



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

JUDGES & RUTH

Week 3

Get a Grip!

Judges 14:12-20

OPENING
up to the Word

Are anger and lack of self-control problems for you or someone close to you? Have you asked the Holy Spirit to help you control your emotions?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Samson knew his riddle was impossible to figure out (v.14). Whom did he challenge to decipher it and what reward did he offer? Was this reward small or large in the ancient economy?
2. How did the Philistines eventually learn the answer to the riddle?
3. How would you characterize Samson's wife?
4. How did Samson pay his debt? Would you consider this murder? What does this act say about Samson?
5. What did Samson lose besides the riddle contest?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Anger can be a tool to make necessary changes or it can be a weapon that destroys us and the people around us. How do you channel your anger?
2. Reflect on this statement from Martin Luther: "When I am angry I can write, pray and preach well, for then my whole temperament is quickened, my understanding sharpened, and all mundane vexations and temptations depart."
3. When is it wise—or unwise—to confront someone (or text, email or write a letter) when either of you is angry?
4. How do you view Samson's wife in this account? Is she a victim or victimizer? Is this the kind of person you would want as a friend or spouse?
5. Have you ever used or had this expression used on you: "If you really loved me you would . . ." ? Is this a fair question?

WINDOW
on the Word

Verse 19 reads: "Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power." There are times when God's Spirit fills people with physical power and courage (see 1Sa 17:34-37 and 2Sa 23:20). Sadly, Samson abused his God-given strength to hurt others.

A Problem With Revenge

DAY 16

Judges 15:1-8

Does anyone make you really angry? Are there people in your life who constantly upset you? Do you rely on Jesus to help you deal with them?

1. What was the flash point for Samson's anger this time?
2. Was Samson angry at the right person(s)? What action did he take? Was it appropriate?
3. How did the Philistines respond? Was their action appropriate? How could this incident have been prevented?

1. Have you had a time of great disappointment in your personal life? How did you respond? Did you withdraw and internalize your loss, or did you explode and lash out? Was it ever "payback" time? Or did you let it go and turn it over to Jesus?

2. In this account, and in this cultural context, is Samson guilty of animal abuse? Over the course of your life, how have you treated God's creatures?

3. Revenge is always a downward spiral. Do you see evidence of destruction anywhere in the world that was caused by acts of revenge? Can the cycle of revenge be broken? How?

*Samson hid in a cave in **the rock of Etam** (v. 8). This was a prominent rock a little south of Bethlehem about 15 miles from the site of Samson's most recent exploit. The rock is also mentioned in 2 Chronicles 11:6.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

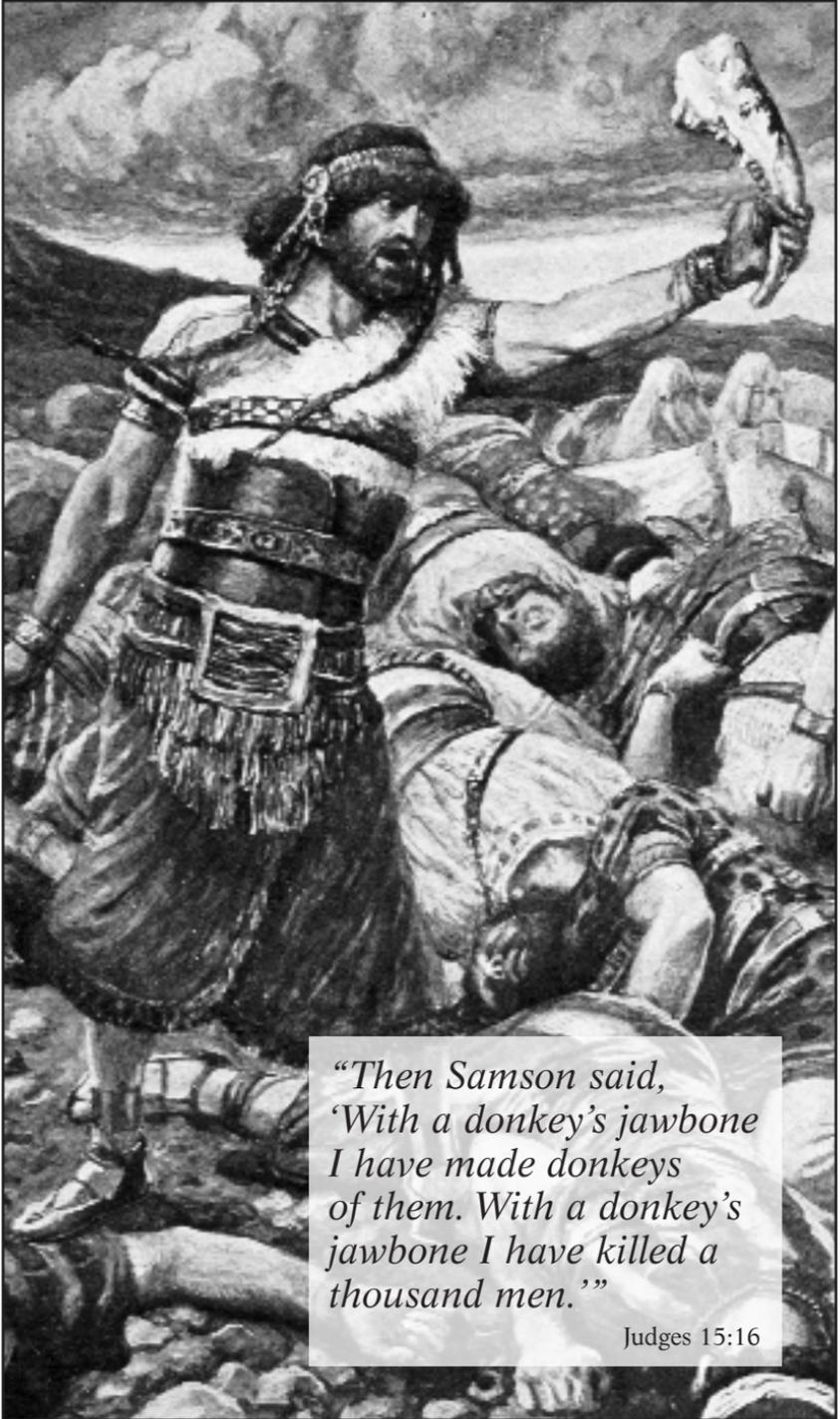
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word



*“Then Samson said,
‘With a donkey’s jawbone
I have made donkeys
of them. With a donkey’s
jawbone I have killed a
thousand men.’”*

Judges 15:16

Superhuman Power

DAY 17

Judges 15:9-20

Samson used God's gift of power to accomplish superhuman feats. Is there an area of your life where Christ can accomplish his work through you?

1. Why were the Philistines angry with Samson? Whom did they first approach? How do you think those people felt about the Philistines' interrogation?
2. What did the men of Judah do to avoid greater bloodshed?
3. Samson surrendered, but on his own terms. Why do you think he did this?
4. In what two ways did God meet Samson's needs in this brief account?

1. Many people experience depression following a great personal accomplishment. Was there a time of great triumph in your life? How did you feel—emotionally, physically and spiritually—in the days and weeks following?

2. The men of Judah were willing to sacrifice Samson in order to protect themselves. Has there been a time in your life when you were abandoned and betrayed by friends? Has there been a time when you were like the men of Judah—willing to “sacrifice” another to protect yourself?

5. Viewed through the lens of the New Testament, what do you think is the most important spiritual lesson to be learned from the story of Samson?

*This section troubles many people because **Samson's strength came from God**, yet he used that power to slaughter 1,000 men. After the slaughter, the text tells us how God continued to support Samson, miraculously providing him with water after a fierce battle in the desert. This might seem to suggest that God approved of Samson's behavior. However, it is helpful to view this account in the light of two considerations: (1) the Philistines were the enemies of God's people and (2) God preserved Samson's life to save and protect the nation of Israel.*

OPENING
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I've Got a Secret

Judges 16:1-16

OPENING
up to the Word

Some believe that God has “secrets” which he allows us to discover if we say and do the right things. But God’s grace is no secret, is it?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What could explain Samson’s deplorable behavior in verse 1? What plot was hatched by his enemies while he was in Gaza? How did he escape?
2. With whom did Samson fall in love? Did she love him?
3. What three requests did Delilah make of Samson, and how did he answer?
4. What words would you use to describe Delilah based on verses 1-16? What words would you use to describe Samson based on the same verses?

LIVING
out the Word

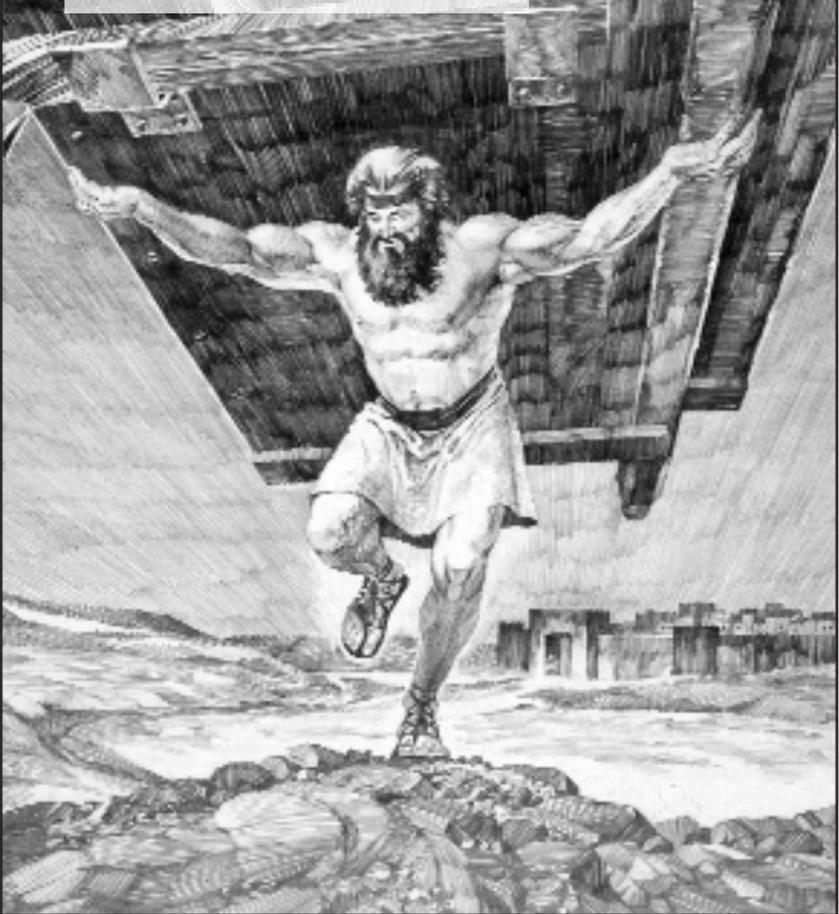
1. If someone were to ask you about the source of your spiritual strength, what would you say?
2. Can you recall your first love? Did you learn any secrets about that person?
3. While Samson had great physical strength, he lacked other strengths. What are some of your weaknesses? How do you deal with them? How can God help you with those weaknesses?
4. Complete this thought: Here are the strengths I have that Jesus can use for his glory and to help other people . . .

WINDOW
on the Word

*Delilah lived in the **Valley of Sorek**, now called Wadi es-Sarar, about thirteen miles southwest of Jerusalem. The valley runs toward the Mediterranean in a northwesterly direction.*

“But Samson lay there only until the middle of the night. Then he got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose, bar and all. He lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.”

Judges 16:3



From Tragedy to Triumph

Judges 16:17-31

OPENING
up to the Word

Do you know anyone who has gone from the top to the bottom, socially or spiritually? How do you think it felt to drop from honor to dishonor, from being triumphant to becoming tragic? Did that person experience a time of deliverance?

DIGGING
into the Word

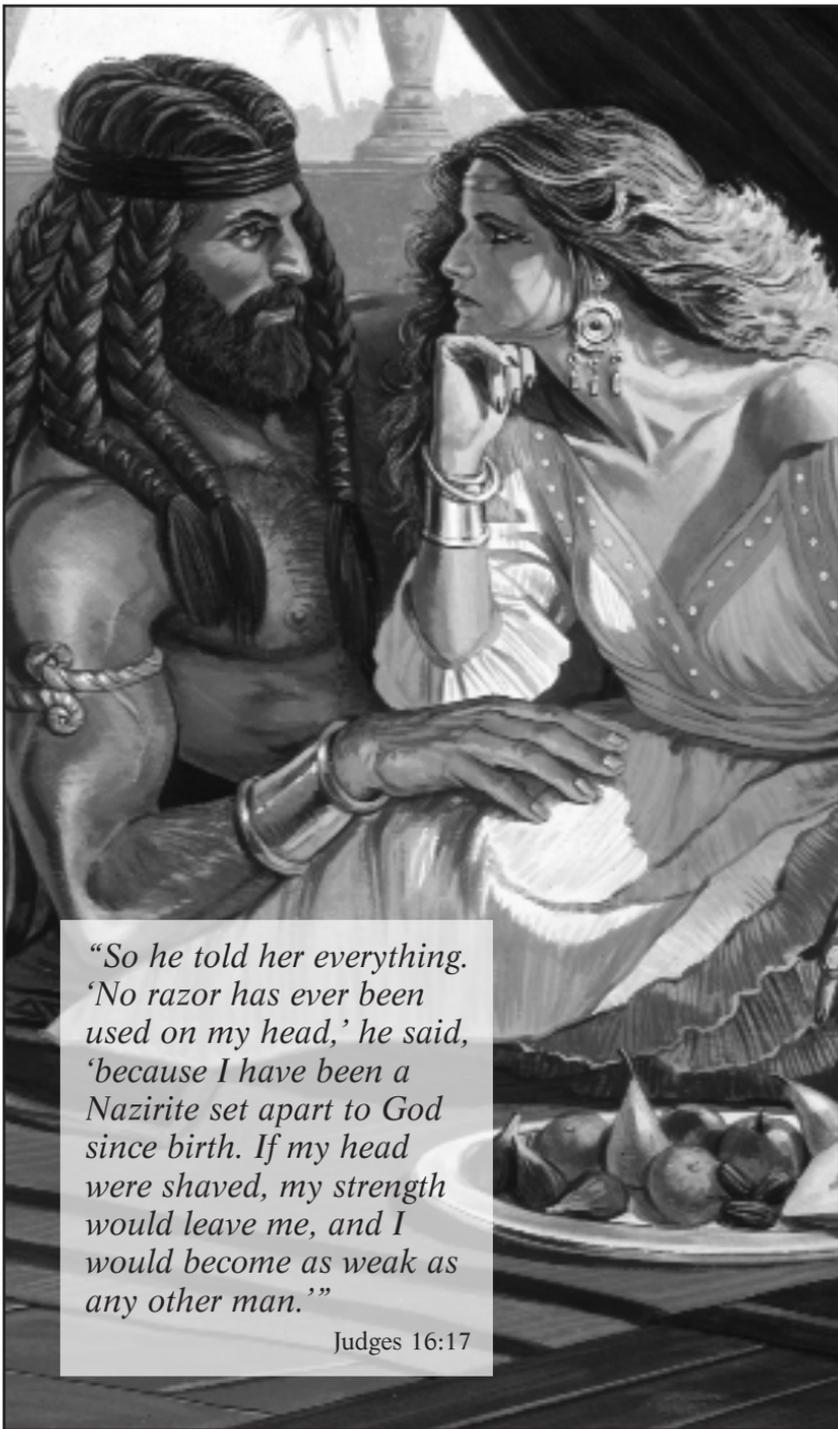
1. How did Delilah finally persuade Samson to reveal his secret? What happened in verses 18-21?
2. What was Samson's "job" in prison? What detail did his captors overlook?
3. How was Samson further humiliated by the Philistines (v. 25)?
4. Samson used the Philistine celebration to his advantage. Describe the events that took place in verses 26-30. Who buried Samson and where?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Samson lost everything—his hair, his mistress, his honor, his eyes and finally, his life. Has there been a time when your losses came one after another? How did you cope?
2. Samson, with all of his faults, was still used mightily by God and triumphed in the end. He is also named among the faithful in Hebrews 11. Yet God still used him and loved him. Is there a lesson there for you and me?
3. If you could offer one final prayer before your life ended, what would that prayer be?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The Philistines worshiped a variety of gods. The one cited in this account is **Dagon**, one of their most revered deities. Dagon means "grain," and may indicate that he was their god of the crops, the one they considered responsible for an abundant harvest. The Philistines may have chosen to bring Samson into their worship of Dagon because they believed Samson's capture was Dagon's revenge for his burning of their crops in 15:3-5.*



“So he told her everything. ‘No razor has ever been used on my head,’ he said, ‘because I have been a Nazirite set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.’”

Judges 16:17

Do-It-Yourself Religion

Judges 17:1-13

OPENING
up to the Word

Remember: Christ-less religion is any set of beliefs and practices that pretend to make or keep God happy on the basis of individual performance. Why do you think someone might allow or be persuaded to adopt someone else's religion as their own?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why did Micah confess to taking his mother's silver? (a) fear of God, (b) fear of pagan gods, (c) superstitious fear of his mother's curse.
2. Why do you think Micah wanted a live-in priest? Whom did he install as his priest?
3. Levites were Israel's priests. Why do you think this Levite accepted Micah's offer to become his family priest, in spite of the idolatry involved?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What was the spiritual climate of the times (v. 6)? Would that description be applicable to our society? Why or why not?
2. Has a family member ever stolen from you? How did you resolve the problem?
3. Based on this chapter, how would you describe the futility of trying to earn God's love on the basis of pills, priests and programs?

WINDOW
on the Word

The Levite referred to in this story may have been a victim of the times. The people of Israel were clearly instructed to support this priestly tribe, but with so many Israelites no longer worshipping the true God, support for Levites began to evaporate. This Levite may have left Bethlehem because the Jewish community there was unable to support him. That may be the reason he decided to live with Micah and his family in exchange for priestly duties.

Micah and the Danites

DAY 21

Judges 18:1-10

Have you ever asked someone to help resolve a conflict between you and another person—or did you try to solve a conflict by yourself? What were the results?

1. Who arrived at the home of Micah and what was their mission? How could the men have recognized the voice of the Levite?
2. Why do you think the Danite warriors sought a blessing from a Levite? Do you think God actually gave his blessing to their mission?
3. What did the five warriors discover at Laish? What recommendation did they make to their brothers?

1. This chapter begins with the words: “In those days Israel had no king.” What kind of leadership would it have taken to resolve the Danites’ problems? (a) military, (b) political, (c) spiritual, (d) all three, (e) no human leadership was needed—the problems could have been resolved if all the parties had obeyed God’s law for Israel.

2. Do you need to hear the words, “Go in peace. Your journey has the Lord’s approval” (v. 6) in your life?

3. Do some spiritual reflection on the words: “Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? Why are you here?” (v. 3). How would you answer those questions?

The Danites were originally assigned a territory (Jos 19:40) but they did not conquer all their land. The Amorites forced them into a small section of the area. For that reason the Danites were looking for more land, preferably an area that would be easy to take over.

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