

Judges



DailyLife
Five Oaks Church

Week 4: November 21–27, 2015

Day 1

November 23



Pray | Thank God that if he has made a promise, he will fulfill it.

EVEN WHEN IT may seem that God has abandoned his promises, we can have confidence that God is working in all circumstances, even in messy situations, with sinful people.

An angel of God came to Manoah and his wife, and he promised them a son who would grow up to begin to deliver the Israelites from their Philistine oppression. In the chapter you will read today, Samson grows up, and we see that he starts off not appearing at all to be the judge his parents have probably been dreaming of. He travels to a Philistine town where he sees a beautiful woman he decides he wants for himself, so he returns home to demand his parents get her for him. Arrogant Samson is not only ignoring the tradition of Israelite parents to arrange marriages, but he wants to unite with a Philistine, the very people God promised them liberation from. His parents may have been wondering, *Did we hear that promise wrong?*



Read | Judges 14:1–20



Reflect / Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

Samson's parents were promised a son who would save Israel from the Philistines, but now Samson demands to marry one instead. Readers get to see the bigger picture: Samson follows his ungodly desires; God still will use the outcome to fulfill his purposes. There may be a situation in your life (a rebellious child, a closed door on a ministry opportunity, significant health concerns) where you thought God was going to work in a specific way, and he hasn't. In what ways can you take steps of faith that God is working despite these discouragements as you patiently wait for him to continue to unfold his story and reveal his plan?

Samson tears a lion apart because of God's Spirit filling him with power. This hints at God's later power in Samson. We do not have supernatural strength, but the power of God is at work in us. He promises to continue to give us strength. Think of how God has empowered you in the past. How can remembering these moments give you courage?

Samson's demand to marry a Philistine woman was not godly, but God used the wedding party results to begin weakening the Philistines, who were oppressing his people. Despite Samson's less-than-holy motivations, "the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him" as he fought in Ashkelon (Judges 14:19). You don't need to be perfect to accomplish his will. How can this truth encourage or challenge you?

Day 2

November 24



Pray / Thank God that he can use anyone, no matter how imperfect.

WHEN FACED WITH overwhelming obstacles, it is comforting to know that God is willing to bring about the seemingly impossible to keep promises and deliver his people.

After things cool down, Samson returns to Timnah with the intention of reuniting with his wife, but he finds, to his anger, that his father-in-law thought he didn't want her and gave her to his best man instead. Samson, in his anger, vows revenge on all the Philistines, and a bitter cycle of revenge gets more and more intense until even the men of Judah feel threatened enough to turn on Samson and come to capture and deliver him over to the Philistines.

With even his own nation against him, the only way Samson will continue to be a judge of Israel is by God's intervention.



Read / Judges 15:1–20



Reflect / Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

The Philistines try to get revenge on Samson, but God continues to overcome their attempts to defeat Samson. What examples can you think of in your own life or elsewhere when it seemed like something bad was going to triumph, but God intervened instead to bring about a completely different result?

The men of Judah fail to see Samson as God's deliverer from their oppression. Their defeated and narrowed vision sees the Philistines as their uncontested rulers, and they overlook the freedom God can grant them through Samson. Perhaps there is a sin in your life you have given up fighting against because it feels like it's too hard to battle or you've accepted the lie that it's "just the way you are." What steps can you take to pursue the freedom we are promised from the bondage of sin, which God offers all of us through Christ's victory over sin and death when he was crucified on the cross?

Samson's defeat of the Philistines was not holy vengeance with a motive to liberate the Israelites, but God still used it for good. Sometimes God uses unconventional circumstances to bring blessings and freedom. How has God used people with unholy motivations to bless you or help grow God's kingdom, which you can offer gratitude to him for?

Day 3

November 25



Pray / Ask God to convict you of areas where you disregard him.

GOD IS EXTREMELY gracious and slow to punish us how we deserve for our rebellious sin. If we choose to live our way, though, and don't take the instructions God has given us seriously for how to live or follow them, we will suffer consequences, and they can be severe.

Samson continues to do as he wants, often making ungodly choices but still seeing continued success against the Philistines as they attempt revenge on him for the destruction he metes out. The Philistines reassess their strategy and recognize two of Samson's greatest weaknesses: beautiful women and arrogance. If they can't best him physically, maybe they can work to defeat him from a different angle.



Read / Judges 16:1–31



Reflect | Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

Samson's placing the gates of Gaza, a major Philistine city, well inside Judah's territory at Hebron is a strong visual testimony to the Israelites of God's strength and saving power to deliver Samson yet again.¹ What visual reminder can you set up to be an encouragement to you and other believers of the work God has done in your life?

Samson pursues a sinful lifestyle but seems to think he is immune to God's consequences. We see him foolishly assuming God is still with him after he spills his secret, and as a result, he loses his hair and God's presence and strength. God does offer much grace despite sin in our lives, but he also does have consequences. Are there areas of your life where you have been chasing after something other than God and think that because God has continued to help you in the past, it indicates you won't suffer consequences for continuing to live your way and not God's?

After Samson shares the secret of his strength with Delilah, "the Lord left him." In Dagon's temple, we see that even though Samson has shown a major disregard for God, his prayers are still answered. God did not abandon him. Are there experiences in your past where you feel you have screwed up too big and now don't believe God will listen to your prayers or want a relationship with you?

1. Dale Ralph Davis, *Judges: Such a Great Salvation* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 185.

Day 4

November 26



Pray / Ask God to give you the courage to live how he wants you to.

OUR OWN JUDGMENT cannot be trusted to make right choices. When we no longer know or follow God's commands and each choose to do what we think is best, we as God's people become corrupt and even turn on each other.

The book of Judges takes a sharp turn in the final chapters, moving away from the oppression of other nations to look at the destruction within Israel because of the people's choices to follow their own hearts' desires instead of remaining faithful to obey how God has commanded them to live.

The Israelites failed to reject the idol worship they left behind in Egypt and found themselves surrounded by in Canaan. They don't reject God fully; instead, they try to combine their religion with popular culture and justify their choices as they move away from the people God called them to be.



Read / Judges 17:1–18:31



Reflect / Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

A series of events in this passage appear to indicate God is blessing Micah and the Danites' actions (for example, after Micah has idols made for worship, a Levite comes whom he can hire as priest). Their actions are a violation of God's commandments, so these are not providential blessings; God is simply delaying judgment. Life's circumstances can be a horrible barometer for God's approval or disapproval of our decisions. What can you use to test whether you are being faithful to do what God wants or doing what you desire?

Micah says he wants to worship Yahweh, but his use of idols in worship violates God's commands. Partial obedience of God's laws is pure foolishness. Do you choose to follow God's commands without exception, or are there some things you have been choosing to ignore or do differently because they are hard to obey or don't make sense to you?

Micah's idols begin as a warped suggestion from his mother, but they spread to corrupt his entire household and eventually an entire tribe of God's people.² Our sins have a huge impact on those around us, especially the people we influence. How can you work to use your influence to lead others toward God and not infect them with any sin habits?

2. Dale Ralph Davis, *Judges: Such a Great Salvation* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 206.

Day 5

November 27



Pray / Ask to better understand him as a God of justice and mercy.

WHEN WE SEE other believers choosing to live in ways that directly violate God’s commands, we are called to stand against sin—while not forgetting that we also have sin in our lives that we need to also be convicted of and have others stand up against.

The book of Judges ends with a grotesque story outlining some of the deepest depravity and internal destruction Israel faced as the people continued to live out their own personal desires instead of following God’s commands or living under his divine ruling.

When an Israelite notifies all of Israel of the horrendous sins of an Israelite city, he asks for all of Israel to come exact judgment on the city. In a period of the nation’s history when so many of the Israelites have been doing whatever they think is right by their own standards, there is a significant need for God’s people to return to following his commands and looking to him for guidance.



Read / Judges 19:1–21:25



Reflect / Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

Despite Gibeah's sins, the tribe of Benjamin defends the city instead of condemning its sinful lifestyle. We are not called to viciously attack believers but also not defend them in their lives of sin, either. How can you speak the truth in love to help other believers recognize sin problems they need to purge from their lives (and be open to others doing this for you) instead of overlooking their sins and therefore supporting them to continue doing what is right in their own eyes?

In battle, the Israelites ask God what to do but still lose their first two battles. Ultimately, God uses those losses to build the Benjaminites' arrogance so the ambush fully succeeds. God uses initial failure to bring victory. Sometimes following God is hard, and we may not immediately win our battles. How can this passage encourage you when you are following God's commands but still face failure despite obedience?

Despite the Benjaminites' sins, we still see grace as the tribe is not completely wiped out and provisions are made. We all deserve full judgment, but God gives grace. How have you seen both judgment and grace in your own life?

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