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The Greatest Commandment

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:1-25

Theme: Love the Lord your God with all your heart

4th-6th Grade (Ages 9-11)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: Samson , God's Strength in Weakness Judges 13-16 | God Gives Us Gifts to Serve Him

Introduction (Hook): Start with a fun discussion: "Have you ever seen a strong person do something really amazing, like lifting a car or jumping over tall buildings? Today, we'll meet a guy called Samson who had incredible strength, but he used it in ways that disappointed God. God gives us special gifts, like strength, creativity, or kindness, to help others, and sometimes, we forget why they're given to us!" Lesson 1: Samson's Gift Was Given for Service (Judges 13:1-7) Samson was born with a special gift, God made him strong so he could help His people. His parents didn't understand at first; they thought he'd be famous for his strength alone. But God said: "I'll give you this strength so you can fight for Me." Think about your own gifts, do you use them to make others laugh, help a friend, or learn something new? Deeper question: What's a gift you have that you might use for fun instead of serving others? Lesson 2: Samson's Weakness Was His Choice (Judges 14-15) Samson's strength started to fade because he made bad choices. He fell in love with a woman who didn't love God, and later, he got angry with Philistines (his enemies). God doesn't give us strength to be perfect, He gives it so we can love Him and others. Personal application: When have you used your gifts to blame others or get angry? How can you ask God to help you use your strengths for good today? Lesson 3: Samson's Strength Was Restored (Judges 16) Even when Samson was weak, God was still working! He was captured, but God saved him in a big way. God's gifts aren't taken away, they're used in ways that matter. Challenge: If God gave you a gift today, how can you use it to bring Him glory, even if it feels hard? (Example: sharing kind words, praying for a friend.) Closing: God's Gift Is Forever (Judges 16:30) Samson died fighting for God, but his story reminds us: God's strength isn't just for us to show off, it's to serve. Even when we mess up, God still loves us! Final question: What's one small way you can use your gifts today to make God smile? Encouragement for Teachers: Keep it simple: "Samson had strength, but he forgot why he had it. God gives us gifts so we can serve, let's remember that our strengths aren't just for us!" End with prayer: "Dear God, help us use our gifts to love You and others. Thank You for Your strength!" Bonus: Play short clips of Samson's story (e.g., Philistine jugs) to keep kids engaged!

Bible Story

Samson: God's Strength in Weakness (Judges 13, 16)

In ancient times, Israel was weak and in trouble. The Philistines, their enemies, ruled over them and made them serve them. But God had a plan to save His people through a man named Samson. Samson was special, not because he was strong, but because he was chosen by God to use his strength to free his people. The Bible says he was born with God's Spirit inside him, and no one knew how or why. His mother, though terrified, trusted God's promise.

Samson grew up strong, but his family didn't understand his unusual strength. He didn't know why he could lift mountains or crush lions with his bare hands, God was the one who gave it to him. The Bible says he didn't ask for it, and he wasn't proud of it. Instead, he used it to help others, like when he rescued a girl named Delilah from the Philistines. But then, the enemy tried to trick him by offering Delilah promises of wealth if he revealed his secret. Samson let her talk him into giving it away, thinking she'd help him win her freedom. He didn't realize how much he needed God's strength, and how much his enemies needed to watch him fall.

The Philistines caught up to Samson one night, tied his hands and feet, and left him to be eaten by wild animals. But God didn't take away Samson's strength, He made him weak in his body so His enemies would know He was the One who controlled him. When the Philistines tied him and called out, "Predict the riddle!" Samson answered, "Out of the eater comes something sweet," and the people cheered. But later, he gave away his secret in anger when Delilah asked again, and his hair, his last source of strength, was shaved off. That night, he prayed to God, and God gave him one last strength to punish his enemies. The Bible says, "Then his hair fell from his head." Without it, Samson couldn't move, but God's power remained inside him.

Samson's story teaches us that God doesn't always give us strength for our own glory, He uses it to do His work. Sometimes, our weaknesses (like Samson's shaved hair) are tools to remind us to trust God more. Samson's greatest mistake was letting pride and fear take over, but God forgave him and showed Himself strong in his weakness. Even though Samson's story ends with his death, God was the one who rescued Israel. Just like Samson, we can trust God to use us, even when we're weak or afraid.

Why This Story Matters: Samson's life shows that God doesn't need us to be perfect to do great things. Sometimes, our weaknesses make us more reliant on Him. The next time you feel strong or proud, ask: "How can I trust God more?" God wants to use you, even your struggles, to serve Him.

Deeper Questions for Discussion: 1. How do you think Samson felt when he realized God was in control, even when he was weak? 2. Why do you think Delilah was so determined to find Samson's secret? 3. What happens when we rely on ourselves instead of God? How can we change? 4. How can we "use our weaknesses" to show God's power, like Samson did?

Key Verse

Deuteronomy 6:5

Samson's Last Strength: A Prayer for Help Samson was a strong, brave warrior, but he had made big mistakes, like getting tricked by a woman and letting his hair grow too long. His enemies had taken him away from his home, and now they were going to make him suffer even more. Even though he was tired and sad, Samson still had one last chance to fight for his family and his country. In this tough moment, he remembered God and asked for help. Samson didn't just pray for himself; he prayed for others too. He wanted God to help him save his people, just like God had done before. Even though he was weak and in trouble, he knew that God could still work through him. His prayer was simple: "Remember me, God, and give me one last big strength to fight." Why Did Samson Ask for Help? Samson had always trusted God for his strength, but sometimes he forgot to ask. His enemies had made him work hard, and he didn't feel powerful anymore. But even in weakness, he realized he needed God's help. He didn't ask for easy answers, just one last burst of strength to do what was right. What Can We Learn? Even when we feel weak or scared, like Samson, we can still pray to God. He wants to help us, just like He helped Samson.

Sometimes we might make mistakes, but God can still use us to do good things. When we feel down, can you think of a time when you prayed for help? What did you ask God for? Personal Application: How Can We Pray Like Samson? Samson didn't wait until everything was perfect to ask God for help. He did it when he was in trouble. Maybe you've ever felt like you were failing or couldn't do something. Can you pray to God just like Samson did? Tell Him you need help, and trust that He will answer. God doesn't always give us the strength we want, but He gives us the strength we need. Next time you feel weak, try this: "God, remember me. Give me just one more chance to do what's right." What do you think God might say to you?

Activities

Activity 1:

Students create a simple "strength test" to explore how Samson's weaknesses (like pride or distractions) affected his strength, then discuss how God provides strength in our own struggles.

1. Explain the Story (2 min): Read Judges 13, 16 (focus on Samson's downfalls, pride, lust, and his enemies exploiting his hair). Ask: "How did Samson's 'strength' fail him? What did he lose?"
2. Design a Test (5 min): Give students 5 minutes to draw a cartoon "strength test" (e.g., "Can you lift this? Can you run? Can you fight?"). Use simple lines and symbols (e.g., a bow for Samson, a sword for his enemies).
3. Add Weaknesses (3 min): On the back, students draw a second scene showing Samson's downfall (e.g., holding a woman's hair, fighting blindly). Label it "How it went wrong."
4. Discuss & Apply (3 min): Compare their tests to Samson's story. Ask:
 5. "What were Samson's 'weaknesses'?"
 6. "How did God's strength show up in Samson's life?"
 7. "Where do we see God's strength in our own struggles?" (Personalize with a prayer.)
 - 2.

Activity 2:

A quick, cooperative game where students act out Samson's traps, like the Philistines cutting his hair, to learn how pride and distractions can weaken us, while also seeing God's faithfulness in redemption.

1. Story Recap (2 min): Briefly review Judges 16 (Samson's fight against the Philistines, his hair being cut, and God's plan).
2. Set Up the Game (3 min): Cut paper plates into strips. Tape them to a table as "Philistine ropes." Write on each strip: "Samson's weakness" or "God's help."
3. Act It Out (5 min): In pairs, students take turns being Samson and the Philistines. Samson tries to lift the ropes (symbolizing his strength), but they keep binding him (representing distractions). If he gives up (e.g., "I don't care!"), the Philistines win.
4. Reflect & Pray (3 min): After the game, ask:
 5. "What happened when Samson relied on his own strength?"
 6. "What happened when he trusted God?" (Point to the "God's help" strips.)
 7. "How can we 'cut the ropes' (distractions) to focus on God's strength?" (Example: praying, reading the Bible.)
 8. Key Takeaway: Both activities encourage students to see Samson's story in their own lives, asking deeper questions like "Where do I trust God instead of my own strength?" Use these as discussion starters before praying together!

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions based on the lesson of Samson, God's Strength in Weakness from Judges 13, 16. These questions encourage deeper reflection, personal application, and discussion of how Samson's story can inspire us to trust God in our own "weaknesses."

- 1. How does Samson's story show that God works in unexpected ways?
- Samson's life begins with a promise from God, his birth as a "Nazarite" set apart for strength, but his story is full of challenges, mistakes, and even tragedy. What are some ways Samson's story shows that God often chooses to work through people who don't always act perfectly? How can we learn from Samson's struggles to trust God in our own lives, even when things don't go as expected?
- (This question invites students to think about how God's power is sometimes revealed in human failures, not just in perfect obedience.)
- 2. Why do you think Samson's strength came and went so differently from the way we usually think about strength?
- Most people would expect Samson to have superhuman strength for his whole life, like a superhero. But God gave him strength only for certain times and tasks (like defeating Goliath or crushing Philistine pillars). What are some real-life situations where you might feel "weak" or out of your depth? How can we learn to wait on God's strength instead of relying on our own power?
- (This encourages them to reflect on their own struggles and how faith can transform weakness into trust.)
- 3. Samson's story has a lot of mistakes, how can we apply lessons from his failures to our own lives?
- Samson's choices (like marrying a Philistine woman or letting his hair grow uncut) led to big consequences. What are some ways we can avoid repeating Samson's mistakes? How can we ask God to help us make wiser choices, even when it feels hard? What's one "weakness" or temptation you've faced that you could learn from Samson's story?
- (This prompts them to connect Samson's failures to their own growth in faith.)
- 4. How can we show others that God's strength is more powerful than fear?
- Samson's greatest strength came when he let go of his pride and trusted God, even when he was captured and humiliated. What are some ways we can share our faith with others, even when we feel afraid or unsure? How can we encourage people around us to trust God, just like Samson eventually did?
- (This question ties the lesson to real-life discipleship and sharing God's love.)
- Each of these questions invites students to explore the story from multiple angles, understanding God's plan, personal growth, and how to apply these truths to their own lives. Would you like any of these adjusted for specific themes (e.g., trust, perseverance)?

Prayer Focus

Here's a heartfelt, age-appropriate prayer for upper elementary students to explore Samson's story and reflect on God's strength working in their lives, especially in their own "weaknings." Prayer Focus: "Lord, help us see Your power in our struggles, just like Samson, who trusted You even when he felt weak. Show us how You turn our fears, our failures, or our "not being enough" into opportunities to rely on You. Give us the courage to ask for Your strength, even when we don't feel it yet. Help us remember that You don't need us to be strong, You are the strength! Open our hearts to trust You in the hard things, just like Samson did, and fill us with Your love so we never forget that You're always with us." Class Reflection Questions (for discussion or journaling): 1. What was one thing Samson thought he needed to be strong for? (e.g., fighting the Philistines, proving his love for Delilah) How does that feel like God's work in our lives too? 2. Samson's strength failed him when he let pride or fear take over (e.g., cutting his hair, trusting Delilah). What's something you've done that made you feel "weak" or tempted to rely on yourself? How can God help you trust Him there? 3. At the end of his life, Samson didn't use his last strength for good, but he didn't stop trusting God either. What's a "last strength" you could use wisely for God, even if it's small? 4. Delilah tried to break Samson by asking him to "give up his secrets." What's something people might try to use against you today? How can you remind yourself, "I don't have to prove my strength, I have God's!" Personal Application: - This week, ask God to help you choose one "weakness" moment to ask for His strength instead of

hiding from it. - Ask God: "Where do I feel weak right now? Show me how to trust You like Samson did, even when I'm afraid or proud." - Practice: Write down one thing you've done lately that felt like "giving up your secret" (e.g., not speaking up, pretending to be okay). How can God use it if you surrender it to Him? Closing Prayer (teacher's version): "Heavenly Father, thank You for showing us Samson's story, not to shame him, but to remind us You're the true Strength. When we feel small, help us believe You're big. When pride or fear pull us down, give us hearts that rest in Your love. Teach us to trust You even in the places we don't see Your power. In Jesus' name, Amen!" Why This Works: - Emotional: Connects Samson's struggles (pride, fear) to relatable "weaknesses" kids face (e.g., social anxiety, academic pressure). - Actionable: Ends with concrete steps (journaling, prayer prompts) so students don't just hear, they engage. - Hopeful: Focuses on God's action (strength in weakness) rather than Samson's flaws, reinforcing trust.

>> Missions Spotlight

Among the Xhosa people of South Africa, the concept of physical strength and warrior culture is deeply valued. Samson's story resonates, and the contrast between Samson's selfish strength and Jesus' sacrificial strength opens powerful Gospel conversations.

-> To the Cross

Samson was given great strength but misused it for selfish purposes. Jesus was given all power in heaven and earth, and used it to serve, sacrifice, and save. Samson's life shows what happens when we use God's gifts for ourselves. Jesus shows what happens when we use them for others.