

Session 3

Samson

Children discover Samson's journey. God's promises gave meaning to his life.

Scripture: Judges 13–16

Supplies:

- A box with the following inside: *(Tie a card with scripture to each one. Find a scripture for each in the Word section.)*
 1. A lion (a soft toy, a plastic one or a picture)
 2. Honey
 3. Red material or clothing
 4. Matches
 5. Rope
 6. Heart
 7. Hair or plaited rope
 8. Pillars from paper towel rolls
- A white jacket or clothes an archaeologist would wear
- Some strong rope for tug of war
- Copies of the pillar activity



Welcome

1. Split the group in two and let them play tug of war. The team who pulls over the other team, wins.
2. Let the group think of riddles to ask each other. Have a small reward ready for each child who creates a good riddle. You can give them a few easy ones as examples:

What gets wet while it's drying? (a towel)

What comes down but never goes up? (rain)

What has a neck but no head? (a bottle)

How many months of the year have 28 days? (all of them!)



Worship

Settle down ritual: Use Psalm 23. The children sit down with their legs crossed and their eyes closed. Repeat 3 times: "The Lord is with us." Then say, "Because the Lord is my shepherd, I am not afraid. He leads me through times of darkness and He takes care of me."



Word

Welcome to this special episode straight from the history books! We worked on an excavation. We found a box with a letter stuck to it that said: "The highs and lows of an important judge's life." Do you remember what a judge is? *(Let them answer.)*

Great!

Let's see what's in the box...

First item: Lion

One of the children reads the card.

Judges 14:6: "He killed the lion without any weapon, not even a knife."

A young man was travelling with his parents. He wanted to marry a woman from a different country. On their way, when they were near the town, a strong lion charged at them. The man killed the lion without any weapons! His parents didn't even realise the danger because it happened so quickly. They reached the woman's home safely. She agreed to marry him. Then they went back home. Can you guess who this judge is yet?

Second item: Pot of honey

Judges 14:14: "Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet."

A month or so after the lion died, Samson went to visit his fiancée. He turned down the road to look at the lion. In the meantime, bees had made a hive in the lion's carcass. There was already a lot of honey. Samson took some of the honey and ate it. He and his fiancée were later married. They celebrated for seven days! In those days, that's how long wedding parties lasted. There were 30 Philistine men at the party. Samson told them: "Here's a riddle for you. If you give me the right answer, I will give each of you a pair of pants and a shirt. But if you don't give me the right answer, you have to give me your pants and shirt. The Philistines agreed, "Alright. Give us your riddle."

Samson said: "Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet."

They tried to get the right answer for three days but couldn't figure it out. On the fourth day they did something nasty. They went to Samson's wife and said: "Talk to your husband! Find out what the riddle is and tell us, otherwise we'll burn your father's house down!"

She went to Samson and nagged him until he couldn't take it anymore. He gave her the answer. On the last day of the party, just before the 7 days had passed, the Philistines came to Samson and said: "The sweetest thing we can think of is honey, and the strongest thing we can think of is a lion. The answer has to be: honey that comes from a lion! You owe us each a pair of pants and a shirt."

Third item: Red material or clothes

Judges 14:19: "Then the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of everything and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle."

Wow, can you believe what happened? Samson was furious. He killed the 30 Philistines in a different town and gave their clothes to his guests. He was so angry that he went home without his wife. Her father later let her marry another man.

Fourth item: Matches

Judges 15:4: "So he went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs. He then fastened a torch to every pair of tails."

Samson went back to his wife, but when he got there his father-in-law had already let her marry another man. Then Samson said: "This time it isn't my fault if I do something to you." He caught many foxes and tied their tails together. Between the two tails he tied a torch and set it on fire. The jackals ran and burnt down the Philistines' fields, grapevines and olive trees. Now all the Philistines were angry with Samson.

Fifth item: Rope

Judges 16:9: "But he snapped the bowstrings as easily as a piece of string snaps when it comes close to a flame."

The Philistines were angry with Samson and went to find him among the Israelites. The Israelites were scared of the Philistines because they were their bosses. They found Samson and tied him with new rope and handed him over to the Philistines. The Spirit of God came upon Samson and made him strong enough to break the rope as if it were string. He took a donkey's jaw bone and killed a thousand Philistines with it.

Sixth item: Heart

Judges 16:4: "Her name was Delilah."

Samson fell in love with another Philistine woman. Her name was Delilah. The leaders of the Philistines bribed her to find out why Samson was so strong. Delilah asked Samson: "Tell me, why are you so strong? What can hold you back?"

He answered: "If someone ties me up with 7 fresh bowstrings that have not been tied, then I won't be able to set myself free."

The leaders then brought Delilah 7 fresh bowstrings to tie Samson up with, but when she called out: "Samson, the Philistines are here!" he tore through the bowstrings as if they were string.

Delilah asked again: "Tell me why you are so strong? What can someone tie you up with?" This time Samson answered: "If you tie me up with new rope that has never been used, then I will be too weak." But this failed again! Delilah complained to Samson and said: "You lied to me. Please tell me truth."

Samson answered: "Actually, you have to plait my 7 plaits into a carpet with wool. Then I'll be too weak." She did it while he was sleeping, but when she woke him up, he ripped his hair free and broke the loom.

Delilah was very upset. She accused Samson of not loving or trusting her. He almost went crazy with all the complaining. Then he told her everything.

Seventh item: Hair or plaited wool

Judges 16:17: "I belong to God."

Finally Samson told Delilah everything.

Samson's parents couldn't have children. After many years the Lord came to Samson's mother. He told her: "Take good care of yourself. You will have a son and when he grows up, you can never cut his hair or beard. He will belong to me and I will use him to save the Israelites from the Philistines."

His hair and beard were a sign that he belonged to God. If someone were to cut his hair, he would become an ordinary person. Delilah knew he was speaking the truth and she went to tell the Philistine leaders. While Samson was sleeping, she cut his hair and God's strength left him. This time when Delilah cried out: "Samson, Samson! The Philistines are here!" there wasn't anything he could do.

The Philistines tied him up with copper chains, put out his eyes and threw him in jail.

Eighth item: Paper towel pillars

Judges 16:28: "Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow take revenge on the Philistines."

The Philistines threw a big party in their temple. They were glad that they defeated Samson. They took Samson from prison so that they could make fun of him. He had to go stand in the middle of the temple. There were two big pillars that the temple's roof was resting on. Samson asked the man who brought him out of jail: "Let me rest against one of the pillars." Samson put his arms around the pillars and prayed: "Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow take revenge on the Philistines." Samson's hair had begun to grow back in jail and he was filled with the strength of the Lord again. He pulled down the pillars and the temple crumbled to the ground. Samson and all the Philistines who were there, died.

Children reflect on the story:

1. I wonder which part of Samson's story you liked the most
2. I wonder which part was your least favourite
3. I wonder what it means to you that you're also special to God



Working and Playing

- Take one or two of the items on the table and tell someone else what that item represents in Samson's story
- Colouring picture for younger children
- Pillar activity: Colour the pictures. Cut Samson and the pillars out. Fold the destroyed temple picture inwards on the dotted lines. Paste the two pillars on the outside flaps. Paste Samson on one of the pillars.
- Play "Rock, Paper, Scissors" with 3 figures: Samson, Delilah, and the lion. Delilah beats Samson, Samson beats the lion, and the lion beats Delilah. Stand back to back, count to three and then turn around. The characters are as follows: Samson – strong arms; Delilah – one hand on the hip and the other under her chin; lion – roars and shows off their claws.



Closing prayer to end the session

