



Compromise

Session 11 • Judges 16:16-31



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) and **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: The Oppressors in Judges*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 13** (*Handout: The Cycle of Judges*).

READ: Direct a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 93.

DISCUSS: How has understanding the principle of cause and effect influenced the choices you make in life? (p. 93)

CONTEXT: Briefly recount the previous sessions from Judges. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 13** (*Handout: The Cycle of Judges*) and review how Israel kept experiencing God's punishment for sin.

SHARE: Highlight "Samson" on **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Summarize this information from **Understand the Context** to provide more background:

- "The angel of the Lord appeared to [Samson's] barren mother and informed her that she and her husband would have a son and that they must raise him as a Nazirite (13:2-7). This meant that he was not to consume anything derived from

the grapevine, he was to abstain from alcohol, his hair was never to be cut, and he was to avoid contact with any corpse (Num. 6:1-21). The Spirit of the Lord stirred Samson, and he was a judge in Israel for twenty years (Judg. 13:25; 15:20). Samson, however, had a flawed character and kept the wrong company." (p. 93)

TRANSITION: *Samson demonstrated a weak moral character on many occasions. But in his encounter with a woman named Delilah, he allowed his lack of self-control to go too far—and he suffered for it.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Instruct each adult to read **Judges 16:16-20 with a partner** and to discuss what sticks out to them. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their thoughts. Highlight today's summary statement: *Samson's physical strength could not save him from the consequences of his weak moral character.*

PREPARE: Direct attention to **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: The Oppressors in Judges*) and highlight the Philistines. Point out that Israel's cycle of sin had placed them under the control of their enemies again.

CONTEXT: Summarize this information to provide more context:

- “Judges 16:4 introduces Delilah, whose name means ‘flirt,’ stating that Samson ‘fell in love’ with her. When the five Philistine governors learned of this, they saw it as a possible opportunity to capitalize on Samson’s vulnerability. They went to Delilah to convince her to persuade Samson to reveal the source of his strength so that they could take him captive. If she did this, each leader promised to give Delilah 1,100 pieces of silver.” (p. 97)

EXPLAIN: Share that Samson’s strength did not come from his hair but from his obedience to God. Note that Samson’s character had led him to compromise his vow on multiple occasions, and his association with Delilah left him open to a final collapse.

ASK: How can the people with whom we choose to associate impact our ability to remain faithful to God? (p. 95)

TRANSITION: *Samson’s physical strength could not save him from the consequences of his moral weakness.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Judges 16:21-25, directing the group to listen to how the Philistines mistreated Samson.

RECAP: Lead a brief discussion about Samson’s devastating fall:

- **(16:21)** Through his lack of conviction and discernment, Samson became easy prey for his adversaries. The ruthless Philistines “seized him and gouged out his eyes.” The man who lived his life by the lust of his

eyes had his eyes gouged out. The man who proudly went wherever he pleased was now forced to grind grain in prison like an animal.

EXAMINE: Summarize the following information about the Philistine god, Dagon.

- **(16:23)** The primary Philistine god was called “Dagon.” He was most likely a storm god, which would have made him roughly equivalent to the Canaanite god Baal or a fertility god in charge of the harvest. Whatever his exact role in their pantheon, we see the Philistines credited him with the victory. In the ancient world, when one people group defeated another in battle, it was assumed that their god had defeated the god of the enemy. The name of Dagon is mentioned in only two other places in the Bible (1 Chron. 10:10; 1 Sam. 5).

REFLECT: Encourage adults to suggest things that Samson lost as a result of his weak character. (*Examples: his eyes, his dignity, his strength, his intimacy with God, and so forth*) Record their responses on the board or on a large sheet of paper.

ASK: What do you think was Samson’s greatest loss, and why? (p. 95)

SHARE: *Samson certainly lost a great deal through his compromise and his lack of self-control. But the writer of Judges also provides a glimmer of hope: Samson’s hair began to grow back. This was a sign of God’s grace and a reminder that He wasn’t done using Samson just yet. As believers, we can take comfort in the “second chances” God provides.*

READ: Read Judges 16:26-31, instructing the group to consider how God did not abandon Samson. Allow adults to share their insights.

EXPLAIN: Point out that despite Samson's destructive choices in the past, he knew he could call out to God in this moment. The Lord heard and answered Samson's prayer.

RECAP: Share that even in this moment, Samson's motives likely were not entirely noble:

- **(16:28)** First, Samson asked God to “remember” him. He was asking God to act on his behalf. Second, he asked God to “strengthen” him. He acknowledged that any strength he had came from God. Third, he asked God to let him “pay back the Philistines” for blinding him. In this last request, we see that Samson still didn't understand his role before God. He sought “vengeance” more than justice and payback more than serving God. His focus was on the wrong done to him rather than on delivering the Israelites from the Philistines' oppression. While we see some growth, then, Samson's flawed character remained.

ASK: In light of Samson's story, how would you counsel someone who is experiencing the consequences of sinful choices? (p. 95)

SAY: *Samson's relatives retrieved his body and buried him in a family tomb. He suffered the consequences of his sinful choices. Believers still suffer for immoral decisions, but God is only a prayer for forgiveness away.*

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- Believers should avoid putting themselves in situations that will tempt them to sin.
- Believers who compromise their faithfulness to God will eventually be put to shame.
- Believers can be confident that God does not abandon them, in spite of their sin.

REVIEW: Lead the group to summarize this session. Allow one adult to start the story with a single sentence. Go around the group, allowing each adult to add a sentence until the entire story is complete. Lead the group to answer “Why?” for each statement above.

REFLECT: Read the session's summary statement: *Samson's physical strength could not save him from the consequences of his weak moral character.* Lead the group to discuss the **Apply the Text** questions on page 95.

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking God to give each adult an awareness of the Holy Spirit that will keep them from sinful choices.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send a text or email to the group. State that the next session begins a study of the book of Ruth, a story of God's faithfulness in a dark time. Urge them to read through this short book before your next Bible study.