



# GIDEON

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FAMILY DEVOS



# The Judges

**Scripture:** Judges 2:11-19

**Memory Verse:** Judges 21:25

“In those days, there was no King in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

## For My Family

For this series, we will be studying the lives of Gideon, Deborah, and Samson, three of the judges of Israel. Before we look at their lives, let's talk what a judge is and what life was like in Israel during the time of the judges.

Our memory verse, Judges 21:25, shows us that one of the problems with Israel was that there was no king, and that everyone was doing whatever *they* thought was right, not what God thought was right. Inevitably, that meant that the people would do evil in the Lord's eyes and start worshipping false gods. Because of this, the Lord would remove His hand of protection from them. He would effectively say to the people, “Okay, if you want Baal to protect you, let's try that for awhile and see how that works out.” Of course Baal is a false god and couldn't protect the people at all, so when Israel's enemies attacked them (like the Philistines or the Moabites), the people of Israel would be defeated. The people would turn back to the true God and cry out for help, so God would raise up a judge who would lead the people (strengthened by the Lord) to victory over their enemies. Sadly, as soon as the trouble was over and the people were saved, they would turn back to their Baals, their false gods, and the whole situation would go around and around again.

Gideon, the first person we are going study, was one of the judges that God chose to lead His people. You might think that means that Gideon was a very brave warrior, or that he was someone who always made the right choice and never did anything wrong. Actually, Gideon was a very ordinary man. He was a man who made mistakes, who was afraid of his enemies, and who had trouble trusting God, but we will start looking at those things next time.

Sometimes you and I can be a bit like the Israelites during the time of the judges. When everything seems to be going well, we can forget about God and start doing things our own way. Then when things start to go badly, we remember God and we cry out to Him for help, which of course He does. Whether times are good or bad, let's remember to seek and follow the Lord. If things are good, give Him thanks for His many blessings. If times are tough, ask the Lord for His help and deliverance. Let's not be like the Israelites who, after the Lord was good to them and delivered them from their oppression, turned away and forgot about the One who was so good to them during the trial.

## Questions for Young Children:

Who did the people serve instead of God? Why did this cause them problems?

When Israel's false gods failed them, who did they call to for help?

What were the people called who the Lord raised up to lead the people? They weren't Kings, they were J\_\_\_\_\_

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Can you relate to the Israelites in this passage, calling out to God and asking Him for help when there is trouble, but then kind of forgetting about Him when things are going well? Why do you think we allow that to happen?

If you pick the characteristics of a good leader, what would they be like?

Would you describe right now as a good time in your life, or a tough time? If it's a good time, are you remembering to thank the Lord? If it's a tough time, are you asking Him for help?

# Mighty Man of Valor

**Scripture:** Judges 6:1-23

**Memory Verse:** Joshua 1:9

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

## For My Family

The Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord. Just as we learned in our last devotion, the people turned their backs on God, and so the Lord removed His hand of protection and the Israelites were overrun. The Midianites and the Amalekites were coming through the land, taking all of the food and leaving the people with nothing. Israel was outnumbered, hungry, and desperate, so they cried out to God to save them.

What kind of person do you think God would use to save His people? A big, strong warrior? Someone with great courage who trusted God, like David when he went out against Goliath? A great king with a vast army at their side? Nope, not this time. God chose a scared farmer who didn't trust God and had a self-confidence problem. In just this chapter alone, Gideon was afraid of his enemies, his countrymen, his father, and even his God (you can read the rest of the chapter to learn more).

To everyone else, Gideon looked like a coward, but God saw things differently. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, and what did He call him? “You mighty man of valor!” The Lord saw so much more in Gideon than anyone, even Gideon himself, did. God knew that if Gideon could trust Him and lean on His strength, then he could go from hiding from his enemies while doing his work to saving the nation.

Gideon didn't trust the Lord at first and would ask the Lord for signs and proofs to help him believe. In this passage, Gideon brought a food offering and placed it before the Lord, asking Him to prove that it was really God who was speaking to him. The Lord was gracious and brought fire up out of the rock to consume the meat and the bread.

Maybe you feel like you aren't important enough for God to use you. Maybe you think you are too small or young. Gideon shows us that God can and will use anybody to do great things for His Kingdom. You can start serving God right now at home. Today, why don't you write a card or a letter and mail it to someone you care about? Do something kind for your brothers or sisters. Give your mom and dad an hour of quiet time in the house, or maybe do some extra chores to make their day easier.

Gideon, despite his doubts and fears was willing to do what the Lord asked. Let's be willing servants of the Lord today.

## Questions for Young Children:

When God called Gideon a mighty man of valor, what was Gideon doing?

What were some of the things that Gideon was afraid of?

What are some ways that God can use us today?

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Why did the Lord allow the Midianites to invade and conquer Israel?

When Gideon was afraid and hiding, the Lord called him a mighty man of valor. What does this teach us about the way the Lord sees us?

Gideon struggled to believe that God was calling him. Are there some things that you struggle to believe about God or His Word? Where could we find some answers to those struggles and doubts?

# The Fleece

**Scripture:** Judges 6:33-40

**Memory Verse:** James 1:5

““If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

## For My Family

War had come to Israel. The Midianites, Amalekites, and the other enemies of Israel that lived in the east had joined forces and were camped with a large force in the Valley of Jezreel. Gideon called for warriors from the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and the men Israel came out to fight. (Check your maps in the back of your Bible or Google “Bible maps in the time of the judges” to see where these places are!)

Gideon, however, was still a man filled with doubts and fears. Even though it seemed on the outside that he was doing really well (he had torn down the altar of Baal, erected an altar to the Lord, and now had gathered an army to defend Israel), on the inside, Gideon continued to struggle with trusting the Lord.

Gideon made a request of God. If God was going to do what He said He was going to do (and save Israel), then when Gideon left a fleece of wool on the ground, if the Lord put morning dew on the fleece but not on the ground, then Gideon would know that, yes, God would save Israel.

We should stop for one second and take note of something important. If God promises to do something, He *always* does it. Titus 1:2 tells us that God cannot lie. So if God told Gideon that He would save Israel by his hand, then He absolutely, without question was going to do that.

Of course, we read that God gave Gideon the sign that he was looking for, and even did it a second time, with the dew on the ground and the fleece being dry this time, just to make it absolutely certain that there could be no doubt that God had done the miracle.

The Lord was so gracious to Gideon. When Gideon was struggling, the Lord reassured Him. When Gideon was doubting, the Lord strengthened his faith, and wonderfully, the Lord does this for you and me as well. In James 1:5 we read, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” When we need God’s help with making a decision, or if we are struggling with doubt or confusion, God graciously asks us to come to Him and He will help us.

All of us have concerns about what is going to happen in our lives. However, we can remember that God promised us that He would always be with us, even to the end of the age. And if He promised to do it, He absolutely, without question, will.

## Questions for Young Children:

What did Gideon ask the Lord to do as a sign?

When we are struggling with doubts or fears what does God ask to do?

What are some other things that God promised He would do in the Bible?  
Remember, if He promised to do them, He absolutely will.

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Why do you think God gave Gideon the two signs with the fleece and the water?

James 1:5 says God gives wisdom “liberally and without reproach” to those who ask for it. What does, “without reproach,” mean? Why is that important?

What are some other promises that God made in the Scriptures that He has already fulfilled?

**Scripture:** Judges 7:1-8

**Memory Verse:** Psalm 46:1

“God is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.”

## For My Family

Gideon and 32,000 warriors assembled in the Jezreel Valley and were preparing for war. They were outnumbered by a huge amount. Verse 12 tells us that the Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east were like grains of sand at the sea shore, too numerous to be counted. What could 32,000 do against such a great army as that? The Lord again saw things differently than we do. Gideon I am sure looked at his army and wished for more troops. God looked at the assembled force and said, “There are too many.” The Lord would not allow the Israelites to believe that they were responsible for any victories that were won. He needed them to know that He Himself had saved them so that they would turn away from the Baals and turn back to worship Him. The Lord would leave no doubt that the glory would be His alone.

“Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead,” the Lord told Gideon, and 22,000 men turned around and went home. 22,000 gone just like that. What could 10,000 men do against such a great army as that? Gideon must have thought, “Surely 10,000 men is too few, but the Lord had promised He would save Israel so that’s okay, but I sure would have loved to have had those other 22,000 men.” The Lord once again looked at Gideon’s troops and said, “There are still too many.” He gave Gideon a test. When they went down to the water to drink, anyone who lapped the water with their hand to their mouth would be set apart, and 300 men were selected and put to the side. Gideon must have been relieved. Only 300 more men would be sent home. He still had most of the 10,000 troops left... but no, the Lord said that by the 300 alone would Israel be saved, and He sent the 9,700 home. Gideon went from an army of 32,000 to a team of 300, and he was expected to defeat the great Midianite army?

Sometimes it can be difficult to understand what God is doing, and sometimes it even feels like He is making things more difficult for us than they need to be. God was showing Gideon that even though he had been chosen as God’s vessel to carry out God’s plan, it was very important that when the victory came, everybody knew that it could only have come from God. Sometimes God takes things away from us to help us to realize how important He is. Perhaps you have experienced this yourself. When that happens, we need to be shown that the Lord Himself is enough. If He is on our side, and He is, then by His strength we can overcome any obstacle or problem, and He will receive all of the glory.



## Questions for Young Children:

How many soldiers did Gideon have at the start?

How many soldiers did Gideon have at the end?

Why did God ask so many men to go home and only leave Gideon with 300?

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Has the Lord taken something or someone from you, and right now you don't understand why He would do that?

Has the Lord ever taken something from you before, and you realized later that you were better off without it?

Do you tend to give God the glory for your accomplishments, or do you typically take credit for your achievements?

# The Victory

**Scripture:** Judges 7:9-23

**Memory Verse:** Proverbs 3:5-6

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.”

## For My Family

The Lord had chosen His army of 300 men to be lead by Gideon. Now finally He spoke to Gideon and told Him to go up against that great army of the Midianites because He had given them into their hands. But the Lord still knew the heart of Gideon. He knew that Gideon struggled with fear and doubt, so He graciously encouraged Gideon one last time. “If you are afraid,” the Lord said. Well, of course Gideon was afraid! He only had an army of 300 against an army too big to even count! After hearing that he would be encouraged and strengthened, Gideon went down to spy on his enemy...

...And they were afraid of *him*! Wouldn't you know that God had been working unseen this whole time. The Lord had been giving the Midianites bad dreams and putting the fear of Gideon right into their very hearts. Gideon, a man who had been afraid of everything and everyone in our story, was now the object of terror for those same people of whom he had been scared.

What was Gideon's response to this gracious encouragement from the Lord? He worshipped. Gideon praised and worshipped God, who had given him everything he needed and who had even been working on his behalf and preparing the way. When Gideon realized just how involved God was and how much He was doing to support and strengthen him, Gideon worshipped.

Gideon and his men went into the camp of the Midianites secretly at night, broke their pots, shined their lamps, and played their trumpets. That's right, the 300 men that God chose didn't do one bit of fighting, they simply obeyed the Lord and watched as the Lord confused the Midianites and made them fight amongst themselves.

The Lord brought victory to Gideon and the Israelites. He was actually working behind the scenes throughout this whole story, preparing not only Gideon's heart to help him to trust in God, but also by working on the hearts of the enemy.

God is working for us too. Sometimes it's hard to see God's hand move, and we start to struggle with doubt and worry. Right now, God is moving on our behalf. He is doing things that are so great that we couldn't even understand them if we tried. Our job is to hear His voice, trust in His promises and obey His word. When we do that He encourages us and strengthens us.

## Questions for Young Children:

What did God show Gideon to encourage him?

What had the Lord done to the Midianites to make them afraid?

What did the Israelites do to win the battle?

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Gideon was prone to worry and fear. How did God show grace to Gideon in the lead up to the battle?

How does God giving the Midianites dreams and nightmares help us to trust the Lord?

What were the key things that God wanted from Gideon?

# The Failure

**Scripture:** Judges 8:22-35

**Memory Verse:** Matthew 6:21

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

## For My Family

The Israelites had been delivered from the oppression of Midian, and there should have been no question that the Lord had delivered the people. After all, there were only 300 soldiers who went down to face Midian, and even then they barely did any fighting. The glory should have been God's alone. Alas, it was not so. The people of Israel came and praised Gideon, not the Lord. They cried out for him to become a king and rule over them. Gideon turned the people down, telling them that the Lord was the true King, and He would rule over them. Gideon didn't want to rule over the people, but he did want one small favor.

Gideon asked for the earrings from all of the soldiers who were defeated, and of course the people agreed to give their hero such a small, insignificant request. You see, the Midianites all wore earrings that were made out of gold, and because there was a such a vast number of them who had fought against Israel, when all of those small pieces of gold were added up together, it was actually a great fortune, over 50 pounds of gold!

Gideon collected the gold, melted it down, and made it into an ephod. An ephod is a kind of special shirt or jacket that is worn by the priests (Exodus 28). It's difficult to know why Gideon made this, but whatever the motivation, we know the result. Gideon hung this golden ephod in his city, and the people, even Gideon himself, began to worship it as an idol.

How sad! Gideon, who had been used so mightily by God, made a golden object that caused the people to turn away from the One who had saved them. This story reminds us of Aaron and the golden calf, when after God had shown Himself to be so powerful, the people took out their earrings and forged them into a golden idol to worship. It is no surprise to us that after Gideon's death, the people would turn away from God completely and worship Baal. At the end of his life, Gideon could only look back to see any good work done for God. Where he started out so well, he ended so sadly.

The life of Gideon teaches us that God can take anybody and use them to do His work. It also teaches us that we must be careful to give all of the glory to God. We need to guard our hearts from pride and greed, and be careful to honor the Lord with everything we have and do. Like Gideon, let's learn to trust the Lord in all things. Unlike Gideon, let's do our best to keep doing that our whole lives through.



## Questions for Young Children:

Why Gideon ask for the earrings?

What did Gideon make out of the gold?

After Gideon died, what the people of Israel do?

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

What did Gideon do right in this story?

What did Gideon do wrong in this story?

How can we learn from those things?

In Matthew 6:21, we read, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” How does this apply to Gideon? How does this apply to us?

A person with long, dark hair is seen from behind, sitting on a grassy cliff edge. They are looking out over a vast body of water towards a bright sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow that fills the sky and reflects on the water. The person is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

# DEBORAH

## FAMILY DEVOS

# Deborah

**Scripture:** Judges 4:1-10

**Memory Verse:** Psalm 19:14

“May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

## For My Family

The cycle started all over again! The Israelites forsook the One True God and the Lord removed His hand of protection and gave them over to the general of the Canaanite army, a man named Sisera. Much like the Midianites, the Canaanite army was very strong. Though they didn't have a vast number of troops that no one could count, instead they had 900 iron chariots, one of the most powerful weapons that you could use in war at that time.

Again the people of Israel cried out to be rescued. This time, however, they didn't cry out to God Himself. They went to the Judge of Israel, who was also a prophetess, a woman by the name of Deborah. We see women with the gift of prophecy several times throughout the Bible: Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Huldah (2 Kings 22), an unnamed prophetess in Isaiah 8, Anna (Luke 2), and the four daughters of Philip in Acts 21. Paul also tells us in 1 Corinthians 11 that some women receive the gift of prophecy, and that they should be diligent to use it carefully and appropriately. A prophet, or prophetess, is someone who hears the Word of God and then speaks it to the people. In other words, they are a spokesperson for God.

When the people came to her and asked what to do, Deborah's response was just wonderful. She said, “Has not the LORD God of Israel commanded ‘Go and deploy troops... and I will deliver *Sisera* into your hand?’” Deborah almost seemed a little surprised. It's as if she was saying, “What do you mean, ‘What should we do?’ God has already told you to go fight this guy. So go and do what God already told you.” Deborah didn't try and come up with a fancy new idea, and she didn't try to out-think God. She simply told the people to do what God had already said. She also knew her role. She was the Judge and Prophetess of Israel. She wasn't a warrior to go fight the battle like Gideon, so she told the warriors, especially their leader (a man named Barak) to go up and fight, and God would lead them to victory.

God spoke to Deborah, and then she spoke those same words of salvation and hope to the people. God has spoken to us. His Word is recorded for us in the Bible. Like Deborah, we can know God's Word and then speak those words of salvation and hope to the people around us. We don't have to receive a special message from God to be His spokesperson. All we need to do is read, learn, and remember God's Word, and then tell it to the people around us who don't know it.

## Questions for Young Children:

What is a prophet (or prophetess)?

What message did Deborah give to the People of Israel?

How has God spoken to us?

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Are you surprised to see a woman as the Judge over Israel? Why or why not?

How did Deborah honor God with the words that she spoke to the people of Israel?

What Bible verses do you have memorized that you could share with people who don't know God?



# Jael

**Scripture:** Judges 4:8-24

**Memory Verse:** James 1:22

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

## For My Family

If we trust God’s Word, He can use us to do incredible things in His Kingdom. In today’s passage, we will see a man who struggled to follow the Lord and missed out on the blessing. We will also see two women that God holds up before us as faithful and righteous, even though the way they were used might seem a little unusual to us.

In part one of our study on Deborah, we saw that she received the Word of God and spoke it faithfully to the people around her. Specifically in verse 6, Deborah told Barak, a man who appeared to be leading the soldiers of Israel, to go up and fight against Sisera because the Lord was going to give them the victory. Like in our study of Gideon, Barak was hesitant to trust this message from God, and seeking some assurance (just like Gideon), Barak asked Deborah to come up to the battle with him. Deborah agreed to go despite the fact that she was not a warrior, but she told Barak that because of his lack of faith he would not receive the glory of the victory. Instead, it would go to someone else.

Deborah, Barak, and the army went up to fight Sisera, and again Deborah faithfully spoke the Word of God to the soldiers, telling them that the Lord had gone out before them to fight with them. The soldiers, encouraged by this word, went out and defeated the army of the Caananites, but Sisera, the leader of the enemy soldiers that had been plaguing Israel, escaped on foot from the battle.

Fleeing from Barak and his men, Sisera turned to one of his allies, a man Heber and his wife, Jael. Unlike Barak, Jael was decisive and acted swiftly for the Lord. She tricked Sisera into hiding in her tent, then when he fell asleep, WHAM! Jael, not Barak, had won the victory for the Lord and for Israel.

Our lesson today does not teach us to go around slamming people in the head with giant hammers and tent stakes. God has put people around us to bring his judgment to those who do evil (police officers, judges, etc.) What it does teach us is that when we know what the Lord is calling us to do, we should do it. James 4:17 tells us, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” Let’s be like Deborah and Jael, these two great women of the faith, who heard God’s Word and obeyed in faith.

## Questions for Young Children:

How did Barak show that he didn't fully trust God?

What are some things that you know that you *should* do today (as opposed to not doing things you are not supposed to do)?

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Why was it okay for Jael to kill Sisera? Would it be different if Sisera had died in battle with Barak? Why did she receive 'glory' for this?

Why is it NOT okay for you and I to act in the same way (read Romans 13 for more on this)?

What are some other things that God's word tells us that we *should* do (e.g. love our neighbors, worship Jesus, etc.)?

# SAMSON

FAMILY DEVOS



# The Birth of Samson

**Scripture:** Judges 13

**Memory Verse:** Proverbs 13:1

“A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.”

## For My Family

Remember our cycle of sin in Judges? Where the people do evil in the eyes of the Lord and their enemies rise up and conquer them? Well, you guessed it, it happened again! This time in our story, we don’t immediately start to look at the Judge that God raised up (Samson) and learn things about his life. Instead, we look at his parents.

In a time when every person was doing what was right in their own eyes, we meet a husband and wife who were unable to have a child. The Angel of Lord appeared to them and told them that the wife would in fact become pregnant and have a son, and then He gave Samson’s mom two instructions: don’t drink any wine or alcoholic drink, and don’t eat anything that God has forbidden, because the Lord wanted their son to be a Nazirite.

A Nazirite was someone who made a special kind of promise to God. They would vow (or promise) not to drink any wine or eat any grapes, not to ever cut the hair on their head, and not to make themselves unclean by touching anything that was dead, or even going to any grave sites. This was to show that they were set apart unto God. Their lives were supposed to be different, not just on the outside, but on the inside as well, completely devoted to the Lord.

This is what the Lord wanted from Samson. He was preparing His Judge from birth to be set apart and different, to be devoted to the Lord as an example to all the people of how we can follow God and keep His commandments. The Lord gave Samson the best possible start that He could. Samson had parents who heard from and obeyed the Lord, who raised Him in the statutes of the Lord even when the rest of the country had turned away from God.

If you are reading this today, it means you probably have people in your life like Samson’s parents, people whom God has given you to raise you up so that you can know His Word and His Love. What an incredible gift that is! The Lord wants you to be set apart and different as well. He doesn’t want you to follow a promise or a set of instructions. He wants you to follow a person, Jesus. The Lord wants you to be an example to the world around you, showing them how we can know Jesus and walk with Him all our lives. Thankfully, we don’t have to promise anything to God in order to do it. In fact, all we need to do is trust in the promises that He has already given to us.



## Questions for Young Children:

What promise did the Angel of the Lord make to Samson's parents?

What were some of the promises that a Nazirite would make to God?

Who has God put in your life to teach you about Jesus? Try to think of as many different people as possible.

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

What do you think it means to be "set apart" for the Lord? How should Christians be different from other people?

Read Matthew 6:1-7. How is what Jesus instructed here different from the Nazirite vow? Think of some ways that taking a vow like the Nazirite vow might lead to sinful thoughts like pride.

Have you been given the gift of people who taught you about Jesus from a young age? How do you feel about that? Do you feel like you have a responsibility to use that gift wisely?

# Breaking the Vow

**Scripture:** Judges 14:1-9

**Memory Verse:** Matthew 6:20

“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

## For My Family

Do you remember the vow that Samson’s family made to God? He was going to be a Nazirite, a person devoted to things of the Lord, and he was going to show that by following three fairly easy instructions: 1) Don’t eat or drink anything made from grapes, 2) Don’t cut your hair, and 3) don’t touch anything dead. Sounds simple enough, right? After all, Samson had been given good parents who would teach him these things from an early age, and Samson would grow up to be Israel’s righteous Judge! Sadly, just because we have parents who want to follow the Lord doesn’t mean that we will.

In the first half of Judges 14, we see that Samson didn’t seem to care about any of his Nazirite vows (except maybe the one about his hair). In these 9 verses, we see that Samson was hanging out in a grape vineyard, which doesn’t break any of his promises, but if you can’t eat them and you can’t drink them, why are you even there? Then in verses 8-9 we see that not only did Samson go and touch a disgusting, rotting, dead animal’s body, but he even scooped out the honey from inside it and ate it! Then he even gave some to his parents without telling them where it came from. And we haven’t even mentioned that he wanted to take a wife from the Philistines, something that God had already forbidden in His Word.

Even though Samson had been given such an incredible gift in his parents and his upbringing, he chose the things of earth over the things of God. He was willing to break his promise to God over some stinky, gross, dead lion honey, and as we will see through the rest of Samson’s story, he was willing to do much more than that.

God may have given you great parents or grandparents who love Jesus and have taught you about Him from an early age. You may have gone to Sunday School all your life. You might even go to a Christian school and have Bible studies in your classes. You are definitely sitting with someone right now doing devotions. You might have had all of these things poured into your life, but you still need to make a choice. Are you going to take hold of all the things that God has put in front of you, or are you going to trade those things in for temporary treasures that will fade away? You should praise the Lord for those people in your life that love Jesus and teach you about Him, but Samson’s life teaches us that we need to follow Jesus for ourselves.

## Questions for Young Children:

What were some of the rules Samson was supposed to keep as part of his Nazarite vow?

How did Samson break his Nazirite vow in this passage?

Do you think Samson cared more about what he wanted or what God wanted?

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

In this passage, what things did Samson show us were more important to him than God?

Why do you think Samson concealed the source of the honey from his parents?

What other way did Samson disrespect his parents in this passage?

# The Spirit of the Lord Fell Upon Him

**Scripture:** Judges 15:9-20

**Memory Verse:** Isaiah 55:8

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord.”

## For My Family:

Isaiah 55:8 tells us that God’s thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways. I think the life of Samson sums this verse up nicely. I would never use someone like Samson. Samson was a promise-breaker and a liar, amongst many other serious faults and flaws. He seemed to be actively rejecting what the Lord was trying to do in his life, and yet God used him mightily.

In today’s passage, we see that the Philistines had come up to make war on Israel and specifically against Samson. Unlike Gideon or Deborah, who commanded armies to defeat their enemies, Samson was a one-man wrecking crew. He had already defeated many Philistines single-handedly, causing an army to come up into Judea seeking revenge. The Israelites, scared of fighting against the Philistines, went down to Samson to arrest him and hand him over to the Philistines. Samson submitted to them, allowing himself to be bound, but when he was brought to the Philistine army, the Spirit of the Lord fell upon him, he broke the bonds, and with the jawbone of a donkey he fought and destroyed an army of 1000 Philistine soldiers. Samson, who was very thirsty after his battle, called out to the Lord, who again blessed him by bringing water up from the ground.

God chose to use and empower one of the most unlikely people you could imagine to do His work in the land. Today, God has chosen to use another very unlikely source to empower: the Church. God has chosen all of us to be His hands and feet in the world and do His work. Just like Samson, we make lots of mistakes, and just like Samson, we sometimes choose to do things for our own benefit, and yet God still works through us. Unlike Samson, we do not fight to bring violence against our enemies, and we certainly don’t use the jawbone of a donkey. Instead, we fight to bring life to our neighbors, and the weapon that we use is the Gospel of Jesus Christ found in the Word of God.

When Samson fought against the Philistines, the Lord sustained him with water from the ground. When the Lord uses us, He also sustains us by refreshing us through His Word and comforting us through the Holy Spirit. How amazing that God would choose to use imperfect vessels like Samson, and even you and me, to do His perfect work here on Earth!



## Questions for Young Children:

What weapon did Samson use to fight the Philistines?

How many Philistines did Samson fight against?

How did God provide for Samson?

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Is it surprising that God would choose to use a flawed man like Samson to do His work? Are there any other people from the Bible that were really flawed that God also used? (Examples: David, Abraham, Peter, Jacob, Jonah, and many more)

Do we have to be perfect to be used by God? Why or why not?

How is the Church a little bit like Samson in this passage?

# Samson and Delilah

**Scripture:** Judges 16:4-20

**Memory Verse:** John 15:5

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

## For My Family:

For many years, Samson had allowed temptation to overcome his faith in God. Of the three components of his Nazarite vow, only his promise not to cut the hair on his head remained uncompromised. In this, the most famous moment of Samson's life, we see that this last part of Samson's vow was also broken, and sadly, so was Samson. Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah. She was also in love, but she didn't love Samson. She loved money. The Philistines offered her a treasure to discover the secret of Samson's strength so that they could overwhelm him and take him prisoner. Even though it should have been obvious to Samson that Delilah was wicked and seeking to harm him, Samson succumbed and finally revealed that his hair had never been cut. Delilah had Samson's head shaved, and the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, leaving him weak. He was taken by the Philistines, and sadly, was badly wounded by them, leaving him blind.

Samson's strength wasn't found in his arms, so binding him with seven fresh bow strings wouldn't weaken him. It wasn't found in his hands, so tying him up with seven new ropes wouldn't defeat him either. It also wasn't found in his hair. Samson's strength came from the Lord. Samson had been set apart to be different, and the Lord blessed him because of that. Unfortunately, Samson's love for the things of the earth proved to be greater than this love for the Lord, and that is why he lost his strength.

There are two great lessons to be learned from this. First is that we can damage our relationship with the Lord so greatly (by loving the things of the earth more than God) that God ceases to work in our lives. We can reject what God wants to do in us, relying on our own strength, which of course leads to failure. Second is that anyone, no matter how strong, how important, or how well-known, can fall into sin. We all have to constantly be aware of our sinful desires and bring them before the Lord.

Even though Samson came to a point where he chose Delilah over the Lord, the Lord was not done with Samson. In verse 22, even though Samson was now a blind prisoner of the Philistines, we read that, “The hair on his head began to grow again.” The Lord gave Samson hope, and as his hair began to grow again, so did his love and desire for the Lord... but we will read about that next time.

## Questions for Young Children:

What did Samson tell Delilah was the secret of his strength?

Where was Samson's strength really found?

How did the Lord give Samson hope, even though he had been defeated by his enemies?

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Samson was so in love with Delilah that he was willing to violate his relationship with the Lord. What are some other things that people love so much that they compromise their relationship with the Lord?

How much pressure do you feel to be in a relationship? What warnings does Samson's story give us about love and relationships?

# Victory in Death

**Scripture:** Judges 16:23-31

**Memory Verse:** 1 Peter 3:18

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”

## For My Family:

Samson, the mighty Judge of Israel, had been imprisoned, tortured, and then was mocked and laughed at by his captors. The Philistines praised their god, Dagon, who in their minds had delivered Samson to them as punishment for the destruction that Samson had brought against them. Whereas before Samson had been so strong, now he was so weak.

What had seemed like a great victory for the enemies of God would of course quickly turn into their greatest defeat. Samson finally did what he should have done his whole life and called out to the Lord to strengthen him one more time as he tore the supporting pillars down in the temple and, in his death, won the greatest victory yet. What the Philistines had intended for evil, the Lord used for good.

Many years later, there would be another man who would be imprisoned, tortured, and mocked by a crowd. Jesus Christ was not chained up in a temple with hands placed on two pillars. Rather, He was taken to a place called Calvary, and His hands were nailed to a cross. Like Samson, it seemed that One who was sent to redeem His people had been defeated. Like Samson, the enemy thought that they had won a great victory, and just like Samson, it was in Jesus' death that the Lord's greatest victory was won.

Samson was a man with many faults and flaws, a sinful man who always wanted to do things his own way. Jesus was a man who never sinned. He always listened to the voice of His Father and was always obedient to that voice in all things. Where Samson was captured and defeated because of his own sinful nature, Jesus went willingly to the cross, laying His life down so that we could live.

There is of course one other huge difference between Samson and Jesus. Samson brought the roof down on the Philistines and his life was done. We read that he was buried in a tomb, and that is the end of the story. When Jesus died on the cross, He too was buried in a tomb, but after three days, Jesus rose again. He had conquered death itself.

For you and me there is hope in both these stories. Like Samson, although we are flawed and imperfect people, we can still be used mightily by the Lord. Because of what Jesus did for us, like Him, we can know that when our time on earth is over, we will rise as Jesus did because death has been conquered forever.

## Questions for Young Children:

At the end of the story, how did Samson show that he knew he needed God to help him?

God won a victory through Samson. How did God win a victory through Jesus?

Samson died and was buried in a tomb. What was different after Jesus died?

## Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

In 1 Samuel 15:22, we read that obedience is better than sacrifice. How can this be applied to the end of Samson's life?

How are Samson and Jesus similar in this story? How are they very, very different?

Compare the stories of Samson and Gideon. How are they different and what can we learn from these? (Gideon starts out afraid, learns to rely on God, but then fails at the end of his life. Samson starts out confident and sure of his own strength, fails miserably, but then finishes well).