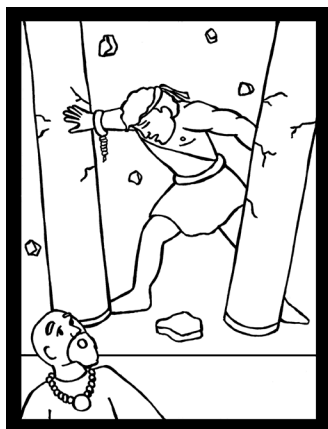




LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Judges 16:4-31

Isaiah 40:28b-31

Session Theme:

Endurance

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: Learn to Braid

Bring a skein of yarn to class, and cut three pieces about two feet long. Ask the class if anyone knows how to braid hair. Invite those who know to show the rest of the class, either using a volunteer's hair or using the yarn pieces. If others in the class want to give braiding a try, let them have a chance to do it, as well.

Ask if kids have ever read anything about hair in the Bible. If not, they will today! In fact, in today's lesson they will learn about a man who refused to cut his hair. Why? Did he succeed in keeping it long all his life? Let's begin our lesson and find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Almighty God, we want to be faithful to you. Help us to put you first in our lives. Keep us from giving in to temptations that would lead us away from what is good. Make us strong in body, mind, and spirit. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- "A Mighty Fortress" (hymn)
- "My God is So Big" (children's song)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the Old Testament
- Scripture Section: Judges

Before there was one king, God's people were led by many different minor leaders called Judges. These included people such as Gideon, Deborah, and Samson. Some of these judges did decide court cases, but most were military leaders who led God's forces in battle.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level:

Children: Read aloud the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read aloud Scripture from the Bible

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Pre-Readers: Coloring Page and Activity

Elementary: Children's Pages (Worksheet and Drama)

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, and Questions)

Adults: Bible Study (Large or Small Group Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. Use the Bible Rhyme as a short review, or simply ask questions to help the students recall the events of the story.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Pre-Readers: Teacher leads a simple prayer

Children: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format



Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Judges 16:4-31

1. The Israelites and Philistines were enemies. Why did Samson (an Israelite) let Delilah (a Philistine) get close to him? What did Samson want from her?

Samson was attracted to Delilah and wanted her to be his girlfriend. He thought he was in love with her and that she felt the same, but he should not have trusted her. Delilah was only pretending to like Samson, so she could fool him and her people could defeat him.

2. The Philistines saw this as an opportunity to get the advantage over Samson. What did they ask Delilah to do? What did they promise her?

The Philistines knew there was some supernatural power behind Samson's strength, but they didn't know what. They wanted Delilah to find out what it was. They promised to pay her 1,100 pieces of silver if she could find out what Samson's secret was and how they could defeat him.

3. Why did Samson lie and keep putting off Delilah's questions? According to verses 15-17, why did he finally give in and tell Delilah the source of his strength? Have you ever done something wrong because you stopped resisting?

Samson didn't want to reveal his secret, because his strength was the one great advantage he had over his enemies. But Delilah did not stop nagging him and pestering him for an answer. She made him feel very guilty, and Samson finally gave in when Delilah asked him to *prove* his love for her. Though he knew it was wrong, Samson stopped resisting and told her the secret — that he was a man under a special vow to God.

4. Go back and read about Samson's origins in Judges 13:1-5. From what you see here, what does it mean to be a "Nazirite"? (Look this up online or in a Bible dictionary for further information.)

The Hebrew word *Nazirite* denotes one who is set apart from others and consecrated to God, by taking the vow prescribed in Numbers 6:2-21. The vow of a Nazirite involved three things: abstinence from wine and strong drink, refraining from cutting the hair of the head during the time of the vow, and the avoidance of contact with the dead. This was not a "magical" thing, although in the story of

Samson, the Philistines seem to understand it in a superstitious way. (The Apostle Paul took a similar vow in Acts 18:18 and Acts 21:23-26, showing it was a thing ordinary Jewish people did.)

5. Do you know other stories from Samson's life? Why were the Philistines so angry with him? Skim through Judges 14-15. What impression do you get of Samson's personality and temperament?

Samson had fought the Philistines many times in battle and was not defeated. Samson wagered on a riddle and then killed and robbed Philistines to pay his debt. Samson had also burned down the Philistines' crop fields (v. 15:5), and had slayed 1,000 Philistines in a single battle (v. 15:15). He was a cruel and nasty guy!

6. Did Samson's strength come from his hair, or did it come from something else? After a self-centered life, at what point did Samson finally realize that he needed God (v. 28-31)?

There was nothing magical about Samson's hair. Samson's long hair was simply a sign of his promise to God; God himself was the source of Samson's strength. When Samson lost that strength, he realized that his power had come from God all along. It was Samson's hardship and weakness that brought him back to God.

7. Read Isaiah 40:28b-31. Whom does the prophet say is giver of true strength? In what ways is the strength described here more than just physical?

Isaiah says it is God who gives strength to the weary — that includes us! But weariness is more than just physical fatigue. In our lives, we can get weighed down with things like worry, stress, hopelessness and despair. God is able to renew our strength, mentally and physically, and give us power beyond our own resources.

8. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. As Christians, why are we able to admit our own weaknesses, as Paul did here? Who was speaking to Paul in verse 9? On whom do we rely when we feel powerless? Why is this greater than any power we have on our own?

The Apostle Paul was not afraid to admit his weakness and need for God. God taught him not to rely on himself, but only on God's own power. God said, "My grace is sufficient for you." The same is true for us. When we are weak, we need to rely all the more on God. By faith, Christ is our strength, and God's power is stronger than us or any of our problems.

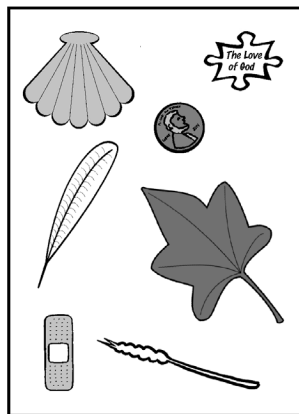
Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: Textured Picture Craft

Materials Needed:

- Card stock (any color)
- Glue or small adhesive mounting squares
- Textured items like feathers, buttons, pennies, foam stickers, paper clips, pieces of yarn, toothpicks, etc.
- Markers



Instructions:

When Samson lost his eyesight, he had to rely on other senses like hearing or touch. That's how he was able to knock down the pillars of the Philistines.

Give each person a piece of card stock (any color), along with some glue and mounting squares and a variety of textured items. Use the glue for flat and porous things (feathers, wood) and the mounting squares for things glue won't work well on (shells, anything metal).

Explain that textured pictures are sometimes used with people who cannot see as a way of helping them learn to recognize things, and this is one way to create a textured picture.

Encourage kids to glue the items to the card stock in a way that would not only feel interesting to touch, but also look good to the eye. That way, it can function as an interesting picture for both the seeing and the blind.

These pictures, because of the weight of the items on them, are meant to lay flat on a table or desk. It's unlikely they would hold up well if hung on a wall.

When everything has dried, kids can take their pictures home and challenge family members to close their eyes and try to identify the items on the picture just by touch. How many can they guess correctly?

Samson lost his eyesight, but he did not lose his desire to serve God. It is good for us to remember this, and not to overlook those who seem different from ourselves. They may be carrying out God's larger purpose in a way that we might never guess.

Activity 2: Bowstring Snap Activity

Materials Needed:

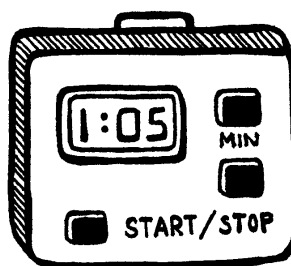
- Several rolls of toilet paper (one roll for every two students in the class)
- Timer

Instructions:

Samson was bound with bowstrings in order to subdue him, but it didn't work because the secret of his strength had not yet been discovered. So he easily snapped the strings and got free.

For this game, divide the class into pairs. Give each pair a roll of toilet paper.

Have one person in the pair be Samson, and the other be either Delilah or Philistine Soldier.



Direct Samson to hold his arms behind his back.

Set a timer for a few minutes. Explain that Delilah or the Philistine Soldier will have until the timer sounds to bind Samson's arms with layers of toilet paper. They can be free to use up as much of the roll

as they can during the allotted amount of time.

When the timer sounds, Samson will try to break out of the bowstrings. If this proves to be difficult, be ready with a pair of scissors to help Samson escape. Then, let kids change places and roles, and do the whole activity again.

Even paper can be fairly challenging to break if it is wrapped around our hands many times!

Samson was not tied with paper but with very strong cords — much more difficult (and painful) to escape from. Yet with God's help, he did it. And in so doing, Samson, despite his failures and limitations, ultimately served God's larger purpose.

Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

Fill in the Blanks:

1. The Philistines paid 1,100 pieces of **SILVER**.
2. Samson's head was shaved while he **SLEPT**.
3. No one was supposed to cut Samson's **HAIR**.
4. When the Philistines caught Samson, they blinded his **EYES**.
5. Samson pushed hard on the two main pillars, knocking them **DOWN**.
6. As a Nazirite, Samson's life had been dedicated to **GOD**.
7. Samson asked God for help one last **TIME**.
8. The woman who tricked Samson was named **DELILAH**.

Write the boxed letters to solve the riddle: "Samson was proud of this. But really, it came from God. What was it?"

STRENGTH

*"The Lord is my strength and my shield;
in him my heart trusts, and I am helped."
(Psalm 28:7)*

Map Answer Key:

Samson's Birthplace

Today's Story



Vocabulary Word for the Week

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary.

Endurance

to keep going, even when things
are hard or painful

*Samson endured many things
but he remained strong and brave.*

Reflection for the Week Ahead

Imagine being the strongest person in the world — and then losing that strength because of something foolish you, yourself, did. That's what happened to Samson. Talk about kicking yourself!

After revealing the secret of his strength to a spy, Samson's hair was cut while he slept. When he awoke and was taken prisoner, he likely felt betrayed by Delilah, angry at himself, and horrified at his situation. Yet even with the bad decisions that led up to his predicament, God did not forget Samson. And when Samson turned to God and prayed one final prayer, God heard him and punished those who had treated him so badly.

Sometimes, we make foolish mistakes or bad decisions too. Is God then done with us? Does he turn his back on us? No. If we see the error of our ways and return to the Lord, he is still there, hearing and helping us. God never gives up on his faithful people. He endures with us, to the end.

Think of a bad decision you made in the past. How did God help you through that? What brought you back to God?



The Practice of Prayer

On the lines below, write a prayer thanking God for his mercy and grace in your life. Ask him to help you in your times of greatest need.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.