**Discussion Questions:**

1. Read Judges 14: 1-4 (in ESV if possible)
   1. Why do you think God forbade Israel from intermarrying with foreigners?
   2. Samson decided to follow his heart and marry a Philistine woman who seemed “right in his eyes.” What is so wrong with doing what seems “right in his eye?” Is this a common problem in modern society?
   3. Are Samson’s parents partially responsible for his choice to marry a foreign woman?
   4. What do you think of verse 4 that states that “this was from the Lord?”
2. Read Judges 15:9-20
   1. What does it say about the Israelites that they were willing to give up Samson?
   2. What does it say about Samson that he would praise himself after his victory?
   3. In what ways do we mirror Samson’s self-worship?
3. Read Hebrews 11:32-40
   1. These heroes of the Old Testament were praise for their faith rather than their accomplishments, why is that?
   2. How do you feel about the fact that there, in this world, people of faith who suffer and people without faith who enjoy success at every turn? How does this match up to a God of justice?
   3. Verse 39-40: What was promised to these heroes of Old Testament? What did they have faith in?

**Redemption of Samson:**

Last of the judges series

**Deeds of mighty Samson:**

What word comes to mind with the name samson?

Killed lion barehanded, served as judge to Israel fo 20 years, killed 1000 men by himself with donkey jawbone, ripped a city gate off its hinges, Delilah, and destruction of Gaza

Used mightily by God, but is a very flawed man

**Birth and consecration:**

Israel did evil, and God allowed philistines to invade. This is the first of two examples we’ll talk about of God using evil to accomplish his will

Childless mother, an angel, child prophesied to save the nation, etc

What is a Nazirite?

**Nazirite Vow:**

God told Moses in numbers 6

Clean vs Holy

Men and women allowed

Usually for a specified period of time – but life long in Samuel and samson’s case

**First sin**

When Israel first settled in this land, God specifically said no intermarriage

She looks “right in my eye” – same words as Eve, Absalom, and Judges 22

In choosing to disregard this command from God – Samson was irresponsibly putting God’s plan at risk

Except…he wasn’t, because Samsom choosing a foreign wife WAS part of God’s plans – Samson just didn’t know it. Here is the second example of God using sin to accomplish his will. We’ll revisit this idea of God using sin later.

**Second sin:**

Notice that samson’s strength came not from his muscles, nor his hair, it came from the inhabitation of God’s spirit

Gloat? Unclear

Touched a corpse though…

**Third sin:**

Seems weak – maybe drank, maybe not – but he didn’t conduct himself well

What do boys usually do at bachelor parties?

God used this to start a war against the philistines

**Fourth sin:**

Pride sometimes understood to be the worst sin

Because it aims to steal glory from God – whose primary purpose is Glory

**Fifth sin:**

Seems like stupidity, but it is the sad portrait of humanity’s inability to choose God over our own desires

Samson: “perhaps if I tell her this, she would finally love me and wont betray me like my first wife”

Chose Delilah over God

Chose love over God

Chose himself over God

After breaking nazirite vow over and over again without repentance, his head is finally shaved, the covenant vow is broken and God left him

Again. Part of the God’s plans. We see his hair began to grow

**Samson finds faith:**

We often see God so much more clearly when we are broken and humbled

Gone is samson’s strength, a mere boy servant to escort the slayer of 1000 men?

Gone are the women who distracted him

Gone are the illusion that he is able to “see what is right”

Indeed…Gone are his eyes

All of it, replaced with true humility

Acknowledgement that his strengths and accomplishments were God’s

Understanding that his life was not meant to be spent on pleasures or women, it was to serve as God’s instrument of wrath against the philistines’s sinful actions against God’s people.

We look at Samson’s life and it’s easy to think that his life came to a tragic end after all he’s suffered, but Paul would say of his own life, of the life of Samson, and of OUR own lives, that “I consider that **our present sufferings** are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us”

That Samson found faith in God and serve his purpose at the end of his life is a true happy ending, the strong man who was actually weak became the weak man who was actually strong.

**Hebrews 12:**

The author of Hebrews takes it a step further and says that all the heroes of the old testament: prophets, priests, kings, and yes – judges – accomplished what they did by faith. (READ)

But he also goes on to say that their sufferings were ALSO by faith. (Read)

That it was not because of their sins and faithlessness (even those exists in plenty) that these heroes were subjected to their miseries, but that it was because of God’s good will. And these men and women listed in Hebrews 12 are heroes of faith, NOT because of their accomplishments, but because of their FAITH in God’s good will.

God is capable of ordaining and using sin for his good purpose without himself being sinful. Samson’s sinful desire of philistine women and disregard for his Nazirite vows… Joseph’s brothers

Now, you may be struggling with what I just said – that God is capable of ordaining and using sin. It might conjure up images of a puppeteer and I beg you to not think of God that way. You are NOT God’s playthings but precious sons and daughters – I know this because even his own beloved son jesus wasn’t spared the sufferings brought on by sin.

Acts 4: "Truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur"

God cannot mean to save us if Christ doesn’t suffer, and Christ can’t suffer if those sins weren’t guided by God’s merciful hands.

**By Faith:**

Applications:

* Do not presume, just because you are strong, or blessed, or engaged in service that you are walking in faith
* Think of the lions in your life, think of the 1000 man armies, think of the Delilahs who betray you, think of the loss of sight, loss of strength, the loss of self. What are these things to you?
  + Loss of a loved one
  + Cancer
  + Unemployment
  + Challenges at work
  + Struggling marriage
  + Troubled sons and daughters

These things not there for you to conquer by your own strength so that you can say “I have overcome”

These things are there for you to accept as God’s grace, to be endured BY Faith, so that you can say “GOD HAS OVERCOME.”

Let us pray.