SAMSON
Study Guide
Samson: The Strongman of Israel

Welcome to the AS IT WAS Bible Series. This guide will provide a method for viewing the DVD episode with a small study group. To get the most out of the Samson episode, it is best if you can devote two full group sessions to viewing and discussing the story. In between the group sessions, there are six daily lessons for home study that will allow participants to thoroughly review the actual scripture passages that are mentioned throughout the episode. We recommend following three steps to get the most from the AS IT WAS series as a Bible Study Tool:

1) VIEW ➔ 2) STUDY ➔ 3) VIEW AGAIN

If you only have a limited time, you can view the DVD, choose a few questions to discuss together and then use the personal study guides to review the scripture later, as time permits.

BACKGROUND: The story of Samson is found in the Book of Judges. This book tells of a troubled time when the rulers of the Israelites were called “judges”, before the time of the “Kings”. It was the worst time in the history of Israel. It was a time of idolatry and greed. Time and time again the people are proud and trust in themselves. Then their enemies defeat them. They are then afraid and turn from their sin to God. Then God saves them. But they soon change again. They refuse God’s authority in their lives. There are a series of stories in Judges. They follow the same pattern nearly every time. There is sin, then there is punishment. (Their enemies defeat them.) They cry to God to rescue them. God saves them. But they soon forget and sin. So there is punishment. The same pattern repeats itself again and again.

In these hard times, even the leaders fail. They do not even try to discover God’s will for their lives. The writer of the book of Judges says, ‘Each person did what he himself thought was right’ (17:6; 21:25). Samson is a perfect example of a leader who has wonderful potential, but squanders it all in his selfishness and pride.

Samson was God’s provision for the deliverance of the nation of Israel during a time of suffering, oppression and death at the hands of the Philistines. God, once again,
heard the cries of His chosen people and sends Samson to begin the deliverance of Israel. And even though Samson gave into his pride, the Lord still finds a way to use him to help the people of Israel. The story of his life is in Judges 13-16.

Watch the Samson DVD

In every AS IT WAS episode, there are characters that are biblical (i.e. they appear in the actual biblical account) and there are characters that are ‘extra-biblical’ (i.e. they do not appear in the biblical account, but there is reasonable evidence that they existed). In the episode of Samson, we heard from five characters. Three of these characters are biblical and two are extra-biblical.

Briefly Skim Judges 13-16 and circle whether the characters below are biblical or extra-biblical

Delilah: Biblical Extra-Biblical
Manoah: Biblical Extra-Biblical
Matania: Biblical Extra-Biblical
Talon: Biblical Extra-Biblical
Zilpa: Biblical Extra-Biblical

Group Discussion Questions

After viewing the DVD, and depending on the time available, select a few questions from those listed and discuss them with your group.

The story of Samson is included in the “Faith and Failure” collection. Why do you think that is? Where did Samson demonstrate great faith and where did he fail?

Individuals in this AS IT WAS episode describe Samson’s character. Please identify Samson’s character traits.
Describe the relationship between Samson and the Philistines.

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Do you know anyone who, like Samson, is not utilizing his or her natural talents?? Why is that? How might you positively encourage them to reach their potential?

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Our “identity” is often wrapped up in our reputation. What do you think Samson’s view of himself was? What might the Israelite nation have thought of him as their leader? How did the Philistines view him? How does your personal estimation of yourself and/or your reputation influence your actions?

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Both of Zilpa and Delilah used nagging to get information. Has nagging worked for you in the past? Do you ever use this method to get your way with friends or loved ones? Do you ever nag God?

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Imagine yourself as Delilah and knowing the power you have over a bigger-than-life character like Samson? If given the opportunity, would you have sold him out for the money, or the safety of your nation and why? If or when does the “end justify the means”?

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Describe how Samson’s choice of getting as close to danger as possible might have led to his demise. Do you teeter on dangerous ground in every day life? Do you teeter on dangerous ground with your walk with God?

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Going Deeper: Personal Study Lessons

Samson: Strong Man of Israel

In this section, there are six daily lessons for your personal study time in order to dig deeper into the scripture story of Samson, once you have viewed the AS IT WAS episode on DVD. You will need your Bible and about 30 minutes a day to complete each lesson.

In each section you will be given some background information, specific scripture readings and a few questions to answer. The icons above will help guide you in your study efforts.

The AS IT WAS series utilizes the New International Version for all scripture quotations on the DVD, but you may use whatever version best suits you for this study.

DAY ONE

READ Judges 13

To be childless in the culture of the time was considered a curse from God. Manoah and his wife were childless, yet they were visited by the angel of the Lord, promised a child, asked to make a life-long Nazirite vow for their unborn son.

What does scripture tell us about the Nazirite vow? (Read Numbers 6:1-21)
DAY TWO

RECOMMEND READ Judges 13-15

📍 Please review Day One’s study of the Nazirite vows.

📍 (Opinion) Why would God require this type of a strict life style for someone such as Samson? If possible, support your thoughts with Scripture?

📍 Who else in Scripture is thought to have taken this same vow? (See 1Samuel 1:11-28, Luke 1:13-16, Mark 1:6)
DAY THREE/DAY FOUR

📖 READ Judges 14-16

✨ This period in the nation of Israel’s history is marked by their choice to disobey the Sovereign God and follow their own desires. God, in His wisdom, allowed the Israelites to be delivered into the hands of the Philistines. Samson, though set apart for God’s service, was influenced by his surroundings and personal interactions, etc.

✍️ From the reading, list Samson’s characteristics: (examples given)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture reference</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judges 13:24</td>
<td>He grew, was blessed, Spirit of God upon him</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judges 14:3</td>
<td>Demanding, seemingly spoiled</td>
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✍️ Considering the above list, what is your personal opinion of Samson?
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✍️ Has your opinion of Samson changed with this study? List the ways it has/has not changed.
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DAY FIVE

📖 READ/REVIEW Judges 13-16

✍️ What was Samson’s upbringing like? (Judges 13) (Some of this may be conjecture)

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✍️ With whom did Samson associate? Mentors? Friends? (Judges 14-16)

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✍️ How did these influences affect his life and his choices in life?

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✍️ (Reflection) Who or what influences your life? What affect have these people had either positively or negatively in your life?

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DAY SIX

💡 READ Judges 16

ㄨ Judges 16:21 describes Samson’s fate at the hands of his captors. Blinded, weak, humiliated, he was bound and sent to prison to grind grain for them. Reduced to a fraction of the man he once was, Israel’s judge of twenty years became a slave to the Philistines. However, the story continues.

💡 Without distractions, Samson now has time to reflect on his life. Imagine his conversations with God and note what you believe may have transpired.

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💡 Samson’s relationship with God has changed. According to vs. 28 what do we see happen for the first time?

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💡 Read Hebrews 11:32-40. What is God’s perspective of Samson’s life?

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💡 What encouragement do you receive from understanding God’s perspective of Samson?

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Sharing the Learning: Group Review

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In this section, we review what we learned as we studied the scripture during the daily lessons and we watch the Samson episode with new insights and understanding of Samson, his relationships, the influences in his life, and the Nazirite vow.

It is easy to be saddened by the wasted potential as seen in Samson’s life. This man of extraordinary physical strength and quick wit was someone who succumbed to his lust for the flesh and for self-satisfaction. Samson was raised in a Jewish household by parents who had an encounter with the angel of the Lord. Instead of following after his religious tradition, Samson chose to surround himself with foreigners and their influences in all areas of life.

However, God had a calling on Samson’s life. He was the judge of Israel for twenty years. He was endowed with incredible physical strength and a quick and clever mind. We learn of his feats of success and experience his defeats. We grapple with the lost potential of the man and wonder how God could possibly consider Samson to be a man of great faith. Still, God sees people in a different way. God sees the inner man, hears the inner cries, and comforts the lost and brokenhearted. (“My thoughts are not your thoughts,” Isaiah 55:8).

Let’s return once more to hear about Samson again with our additional scriptural insights and understandings.

Watch the Samson DVD
Group Discussion Questions

After viewing the DVD, discuss the following topics with your group.

❖ What new perspectives did you have on the characters when you watched it this time? Who did you see differently and why?

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❖ If you were filming this Biblical account, what aspects would you emphasize (de-emphasize) in this film? Why is the scene or person you selected important (unimportant) to you or to gain understanding?

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❖ How can you personally relate to Samson through this story?

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❖ What did you learn about God’s character as you studied the scripture behind this story?

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Review

The story of Samson reveals to us that God is a patient God and that His plans will not be thwarted no matter how hard man tries. We can be encouraged that God uses self-centered, selfish and sinful people to further His kingdom.

1) **God heard the cries of His people.** Oppressed by the Philistines, the cries of the children of Israel reached the ears of God and He sent Samson to “begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines.” Not until the time of David were the Israelites free of Philistine rule, but it began with the man named Samson.

2) **God will always accomplish His goals in spite of man.** Regardless of Samson’s personal choices, God struck fear in the hearts of the Philistine nation. They recognized Samson’s inordinate strength and were fearful of what he could do to them. He was an adversary, not an ally. They believed that once he was captured, they would be safe. It was just the beginning, however.

3) **It is never too late to call upon God.** For the majority of his life, Samson squandered his talents and potential by satisfying his fleshly, selfish desires. Aside from Samson’s father, we see no evidence that Samson sought Godly wisdom UNTIL he was reduced to a weak, blind slave. Despite this fact, God faithfully answered Samson’s final cry for help and struck a blow to the Philistine nation.

Hebrews 11:32-40 lists Samson in the “Hall of Faith.” This prestigious list names men and women of great faith who accomplished much for God. After reviewing Samson’s seemingly pitiful example of gift utilization, one would hardly think God would consider him worthy of this honor. Yet God, in his infinite wisdom, DOES consider Samson successful, victorious, and honorable. We, too, then can take comfort from this truth and we should be encouraged in the same way. We can accomplish what God designed us to accomplish when we turn to Him and ask. Believe as Samson did that God will answer an honest call for assistance.

Action Item

Ask the Lord to reveal to you His will and purpose for your life, and ask for strength to reach this potential. Ask Him where you are utilizing your talents and where you are missing his desires for you. Be encouraged that God has chosen to perform His will through mere men and that each one of us has a purpose in His greater plan. We may not possess extraordinary physical strength like Samson, but God has gifted each one of us in a unique way. Seek the Lord, He wants to be found, and He desires for everyone to reach their potential.