

Judges 13-16, Samson

Breaking the Rhythm

- Intro

- Comfort with unrepentant sin is one of the scariest things believers can get wrapped up in. Sin is always present in our lives, so our struggle against sin only ceases when we stop struggling and sink down, like a shipwrecked man who decides to stop swimming. It's a scary thought to process as I examine my life and see things that I still struggle with and need to change. This is why Scripture teaches us that following the Lord is an active sacrifice of dying to ourselves daily. The moment we get comfortable with where we are in Christ is the moment we get into trouble. Growing in the fullness of Christ requires sacrifice of ourselves in order to become more like Jesus (although we will never be perfect). Each day, every moment, we decide whom we will serve.

- Discussion Questions

- Samson's Birth (Ch. 13)

- In v.6-8, how do Manoah and his wife react to what God tells them? How do we respond similarly when God speaks to us, or how should we respond?
- As with Jericho and Gideon, God's plan seems a little crazy: what's the point of the Nazarite vow? Do extra vows or disciplines make us more or less holy? Will God do more in our lives if we do something extreme for him?
- Notice in v.13-14, the Angel charges Manoah to help his wife do what the Lord has called her to do. What can we do, as a community, to help others in our community follow after the leading of the Spirit? How do we respond when people reject the leading of the Spirit?

- Samson's Struggles (Ch. 14-16)

- Pastor Matt made a comment that we are often our own enemies. How is that true in Samson's life? How is it true in ours?
- In these chapters, we see Samson betrayed several times by the people closest to him as they lead him into sin and destruction. How do we wisely choose people with whom to be intimate? How do we pursue holiness while still loving sinful people?

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- Throughout these chapters, we see Samson breaking the vows he made to the Lord, really for little to no reason. What are the demands of discipleship on our lives, and how do we respond when we see a Christian brother or sister treating them loosely?
- Samson's End (Ch. 16)
 - In v. 23-31, we see a bound and blinded Samson mocked and on display. Does this have any parallel to our lives? Is it fair to say that sin always ends this way?
 - What is the place of Samson's story in the broader story of redemption? How does he relate to Jesus' life and work, and why would Samson's life matter for modern Christians?
 - We see in v. 28 that it's never too late to call on God, but why is it that we often hit rock bottom before we cry out to God? How should we respond when we see someone wrecking his life? How can we as a community minister to those who are in a low place in their lives?
- Leader Prep Help
 - The first thing to note about Samson is that he is one of several miraculous children in the history of God's people—Samson's mother was barren until one day an angel of the Lord appears and tells her she will have a son. Seth, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, Solomon, John, and then of course Jesus, are all born or preserved miraculously. These miraculous births were considered to be signs that God was preserving his offspring as a means of redeeming the world from sin, that his people would always persist on the earth. The Israelite people, as a whole, were miraculously birthed through Isaac and miraculously preserved, so every time we see a miraculous birth, we tend to see a retelling of the entire history of redemption through God's people. It was prophesied that God would save the world by one such miraculous birth—a prophecy we see fulfilled in Christ. Paul considers this idea to be so important that he places it as a centerpiece of his letter to the Romans, calling all Christians miraculous children of the promise given to Abraham.
 - Even setting aside his birth, Samson is unique in the book of Judges. There is the matter of the Nazarite vow, and then he is the only judge to come when Israel is not seeking repentance. He never gives glory to God, yet throughout his story is aware and recognizes that his abilities are given to him by God.
 - We tend to view Samson pretty negatively, and certainly there is sin in his life, but the fact that the author of Hebrews places him in the "faith hall of fame" in Hebrews 11 should cause us to reconsider. First, there are extensive lists in Joshua banning them from marrying certain people groups, but the people from whom Samson chooses his bride are

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not among them. Then, when he attempts to disinherit the people at his wedding, he is doing exactly what God has raised the judges to do: disinherit the people of the land. When he burns their fields and kills many, he is said to do it in the power of the Spirit, just as Joshua devoted the people of the land to destruction. Again, he is likened to Joshua when he “turns in” to a prostitute’s house in the capitol city of the land and hides there from his enemies. His final giving in to Delilah, though, and breaking his vow by cutting his hair is certainly something which God judges by removing his spirit, a heartbreaking moment since this is the second time Samson is betrayed by the woman he loves.

- Considering Samson’s life as a retelling of the history of God’s people, we see that God’s people were given his Spirit and his promise, but they broke their promises to God again and again, even as God remained faithful. Because of this unfaithfulness, God will allow them to be captured and tormented by their enemies, but then his Spirit would return to them to judge the world and free his people. Samson’s life, then, can be seen as a promise in itself, a prophecy, that God would return again to rescue his people, and even that the death of their savior would free and restore Israel.