

Memory Verse

“For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:5)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Samson was dedicated to God from birth as a Nazirite, but he ignored his identity and his vows.2. Despite his weaknesses, God still used Samson to enact His will.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God has His plan for our lives.2. God is not limited by our weaknesses.3. The Spirit of God will empower us to do His will.	Learn to protect our identities in Christ.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. God’s Provision
- B. Samson’s Feats of Strength
- C. Samson’s Weaknesses

Life Application: Protecting Our Identity in Christ

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Samson’s choices did not deter God’s plan. However, we can learn from his mistakes and become better spiritual Nazirites, dedicated to God and driven by our faith in Him, rather than by our worldly desires. In this way, we can avoid letting our faith deteriorate and protect our identities in Christ.

Introduction

After Gideon came several judges, including Tola, Jair, and Jephthah. Israel's ninth, tenth, and eleventh judges were named Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. Samson was the twelfth, and last, judge recorded in the Book of Judges. Since the time of the previous judge, the Israelites had once again strayed and "did evil in the sight of the LORD" (Judg 13:1). As a result, God gave them over to the Philistines. By the time Samson was born, they had been oppressed for forty years.

A. God's Provision

1. God provides for Samson's parents

In Old Testament times, it was considered shameful if a woman were barren. Hannah, for example, was deeply miserable due to her inability to bear a child for her husband (1 Sam 1:6–9). Like Hannah, Samson's mother was also barren, but from the way the couple treated the Angel of the Lord, it is clear that they revered God, despite her condition and the decline in the Israelites' faith (Judg 13:1, 8, 18–23). Because of their reverence, they were blessed with a son who was set apart from his birth to serve as a judge over Israel. As with many times before, God had chosen unexpected people to serve His purpose, and He transformed her disgrace into joy.

2. God provides for the Israelites

God had given the Israelites into the hands of the Philistines, who were fierce warriors. They knew how to make weapons out of iron, giving them a huge advantage in battle (1 Sam 13:19–22). After forty years of oppression at the hands of the Philistines, God chose to "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judg 13:5). His plan began with Samson (14:4).

B. Samson's Feats of Strength

Samson's life was an unusual case, as the vow of a Nazirite was normally voluntary and temporary. Samson, however, was set aside by the Lord to be a Nazirite for his entire life (Judg 13:6–7). Even his mother had to observe the same restrictions until his birth (vv. 13–14). We don't know the exact purpose for such unusual circumstances, but we know that as God's chosen, the spirit of God empowered Samson and gave him extraordinary strength. Let's look at his feats of strength recorded in the Bible.

1. Kills a lion

Samson's first recorded feat of strength was when, "to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him." The Bible says that "the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart" (Judg 14:5–6). We don't know if this is the first time he demonstrated his strength, but it is a very dramatic scene in which the Lord showed His power working within Samson.

2. Defeats the Philistines

Let's read Judges 14:2–4. Although Samson's actions were entirely self-centered, the Lord used Samson's desires for His own purpose. As mentioned earlier, God had plans to "deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines." This was the start of His plan. Following Samson's wedding, a cycle of vengeful retribution began, as recorded in Judges, chapter 15, when he discovered that his wife had been given to another. In response, Samson burned down the Philistine's fields. The Philistines answered by burning his wife and father-in-law. Once again, Samson dove headlong into vengeful action, killing 1,000 Philistines with a jawbone from a donkey.

3. Dies with the Philistines

The Philistines tried to capture Samson repeatedly, once when he was with a harlot in Gaza, and three times while he was with Delilah. Each time, Samson used his strength to overcome their forces. However, he finally revealed his secret to Delilah and was captured. After a period of suffering, he was eventually brought out to be mocked by the Philistines. Let's read Judges 16:21–30. In his last act of defiant strength, Samson called upon the Lord once more and killed thousands of Philistines, including their rulers, in one crippling blow to the nation.

Samson's life as a Nazirite is out of the ordinary in the unfortunate fact that he eventually broke all three of the Nazirite vows. However, God still granted him amazing strength and allowed Samson to kill the Philistine leaders.

C. Samson's Weaknesses

While he was physically strong, spiritually, Samson was tragically weak. When we read about him, it is clear that this is because his life was not oriented around God, but around himself. This became the main cause of his downfall. Let's look at his weaknesses and how they affected his life.

1. Self-centered

Let's read Judges 14:1–10. Our introduction to Samson finds him insisting on marrying a Philistine woman against his parents' wishes and in spite of his status as Israel's judge and a Nazirite. Later, he breaks two of his Nazirite vows within a few days of each other, first by taking honey from a lion's corpse, and second by holding a banquet for his wedding feast, where he likely drank wine.

You may have noticed that Samson didn't seem very reverent or respectful towards God! All of his life events recorded in the Bible were driven entirely by his own self-centered decisions and desires. He also showed a complete disregard for God's laws when he involved himself with three different Gentile women. He was a man who persisted in his own desires and ignored his Nazirite vows.

Although Samson judged Israel for twenty years, the Bible only records two prayers from him: the first time came when he was thirsty (Judg 15:18), and the second time came when he begged for the strength to take vengeance for his two lost eyes (16:28). God answered both prayers, but we can see that they both capture the self-centered life that he lived.

2. Lacked resolve

When pressed enough, Samson relented and gave up his secrets. The first time may have seemed harmless as it was simply an answer to a riddle, but it led to an opening and escalation in violence between him and the Philistines. It can also be seen as a foreshadowing of his eventual downfall when Delilah pressed him in precisely the same manner as his wife.

It is clear that in his heart, Samson knew that Delilah could not be trusted, because he did not reveal the truth to her at first. However, knowing that she would betray him was not enough to deter him from staying. Because of his desire to be with her, and perhaps because he thought that he could not be harmed, he willingly kept himself in a vulnerable situation. This gave Delilah plenty of time to whittle at his willpower and eventually completely break down his resolve.

3. Lacked a relationship with God

Although the Bible says that Samson served as judge over Israel for twenty years, it is clear from his actions that Samson did not esteem his identity as God's chosen. It is also clear that he took God for granted. Whenever he attacked or defended himself from the Philistines, he simply did so without a second thought. He took God's presence and power for granted.

Let's read Judges 16:20. When he tried to shake himself free a fourth time, the Bible notes that Samson did not know that the Lord had departed him. This reveals to us the underlying issue in his faith: he did not have a personal relationship with God. His lack of regard for God manifested itself in his foolish actions, in both refusing to leave a woman who had betrayed him three times and failing to keep the secret of his God-given gift.

Despite everything, the Bible still calls Samson a faithful worker (Heb 11:32–34). However, it is difficult for us to say whether the life Samson led was a successful or spiritually victorious one. He may have ultimately enacted God's will, but he had many weaknesses. At the very end, Samson still knew to call on God, but his primary drive was for vengeance. From this, we know that we can never hinder God's will, but we also do not want to become like Samson! Let us learn from his mistakes and become better spiritual Nazirites, dedicated to God and driven by our faith in Him rather than by our worldly desires.

Check for Understanding

1. **What is unusual about Samson's vow as a Nazirite?** The vow of a Nazirite was normally voluntary and temporary. Samson, however, was set aside by the Lord to be a Nazirite for his entire life. Even his mother had to observe the same restrictions until his birth.
2. **What are Samson's recorded feats of strength? How did each one occur?** See *Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section B*.
3. **What were Samson's three main weaknesses?** He was self-centered, lacked resolve, and lacked a relationship with God.
4. **In what way did Samson lack resolve?** When pressed enough, Samson relented and gave up his secrets. Also, because of his desire to be with Delilah, and perhaps because he thought that he could not be harmed, he willingly kept himself in a vulnerable situation.
5. **Why do we know that Samson lacked a relationship with God?** He did not realize that the Lord had departed from him when he tried to shake himself free a fourth time.

Life Application

Protecting Our Identity in Christ

From today's lesson, we learned that Samson did not treasure his identity as God's chosen, but instead allowed himself to be distracted by the world around him. As a result, his desires led him through a cycle of vengeance that ended in his imprisonment and death alongside the Philistine lords.

1. Do not be controlled by our desires

Unfortunately, we all have our own "Delilahs" in our lives, distracting us from God's purpose. Like Delilah, the world today often pesters us daily to turn away from God. Distractions such as social media, entertainment, or material wealth can make us forget that we are a child of God, a royal priesthood, and a living sacrifice. We are constantly bombarded by all kinds of worldly desires in movies, billboards, television, magazines, books, or social media. With so many different desires that distract us from our faith, unless we surrender our eyes, minds, and hearts to God, we are in danger of becoming captive to sin. We become of the world rather than above the world.

Desire shows itself in many forms. Food, fame, power, deception, or laziness are among the few types of desires that can control our lives. Sexual desire in particular is a common and powerful tool that Satan can use to deteriorate our faith. We need to be aware that following our desires erodes our control and, rather than fulfilling us, makes us thirst for more. They are powerful temptations that we need to deal with until we leave this world. So what is the best way to face them? The Bible teaches us a few ways to avoid being controlled by our desires.

- *“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” (Ps 50:15)*
It takes humility to admit it, but as humans, we are simply too weak to face temptations on our own. Therefore, the first thing that we must do is call on the Lord for help. He can give us the strength to walk away from our desires.
- *“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (2 Tim 2:22)*
To protect our identities in Christ, we must “flee” from our desires! On top of this, when we gather with like-minded people who also worship God, we can share our troubles, strengthen each other, and pursue God out of a pure heart together. When we help and encourage each other, we have a much better chance of overcoming temptation.
- *“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” (Gal 5:16)*
When we fill our hearts with God’s Spirit, there is no room for worldly lusts. By filling ourselves with the Holy Spirit, we are also receiving strength from God to walk in the Spirit instead of obeying our sinful desires.

2. Be aware when our faith is deteriorating and take steps to return to God

It is clear that Samson had no awareness of the state of his own spiritual life. Our spiritual life is in the greatest danger when we don’t even realize that our faith has deteriorated! To protect our identity in Christ, it is important that we constantly evaluate our faith and seek to draw closer to God. It took the loss of his eyes, imprisonment, and his desire for vengeance to drive Samson back to God. But we do not want to take that long to return to Him – by that point, it is already too late.

To evaluate our faith, we must take a look at ourselves every now and then and ask what our priorities are. Do we always try to spend a little extra time with God in our prayers or Bible studies, or have we decreased the time that we spend with Him? Do we put effort into our prayers, or allow our minds to drift? Do you feel the movement of the Spirit in your life, warning you when you are straying or helping you to make choices that are correct in God’s eyes? Or do you barely even remember the Spirit’s presence? If we find that we have begun to stray and are following our desires more than our faith, then we need to take immediate steps to return to God before it is too late:

- *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” (Phil 4:6)*
If we are in trouble, ask God for help. If we are in need, make our requests known to Him. God knows our needs, so when we find that our faith is deteriorating because of our anxieties, our worries, or because of our physical needs, simply seek out God and tell Him.
- *“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.” (1 Sam*

15:22)

God loves those who are faithful to Him, and who follow His word. He will “delight” in us when we walk in obedience to God. So, if our faith is deteriorating, to turn back to Him, we must go back to the basics in our faith: how have I disobeyed God, and how do I return to Him in obedience?

- *“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (Jas 4:7–8)*

When we submit to God and resist temptations, we can experience relief. When we avoid our desires and draw near to God, we will find that we are no longer attracted to our worldly desires. We will find that we treasure our identity in Christ.

Even small sins can affect our salvation, so we must learn from Samson and make wise choices that protect our identity in Christ. If we are struggling with our desires, remember that God is faithful. If we find that our faith is deteriorating, as the Bible says, “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isa 41:10). All we need to do is draw near to Him and call on Him for help.

Discussion

- What kinds of steps can you take to protect your identity in Christ?
- Is there something in your life that you know is bad for you, yet you still struggle to let it go?
- What are some steps you need to take in order to combat a specific desire in your life?
- Share a time when you were low in faith. How did you get yourself back up?

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“For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:5)

Meaning

1. A Nazirite is someone who has decided to set themselves apart for God for a set period of time. For that period of time, they have chosen to devote themselves to God and remain separated from sin.
2. Samson had a noble, ordained purpose before he was even born—to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. Although he broke his Nazirite vows and his life choices were steeped in sin, God still used Samson for His plan. However, Samson himself died alongside his enemies.

Conclusion

Samson centered his choices around himself rather than around God. He did not treasure the gift that he had been given as God’s chosen, but instead used his strength to follow his desires. As a result, he broke all of his Nazirite vows, lacked the resolve to keep his strength a secret, and ended up dying alongside his enemies. His choices did not deter God’s plan. However, we can learn from his mistakes and become better spiritual Nazirites, dedicated to God and driven by our faith in Him, rather than by our worldly desires. In this way, we can avoid letting our faith deteriorate, and protect our identities in Christ.

Lesson 4 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What is a Nazirite?
A Nazirite is someone who has decided to set themselves apart for God for a set period of time. For that period of time, they have chosen to devote themselves to God and to remain separated from sin.
2. "I say then: _____ in the _____, and you shall not _____ the _____ of the _____." (Galatians 5:16)
Walk, Spirit, fulfill, lust, flesh
3. What made Samson's Nazirite vows out of the ordinary?
The vow of a Nazirite was normally voluntary and temporary, but Samson's vow lasted his entire life. Also, despite being set aside by God to be a Nazirite for life, Samson ended up breaking all three of his vows.
4. What was Samson's biggest weakness?
His life was oriented not around God, but around himself. This became the main cause of his downfall.
5. How do we know that Samson lacked a relationship with God?
He took God's power for granted, and he did not realize when God had left him.
6. What kind of threat do worldly desires pose to our faith?
Such desires encourage us to turn away from God, and we are in danger of becoming captive to our lusts. We become of the world rather than above the world. Following our desires erodes our control and, rather than fulfilling us, makes us thirst for more. This results in a deterioration of our faith.
7. Take a moment to evaluate your faith and spiritual life. Do you think you have a good relationship with God? Or do you follow your desires more than your faith? Briefly explain why you think so.
Personal answers.