

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## JUDGES 13-16

The California redwoods are one of the wonders of nature. They're colossal. The trees are skyscrapers - their girth is gigantic - they're kings of the forest.

And nothing is as impressive as the falling of one of these redwoods...

The cutters score the tree trunk. They move the saw back and forth, and the cut deepens. Soon, the tree starts to bend. It leans further and further from the cutters. Before long you hear the cracking of wood fibers. With each slice of the saw the noise builds. Eventually, it swells to a roar. The tree begins to fall.

If you're underneath it seems that the sky is falling. The trunk explodes along the cut-line, and the tree crashes to the forest floor. It sounds like thunder.

Tonight, I need to yell *"TIIIIIMBEEER..."* - for we're going to watch the falling of a redwood... not of a giant tree, but a giant of a man.

Samson was huge – not necessarily in physical stature, but in privilege, and power, and effectiveness for God. Samson was a Nazirite (*dedicated to God*).

He came from a godly home - served in an important post - was feared by his enemies - was used by God in supernatural ways. Samson was God's Strongman. He was a divine vigilante – a one-man wrecking crew. *Samson was a redwood.*

Yet Samson fell... The saw slides back and forth - the

slender score line around his heart deepens – he leans – finally cracks – Samson falls hard.

We've all met a Samson – a person who had it all... beautiful spouse, good job, healthy kids, good reputation, effective ministry. Then one day he crashes...

A secret, sinister side gets exposed. A name gets muddied. A family is broken. Hearts get wounded. The cause of Christ takes another black-eye... *Perhaps Samson's example will wake us up, lest anyone yell timber over our lives....*

Chapter 13, “Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for 40 years.”

The Philistines fled from Greece and settled in Canaan around 1200 BC.

They first attacked Egypt, but were repelled. That's when they settled northward on the Canaanite coast. They knew how to smelt iron and forge weapons. Their knowledge made them a threatening neighbor to Israel.

“Now there was a certain man from Zorah...” This was a city 14 miles east of Jerusalem. “Of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children.” Barrenness was the scourge of the ancient world. It was considered a sign of God's curse. Nothing brought greater shame...

“And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no

children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

Notice, "he shall begin to deliver Israel". Samson never rallied the nation to battle against the Philistines. Unlike other judges, Samson resisted the enemy alone. His struggles were more *personal vendettas* than *national campaigns*.

Samson began Israel's revolt against the Philistines. But it'll take Samuel to rally the nation together and conquer the Philistines at Mizpeh in 1 Samuel 7.

Now Mrs. Manoah was promised a son... and he was to take a special vow – a lifelong vow. Her son was to be a "Nazirite" - the word means "to dedicate".

The vow of the Nazirite was an act of special devotion to God. There were only three lifelong Nazirites in Scripture... *Samson, John the Baptist, and Samuel.*

The Nazirite's special act of dedication consisted of 3 elements: *he was not to eat or drink of the fruit of the vine - cut his hair - or touch anything that was dead.*

In other words, you'd never find a Nazirite in a *liquor store, a barber shop, or a funeral parlor.* And understand, these are three places that get heavy traffic. Drive by any new strip mall, and it's likely to have a liquor store, and a barber shop.

And funeral homes are everywhere too. *In fact, people are just dying to get into them.*

People want a **nip**, a **clip**, and then they want to *rest in peace... a rip*. They're into pleasure, appearance, and immortality – the antithesis of what God values.

1 John 2:16 sums up the philosophy of this world, “**The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.**”  
*Feeling great – looking great – being great.*

Well, the Nazirite sent a message. Real life is more than a *nip, clip and rip*. It's lived on a spiritual plane. True fulfillment is found in the spiritual and in the eternal.

Real joy isn't produced by *distilled spirits*, but by the *Holy Spirit*.

Real beauty isn't created inside a barber shop - but inside the heart.

And every mortuary should remind us that real meaning isn't found here on earth. There's a life to come. Real soul-satisfaction is found in eternal pursuits.

The Nazirite was a walking billboard – an advertisement for godly values. Real life is found in *the spiritual, not physical – the internal, not external – the eternal, not temporal!* And the child born to Mrs. Manoah was to be a life-long Nazirite.

Verse 6 “**So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name. And He said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son.**”

Now drink no wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.' "

Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, and said, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born." And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field; but Manoah her husband was not with her. Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband, and said to him, "Look, the Man who came to me the other day has just now appeared to me!"

So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said to Him, "Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?" And He said, "I am."

Manoah said, "Now let Your words come to pass! What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?" So the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah..." He repeats what He already told Manoah's wife. "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful.

She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe."

"Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You." And the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the LORD." (For Manoah did not know He

was the Angel of the LORD.) In other words, I don't need a meal - but I'll accept a sacrifice – a burnt offering. And of course, the only person worthy to accept sacrifices is God.

Obviously, this is no ordinary angel.

Here again the messenger of God claims to be divine. Here is a clear case where the Angel of the LORD is actually a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.

Manoah was hoping for some new, additional information about his son - but instead of discussing the boy, he learns the truth about His supernatural visitor.

Verse 17 “Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, “What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honor You?” And the Angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?”

In Isaiah 9:6 Jesus is referred to prophetically as “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...” Jesus' name is *wonderful!*

So often like Manoah we pray for more information about God's *plan*, but what we really need is a revelation of His *person*. Rather than more details about our *mission* we need a clearer vision of the *Messiah*. We need to see Jesus!

That's how the Angel handles Manoah. He talks about Himself not his son.

Finally Manoah offers the burnt offering, “So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LORD.

And He (the Angel of the Lord) did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on - it happened as the flame

went up toward heaven from the altar - the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground.” Talk about “going up in smoke”?

Here are some real July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks! The angel ascends in the flame of the sacrifice.

Just a word to married couples... If you're looking for a new spark – or want to relight a fire in your marriage - follow the example of Mr and Mrs. Manoah. Offer yourselves and your marriage as a sacrifice to God, and Jesus will join your flame.

“When the Angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the LORD. And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!" He obviously feared God.

In John 1:18 Jesus said, “No one has seen God at any time.”

No mortal is worthy to look on God and live. Yet Manoah knew that in seeing God's pre-incarnate Son he'd actually seen God Himself. Now he's scribbling down his last will and testament just in case God decides to strike him dead.

“But his wife said to him, "If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have told us such things as these at this time." Once again, a wife settles down her husband with some common sense.

“So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; (the name means “sunny”). And Sunny will provide the Philistines many dark and stormy days.

“And the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.” Notice where the Spirit of God first began to move on Samson’s life? “Mahaneh Dan” which means “the camp of Dan.” Perhaps it was the MS or HS or Kids camp?

But between Zorah and Eshtaol God’s Spirit filled Samson, and baptized him with power. Until this point Samson was a typical Jewish kid, but at Mahaneh Dan the Spirit moved on him in a new way. It wasn’t something that gradually dawned on him, or he grew into, or developed through osmosis, or caught like a cold. This was the specific turning point in his life where He experienced God in a new way.

I still remember where I happened to be the first few times I was baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit had been *in* me for some time, but there came a point in time when He came *upon* me with power... And this can happen to you!

If you’ve never been to Mahaneh Dan in your life - ask God to take you there.

Chapter 14 “Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, “I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.” Note the first recorded words out of Samson’s mouth. They’re the reason this



redwood falls... “I have seen a woman...”

Samson goes to Timnah and sees a *Philistine Philly*. He likes her looks. He wants her for his wife. He insists that his parents arrange the marriage. Samson doesn't care that she's a Gentile, and God forbids Hebrews to marry Gentiles.

All Samson cares about is satisfying his sexual desires. He wants the girl...

This was Samson's problem in a nutshell – he may or may not have been an *exerciser*, but he was definitely a *womanizer*. He liked to chase skirts. He had an eye for the ladies. Samson could slay 1000 Philistines, but not his own libido.

You might say, “Samson was a *he-man with a she-problem*.”

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources reports that 17,000 deer are struck by motorists every year on state roads. And the peak season for road kill is late November – *that's the season when the bucks like to mate*. The state Wildlife Director makes the statement, “The deer are concentrating almost exclusively on reproductive activities, and are a lot less wary than they normally would be.”

This is what happened to Samson. Sex was his Achilles Heel. And this is why we need convictions. Despite what the media tells us, *life is more than sex*.

Sure, sex is pleasurable, but the pleasure is physical and fleeting - whereas our deepest needs are spiritual... and always remember, *physical pleasure will never satisfy a spiritual need*. The key to real, lasting, permanent fulfillment is

not *physical intimacy* with another person, but *spiritual intimacy* with God.

Verse 3 “Then his father and mother said to him, “Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” And Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well.” Samson was all about his own desires.

“But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD” I’m sure God didn’t approve of Samson marrying a Philistine, but he used Samson’s selfishness.

For God “was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah.”

“Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him.” Samson is on the road to Timnah to see his sweetie when suddenly a man-eating lion attacks him.

Verse 6 “And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.” If God did this miracle for us, we would stand on the lion’s carcass, take a photo, and download it on the internet. Or the photo would appear in the next edition of Calvary magazine.

To Samson’s credit, he took no glory for what he’d done.

“Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she

pleased Samson well.” A relationship develops. It was lust at first sight. “After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion.”

The honey makes for a nice snack... *and the whole picture becomes the inspiration for a riddle.*

But notice, long before his infamous haircut, Samson broke his vow to God. Here he breaks the third part of the Nazirite vow - he touches a dead carcass.

Verse 9 “He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.

So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast there, for young men used to do so.” Samson threw himself a bachelor’s party.

The Hebrew word “feast” means “drinking bout” or “drinking celebration”. And knowing what kind of guy Samson was it’s hard to imagine he was content with soda pops. He was probably hitting the wine himself which would’ve been a violation of the first part of his vow – drinking of the fruit of the vine.

And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought 30 companions to be with him. Then Samson said to them, “Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the 7 days of the feast, then I will give you 30 linen garments and 30 changes of clothing.” Samson gets a little sauced - and he proposes a friendly wager... He’s going

to stump them with a riddle.

“But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me 30 linen garments and 30 changes of clothing.” They’re both wagering 30 new suits from the Men’s Warehouse. “And they said to him, “Pose your riddle, that we may hear it.”

“So he said to them: “Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet.” Now for 3 days they could not explain the riddle.

But it came to pass on the 7<sup>th</sup> day that they said to Samson's wife, “Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? Is that not so?” The Philistines don’t want to lose. They threaten Samson’s bride.

“Then Samson's wife wept on him...” She turns on the tears. The beautiful Philistine babe is also a manipulator. She makes him feel guilty...

She said, “You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained it to me.” *“Sunny, honey, you left me out of your game. If you really love me you’ll whisper the answer to me.”*

“And he said to her, “Look, I have not explained it to my father or my mother; so should I explain it to you?” Now she had wept on him the 7 days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much.” Samson could kill a lion with his bare hands, and slay a band of Philistines – but he lacked the

strength to say “no” to a woman.

“Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people.”

“So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down: “What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?”

Immediately, Samson smells a rat. He’s been doubled-crossed.

In verse 18 Samson shows off his way with words... ‘And he said to them: “If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle!”

“Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed 30 of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle.” Samson gave them the clothes, but he took them off the backs of dead Philistines. Hey, we go to the *mall* to purchase clothes. Samson went to the *brawl*. He *mauled* the Philistines.

“So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house.” His wife’s betrayal had upset him deeply. Samson went home to sort out his feelings.

In the meantime, “Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.” Talk about adding insult to injury... The Philistines better brace themselves when Samson finds out what his father-in-law has done to him.

Chapter 15 “After a while, in the time of wheat harvest (late

May or early June), it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat." A young goat was the equivalent of a dozen roses and a box of candy. Samson has concluded he loves his bride and is willing to forgive her act of betrayal. He's coming to make up.

And he said, "Let me go in to my wife, into her room." But her father would not permit him to go in. Her father said, "I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead." He tries to pawn off the baby sister on Samson.

"Samson said to them, "This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!" It's payback time! "Then Samson went and caught 300 foxes;" The Philistines took Samson's foxy woman – now he'll take 300 of their foxes.

"And he took torches, turned the foxes tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. When he had set the torches on fire, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves." Their crop was devastated.

Verse 6 "Then the Philistines said, "Who has done this?" And they answered, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion." So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire." They torch Samson's in-laws. The love of his life dies in the flames.

You could say Samson and the Philistines are fighting *fire with fire*.

“Samson said to them, "Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease." So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam.” He retreated to the borders of Israel. Etam was south of Bethlehem.

But notice the phrase “he attacked them hip and thigh...” This may’ve been a wrestling term. He dismembered them. He pulled apart their hip and thigh. Or it could’ve meant he stomped them. Samson thoroughly trounced the Philistines.

Verse 9 “Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi.” In other words, the Philistines have come to arrest Samson. “And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?"

So they answered, "We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us." Then 3000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What is this you have done to us?" And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them." But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines." You begin to feel a little sorry for Samson... His newlywed wife betrays him. Now his fellow countrymen are wanting to arrest him... extradite him... turn him over to their enemy.

“Then Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not

kill me yourselves." So they spoke to him, saying, "No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you." And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock." New ropes were strong and unbreakable.

"When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him." They saw the ropes. They saw he had offered no resistance. They thought they had him.

"Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire..." Suddenly, the ropes flaked away and crumbled. Like when you take the poker and hit the last piece of wood in a hot fire. They flaked in pieces. "And his bonds broke loose from his hands."

Verse 15 "He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it." A thousand men were too few. Twenty thousand men would've been too few, *for the Spirit of God fought for Samson.*

I picture a posse' bringing Samson through a narrow canyon. Rock walls and slight openings are around him. He breaks free, and for the Philistine soldiers to capture him they have to attack him with small bands of men. They try to wiggle through the narrow passages, and Samson picks them off one or two at a time.

Verse 16 "Then Samson said: "With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men!" The phrase "heaps upon heaps" is a word play. In the Hebrew the word resembles "donkey".



Samson is mocking the Philistines. Donkeys were slain with a donkey's jawbone.

You might say Samson was boasting – or better yet, “*trash-talking*”.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, says this conquest over the Philistines went to Samson's head. He thought he had become invincible. Josephus says verse 16 was really a small portion of a much longer song of victory - a bigger boast.

Apparently, Samson was *jawing about the jawbone*.

Josephus puts it this way, “(Samson) said that this did not come to pass by the assistance of God, but that his success was ascribed to his own courage...”

Proving there were actually two jawbones of a donkey at work in this story...

“And so it was, when he had finished speaking (implying he spoke for a long time.), that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi.” The name of the place, “Ramath Lehi”, means “*Jawbone Heights*”.

Let me read Josephus' comments in their entirety they explain what happens next, “Upon this slaughter, Samson was too proud of what he had performed, and said that this did not come to pass by the assistance of God, but that his success was to be ascribed to his own courage; and vaunted himself, that it was out of a dread for him that some of his enemies fell, and the rest ran away upon his use of the jawbone; but when a great thirst came upon him, he considered that human courage is nothing, and bare his

testimony that all is to be ascribe to God...”

In verse 18 Samson learns a lesson, “Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?"

“So God split the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore (which means “*Spring of the Caller*”), which is in Lehi to this day.

And he judged Israel 20 years in the days of the Philistines.”

Chapter 16 “Then Samson went to Gaza (a major Philistine city) and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.” He must’ve tried to slip in undercover.

But there’s a leak, “When the Gazites were told, "Samson has come here!" they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city.” A squad of Philistines locked the city gates, and set a trap for Samson.

Remember, ancient gates were serious fortifications. They were deeply imbedded – they were strong and heavy - able to resist an entire army.

Verse 2 “They were quiet all night, saying, "In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him." That was the Philistine plan. Samson had a plan of his own.

“And Samson lay low till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces

## Hebron.”

Imagine the Philistines camped out around the gates expecting to pounce on Samson at daybreak. Suddenly, Samson is ripping the gates out of the ground and using the iron bars to bulldoze down the Philistines who oppose him.

It was a huge embarrassment for the Gaza police department.

And it was also proof that not even city gates can stop a man empowered by God’s Spirit. A single man filled with the Holy Spirit can defeat an entire army.

Yet the source of the power was also a problem... *“filled with the Holy Spirit.”*

This is why Samson’s life is such an enigma. He’s a walking contradiction... Samson is *familiar with God’s power*, but he’s *a stranger to God’s purity*.

Here’s a man who spends the night with a hooker. He walks out of *a brothel – not a chapel* – and God uses him to do the miraculous - win a great victory.

*How can this be?* Perhaps nobody in the Scriptures demonstrates as much a contradiction between his *personal life* and his *public ministry* as does Samson.

How can a man be used so powerfully by God, while being so nonchalant about obedience to God? There can only be one answer... *it is God’s mercy*.

God uses imperfect vessels. He supplies His servant’s on-the-job training. He fixes us on the fly. He works *in us – on us* – and *through us* all at the same time.

But don't make the wrong assumptions... Just because God continues to use you doesn't mean He approves of everything you do. God was extremely concerned with Samson's sin. We see in chapter 16 there comes a point when enough is enough. Samson crosses a line. He goes too far, and the power he's come to expect - and believes will always be there - is suddenly gone.

The life of Samson teaches us there's a definite point - there's a line you cross and God says "*enough*". He withdraws His blessing. He puts you on the shelf. The giver of the *Great Commission* puts you *out of commission* if you cross that line.

And here's the added problem - you don't really know where God draws that line until it's been crossed. Chapter 16 marks Samson's sad, pathetic end.

Verse 4 "**Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.**" Notice, Samson's *vice* led him to a *valley* - not just *geographically*, but *spiritually*. Even as God used Samson each time he yielded to temptation the condition of his heart grew worse. *Notice the deterioration...*

**The first time** he lusts for a woman at least he tries to do the honorable thing - and get married. **The second time**, he settles for a one-night-stand, but it's done in secret, and it's not permanent. He still senses some shame. But **the third time**, he throws away restraint, and shacks up with Delilah in an open act of defiance.

I detect a progression – *a seedy slide*. Samson has a lust problem he never turns from... he tries to *legitimize* it - then *privatize* it - finally he *secularizes* his outlook. He *gives up* the fight for virtue, and *gives in* to sin. Samson becomes brazen and shameless... It's a slippery slope down to the edge of the cliff.

“And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you 1100 pieces of silver." There were 5 lords of the Philistines so that's an offer of 5500 pieces of silver. Delilah gets big bucks if she can deliver the secret of his strength.

Which brings up a point... if Samson had possessed a muscular physique - like he's often pictured – a buff, beefy, muscle bound brute – why would anyone want to know the secret of his strength? It would be obvious. Keep him off the steroids.

This is why I believe Samson had a slight build - he may've been a pipsqueak.

I don't think there was a ripple in Samson's shirt - but when God's Spirit came upon him he exuded super-human strength. *This is why they wanted his secret...*

Verse 6 “So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you." And Samson said to her, "If they bind me with 7 fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man." At first, Samson plays with Delilah...

“So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her 7 fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. Now men were lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!"

But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire.” They popped right off. “So the secret of his strength was not known.”

Verse 10 “Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with."

So he said to her, "If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And men were lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.” Again, Samson is playing a game – but it never dawns on him that Delilah is not... and neither is God.

“Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with." And he said to her, "If you weave the 7 locks of my head into the web of the loom" And notice he’s getting close to the real secret of his strength. His long hair is the last remnant left of the vow he made to God.

“So she wove it tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web

from the loom.” Again she failed to pry away his secret.

Verse 15 “Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength lies.” Delilah is desperate. She pulls out the old, “*if you really love me*” line. How many young men and women have thrown away their virginity and integrity because of this statement, “*if you really love me...*”

Hey, if you really love someone you won’t ask them to disobey God. And if you really love the person asking... you’ll say “No”. You’ll insist on God’s best for them.

Yet imbedded in Delilah’s statement was the ultimate issue for Samson.

She questioned him “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me?” She’s really asking “*where is your heart?*” This is what God asking too...

For awhile - despite Samson’s failures - his heart still belonged to God. He kept yielding in moments of temptation, but deep in his heart he wanted to please God.

Yet repeated compromise takes its toll. It chips away at the will. It erodes your desire and devotion. Eventually Samson no longer cares. *Where is his heart?*

It used to belong to *God* – buy now in the valley of Sorek - it belongs to *a girl!*

Verse 16 is an awful verse, “And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, that he told her all his heart, and

said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

This was the one part of his vow he had kept. His long hair was the last tie between him and God. It was the last token Samson could give to prove that he cared about pleasing God, and following God. As long as there was a desire for godliness, God would forgive his weakness, but now the desire is no longer...

"When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart." So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the 7 locks of his head. Then she began to torment him (It goes to show how much Delilah really loved him.), and his strength left him.

And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!"

But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him."

In one sense we can say a single woman did what a thousand Philistines couldn't – bring down Samson. But it wasn't just Delilah. It was a lifestyle that built up over years – a tolerance – an accommodation with a sin that Samson should've never allowed. It was a cavalier attitude toward a



serious problem. Samson was a man who kept playing with the poisonous snake, and it finally bit him.

Samson's life teaches us that sin doesn't just produce unannounced failure – it saps the life out of our commitment to God. It diminishes our desire for God.

The Philistines immediately begin to torture the man who tortured them for 20 years. Verse 21 **“Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.”** They poked out Samson's eyes, and paraded him in the temple of Dagon. They gave credit to their god for delivering their enemy into their hands.

How it had to break his heart to know he'd become a trophy to an empty idol.

And isn't it ironic - they pluck out Samson's eyes. Samson's problem his whole life was *his wandering eyes*. **Samson has to become blind for him to really see.**

Verse 22 makes a passing comment, **“However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.”** In other words, a fresh commitment was still possible. Samson had been shelved, but the shelf doesn't have to be permanent.

**“Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said: "Our god has delivered into our hands Samson our enemy!" When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said: "Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy,**

the destroyer of our land, and the one who multiplied our dead." One day Samson is in the temple of Dagon – the object of Philistines jeers and insults. He's drawn quite a crowd.

"So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may perform for us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them." On this day the place was full of spite. Most everyone in attendance had a relative Samson killed. They hated him with a vengeance.

"And they stationed him between the pillars." two main supporting posts.

Verse 26 "Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them."

Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there - about 3000 men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed.

Then Samson called to the LORD, (and prayed his final prayer) saying, "O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!"

The Spirit of the Lord comes upon Samson one final time.

"And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left.

Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!"

And he pushed with all his might," Imagine, being inside the

structure. The beams and seats start to wobble and shake - then collapse like a house of cards. “And the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it.”

And what an epithet - verse 30, “So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.” Samson went out with a bang. His greatest victory was his last. *His ultimate victory came as a result of his own death!*

And that’s true for us all... It’s only when we die to our own selfishness and pride – and sacrifice everything we have to Jesus that we really begin to live.

Once Samson lost his eyes, he could see what life was all about. Women, pleasure no longer matter – in the end all Samson wanted was to experience the power of the Spirit, and bring glory to God... *even if it cost him his life.*

How desperate are you to know God? Do you want to know the power of God more than life itself? Even if you’ve been on the shelf, ask God to use you again!

Verse 31 “And his brothers and all his father's household came down and took him, and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel 20 years.”