

DEVOTIONAL

SAMSON

Sorry, Not Sorry // February 20, 2022

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: It has been said that a good beginning doesn't guarantee a good ending in a person's life. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Key Text: Read Judges 15:1-20.

In his book *You'll Get through This*, Max Lucado tells this true story: In 1882, a New York City businessman named Joseph Richardson owned a narrow strip of land on Lexington Avenue. It was only 5 feet wide and 104 feet long. Another businessman, Hyman Sarnar, owned a normal-sized lot adjacent to Richardson's skinny one. Sarnar wanted to build apartments that fronted the avenue. He offered Richardson \$1,000 for the slender plot. Richardson was offended by the amount and demanded \$5,000. Sarnar refused, and Richardson called Sarnar a tightwad and slammed the door on him.

Sarnar assumed the land would remain vacant and instructed the architect to design the apartment building with windows overlooking the avenue. When Richardson saw the finished building, he resolved to block the view. No one was going to enjoy a free view over his lot. So, 70-year-old Richardson built a house five feet wide and 104 feet long and four stories high with two suites on each floor. Upon completion, he and his wife moved into one of the suites. Only one person at a time could ascend the stairs or pass through the hallway. The largest dining table in any suite was 18 inches wide. The stoves were the very smallest made. A newspaper reporter of some girth once got stuck in the stairwell, and after two tenants were unsuccessful in pushing him free, he exited only by stripping down to his undergarments. The building was dubbed "Spite House." Richardson spent the last 14 years of his life in the narrow residence that seemed to fit his narrow state of mind. Lucado wrote, "The Spite House was torn down in 1915, which is odd. I distinctly remember spending a few nights there last year. And a few weeks there some years back. If memory serves me, didn't I see you squeezing through the hallway? Revenge builds a lonely house—space enough for one person. The lives of its tenants are reduced to one goal: make someone miserable. They do: Themselves."

The theme of Judges 15 is revenge, and in its 20 verses, we see Samson taking up residence in the "Spite House" as he seeks vengeance.

Samson took a gift on a visit to the father of his wife from Timnah. But upon arrival, he learned that she was actually married to Samson's friend! The woman's father offered Samson the younger, prettier daughter, but Samson was furious. Samson took his anger out on the Philistines—he burned all the grain in their fields (14:1-5).

Discuss: In what ways have you seen spiteful people express their anger on others who had nothing to do with the issue that made the people angry in the first place?

Discuss: As a leader/judge, Samson should have always acted on behalf of God's people for their good. But he acted out of pure selfishness. How can a leader's selfish acts harm the people he is supposed to be leading?

The Philistines retaliated against Samson by killing his wife and her father (14:6-7). So, Samson retaliated against them. The Bible doesn't say how many Samson killed. Afterwards, Samson retreated to a cave from which he could watch the enemy (14:8).

The Philistines then decided to attack Samson by attacking Judah. Judah was an easy target as Samson had not done his job as a leader organizing, training, or arming them for battle. When the men of Judah heard that the Philistines mainly wanted Samson, the men of Judah approached Samson to ask his permission to let them bind him and take him to the Philistines in order to appease the Philistines. Samson realized that the Philistines would bring suffering and misery to the people, so he agreed to let his own people bind him and carry him to the enemy (14:9-13).

Discuss: Do you think Samson's allowing himself to be bound and carried to the Philistines was heroic? Why or why not?

The Holy Spirit entered Samson, and he easily broke the ropes that were binding him. He picked up the jawbone of a donkey and slaughtered 1,000 Philistines (14:14-15). (Note: For interesting insight on this, please read the article "How Could Samson Kill 1,000 Men with the Jawbone of a Donkey?" at www.answersingenesis.org.) Samson celebrated his victory with a song (14:16-17). But his victory celebration didn't last long. He was thirsty and called upon the Lord to provide him water. God miraculously provided the water to sustain Samson by opening up a spring of water in a hollow place (14:18-20).

Note: It is important to remember that the ministry of the Holy Spirit was different in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would enter a particular person at a particular time to accomplish a particular task; then, the Holy Spirit would leave that person (e.g., Samson, Saul, David, etc.). But in the New Testament, beginning at Pentecost in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit enters a believer's life at the moment of salvation to take up residence and never to leave. For more information on this, please read the article "Can You Lose the Holy Spirit?" at www.gotquestions.org.

Discuss: True to character, when Samson asked God for water, he seemed only concerned about his physical needs and desires in the moment. What else do you think Samson should have asked God for in addition to water, considering all he had—and would—experience?

Discuss: It has been said that "When we are totally dependent upon the Lord, we are the safest." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

Discuss: When have you been desperate for something from God, and in response, He opened "a spring of water from a hollow place"?

For Further Study:

"Judges 14" at www.biblehub.com

"Can You Lose the Holy Spirit?" article at www.gotquestions.org

"How Could Samson Kill 1,000 Men with the Jawbone of a Donkey?" article at www.answersingenesis.org