

RockPointe Church Small Groups

Judges and Kings • Samson: The Humiliation of the Proud • Judges 13,14,16 •
09/15/2019

Main Point

We must recognize pride when it comes and depend on God to help us resist its temptations.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How would you define the word “potential?”

Who is an example of maximizing great potential? Who is an example of squandered potential?

What enables or hinders a person from reaching his or her potential?

We can think of many people, either in our lives or in our culture, who had great potential. Some have lived up to their potential, while others fizzle out and fail to reach the level their talent could have produced. Samson came into the world with great potential, but his pride, recklessness, and lust made him his own worst enemy.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have A volunteer read Judges 13:1-7.

Are birth announcements common in the Bible? Who else had their births announced?

What would you expect from someone whose birth was announced by an angel?

How did the Lord show He was planning to use Samson to accomplish His purposes?

What would be difficult about a Nazirite vow? Why? What type of person is most likely to be successful with such a vow?

Birth announcements are rare occasions in Scripture. Ishmael was announced to Hagar, John the Baptist to Zechariah, and Jesus to both Mary and Joseph. Such a rare occasion and important announcement would typically bring with it great expectation. Samson came into the world with great expectations and great potential. He was called to be a Nazirite—not to touch anything dead and not to cut his hair. Such a vow required great discipline and careful attention. Nazirites had to depend on God and not on themselves. Instead of living up to his potential, however, Samson chose the way of foolishness and spiritual compromise.

| Have a volunteer read Judges 14:1-7.

Why did Samson want the Philistine woman?

What senses led Samson? What instincts compelled him?

What was wrong with Samson taking this woman as his wife?

Read Deuteronomy 7:1-3. What had God commanded the Israelites about taking a spouse? Why do you think God commanded this?

What does Samson's decision to marry the Philistine woman reveal about his heart?

Why didn't Samson follow the commands of God? Do you think Samson thought he was in control of the situation? Why or why not?

In Deuteronomy 7, the Lord commanded that the Israelites be careful with how they lived among the peoples living in the promised land. In verse 3, God told the Israelites not to marry any of them. God wanted His people to be set apart and to take the land He had given them. Samson failed to remember and keep God's commands because He did not trust God. Instead, he gave in to the passions and lusts of the world.

| Have A volunteer read Judges 16:1-19.

After Samson's marriage fell apart, did he change the women he went after? Did he change at all?

What was the main motive for Samson's actions in this part of his story?

How was Samson missing what God had for him?

Samson failed to change his ways even after receiving the wages of his lust and sin. Instead of trusting God, he followed his sinful passions. Samson, whose name comes from the Hebrew word of light, gave up his secret because a beautiful woman Delilah, whose name

means “darkness” manipulated him. God gave him great power and he wasted it on lust.

Samson’s pride led him to a wasteful demise, but let’s finish our discussion by looking at the example of Jesus. His humility led Him to death as well, but in obediently following the Father, He secured life for all who believe.

| Have a volunteer read Philippians 2:5-9.

What do you think it was like for Jesus to leave heaven and become human?

What did He give up in doing so? What did we gain from His action?

Though culture often views humility as a weakness, in what ways did Jesus’ humility convey and require strength?

Paul pointed to Christ’s love for others and His humble service to God as examples for his Philippian friends. Unlike Samson, we are to live with an attitude of humility as we relate to others. With a healthy, balanced view of ourselves, we neither think too highly nor too little of ourselves. In this way we remain usable in God’s kingdom.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What do you take away from Samson’s story? Do you relate to him at all? If so, in what ways?

Is there anywhere in your life right now where you might have a false sense of control because of pride? What is a step you can take to challenge that weakness?

What is one specific way you can imitate Christ’s humility and service this coming week?

Pray

Ask God to help you be vigilant and aware of the pride of the world. Pray that God would keep your group far from it and that they would rely on the power of the Spirit to fight against it.

Commentary

| Judges 13:1-7

The opening of Samson's story, There was a certain man, exactly matches that of Samuel, inviting comparison of these two sons born to formerly barren women. The name of his father, Manoah, means "rest," which is what Israel lacked.

A Nazirite made a vow to abstain from wine and other alcoholic beverages, to remain separate from corpses and other sources of defilement, and to leave his hair uncut (see Num. 6). Since the dietary restriction not to...eat anything unclean should have been observed by all Israelites all the time, it suggests that general standards of holiness were low during this period. The baby that she would bear would be called to begin to save Israel from the power of the Philistines, though others would finish the work.

The Lord's design for Samson paralleled His design for Israel. Israel was intended to be a holy people, because their Lord was holy (see Lev. 11:45). Their subsequent history and lack of faithfulness to their calling was matched by Samson's career as he disobeyed every single one of the vows made on his behalf. From the womb on, Samson is a picture of Israel—chosen for holiness, but defiled by his sinful actions.

| Judges 14:1-7

14:1-2. After Samson's empowering by the Spirit in 13:25, his next action should have been calling out the Lord's people to battle the Philistines. Instead, he wanted to marry a Philistine woman whom he saw in Timnah. This city was only six miles west of Zorah, Samson's hometown (13:2), but it was in the hands of the Philistines. To get there involved going down, both physically and spiritually.

14:3-4. Samson's parents asked him in vain if there were no women among his relatives whom he could marry. Intermarriage with the Philistines was a denial of Samson's calling as a Nazirite, and his choice of a bride contrasts strongly with the "ideal" wife of Othniel, the first judge, who married Caleb's daughter. Samson said of the woman he "saw" (v. 1), I want her, which is literally, "she is right in my eyes." In this he represented Israel, where each citizen "did whatever he wanted" (17:6; 21:25), literally, "what was right in his eyes." Yet the Lord would use even Samson's sinful desires to accomplish His purposes. The text literally says his father and his mother did not know that she was from the Lord.

14:5-7. On another occasion, Samson was going down to Timnah with his parents when a young lion rushed at him. This attack happened as he came to the vineyards of Timnah, an odd place for a Nazirite to be, since he was required to avoid all contact with grape products.

The ease with which Samson disposed of the lion raises questions about why he had not yet begun to dispense with the enemies of the Lord—the Philistines.

| Judges 16:1-19

16:1-3. The opening verse parallels 14:1. Samson went to a Philistine town and saw a woman. Like the history of Israel, the spiral in Samson's life is downwards. This time he didn't want to marry her, he just wanted to sleep with her. Gaza was the most distant city of the Philistines from Samson's home, which symbolizes how far from God Samson had gone. When the Philistines heard that he was there, they surrounded the city and waited for him at the only exit, the city gate. Yet such was Samson's enormous strength that the Philistines were unable to trap him. His vast show of strength in uprooting the city gate and carrying it roughly 40 miles uphill to the mountain overlooking Hebron heightens the irony of his subsequent weakness in the hands of a woman.

16:4-5. Women were Samson's problem all along, yet his encounter with Delilah is the only case where love is mentioned. Once again, his heart was set on a Philistine woman. Delilah's name sounds like the Hebrew word for "night," in keeping with the darkness that was about to descend on Samson. The Philistine leaders, the rulers of the five city-states that made up that region (see 1 Sam. 6:17-18), sought to persuade Delilah to determine the secret of Samson's strength by promising her an enormous sum of money—1,100 pieces of silver from each leader. In comparison, the price of an ordinary slave was 30 pieces of silver (see Ex. 21:32).

16:6-9. Bowstrings were made from the sinews of animals, so fresh bowstrings would come directly from an animal's corpse. As with the earlier incidents with honey from a lion and the jawbone of the donkey, Samson displayed a disdain for his Nazirite vow of separation from corpses. Since seven was seen as the number of completeness in the ancient Near East, the idea of being weakened by seven bowstrings wrongly suggested that the source of Samson's strength lay in magic rather than in the Lord.

16:10-12. This time Samson told Delilah to use new ropes to bind him. This was the same technique that the Israelites used to bind Samson in 15:13, so it is no surprise that the attempt was unsuccessful.

16:13-14. The third time Delilah sought the secret of his strength, he told her to weave...seven braids of his hair into a fabric. This attempt, while also unsuccessful, was more ominous than the previous ones. Not only did Samson point to the connection between his hair and his strength, but the image of a woman standing over a sleeping man with a pin in her hands is

reminiscent of Jael approaching the sleeping form of Sisera.

16:15-17. Finally Samson told Delilah the whole truth (literally “everything of his heart”), that his strength came from his Nazirite vow, symbolized by his uncut hair. In fact, this was the only part of his Nazirite vow that he had not yet broken, and this revelation shows how lightly he took it.

16:18-19. Delilah realized that this time she had the secret, so rather than just saying, “The Philistines are here!” (vv. 9,12,14), she actually summoned the Philistine leaders, and they shaved Samson’s head. With the final element of his Nazirite vow gone, his power was lost.