people and now we need to kill him."

The Israelites did not want trouble with the Philistines, so they went to Samson and told him, "We have come to tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines."

Samson allowed the men to tie him up with two new ropes. The men took him to the Philistines. When the Philistines saw Samson, they came toward him shouting. They were angry at him and wanted Samson dead. But then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson in great power. Even though Samson was tied up, he easily broke the ropes. Right away, he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey and used it to kill a thousand Philistine men.

In today's story, we learned about Samson and his great power. We also learned that he did some horrible things when he was angry. Even though God chose Samson to help the Israelites fight the Philistines, Samson used his strength for selfish reasons some of the time. We will find out in the next lesson if Samson listens to God or not.



Check For Understanding

1. **What was so special about Samson, even before he was born?** (God had chosen him to be a Nazirite.)
2. **What special rules did a Nazirite have to follow?** (He could not cut his hair, drink wine or touch dead bodies.)
3. **How do we know Samson was strong?** (He killed a lion with his bare hands; he killed many Philistines with just a donkey's jawbone.)
4. **Why were Samson's parents sad when he wanted to get married?** (Samson wanted to marry a Philistine woman.)
5. **What did Samson want to do for fun at his own wedding feast?** (He wanted to tell a riddle.)

6. **How did the Philistines find out the answer?** (They asked Samson's wife to find out. After that, Samson went and killed thirty men.)
7. **When Samson found out his wife had been given to another man, what did he do?** (He burned the fields that belonged to the Philistines.)
8. **When the Israelites tied Samson up and gave him to the Philistines, what happened?** (Samson was filled with the Spirit of God. He broke the ropes that tied him up. Then he killed a thousand Philistines with just a donkey's jawbone.)
9. **Do you think that Samson obeyed God?** (Allow students to answer. Explain that God had given Samson special strength to help the Israelites fight the Philistines. Sometimes he did help but a lot of the times, he didn't follow God's rules and instead did what he wanted to.)



Life Application Story

Obeying Our Parents

Ricky Lopez invited Benjamin Lim to play basketball at his house one afternoon. They did not live that far away from each other. Ricky had asked his dad to put up a basketball hoop on top of the garage door.

Benjamin came running up the driveway. "Hi, Ricky, I'm here!"

"Oh good. You made it. I was going to call you at home to see if you had left or not," Ricky said.

"Well, I'm here. Let's play!" Ben exclaimed excitedly.

The boys played one on one. Ricky made a lot of shots, and so did Ben. They were having so much fun that they forgot how long they had played. The boys did not even feel tired. Just then Ricky's dad called out to them from inside the house.

"Ben and Ricky, you two have been out there for a long time. Please take a break and come in for some juice or water!" Mr. Lopez said loudly.

"No, thanks, Dad. We're not thirsty!" Ricky said. Ben didn't want to sound rude so he said, "We will be right in in a few minutes, Mr. Lopez!"

The boys played for another fifteen minutes. Then Mr. Lopez got a phone call from Mrs. Lim. She wanted Ben to go home because he had some homework he had to finish. After Mr. Lopez hung up the phone, he went out to the driveway and he told Ben what his mom wanted him to do. Ben thanked Mr. Lopez and said bye to Ricky.

"Awww ... do you really have to go?" whined Ricky.

"Yes, he really needs to go home," said Mr. Lopez. "You also need to come in, wash up and do your homework too."

Ben waved good-bye and began to walk home. Ricky didn't want to go inside yet.

"Just a couple more minutes, okay, Dad?" pleaded Ricky.

"I think you've had enough fun already. Please come in right now. It's getting dark and you need to do your homework. Also, you are tired and I don't want you to get hurt."

Ricky pretended that he didn't hear what Mr. Lopez had said and kept on playing. When Ricky jumped to throw the ball into the basket one last time, he lost his balance and twisted his ankle as he landed.

"Ouch! Dad, please come help me. I think I twisted my ankle!" Ricky yelled out in pain.

Mr. Lopez ran to Ricky and helped him get up.

"You are more tired than you think and that's probably why you landed funny," Mr. Lopez said. "Are you alright?"

"I think I am okay. I can still walk a little bit. I'm sorry Dad, I should have listened to you," Ricky apologized.

"That's okay. I am just glad you aren't hurt too badly. Come on, let's go in and put some ice on it."

Questions to Think About

1. **Why did Mr. Lopez want Ricky to come in the house?** (It was getting dark; Ricky had homework

he needed to do; he might get hurt when he is too tired.)

2. **What happened when Ricky ignored Mr. Lopez's warning?** (He twisted his ankle.)
3. **Have you ever played with your friends and had so much fun that you didn't want to stop?** (Allow students to answer.)
4. **Why do you think your parents want you to stop during something that is fun?** (We have other important things we need to do besides having fun. If we played all day long, it would not be fun after a while. We would get tired of it.)
5. **What does it mean to obey our parents?** (Allow students to answer.)
6. **How can obeying our parents help us learn to obey God?** (It is one of God's commandments. When we obey our parents, we are obeying God.)



Activity 1

Samson's Strength

Look at the pictures. How strong was Samson? He killed a ____ (lion) with his bare hands. How strong was Samson? He caught ____ (300) foxes and tied them up. Color in the pictures.



Activity 2

Who is Being Polite?

Look at each set of pictures. Who is obeying their mother or father by being polite? Circle the right picture. Can you practice these polite words? ("Please," "Thank you," "May I?")



Activity 3

Lollipop Samson

Materials:

1. large lollipops (one per student)
2. black licorice
3. frosting

4. raisins
5. plastic spoons or knives
6. cellophane or other plastic wrap

Directions:

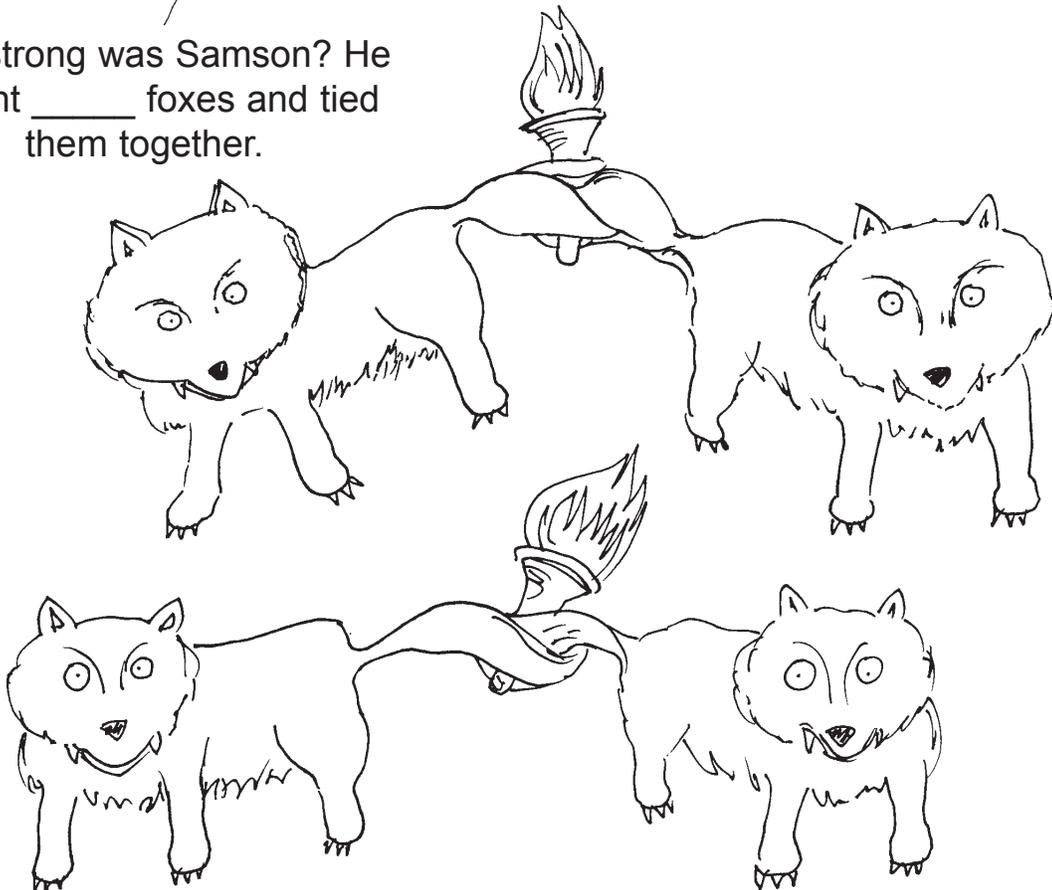
1. Give each student a large lollipop.
2. Have each student cover one side of the lollipop with frosting.
3. Break apart the black licorice so that the students can place them on the frosting as Samson's hair.
4. Use the raisins as eyes, a nose and mouth.
5. As the children are making "Samson's head," talk about why Samson was so strong. Even though he was strong because he did not cut his hair, God is still the one who gives the great power.
6. To discourage the students from eating the lollipop, cover the final product with cellophane and tie off at the bottom. Then the students can preserve it and show it to their parents.

Samson's Strength

How strong was Samson?
He killed a _____ with his
bare hands.



How strong was Samson? He
caught _____ foxes and tied
them together.



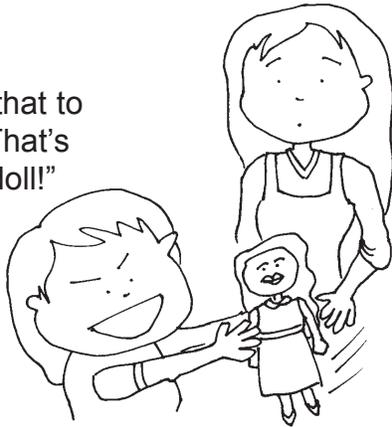
Activity 9:2

Who is Being Polite?

Look at each set of pictures. Who is obeying their parents by being polite?
Circle the right picture. Can you practice these polite words?

1.

"Give that to me. That's my doll!"

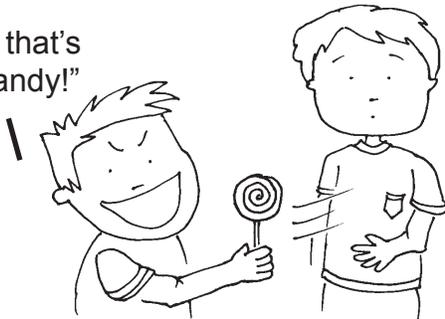


"Thank you for finding my doll."



2.

"Hey, that's my candy!"



"May I share some of that candy?"



3.

"Can I please have a turn at the game?"



"You've had it for a long time. It's my turn."

