

Use Week of:

Unit 9 • Session 4

Samson

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Judges 13–16

STORY POINT:

God gave Samson strength to defeat the Philistines.

KEY PASSAGE:

1 John 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 190



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 192



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 198



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

Samson was the last of the major judges of Israel. He was born to parents who dedicated him to the Lord as a Nazirite after the Angel of the Lord announced that Samson would be born to save the Israelites from the power of the Philistines. Samson grew up, and God blessed him with great strength. But when Samson requested to marry a Philistine woman, his parents were confused. Samson was supposed to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines. Why would he want to marry one of them? But God had a plan in all of this. (See Judg. 14:4.)

As Samson prepared for the wedding, he gave a riddle to the men with him about an event that occurred on his way to Timnah. (See Judg. 14:9-14.) Days passed, and the men convinced Samson's wife to tell them the answer to the riddle. This action sparked a series of events that would eventually lead to the death of Samson.

When the men solved his riddle, Samson was so angry that he torched the fields of the Philistines. He used the jawbone of a donkey to kill 1,000 men, and he left his wife. The Philistine leaders determined to kill Samson. When Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, the leaders bribed her into telling them where Samson's strength came from.

A man came and shaved the braids from Samson's head. He lost his strength and became helpless. The Philistines gouged out his eyes and took him prisoner. They had him stand between the pillars of a pagan temple. In a final plea to God, Samson asked for his strength back. God gave him strength, and Samson knocked over the pillars, collapsing the temple. In his death, Samson killed more Philistines than he had killed in his life. (Judg. 16:30)

Though Samson disobeyed God, God used him to accomplish His purpose of delivering the Israelites from the Philistines. Jesus would come as the last Deliverer, saving through His obedience in His life and His death those who would trust in Him.

The BIBLE Story

Samson

Judges 13–16

The Israelites once again disobeyed God, so God let the Philistines rule over them. One day, the angel of the LORD told a husband and wife that they would have a son who would save the Israelites from the Philistines. God had a special

instruction for their son: He should never cut his hair.

The woman had a baby, and she named him Samson. God made Samson strong. When Samson grew up, he saw a Philistine woman and wanted to marry her. He and his parents went to meet her. On the journey, a lion jumped out at Samson. Samson killed the lion.

Later, some bees had made honey in the lion's body. Samson ate some of the honey and gave some to his parents.

Philistine men came to Samson's wedding. Samson told them a riddle: "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet."

The riddle was about the lion and the honey, but the men could not figure it out. They asked Samson's bride for help. She told the men the answer. Samson was angry, and he left his wife. When he went back to get her, she was gone. Samson was so



upset that he burned the Philistines' fields. This made the Philistines angry.

Samson escaped to another city, where he fell in love with a woman named Delilah. The Philistines gave Delilah money to find out why Samson was so strong.

Samson told Delilah, "If you tie me up with seven fresh bowstrings, I will be weak." But that was not true. Then Samson said, "If you tie me up with new rope, I will be weak." But that was not true, either. So Samson said, "If you weave my hair into a loom, I will be weak." Another lie!

Finally, Samson told Delilah the truth: "If you cut my hair, I will not have my strength." So when Samson was sleeping, a Philistine man cut his hair. Delilah shouted, "Samson! Wake up! The Philistines are here to kill you!" Samson wasn't strong anymore. The Philistines grabbed him and took him away in chains.

One day, the Philistines made Samson stand between two pillars in their temple. Samson cried out to God, "Lord, strengthen me once more." So God strengthened Samson. Samson pushed on the pillars and collapsed the temple. Samson and everyone in the temple died, but Samson had saved the Israelites from the Philistines.

Christ Connection: Samson's sin led to his own death, but God used his death to save the Israelites from their enemies. Samson's story reminds us of Jesus. Jesus never sinned, but God sent Him to die on the cross and rise again to rescue people from sin and give them eternal life.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Call for active listening:** Challenge kids to count how many times they hear the name *Samson* in the story.
- **Role play:** Choose a volunteer to act out the role of Samson. Pause throughout the story for the volunteer to role play wrestling a lion, eating honey, running away, sleeping, pushing on pillars, and so forth.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Samson

BIBLE PASSAGE: Judges 13–16

STORY POINT: God gave Samson strength to defeat the Philistines.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 John 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to talk about the strongest person they know. What can people do to get stronger?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Riddle Time” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete “Riddle Time” on the activity page. Challenge kids to answer the riddles. After a few minutes, review the answers.

SAY • In the Bible story we will hear today, a man named Samson told a riddle to some other people but they could not figure out the answer! We’ll hear more in a few minutes.

LOW PREP

- bath tissue or crepe paper streamers, 1 roll per group

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Break out

Form groups of two or more kids. Provide a roll of bath tissue or crepe paper streamers for each group. Prompt each group to choose one player to be wrapped. Explain that when you say “go,” kids will wrap the designated player.

The first group to wrap up the player wins. When kids finish, invite each wrapped player to try to break out. If kids are not successful, encourage the other kids to help them break out. Play additional rounds as time allows so each kid has a chance to break out.

SAY • Today we are going to hear a story from the Bible about a man, Samson, who was very strong. God made Samson strong. We'll find out why.

OPTION 2: Standing pool noodle game

Form groups of three or more kids. Give each kid a pool noodle and instruct kids to stand in a circle and hold the pool noodles upright, with one end against the ground. Kids should stand about three feet apart from their group members.

• pool noodles, 1 per kid

Explain that you will count down from three and shout “right” or “left.” Kids should let go of the pool noodles, move in the direction called, and grab the next pool noodle before it falls over. Count down for kids to move again.

Allow groups to play a few rounds. Then call for players to spread out so they are about four feet apart and continue playing. Continue as time allows.

SAY • Those columns fell over easily because they don't weigh very much. Imagine knocking over columns that weighed hundreds or thousands of pounds! Today we'll hear about a man in the Bible who did just that.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Samson

BIBLE PASSAGE: Judges 13–16

STORY POINT: God gave Samson strength to defeat the Philistines.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 John 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• dumbbells
• Bible

[Leader enters carrying a couple of lightweight dumbbells. Leader does a few curls before setting them down. A Bible is positioned on a table or chair.]

LEADER • One and two and three and four ... whew! These biceps are going to burn tomorrow! *[Set down the weights to address kids.]* Hello there! Great to see you. I'm *[your name]*. The research I've been doing about the universe has really motivated me to do some strength training. You're probably familiar with a force called gravity. *Gravity* is a force that pulls one body of mass toward another. It's why things fall toward the center of the earth if you drop them. Believe it or not, there is gravity in space! Sometimes it's just a small amount, but it's there.

And gravity isn't even the strongest force in the universe! The strongest force we've discovered so far is called *strong nuclear force*, but that's another lesson.

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

Are you ready to get started? Today's Bible story is about another source of strength.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Before we get started, let's review our big picture question and answer. Raise your hand if you remember the question. [*Call on a volunteer to respond.*] Great! Now raise your hand if you remember the answer. [*Call on another volunteer to respond.*] Now let's all stand up and practice the question and answer together.

What is repentance? [*Stand facing one way.*]
Repentance is turning away from sin and [*turn to face the other way*] ***turning to Jesus.***

• Big Picture Question Poster

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

LEADER • We've been learning about the judges of Israel. After Moses and Joshua died, the Israelites turned away from God. They were stuck in a cycle of sin. When the Israelites cried out to God for help, He sent a judge to deliver them.

Can you name the judges we have studied so far? (*Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon*) Today's Bible story is about a judge named Samson. Samson lived more than a thousand years before Jesus was born. Let's learn more about his story.

• Giant Timeline

• Bibles
• "Samson" video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Story Point Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Judges 13–16. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or

show the Bible story video “Samson.”

LEADER • Before Samson was even born, an angel appeared to Samson’s parents and told them that their son would begin to save Israel from the Philistines. When Samson became judge, the Philistines were ruling over the Israelites. The Philistines were mean.

Samson married a woman who was a Philistine, and he ended up defeating many Philistines by fighting them with the jawbone of a donkey.

Can you tell me how Samson got so strong? God gave Samson power. God told Samson that he must never cut his hair. But Samson told his secret to Delilah, and the Philistines cut Samson’s hair. Samson lost his strength. The Philistines made Samson a prisoner and blinded him.

But God made Samson strong again. **God gave Samson strength to defeat the Philistines.** Samson used his strength to knock down the temple of their false god, and even though Samson died, he killed many Philistines too.

Christ connection

LEADER • Samson’s sin led to his own death, but God used his death to save the Israelites from their enemies. Samson’s story reminds us of Jesus. Jesus never sinned, but God sent Him to die on the cross and rise again to rescue people from sin and give them eternal life. Everyone who repents and trusts in Jesus has forgiveness and eternal life. ***What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.***

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 197 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 9, Session 4” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about whether or not God needs us to accomplish His plans. Guide them to discuss why it is better to live for God rather than to live for ourselves.

- “Unit 9, Session 4” questions from kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Write the words *HOME*, *NEIGHBORHOOD*, and *CITY* on three separate sheets of poster board or large paper. Tape the signs on different areas of a wall.

- poster board or large paper, 3 sheets
- marker
- tape

LEADER • Samson was strong. Something else that is strong is prayer! We’ve been hearing about the Dye family, missionaries in Atlanta, Georgia. They pray often for their city. We can pray for the places God has placed us too!

Place kids into three groups and assign them to pray at one of the locations on the signs. Encourage them to think of things they can specifically pray for in each location. Be ready to offer suggestions. (Suggestions: Pray for people in each location to hear and believe the gospel, for believers to have love and unity, and for God to be glorified in the city.)

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 John 1:9.

- Key Passage Poster
- “Faithful and Righteous” song

LEADER • We can recognize ourselves in Samson’s story. God wants us to follow Him, but we often turn away from Him and live the way we want to. But our sin doesn’t disqualify us from being part of God’s good plan. We can confess our sin, and He will forgive us. God is faithful and righteous. Let’s sing.
Lead boys and girls in singing “Faithful and Righteous.”

· "Onward, Christian Soldiers" song

Sing (4 minutes)

Open your Bible and read aloud Psalm 68:19-20.

LEADER • Our God is a God who saves us! He saves us from death. Sing with me.

Sing together "Onward, Christian Soldiers."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord God, thank You for Your Word. We know that strength comes from You. Help us to trust You in our weakness. When we call to You, You help us. Let us live for Your glory. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: Samson

BIBLE PASSAGE: Judges 13–16

STORY POINT: God gave Samson strength to defeat the Philistines.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 John 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- index cards
- marker

Before the session, write the key passage in words or phrases on several index cards. Hide the cards around the room. Display the key passage poster and invite kids to read it aloud. Challenge kids to find the hidden index cards and arrange them in the correct order.

When kids finish, invite volunteers who have memorized the key passage to say it from memory.

SAY • Great work. If you haven't memorized our key passage yet, keep working on it! Memorizing God's Word helps us remember what is true.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Judges 13. Explain that today's Bible story comes from Judges 13–16.

Challenge kids to tell you how many Bible books are part of the Old Testament History division. (*12 books*) Remind kids that the Book of Judges tells about Israel's cycle of sin, defeat, cries for help, and deliverance through a judge. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Judges 13:1.

SAY • When God raised up Samson as a judge for Israel,

the Israelites were being ruled by the Philistines. They were from an area along the Mediterranean Sea. [*Point to the coastline north of Gaza (I2) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map.*] Samson's sin led to his own death, but God used his death to save the Israelites from their enemies. **God gave Samson strength to defeat the Philistines.**

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Where did Samson's strength come from? *Help kids recognize that Samson's long hair didn't actually give him strength; it was a picture of his devotion to God. God was the ultimate source of Samson's strength. God chose Samson before he was born to deliver the Israelites from their enemies.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 11:32-34.)

2. How can weakness be a good thing? *Lead kids to recognize that weakness requires us to rely on God. God's power is displayed when He uses us in our weakness to accomplish His purposes.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 2 Cor. 12:9-10.)

3. Samson looked like a great deliverer, but was he? What about Jesus? *Lead kids to discuss how Samson was strong, but he failed to obey God. Still, God can use sinful people to carry out His plan. Jesus, on the other hand, was an unexpected deliverer. He came to the world as a baby in humble circumstances. He entered Jerusalem on a donkey rather than a war horse, and defeated sin and death not through a physical battle but by laying down His life.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Phil. 2:5-8.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- paper
- crayons or markers

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Tip: Adapt the exercises if kids' clothing restricts their participation.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: My strong impact

Give each kid a blank piece of paper. Instruct them to write the word *me* in the center of the page and to draw a circle around it. Next, draw a larger circle around the *me* circle. Draw a larger circle around those two circles, and continue adding the circles until the page is full.

Remind kids that, like the Dye family, God can use us to make a strong impact for the gospel wherever He has placed us. Instruct kids to think about places they have influence (home, school, sports practice, and so on) and write them down in each of the circles. Give kids time to pray for over each of the places they have written down and to ask God to use them to make a strong impact in that place.

SAY • God placed Samson exactly where He wanted him to be, and God used him to defeat the Philistines and save His people. God has also picked this exact place for you to live! You can make a big difference for God in this place by telling others about Jesus and His strong love.

OPTION 2: Boot camp race

Instruct kids to lie down on the floor. Make sure everyone has room to move around. Explain the drill.

On the count of three, everyone will quickly do one sit-up, one push-up, and one jumping jack. Then players will begin another round: two sit-ups, two push-ups, and two jumping jacks. After each round, kids add a repetition to each activity (three, four, five, and so on).

Allow kids to sit out when they tire. Recognize the player who completes the most repetitions.

SAY • Whew! This activity required a lot of physical

strength. In today's Bible story, Samson was very strong, but his physical strength didn't come from working out. His strength came from God. **God gave Samson strength to defeat the Philistines.** In the end, Samson's sin led to his own death, but God used his death to save the Israelites from their enemies. Samson's story reminds us of Jesus. Jesus never sinned, but God sent Him to die on the cross and rise again to rescue people from sin and give them eternal life.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God for our Deliverer, Jesus. Ask God to deliver kids today from temptation and from any sin that is hindering their relationship with Him.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Who's Who? Maze" on the activity page. Kids should complete the paths in the maze to connect each name with its matching description.

• pencils
• Journal Page
• "Who's Who? Maze"
activity page,
1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.