

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 Have you ever felt that you had made too many mistakes for God to care about you? How does the belief that God doesn't need us to be perfect before we ask for His help change how you deal with your own imperfections?
- 2 Reflect on a time in your life when you turned to God during a challenging or messy situation. How did you experience His presence and grace in that moment?
- 3 Are there specific areas in your life where you struggle to accept God's grace and forgiveness? How can you work on surrendering these areas to Him, just as you are?

WE DO LIFE TOGETHER!



SCAN QR

If you haven't been involved in a LIFE Group yet, send us a message us thru Fb, and we will get you connected to a small group.



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SUNDAY WORD

09 • 17 • 2023

FROM SETBACK TO COMEBACK

PART 3
WHEN GOD
CALLS YOU BACK

TEXT: Judges 13-16

From birth, Samson was a Nazirite. While still in the womb, God told Samson's mother that he would deliver Israel and was to always follow the Nazirite vow as written in Judges 13:2-5. A Nazirite vow, based on the Book of Numbers chapter 6, meant that Samson had to avoid three main things: 1. No alcohol or wine to show he was dedicated to God and not possessed by other things. 2. No contact with dead bodies to stay pure and clean. 3. No cutting his hair to keep his strength and power. Most people made Nazirite vows for a limited time to show their dedication to God, but Samson was unique. He had to follow the Nazirite vow his whole life to always be devoted to God.

But as Samson grew older, he had three big problems. He struggled with Lust. When he wanted a woman, he had to have it right away. He also had an issue with Entitlement, thinking he deserved everything. Lastly, Pride made him believe he could handle everything on his own. Samson was a strong man with poor self-control.

Chapter 14 reveals FOUR UNWISE MOVES SAMSON MADE, which marked the beginning of his decline and strained relationship with God.

1. He Went to The Wrong Place.

Judges 14:1 - "Samson went down to Timnah (NIV)." Timnah was in the Philistine area, about four miles away from Samson's village called Zorah. In his first crucial action as a ruler, he left Israel and went to where the Philistines lived. In short, Samson moved away from God's people and spiritually went in a different direction, heading south. If we distance ourselves from God, we also distance ourselves from the fulfillment of His grand plans for us. On the other hand, if we align ourselves with God, we align with His divine plans and purpose.

2. He Went Looking For The Wrong Thing.

When Samson was at Timnah, he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines." When he returned home, he told his parents in Judges 14:2, "I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife (NIV)." Israel was commanded not to marry outside the nation. Also, Samson was born to rescue Israel from the Philistines. It was not wise to literally sleep with the enemy. His parents had seen the danger of this action so they protested his decision. God had a specific plan for Samson. However, he focused on having a wife rather than doing what God told him to do. When people venture off searching for the wrong things instead of God, they often end up lost. When people focus on the wrong thing, they miss the blessings of God.

3. He Rejected Godly Counsel.

The downward spiral continues but now takes a threatening turn when he dismisses the warning from his parents in Judges 14:3. When his parents bring up valid points, he responds with, "Get her for me. She's the right one for me." That's not the last time we will see that phrase being used. It's his life motto. He does what is right in his eyes. Ironically this mindset is exactly what got Israel in so much trouble. Samson is also rejecting what God said about marrying a non-believer. We see this in 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness (NIV)?" For young people, don't rush to find a husband or wife. Find a partner who's in love with Jesus. If a person loves Jesus, he will love his spouse more than his life. You will never go wrong with a partner who loves Jesus. Listen to godly counsel because it's the compass guiding you through life.

4. He Continued A Wrong Relationship.

Judges 14:7 - "Then he went down and talked with the woman, and he liked her." It seems he hadn't met her before, but that's not important. Samson is more focused on his feelings than being guided by the Holy Spirit. This is like the Old Testament way of saying, "Hi, I like you, can you be mine?" He really wants what he desires, whenever he desires it, no matter what he has to do to get it.

Unfortunately, Samson is like a person who's starting to give up on his covenant with God. If you only look at his long hair, he seems like he's devoted to God, but the way he lives shows a different story. On the surface, he seems very committed to God, but deep down, he's a person who desires to do his own will. Choosing wrong relationships can lead us in the wrong direction in life. For the youth, choose your friends wisely. As they would say, "Tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are."

By observing Samson's actions, it becomes obvious that he made impulsive and poor choices. What spiritual weaknesses can we identify in Samson?

1. He didn't value his spiritual heritage.

In the beginning, he had godly parents, a godly family, and a godly calling. He knew the will of God and he knew the Word of God. He had an angel show up to personally announce what he was supposed to do. Samson inspired people. He was born for greatness. Samson had it all. But he never recognized that everything was given by God. He became conceited. He went this way and that way; he messed around, and in the process, he basically wasted his life away.

This can happen to any of us. Beware of the dangers of drifting away from God. It doesn't matter whether you're new or old in this church or whether you attended this church all your life. If you don't recognize God in your life and appreciate what He has given you, you are doomed to drift away from God and fail. Don't take your spiritual heritage for granted.

2. He couldn't control his emotions.

When we read Samson's story, we tend to think that his problem was all in the sexual area. Actually, his problem is not in the sexual area at all. His most basic problem was that he never learned how to control his emotions. He is filled with lust and anger.

That's why he would continually get in trouble. Friends, Don't let the passion of your emotions lead you to sin.

WHEN THINGS GET OUT OF CONTROL

Judges 16:20-21 - "20 But he did not know that the Lord had left him. 21 Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison (NIV)." This is the saddest thing to happen to Samson. He didn't know that the Lord had left him.

Many Christians move away from God because of foolishness and unwise choices. They don't appreciate what they have until it's gone. If we don't recognize and deal with our destructive flaws, we'll end up just like Samson. Sin **BLINDS** us, then it **BINDS** us, and then it slowly **GRINDS** us to death.

Samson acknowledged that he had sinned against God when he prayed: Judges 16:28 - "Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes (NIV)." Listen to how the narrative ends in verse 30: Judges 16:30b - "...Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived." (NIV)

The moral of this story has nothing to do with Samson and everything to do with God. This passage is a living lesson in the grace of God. How a man who was beaten and blinded, humiliated by his own repeated foolishness, reached the bottom, turned around, and discovered that God was waiting for him all the time. There's nothing heroic about Samson. All he did was turn around and find God. God is the hero.

Some of us really need to hear this. Restoration of a relationship with God does not depend on your performance. Reconnecting with God is about your heart, not your ministry. Samson came back to God before he pushed those pillars down. He came back to God while he was still in chains. He came back to God while he was still blind. He turned back to God and God took him. He took out 3,000 Philistines and their false god, which was his initial mission and purpose given by God. We know that because his name appears in the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11. Failure does not have to be final when you turn back to God. Are you ready to turn back to Him...before it's too late?

How far can you go before God stops caring about you? What if you make mistakes like getting drunk, having many relationships, stealing, or even taking someone's life? Is that too much for God to forgive? What if you cheat or commit adultery? Think about the most grievous or heaviest sin you can imagine. Can you go so far that God says, "I won't help you anymore, you're on your own"?

The truth is, nobody knows the answer to that question because nobody has ever gone too far that God couldn't reach them. Corrie Ten Boom once said, "There is no pit so deep that the love of God is not deeper still."

Sometimes, we carry a heavy burden of guilt, even when we come to church or try to pray. We feel like we have to clean up our act before God will accept us again. But that's not how it works. Samson came back to God just as he was, and God welcomed him with open arms. God doesn't require us to clean up our mess first; He wants us to turn to Him as we are.

This story gives hope to people like us who have made mistakes. We all have our flaws, but God's love is greater than any of them. Samson's story shows that it's never too late to come back to God and experience His forgiveness and love.