

*Judges 16*

## Aim of Lesson

To show that in his time of weakness Samson saw his great need for God.

## Background study

Numbers 6:9-21; Hebrews 11:32-34.

## Suggested outline of lesson

Find out whether the children remember the rules of the Nazirite vow. As a result of keeping this vow, God had at times given Samson extraordinary physical strength. Ask the children to recall examples of this.

Using a map, indicate the area of Samson's home in the territory of Dan next to the Philistines, who were the enemies of Israel in the days of Samson. He had been responsible for the deaths of at least one thousand and thirty Philistines, and the lords of the Philistines wanted to make Samson their prisoner. Remind the children that God had given Samson his great strength so that he could use it to free the Israelites from their enemies. Unfortunately he was unwise in his choice of companions. Discuss with the children the importance of making good friends. Emphasize his foolishness in being attracted to Delilah, a Philistine unbeliever, who was offered an enormous bribe of eleven hundred pieces of silver by each of the lords of the Philistines to find out the secret of his great strength. Explain the meaning of a bribe.

Tell the children about Samson's visits to Delilah and her three attempts to trick him, first binding him with new cords, then new ropes, and then by weaving his hair into the cloth she was making. Describe the way she used her feminine charm to beguile him. Illustrate the dialogue by changes in voice and expression. Hand puppets could be used to dramatize the scene. Finally, show Delilah's frustration at having been teased by Samson, and being made to look foolish in the eyes of the Philistines, from whom she hoped to get a large reward.

Point out that Samson appeared to be unaware of any personal danger, in spite of Delilah's previous attempts to hand him over to the Philistines. She persisted in her cajoling and, totally captivated by her, he finally gave in to her pleading and foolishly divulged his secret.

Convey the Philistines' triumph over their now helpless enemy, and the sudden reversal of the situation; how they put out Samson's eyes, bound him with fetters of brass, and took him to Gaza where he was made to grind corn in the prison house. Ask the children if they have seen animals doing a similar task. Draw out the children's ideas of how Samson must have felt at this time – frustrated at not being able to see, remorse and self-disgust for having given away his secret, and the utter weakness of his own body. Looking back on his life, Samson saw how reckless and self-reliant he had been, and realized his absolute dependence upon God. Nevertheless, he had to endure the cruel consequences of his careless disregard of God's laws. Eventually, however, Samson's hair started to grow again, perhaps reminding him that according to the rules for the Nazirites, once the vows were broken the hair had to be shaved off and grown afresh. No doubt he realized that his strength was being returned to him.

Describe vividly the scene of the Philistines gathering to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon, and their rejoicing over the capture of Samson. Highlight the curiosity of those on the roof, who wanted to see this man who had been brought from the prison and set between the centre pillars of the building. Explain what a pillar is, and its place in the construction of the temple.

In spite of his foolishness, and his broken vows, God heard Samson's final prayer and granted him the strength with which to avenge the Philistines for the loss of his eyes. He was prepared to die with his enemies as he grasped the centre pillars and drew them down upon himself. Ironically, Samson killed more Philistines at the time of his death (three thousand) than he did during his lifetime.

## Relevance to the children's lives

It is so easy to think we know better than our parents, and to ignore what they say. Samson had been brought up to obey God's commandments but, when he grew up, he was foolish in his choice of companions. In the end, Delilah caused his downfall. When, and why, should we be very careful about our choice of friends?

## Worksheets

Samson's prayer reads 'O Lord God, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more!'

## Prayer

Dear Lord God, forgive us when we are too proud to listen to wise advice. Help us to turn to you, and to do what you ask. Amen.

## Memory verse

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1)