

Word notes Sunday 01/12/13 Michael Meeks
Living for God - Samson

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Texts: Judges 15

It's easy to think of Samson solely in the way Hollywood has portrayed him: as a womanizing muscle-bound strongman, a closer look reveals something different. Before the period of the Judges it was Moses who served God and Israel as Prophet, King and Judge and while Israel had to wait for appointed kings the Judges were God's way of leading His people. Samson takes up one fifth of the book and so is a key figure.

The role of a Judge wasn't just military it was clearly spiritual too and in Samson we see he was used by God perhaps more than any other – the Spirit of God is recorded to come on only four Judges, three others once only, Samson four times. Samson was set apart for God as a Nazarite and even his mother had to refrain from alcohol and unclean things during her pregnancy, clearly Samson was a man appointed by God for great deeds not some hooligan roughneck who happened to be in the right place.

In marrying a Philistine it may seem that Samson is betraying his people – his parents even ask “is there not a good wife to be found among you own” – clearly not from what has been said about Israel at the time. In any case Philistines were not in the list of those Israelites were forbidden to marry and marriage was a standard way to win land (the other being battle). Was Samson trying the gentle approach first, was God giving the Philistines an option to capitulate?

The image of the muscle-bound strongman is also probably off too. Samson's victory over 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass isn't about a man with a big weapon but a man with the Spirit of God, the very simplicity of the weapon highlights the impossibility of the situation without the supernatural power of God.

Samson doesn't big up the weapon but throws it away; it wasn't the jawbone or Samson that won the battle but The Lord. Samson's prayer for a drink was in direct contrast to how Israel acted in the desert when thirsty. They grumbled against the leaders and God instead of asking God to provide. Samson asked God for a drink - praying for the thing he needed to sustain him after the fight.

Samson then led Israel for 20 years in the days of the Philistines. God must have been with him to do that.

In this account Samson has nothing but weakness - his wife is taken, he has no weapon, even the people of God are against him but God uses him in his weakness. The hill where he won the battle is called “Jawbone” - a reminder of weakness and of God's strength for a man who was available.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

What is God doing through Samson with the Philistines and Israel? Ask for some views first then read Judges 13:1 and 14-1-4.

In the light of those verses what do you understand of Samson's actions in the wedding feast riddle (14:10-14).

As the situation escalates through 15:1 to 15:17 which actions of Samson's are led by the Lord? How would you explain what's going on to someone who would question God's motives and methods?

What besetting weakness might we believe Samson to have in reading 14:15-17 and 16:15-17?

Some of Samson's weakness was given over to God for His glory, others maybe not. Read 2 Cor 12:7-10 and discuss how we might deal with various weaknesses – are there two types (for example not being confident about sharing the Gospel compared to being weak in resisting sexual temptation) and how should we see these in our lives, how can the Spirit of God assist us in each case?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

It's time to start thinking about who we can invite to our Christmas services!