

Samson: A Negative Role Model

Gregory A. Smith

26 May 2002

All Scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are from the book of Judges.

Introduction

Samson was born around 1090 BC, in the latter period of Israel's judges, to a family of the tribe of Dan. He was privileged in his upbringing in many ways.

- His birth was miraculous, the product of divine intervention (13:2ff).
- His parents were chosen by God to raise him as a Nazirite who would deliver Israel (13:2ff).
- His mother learned of her son's special mission from the angel of the LORD (13:3ff).
- His mother was commanded to observe the Nazirite code of conduct--a form of separation to God (13:4-5).
- His father prayed for a second appearance of the angel of the LORD, and his prayer was answered (13:8ff).
- His father sought God's direction as to how to prepare the child for his life's work (13:12).
- His father offered a sacrifice to the LORD (13:15-20).
- His father feared God (13:21-22).
- His parents confronted him when he sought to violate God's law (14:3).

Despite all these privileges, Samson made a number of sinful choices, often bringing glory to God only in an indirect way. In this lesson we will recount his failures in order to consciously avoid them.

Body

He flirted with spiritual disaster.

- He chose a pagan wife on the basis of appearance rather than character (14:1ff; cf. Deut. 7:3).
- He lived in a cycle of escalating violence and revenge (14:18-15:16).
- He returned to the land of the Philistines after repeated confrontation with them (16:1ff).
- He engaged in immoral behavior, first with a prostitute (16:1-3) and later with Delilah (16:4ff).
- He naïvely divulged the source of his strength to a woman whose loyalty was in question (16:15-18).

He violated the code of his calling (cf. Num. 6:2-6).

- He touched the carcass of a lion (14:8-9).
- He likely consumed alcohol (14:10 ["feast" is literally a drinking party]).
- He allowed his hair to be cut (16:16-19).

He presumed the continued blessings of God.

- He experienced the power of the Spirit of the LORD despite repeated sin (13:25; 14:6; 14:19; 15:14).
- His actions against the Philistines were motivated more by personal vengeance than zeal for God's people (e.g., 15:7; 16:28).
- He was insensitive to God's presence in his life (16:20).

Implications

- We must recognize that godly parenting does not guarantee that a child will follow God.
- We must learn to flee from evil rather than flirting with it.
- We must live out our identity as God's children.
- We must seek--not presume--God's blessings continually.
- We must recognize the deceitful, enticing nature of sin.

Bibliography

- Bowling, Andrew C. "Judges." Baker Commentary on the Bible. Ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989. 158-78.
- Crenshaw, James L. Samson: A Secret Betrayed, A Vow Ignored. London: SPCK, 1979.
- Ellsworth, Roger. "Samson and the Seduction of Culture." Founders Journal 31 (1998). 25 May 2002 <<http://www.founders.org/FJ31/article2.html>>.
- Hildebrand, David R. "Samson." The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979-88.
- Lindsey, F. Duane. "Judges." The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty: Old Testament. Ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck. Colorado Springs: ChariotVictor, 1985. 373-414.
- "Samson." Dictionary of Biblical Imagery. Ed. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998.
- Swindoll, Charles R. Old Testament Characters: Bible Study Guide. Fullerton, CA: Insight for Living, 1986.