

Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of March 19th-25th

Getting Started

1. When you hear the name “Samson”, what comes to your mind? What sort of familiarity do you have with the saga of Samson in Judges 13-16? Does it take you back to Sunday school lessons as a child, or any preaching you’ve heard, or personal study in which you’ve engaged? If so, please share a bit with the group.

Digging Deeper

2. Take some time and read through the entire Samson cycle in Judges 13-16 as a group. We’re planning to invest these last three weeks of the Lenten season in this portion of Scripture as a church so it’s important for us to begin to get the lay of the land. What’s the setting? Who are the key characters? What is the focus of the main part of the story? How does it end? All along, let’s bear in mind this question: *What does this teach us about our God and about ourselves in relationship to God?*

Open Your Bible to Judges 13:1...

3. There is a great deal of discussion about if and in what way Samson is a type (or symbol) of Christ. What remains surprisingly unexamined is how Samson is undoubtedly a type of Israel. In the words of Old Testament scholar Daniel Block: “This man embodies/personifies all that is wrong in Israel.”¹ Samson, like Israel, experienced a miraculous birth by the hand of God (Judges 13:3; Genesis 11:30; 12:1-3). Furthermore, he was set apart to a unique calling as an instrument in God’s hand (Judges 13:4-5; Exodus 19:5-6). While there is a lot to lament in his story (and Israel’s), it is clear that their origins are remarkable and God’s designs for them are extraordinary. So, too, with us. As Christians, our new birth is no less miraculous (1 Peter 1:3-5) and our calling no less holy (1 Peter 2:9-13). Do you see yourself as well as the church of Jesus Christ today in the reflection of the mirror of these Old Testament texts? Explain.
4. Samson as an individual, like Israel as a nation, has “a rash, opportunistic, and immature personality”.² What specific evidences did you see of this as you read through the account of Samson? Compare some of these with the behavior of God’s ancient covenant people in Exodus 16:2-3; 1 Samuel 8:4-9; and Malachi 1:2, 6-7, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7-8, 13. Once more, look into the mirror of Holy Scripture (James 1:22-25). In what ways do you observe aspects of Samson and Israel in your own life?

¹ Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary, Volume 6. B&H Academic: Nashville, TN. 1999. p.392.

² Block, p.392.

5. What's more, "Samson is inexorably drawn to foreign women, like Israel was drawn to foreign gods (both 'play the harlot')." ³ Where does this happen in the Samson cycle? Notice a similar pattern with Israel (Hosea 1-3 is representative). Paul's concern for the church's infidelity to Christ is no different (2 Corinthians 11:2-3). How is the image of your sin as spiritual adultery against the Lord helpful to you personally?

6. Furthermore, "Samson experienced the bondage and oppression of the enemy" and he "cries out to Yahweh from his oppression" ⁴ When does this occur in Samson's story? It's not unlike the cycle of the Judges more broadly, is it (Judges 2:1-23)? Can you bear witness to the experience of indwelling sin as enslavement? If so, has it led you to cry out to the Lord in repentance (1 John 1:9)? Share with the group.

7. Daniel Block also observes that "Samson [like Israel] is blinded." ⁵ Samson's physical blindness (Judges 16:21) is reflected in Israel's spiritual blindness (1 Samuel 3:1-3). In what ways have you been blind to sin over the course of your life? What has helped you to regain your sight?

³ Block, p.394.

⁴ Block, p.394.

⁵ Block, p.394.

8. Finally, Block notes that “Samson is abandoned by Yahweh and doesn’t even know it”.⁶ What happens to Samson (Judges 16:20) also happens to Israel (Ezekiel 10). Now, read all the way through Hebrews 12:1-29. Explore together what it looks like to heed the warning of Hebrews 12:15-17, 25-29, as well as to claim the promise of Hebrews 12:1-2, 18-24.

⁶ Block , p.394.