Samson was the last judge of Israel. We know more about Samson than any other judge. The Bible tells us the story of his life from beginning to end. Samson was set apart from birth to serve God, yet seemingly, he spent his life serving his own sinful desires. God is in control of all things, and He could even use a man like Samson to accomplish His purposes.

God blessed Samson from the very beginning of his life. Even as a boy, the Spirit of God was at work in Samson’s life, and Samson soon became famous for his great strength.

One day, after Samson had grown up, he saw a beautiful woman and he was attracted to her. She was a Philistine. Samson told his parents that he wanted to marry her. His parents did not want their son to marry any of the people from the land of Canaan (Joshua 23:12-13). This included the Philistines.

But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me. She’s the right one for me.” - Judges 14:3b

Though Samson had no regard for God’s law or his parents’ advice, God was going to use this situation for His own purpose. God was working out His plans against the Philistines because they were ruling over the Israelites (Judges 14:4).

God can even use the wrong choices people make to bring about His purposes (Genesis 50:20). Sometimes people around us make wrong choices. When this happens, pray that God will make something good come from it - something for His glory.

Play a Riddle Game. Look around the room. Without saying what it is, pick something in the room. Think of 3 words to describe it. Say, “I am thinking of something that is ____, ____, and ____.” Let your mom or dad guess what it might be. Take turns playing this riddle game. Today we will look at a riddle that Samson made up.

Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Samson with power. He tore the lion apart with his bare hands. - Judges 14:6a

Then Samson went and talked to the young woman. He liked her very much. Samson went home, and some time later, he returned to her town to marry her. Along the way, a young lion suddenly came roaring toward Samson.

When the lion came roaring, Samson grabbed it by its hair. He tore it apart with his bare hands! (Judges 15:14, 15)

When the lion turned to come at him with its mouth wide open, Samson grabbed it and tore it apart with his bare hands! (Judges 15:15, 16)

God has given you the choice to make wise decisions or to make sinful decisions. When God gives you free will, He gives you the freedom to choose wisely or to choose foolishly. When you choose wisely, you are making wise decisions. When you choose foolishly, you are making wrong decisions. Do you believe that God gives you the choice to choose wisely or to choose foolishly?
Day #3 continued:
a bet with 30 Philistine men at the party. He said he would
tell them a riddle. If they could solve the riddle at the end
of the seven day party, he would give them 30 linen shirts
and 30 sets of clothes. If they could not answer the riddle
by the end of the party, they would have to give him 30
linen shirts and 30 sets of clothes. The men accepted
Samson's challenge.

Samson's riddle went like this:

"Out of the eater came something to eat.
Out of the strong came something sweet."
- Judges 14:14a

What was Samson describing? (The honey in the lion.) It
was Samson's wedding week and he was trying to trick
his wedding guests. It seems Samson was trying to prove
that he was smarter than these men. Surely he pictured
himself strutting around town in the new clothes, proud
that he had fooled 30 men. Then, everyone would know
how clever he was. The Bible says it is wrong to love praise
from people more than praise from God (John 12:43).

At times we are tempted to “prove” something. We would
like to think we are smarter or better at doing something
than someone else, because this will make us feel important.
However, as Christians, we must find our value in the Lord.
You are worth much because God made you (Psalm 139:13).
You are valued because God loves you (1 John 4:10). And
you are priceless because of the price that Christ paid for
you (1 Corinthians 7:23).

Day #4: Wrong Motive

For three days, Samson's party guests could not figure out
the answer to his riddle. So the men went to Samson's bride.
They threatened to harm her and her family if she did not
tell them the answer. Samson's bride begged and pleaded
for Samson to give her the answer. Finally, he did. She told
the men immediately.

Before sunset on the seventh day the men of the town spoke
to Samson. They said, "What is sweeter than honey? What
is stronger than a lion?" - Judges 14:18

Samson knew his bride had given them the answer. He was
furious that they had cheated. Filled with power, Samson
went to another town and killed 30 Philistine men there.
He took all of their belongings and gave their clothes to the 30
men at the party. Samson went to his father's house. He
was burning with anger (Judges 14:19).

Some time later, Samson decided to return to his wife. But
when he went to her father's house, he learned that her
father had given her to marry another man.

Her father said, "I was sure you really hated her. So I gave
her to your friend."
- Judges 15:2a

Samson said to them, "This time I have a right to get even
with the Philistines. I'm going to hurt them badly."
- Judges 15:3

It is true that Samson was sent by God to destroy the
Philistines. But Samson did not battle them to bring glory
to God's powerful name. Each time Samson attacked the
Philistines, it was because of his own pride. Tomorrow we
will see what Samson did next.

Before he was even born, God said that Samson would
deliver God's people, the Israelites, from the Philistines.
And God gave him the ability to do it. Yet, Samson did not
pray or ask God to guide his steps. Samson followed what
seemed right to him - even sinful things. We must never
take God's calling for granted, or use the gifts He has given
us for our own selfish reasons.

Day #5: Seeking Revenge

Have you ever been so angry with someone for hurting you
that you wanted to get back at them? Doing something to
get back at someone is called revenge. The Bible tells us
not to take revenge, but let God take of things (Romans
12:19). Today we will look at what Samson did to get
revenge on the Philistines.

So he went out and caught 300 foxes. He tied them in pairs
by their tails. Then he tied a torch to each pair of tails. He
lit the torches. He let the foxes loose in the fields of grain
that belonged to the Philistines. He burned up the grain
that had been cut and stacked. He burned up the grain
that was still growing. He also burned up the vineyards and
olive trees. - Judges 15:2-3

This action completely destroyed the Philistines' crops. A
whole year's worth of food went up in smoke. When the
Philistines found out that Samson was the one who had
burned up their fields, they killed Samson's wife and her
father. This made Samson even more angry so he killed
many Philistines and then he hid in a cave.

More Philistines came looking for Samson. Because the
Philistines still ruled over Israel, the Israelites were afraid
of them. The Israelites, Samson's own people, found him
and handed him over to the Philistines.

Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Samson with power.
The ropes on his arms became like burned thread. They
dropped off his hands. He found a fresh jawbone of a
donkey. He grabbed hold of it and struck down 1,000 men.

Then Samson said, "By using a donkey's jawbone I've
made them look like donkeys. By using a donkey's jawbone
I've struck down 1,000 men." - Judges 15:14b-16

Notice that it was God's Spirit that gave Samson power,
yet what did Samson say? I have done it. Samson took all
the credit. Again, in his pride, Samson did not turn his
thoughts toward God. Samson had a wrong view. He thought
too highly of himself, and not highly enough of the Lord.

We must be sure to always let others know when God has
worked in our lives. When we take credit for what He has
done, we are stealing praise from God (Acts 12:23).

But as for me, how good it is to be near God! I have made
the Sovereign Lord my shelter, and I will tell everyone
about the wonderful things You do. - Psalm 73:28 NLT