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Empathy for the Wicked - Samson

Main Verses: ````html`

- [Hebrews 11:32](#)
- [Judges 4](#)
- [Judges 13](#)
- [Judges 13:3](#)
- [Numbers 6](#)
- [Judges 14](#)
- [Judges 14:10](#)
- [Judges 14:12](#)
- [Judges 14:18](#)
- [Judges 15:1](#)
- [James 1:15](#)
- [James 1](#)
- [2 Corinthians 5:20](#)
- [Judges 16](#)
- [Judges 16:22](#)

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Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family, so welcome home. Shabbat Shalom everybody. So we're continuing in this series, um... I hope it was edifying last week. We're kind of jumping into the Bible and we're exploring the Bible for what it is, and that's a narrative. It's a story that's laid

out, and it's one giant story that leads us to Yeshua, that leads us to Jesus. And we've been kind of jumping into the stories and looking specifically at some of the people that weren't so great in the Bible. Some of the people that did wicked things. Some of the villains. Last week we spoke a little bit about Cain and finding empathy. Not sympathy, but empathy for the people that are known for doing wickedness in the Bible. Matt, why would you ever do that? We just need to judge them, slam the door, and move on. Well, if we... If the biblical authors didn't want us to know more about these people, then they wouldn't have written about them. You see, these people in the Bible got the way they were through some type of desire, some type of drive, something they got stuck in their lives that they never got rid of, and it grew and it manifest, just as James says, and finally it birthed something evil and wicked. And if we refuse to acknowledge that not every single wicked person in the Bible was born that way, that not every single wicked person in the Bible simply woke up wanting to be wicked, if we refuse to acknowledge that, then we ourselves run the risks of never learning why they became and how they became what they are. We run the risk of never taking the time to audit our own hearts and make sure that we don't step in the same potholes that they found themselves diving into. So, this week, um, Might be kind of a weird title, but I chose Samson. And I know, I know, some of you, even among the pastors here, Matt, why wouldn't you put Delilah? Like, Delilah's the villain of the story of Samson. I know this. Delilah is most definitely the villain of Samson. Yeah, Samson's the hero. Okay, Samson is very much so. He's a strong guy. Hebrews 11.32 states that he is a hero of the faith. and he's one of the contributors to the larger story that leads us to Yeshua, to Jesus. Right next to Jephthah in Hebrews 11 as well. Jephthah was a warrior, and he defeated the Amorites and the Ammonites. He's a powerful man of faith. But sometimes when we look at the heroes of the Bible, we tend to ignore the areas that are uncomfortable. Jeff, for example, he had this great battle, came home, and what did he do? He made a vow to God. And that's where we kind of stop reading and say, we're not going to explore this story anymore. He said, I'm going to make a vow. The first thing that walks out of my gate right there, I'm going to sacrifice to God. Long and behold, his daughter runs out the gate. And this was a hero of the faith in the story of Judges, which is about the Israelites moving farther and farther away from the character of God, moving farther and farther away from truly knowing the wants and the passion and the vision that their God has for them. And so what's he do? Yeah, I guess I need to offer her. And so the story concludes with everyone mourning because he offered his own daughter because he thought that was something that God actually found acceptable. And when we look at the story of Samson, we see this strong, mighty man who's the champion of Yahweh to Israel. He is the final judge, superhuman strength. And sometimes we tend to just kind of glaze over the areas of his life where he was not a nice person at all, nor was he like this champion role model. And so that's what we're going to be diving into today. You know, we sometimes like to view the world in black and white. We definitely prefer to view the Bible in black and white terms sometimes. Drawing a line in the sand where we can make absolute assertions about God, about the biblical stories, even about our own lives. And, you know, that's not how life works. Very few people wake up every day and say, hey, I'm going to be a wicked person today. I'm going to be a villain. Very few people. In 1933, a new chancellor was appointed in Germany named Adolf Hitler. People were like, who is this guy? He's very charismatic. He vowed to put Germany back on the map. He's going to bring the greatness of Germany back again. And that he did. He put Germany on the map forever. A year later, when the president died, he combined the two positions of the presidency and chancellor and basically became the leader of Germany. And he had a lot of support. He had a lot of

support. And the people that woke up supporting him that day, that vowed to follow him as their leader, These people didn't wake up monsters. These people didn't wake up with this ambition. These people didn't know that their political party of National Socialism or Nazi would be something that would never be mentioned again in the world for as long as history lasts without some type of dark infamy around it. They didn't wake up knowing that the way that they salute would be something that can never be done in any other country again. They never knew that they were going to be monsters. It was a slow process, a very slow process, until one day, young soldiers who joined the army because they wanted to serve their country were being let out of a Dachau prison camp. And the Allied soldiers coming in had disgusted looks on their face, not only for them, but just everything they had done. This was a gradual thing. Sin is gradual. Sin tastes good, it feels right at first, but slowly, slowly, it creeps in, and the daylight goes dark, and death is birthed. So, as we enter the story of Samson, this short story amidst the many in the book of Judges, we have a lot of these preconceived ideas about how the story should be read. For example, who's the hero, who's the villain? Who's the ultimate villain of the story of Samson? Not a trick question. We often say Delilah. Was Delilah a villain? Yeah, she was kind of villainous. Yeah, yeah. She used her feminine skill set to lure Samson into being immobilized and defeated. Who was the hero of the story? Well, if there's going to be a hero, it's Samson, of course, right? Of course. The divinely chosen champion of Israel. Israel's judge that would defeat the Philistines, right? This is the story that we've been told growing up in cartoons and movies. And, uh, I don't know. Today I want to take a closer look at it, if you're prepared. I want to try to look at Samson from a different angle. I want to try to look at Samson through the eyes of Delilah today, if we can dare do that. Maybe also through the eyes of the ancient Israelites that were reading the story. Tor observant, God-fearing Israelites that lived long after Samson reading the story. How did they read it? What did they see? What jumped out at them? You see, Delilah is most certainly the villain in the story that we're about to be introduced to. But honestly, the story doesn't revolve around her. She's introduced much later in the story. Much later. Much later, after Samson has already been introduced and his character has been built up. She's the beautiful woman who uses her bedchambers to seduce the man into a vulnerable state until she can defeat him. Isn't there another woman in Judges that did the same thing? In Judges chapter 4, Yael? Yael. Remember? The pagan general, Caesarea, he was running from Baruch and the Israelite army had been defeated. And he went into a tent and she invited him in. She gave him some skim milk. Nice. He's like, can I lay here? Can you watch the door and make sure I'm safe? Like she totally, totally made him feel safe. Allowed him to be vulnerable in her tent, in her bedding area. Now unlike Delilah, she didn't just cut his hair. She found a tent stake and drove it through his skull. But details aside, details aside, they're very similar contrasts in the book of Judges. Here you have two pagan women, two beautiful women, two women who made men feel safe being vulnerable in their tents and their beds, two women who immobilized them by exploiting their heads. One woman is considered a hero. One woman's considered a villain, the enemy of Israel. Why is that? Thank you. One defeated an enemy of Israel while the other immobilized the champion. Truly the only difference between them. Samson, on the other hand, seems to be the obvious hero that we all know. Think about it. He's strong. He's a Hebrew, which just honorary brownie points just for that, right? His birth is divinely announced by an angel to his mother. and she was told that he would overpower the evil Philistines. Samson also had a superpower, superhuman strength, right? Crazy, crazy strength, which always begs me to wonder, what did Samson look like? Anyone ever think about that? What did Samson look like? Because we're told his strength was not from his

own abilities. It was divinely given, right? In other words, Samson wasn't strong because of his muscles. Did Samson have any muscles? We always picture this like Dwayne Johnson rock, like, you know, cool tattoo and everything, big, Maybe Samson was a total nerd. I don't know. Some glasses that were broke like computers. I don't know. Maybe he was into astrophysics. I don't know. But my point is we imagine Samson to be this superhuman looking person. Maybe he was just some small guy. That's why the Philistines were so ticked every time they got defeated by him. Like, who is this guy? I don't know. I don't know. But Samson also had a secret weakness. His hair. What if we look at Samson through the eyes of Delilah? Here is a man that is proclaimed to be the champion of Yahweh, Israel's God, but he never once defends the honor of Yahweh, Israel's God. Never once. He's extremely uncivilized. He acts more like an animal than a human being and seems to be outright cruel at times. He's arrogant. He's full of pride. He picks fights intentionally that he knows he can win. I mean, Israel is the people known for their set-apartness, right? Their Torah, their laws, their commandments. And here, here is their champion that disregards all of them, save not cutting his hair, as if he picks and chooses only the ones that benefit him. He did whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted. Why? Because he was really not accountable to anybody. Are we feeling, am I portraying him in a way that makes you feel a little conflicted? Maybe. It's good. I hope so. Because I believe that's the author's intention. We want to root for Samson, but we also want to like block out some of the things that he ends up doing. Remember, as we discussed before, the entire book of Judges is about Israel when they had no king and did what? What was right in their own eyes. The book of Judges lists the leaders that God raised up to redeem Israel, rescue them from their oppression. And as we are discovering at the men's group, it's nothing short of a downward spiral from Genesis 1 of the leadership all the way down to Samson. Now, if Samson is the last judge, where does that put him in the spiral? Rock bottom. Rock bottom. The defeat of Israel's final judge rested solely on his shoulders. It was Samson's vocation to carry Israel forward, upward, raising the bar, the standard of holiness back up to Israel, raising the people up back towards God. The distinction here when we read the story of Samson between the Philistines and the Israelites should have been a clear one. It truly should have, but it wasn't. Samson chose to wear his holy status Only for his personal gain. Only taking the benefits of it while neglecting his divine calling. That is the basis for Samson's sin, is my assertion. Instead, Samson many times did what was right in his own eyes. And just like people do with their leaders, Israel followed. So let's talk about the Philistines for a moment, after I scared everybody. Let's talk about the Philistines for a moment. Today we imagine the Philistines much like the Canaanites, right? They're barbaric, they're ignorant, Neanderthal-looking people that can swing big swords and don't know how to use a fork. Like, this is what we get when we think of the Philistines. And while the identity of the Philistines kind of remains a mystery, they're believed to be the seafaring people who escaped Greece before their collapse in 1200 BC. Now, if this is true, the Philistines were far from uncultured. They were far from unintelligent. In fact, It would have been one of the most leading-edge civilizations in the world. We already see in the biblical narrative that they had far more advanced technology in their weaponry. But not only that, in their civilization, their transportation, their chariots, they were advanced. They had entered the Iron Age when Israel was still hammering out bronze. In other words, when Israel shot an arrow at a Philistine, it bounced off their armor. These were the invaders. While Israel was constantly repairing their weapons and their carts... pseudo chariots they had. Philistines were going off-roading like it was butter. It's no big deal. Israel thought their electric calculators were pretty good. The Philistines were talking to Suri, asking her to solve other problems. This is what it is. A race of

people that was far, far more educated, far superior to Israel on so many accounts. They were civilized, well-armed, and technologically advanced. Unbeatable until they met Samson. Samson was undefeatable. Remember he took out 30 leaders at Ashkelon, tore the gates off the city when they thought he was trapped in. Okay. Let's mass an mass army against Samson. He picks up a piece of a dead animal and slays a thousand of them. Likely for the first time ever, the Philistines faced a foe that was undefeatable. How do we overtake him? This barbarian, how do we overtake him? He loves that girl, Delilah. Delilah, she can soothe this beast. See, in Delilah's eyes, she was the cultured one. I mean, look at these Israelites desperately just trying to make a pot that won't break after a couple uses. Still trying to figure out advanced metalworking, something her people had done long before. Delilah's 2018 Israel's back in the 30s or 40s. It's fascinating. When you read the story with Delilah, she conducts herself as independent. No man speaks for her. When people want to strike business deals with her, they come directly to her and she responds. Powerful woman. We know from the narrative that Delilah was in the same valley. She grew up in the same valley as Samson, the valley of Sorok. She would have known that he was famous for his victories, the defeats of the Philistines. Also, losing his temper when he lost a bet at a wedding. She would have heard that story. Also, he got upset one day and ruined the crops for the whole valley. That's Samson. So Judges starts off by telling us in Judges chapter 13 that an angel came to visit Samson's mother and later his dad too. But he tells them that his mom cannot eat any grapes or drink any wine. In Judges 13, 3, Behold, you are barren and have not born children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Therefore, be careful to drink no wine or strong drink or eat nothing unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines. Now, Samson's going to be a Nazirite. And Nazirite in the word means to be set apart. In Numbers chapter 6, the Torah speaks about this mysterious rite or ritual where a man or woman, if they take this vow, like they achieve the climax of holiness. The mascot for being set apart in Israel is who these people represent if they take this vow. There's a few stipulations, though. Can't eat any grapes, no vinegar, no wine. Can't be around dead bodies. Can't touch dead carcasses or animals. Can't eat anything unclean, just like Numbers says. And you can't cut your hair. Embers chapter 6. This judge was a special judge of Israel. This judge was intended to be set apart, an example of holiness to Israel, someone for them to follow. Now, Judges 14 tosses the reader straight into the story of Samson wanting a wife. Samson's been born, everything's good, I want a wife. And he sees one, and it's a great Jewish girl, it's in covenant with God, and everything's going to be great, right? Nah, it's a Philistine woman. She's pretty. So he begs his parents to negotiate the marriage. I want her. And his parents are rightfully concerned. What's he do? He counters and says, come on. She's right in my eyes. His parents end the consulting and the narrator kind of inserts a clue here. It's fascinating. Here's what Samson says, and it should give you a clue as a reader if you've been reading Judges. But Samson said to his father, no, get her from me, dad. She is right in my own eyes. I want her. Now the narrative of Judges here, he inserts this line in 4. He said, So we have a hint here that God has a plan regardless of Samson's vain pursuits. Something that we'll talk about near the end of the story here. Samson's so excited he's going to get married as you read the story. On his way to go greet this woman, though, he's attacked by a lion. So what's he doing with this lion? So the spirit of the Lord came upon him and he ripped it in half, just like a goat. I picture him catching a lion in the air and just kind of breaking it and folding it like tissue paper and throwing it inside the curb. I don't know. Use your imagination. It's a story. So he does this with

the superhuman strength, and he just leaves the carcass on the side of the road. And the story kind of jumps forward a little bit. He says a while later, after it seems he's already negotiated this festival, this feast for his wedding, he's walking back to this big festival, and he's following the same road. And he looks over, and he sees the rotting corpse of this lion. Worms all in it, guts hanging out. And he sees it kind of moving. It has a buzz to it. He walks over, and what's he find? A bunch of bees have made a big hive inside of it. That's kind of nasty. Goopy honey, guts and blood and organs and flies and maggots. The narrator wants you to kind of get disgusted here. This is the story. And so what's he do? He looks over, kind of peeks inside, and being the good Nazirite that he is, Samson stays far away from it. I don't need to be touching these dead carcasses. I'm going to keep on on my way, right? Nah, Samson sticks his hand inside the belly of this rotting maggot ridden corpse and scoops out some honey and starts stuffing his face with it. Because what else do you do on the middle of a nice hot summer day with a rotting corpse with honey in it? You stuff your face. And then he takes a bunch of it, complete disregard for his status as a Nazirite, he takes a bunch of it, And he takes it to his parents. Now, some of us would say, well, yeah, I mean, how do you know he was doing something like disregarding God's commandments? Maybe he just forgot. Well, and he scraped it out into his hands and went on eating as he went. And he came to his mother and father and gave some to them. And then what's it say? But he did not tell them that he scraped the honey out of the dead rotting carcass of a lion that he killed. He kept it from his parents because they're not going to touch it because it's nasty. Right? Right? Let's imagine. Let's imagine Samson arriving at the wedding festival, his wedding festival. And let's imagine, the story doesn't say this, but let's just imagine that Delilah's there. She's part of the family, like she's part of the valley, she lives there, like she probably knew what was going on, maybe she was a guest, I don't know. We're going to use our imaginations this week. Let's imagine that Delilah's family own a wealthy vineyard or something, and Samson invited Delilah's father to help bring all the wine to the feast. His wedding feast to his new bride. We'll call her Brenda. Her name's not mentioned. It's not such a far-fetched scenario, but I digress. Imagine Delilah showing up to this wedding festival, her family providing the wine, and the bride, Brenda, actually being her childhood friend. She had always heard of Samson, the troublemaker Israelite who stole from the Philistines, always got away with it, made the lives of his own people around him kind of miserable, as we'll see later in the story. Now he's marrying her childhood friend. Maybe he'll settle down. That happens to men sometimes. They get married, you know. Maybe he'll get his act together. Maybe Samson will finally grow up if he gets married, right? Happens sometimes? So Delilah shows up watching from afar. Could Samson actually have some wit about him? Like, can he actually compose himself? Maybe he's actually a pretty neat guy. I don't know. The feasting lasts a week. If there's one thing that Israelites can do, party. Party. Party. And imagine her looking up and seeing Samson arrive, this brutish, arrogant-looking man walking into the festival. His father-in-law greets him, only for his welcome to fall to the ground. Samson looks at him. Where's my bride? As Samson enters the square, maybe he looks up, as the story tells us, and sees the 30 lords of Ekron, Philistine leaders, lined up. He sees that they've brought their swords. Can you imagine? Jane drops them. Hey, guys. Nice swords, right? As he walks past them, just kind of mocking them. Maybe he picks up a big old jar of wine, starts pouring his glass, chugging it. But Matt, he's a Nazarene. He wouldn't have drank wine. Well, in Judges 14.10, it's fascinating. The word for feast there is metza. It actually denotes a heavy drinking party, a festival, a week-long festival. It was a party. Not too far-fetched that a man that just dug guts out of a dead lion would be concerned about drinking wine and being a Nazirite. But I digress. A day

into the festival, Samson, imagine Samson stumbling into the square and he sees the 30 leaders of Ekron. A few of them reach for their swords. Put away your swords. What are you going to do with those? Samson looks at them and says, I have a wager for you. I have a deal for you. And Samson said to them, verse 12, Let me now put a riddle to you. If any of you can tell me what it is, within the seven days of the feast, find it out, then I will give you 30 linen garments and 30 changes of clothes. But if you cannot tell me what it is, then you shall give me 30 linen garments and 30 changes of clothes. Imagine how the leaders looked at each other. Samson's beat us, like, a lot. He beats us with strength and pure power, but when it comes to intelligence, I mean, we're the Philistines. Like, we're the Philistines. Like, he's not going to be, it's Samson. Look at this beast. All right. Give us the riddle, they say. That way we may hear it. And he said to them, out of the eater comes something to eat. Out of the strong comes something sweet. Delilah, bearing witness to all of this, notices Samson's new wife, Brenda, in the corner, cowering, tense. All of the relationships that are surrounding her are pitted against each other. Imagine just, she looked terrified. Her new husband, the Hebrew, already causing strife among her people. What is she to do? What's she expected to do? Is anyone questioning her loyalty in this? Like, what is happening? On the fourth day of the celebration, imagine Delilah noticing Brenda in her tent, crying. She looks up, running into Delilah's arms. What is wrong with you? Why are you crying? The lords of Ekron have come to me and told me that I need to get the answer of the riddle for them, she says. I told them I can't do it. I mean, Samson doesn't talk to me. All he does is drink and curse my people. Like, he doesn't talk to me. They say that they're going to burn me and my dad and his house down if I don't give them the answer to the riddle. Imagine Delilah maybe standing up to her, composing herself, looks her in the eye, tells her to snap out of it. Men are stupid. You're a woman. Men only lust after the things that they desire. Do you not have power over that? Imagine Brenda getting a smirk on her face, no longer tense. I guess I can get this from Samson. She knows exactly how to get it from Samson. And she does in the story. At the end of the feast, Samson came before the 30 Echronite leaders, taunted them. So you guys all have all 30 pieces of my clothes, right? I'm going to be set for life. Hope it wasn't too expensive. Go ahead, embarrass yourself with the wrong answer, guys. Come on, let me hear it. Judges 14, verse 18. And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, what is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion? So the men had not only answered the riddle because old Brenda got it from Samson, but if you notice, if you notice, they formed a new riddle. This wasn't Jeopardy. They didn't have to form a question. They form a new riddle. What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion? Samson knew the answer. The answer is when you can entice another man's wife to go against him. And he said to them, If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would have not found out my riddle. Accusation is there. Samson, we guessed your riddle. You owe us 30 new garments. Whatever will you do, you poor, beastly Hebrew? Samson didn't answer. Imagine his shoulders getting tense. Imagine that vein in your neck popping out. That one pops out of Samson's. His whole composure. Samson, your wife, just because she was all too willing to give us the answer doesn't mean that you should be upset about it. Be a good sport. Imagine Samson. His composure changes. He relaxes. His shoulders come down. Shrugs. You're right, guys. A deal is a deal. Let me go and retrieve your garments. You won this fair and square. He won't hear another peep out of me. Please, enjoy my father-in-law's hospitality. There's fresh goat over here. Take the wine. Take the wine. Drink as much as you like. I'll try to be back before nightfall. Later, while the sun is setting, Samson erupts into the main tent. Having these two huge stacks of clothes, he slams them on the table, spilling wine everywhere,

causing a big commotion. Imagine the whole party just stopping. Okay, here you go, guys. The lords of Ekron look down at the clothing and they smile. "He got us our clothes." But then one notices, "Is this the signet of Ashkelon on the clothing?" Ashkelon was a nearby city that was inhabited by the Philistine Philistines. As the Ekron leaders rumbled through their new piles of clothes, they were shocked at the overwhelming smell of death among them. Samson had struck down 30 lives of neighboring cities to spite the men who took his wager. I asked your brothers in Escalon for help paying for my wager that I lost and they were all too happy to help. Attent. Imagine it being silent. Samson looked at his father-in-law. Keep your daughter. Why would I ever want the daughter of a dog like you? Storms out of the feast. Judges chapter 15 verse 1 starts off at about this point. After some days the time came of the wheat harvest and Samson went to go visit his wife with a young goat. I guess that's like a dozen roses. I don't know. He left his wife in such rage in chapter 14. He goes back to the young doke and he says, I will go to my wife and be with her in the chamber. He wants to finish the wedding ceremony. But her father would not allow him to go in. And the father said, I really thought you utterly hated her, Samson. Like, do you remember what happened? I thought you hated her. So I gave him to your best man, your companion. Listen, her younger sister is totally prettier than her. Why don't you just take her? Like, her dad's totally trying to negotiate something. Like, knows what's at stake. Listen, Samson. And Samson said, At this point in the story, Samson goes out and he catches 300 foxes. And then he ties their tails together and he sticks a lit torch in between them. Now some of us are going, what? And others are like, that's genius, right? And what's he do? He lets the foxes go in the fields. They catch all of the grain, the standing grain, the grain fields on fire, the olive orchards. All of it is torched to the ground. Remember, this is in the same valley that is shared by Hebrews and Philistines. It's their grain, but it had to have affected the economy all the same. Verse 6, the Philistines. And the Philistines said, who has done this? And they said, Samson, the son-in-law of Tim Knight. Tim Knight's Brenda's dad. Because he has taken his wife and given it to his companion. And the Philistines came up and burned both her and her father with fire. And Samson said to them, Is this what you do? I swear I will be avenged on you, and after I will quit. And he struck them hip and thigh with a great blow, and he went down and stayed in the cleft of the rock of Etam. So what we've just read is nothing short of absolute chaos. We want Samson to win in some cases, but he's just leaving this trail of destruction. Now his wife and his father-in-law were burned alive because he just lost it. And so he goes and he kills the guys that burned them alive because they deserve to die now and everyone deserves to die and I am Samson, look at me. And he goes to hides in a rock. This is Samson. This story does not get any better. His own people end up approaching him, pleading for him to give himself up to the Philistines. This leader was so bad that his own people came and begged him to give himself up. Listen, Samson, we won't hurt you. Can we tie some ropes around you and just deliver you? Please? Please? We got the rope. We brought it. Please? Samson agrees. But upon arrival, it's fascinating. The Bible says that the ropes melted off of his body because of his strength. Just... He grabbed a piece of a dead animal, again, Nazirite, a jawbone of a donkey, and he kills a thousand Philistines with it. A thousand, just corpses everywhere, up on the rocks and the trees, like just a thousand. If you know the story, you know what happens next. Old Samson, kind of feeling good about himself. He's pretty excited that once again the Spirit of the Lord has come upon him, and look what he did. A thousand. So... He wants to go celebrate. So he goes into a town, and how do you think he celebrates? Like a good Nazirite would, right? Maybe, you know, he drinks wine, maybe he gets a little bit of wine, maybe he takes some shots, does karaoke. Nah, he celebrates with a prostitute. Ends up vandalizing the

whole city by ripping the gates off the front when they said that they were going to trap him.

Some ancient Near East commentary there, it's pretty neat. But just vandalizes the city, celebrates with prostitutes, the judge of Israel. When he gets home, gets back to the valley, he lays eyes upon a woman who seems to have herself together. She's independent, she's bold, she's attractive. A woman who embodies everything he himself is not, is missing in his life. Order, peace, focus. It is the only woman in the story of Samson that says that he loved. It's like a fairy tale moment. Love at first sight. And her name? Delilah. Now you know the rest of the story. Delilah seduces Samson, exploited him through his fleshly desires. A man who thinks he's invincible because of his status of being God's holy judge. He's overtaken by the enemy without even realizing it. He only wears his holiness, his set-apartness on his outside to get whatever he wants that benefits him in his flesh. Samson had the status of being God's chosen, God's favorite, God's blessed, God's holy, God's ambassador. He loved the outward status, but on the inside, he only really loved using it for gain. So the question of the story of Samson is how many of us are the same? How many of us are just like Samson? How many of us wear our status of holy, our status of being set apart? How many of us wear our status of being God's own? How many of us wear our status of being Torah observant and following? How many of us wear our status of being a Yeshua follower, a Christ follower, a Christian, only to feed our own arrogance and self-righteousness and pride? How many of us are far too happy to be a Nazirite not to cut off our hair, you know, the things that people see on the outside, but on the inside behind closed doors when no one's looking, we lick the inside of a rotting carcass. This is the lesson from Samson. You have a holy vocation. You are called not only to appear set apart, you're called to actually produce fruit that testifies of it. Delilah could have been the next Jael in the story of Samson. Delilah could have been the next Rahab, committing to pursuing this God. Not of the pagans, but this God who loves and sets slaves free. Delilah could have been the next Ruth, someone who rejects her identity as a pagan, as not a follower of God, to give it all in, to go all in, to have a newness and identity of the people of God. Why didn't Delilah do this? She had no one to show her the light of God. She didn't do it because Samson was the ambassador that represented God. 2 Corinthians 5.20 says, Paul says that we are therefore Christ's ambassadors. As though God is making his appeal through us, we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. To drive it home, Christ Christos means the anointed one. It kind of gives a signal of a king. Yeshua the king, Jesus the king. You are the king's ambassadors. You represent the king. That you are to go in the world and show everybody what reconciliation with the God of creation looks like. He's making his appeal through you. You've been called. You're an image bearer to bear his image. You're called to show the world what the kingdom of God looks like, feels like, sounds like. Not to just claim the status of a child of God only to use it to feed your own selfishness. Now, Bible Geek time. So, Delilah. The root of Delilah is Lila. Yes, as in Lila Tov. It means night or darkness, if you will. Kind of neat. Samson or Shemeshon. The root of that is Shemesh. It means sun, right? Son of righteousness, Shemesh, which means sunlight or daylight. Interesting, huh? Just that, night and day. Samson is the judge of Israel, empowered by God to be the light, to be the sun, the bringer to his people. What happens when he encounters the night? Now the sun, the light should always overtake the darkness, but that doesn't happen in Judges chapter 16, does it? The sun does not overtake the darkness. Samson finds a girl that makes his heart beat. This Philistine. The Philistines come and they strike a deal directly with her. If she can seduce this uncivilized beast to tell her a secret, she'll be set for life. The strongest men of the Philistines come to this woman in the Iron Age. Only she can defeat Israel's greatest champion. Whoa, that's a big deal. That's kind of a big deal. So what does she do? She just

seduces Samson. You know how the story goes. Samson, tell me how you get your strength. You love me, right, Samson? Yeah, I love you. Tell me how you get your strength. Are you weak? How do you get weak? How can I make you weak? Okay, okay, Delilah. Tie like seven bow strings around me and I'll be as weak as any other man. So what does Delilah do? She ties seven bow strings around him and then like she calls the Philistines in and she's like, hey, Samson, wake up. The Philistines are here. Oh, how did this happen on the night that I tied you up with seven trees? Like that you told me we're going to make it. So he gets up, the strings break, he defeats them all. And guess who's upset? See, we think like Samson, we're reading the story like Samson, ooh. He's not upset at all. She's upset. Samson, how could you lie to me? The audacity, the boldness that this woman has. How could you lie to me? You don't love me. Tell me the truth. How do you become weak? So what's he do? I'll tell you what. If you tie new ropes around me, I'll be as weak as any other man. So in the middle of the night, the Philistines are here. Samson wakes up. There are all these new ropes like noodles. They fall off. He defeats the Philistines. Once again, Delilah is upset with Samson. That's crazy. Anyone ever read that and just been like frustrated? Like, Samson, snap out of it. Stop it. Stop it. Like, this is, Samson, you don't love me. You don't love me. Samson, tell me the truth. Why do you treat me like a fool? What is your weakness? Fine, Delilah. Weave my hair in this loom and seven different braids. And it should look really funny. And then I'll be weak. No one can defeat me. Can you imagine, like, I don't know what a loom looks like. I imagine like a pedal thing in the Middle Ages. She's doing something. Seven braids. He looks like something's going on all nice and braided up. Samson, the Philistines are here. He wakes up, pulls the pin out, loom falls off, he defeats the Philistines. Do you think that Samson is a little stupid at this point? He's not stupid. He's just blinded. He's just blinded. This is what a slow progression away from God looks like. This is what a slow progression into sin looks like. This is what it looks like when you accept the mandate to be a holy people, standing for Christ, standing for Yeshua, and slowly allow yourself to fade back into the darkness. Bit by bit, one day at a time, slowly. This chapter is meant for you to become extremely frustrated at Samson. Samson, can't you see what's happening? You're being taken advantage of. You're being drugged down. Can't you see you're being led astray, Samson? You've allowed the night into your life and it is slowly fading. blacking out the sun just like it does for you when you commit to God and you keep darkness in your flesh alive and you continue to feed it when you keep pride and lust and selfishness and arrogance when you keep the false assurance with your gossip when you feed the hate in your heart towards others when you live a life with the hair of a set-apart Nazarite but never produce any fruit that actually testifies of what that means When you never produce the fruit of God's kingdom manifest on earth through you. This is a chapter that the author meant for you to take a moment and reflect on. Are you as blinded as Samson? Remember who he's written to? Israel. Are you as blinded as Samson was? You chosen people. Finally, Samson tells Delilah that if his hair is shaved off, he'll become weak. So, spoiler alert, what'd she do? She lays him down in her lap and slowly tames the beast of Israel. Sin gives birth to death. It's slow. It's progressive. James tells us in James 1. In James 1, verse 15. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to only one thing, death. It brings forth the wages. Verse 21. The Philistine seized him, gouged out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. And he ground at the mill in the prison, but his hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved. Samson's overtaken by the Philistines. His eyes are gouged out. The sun goes dark. He's forced to work in the mill until a giant festival that celebrates the Philistines' grain god, Dagon, takes place. They want to make an offering. They want to

celebrate this mighty victory. So they call Samson in to mock him, make fun of him, you know, what you do, I guess. Samson finds himself between the two main pillars of the house. And then Samson prays. Samson prays for the first time in the entire story. You guys want to read the prayer? You don't have a choice. Then Samson called to the Lord and said, Oh Lord God, remember, vulnerable. He's got his hands beside two pillars. Eyes are plucked out. He's been humbled like never before in his life. Then Samson called to the Lord and said, Oh Lord God, please remember me. Please strengthen me only this once. Oh God, that I may have avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes. It's a lot. Then his brothers and all of his family came down, took him, brought him up to be buried with Zorah and Eskedal in the tomb of Monah, which is his father. Samson judged Israel for 20 years. This is a snapshot of what his judgment looked like over Israel. So I want to point out that the story does not necessarily end on a good note. It ends very manly, like, oh, y'all got here, that's how you want to go out right there. But it's not necessarily a great note. Samson produces this climactic prayer where he mentions himself four different times, right? God, bless me so I can get revenge. Also notice God doesn't actually answer his prayer. Never says that. I know. Matt, what do you mean? God gave him his strength. Well, God never took his strength. See, at the beginning of the story, God made a promise. And as long as his hair grows, what happens? He will have his strength. Now look back at verse 22. But the hair in his head began to grow again after he had been shaved. This is long before the party. God didn't need to answer his prayer because God never stopped being faithful. He never stopped being faithful the entire time of Samson's life. God was still on his throne. God made a promise. Worship team, you guys can come up and conclude. I don't know. Some of you guys may be here reflecting on your own lives today, knowing, visualizing the Delilahs that you have, maybe in your own hearts now. God is still faithful. God had a plan from the very beginning of the story. God knew it was going to happen. God has not left. But God wants his people back. God wants you back. God wants to work through you. He wants his kingdom to blossom and he wants the world to see him in you. The author of Hebrews mentions Samson vaguely as a hero of the faith alongside many others. There's one redeeming quality of Samson and it's a big one. Samson allowed the spirit of God to come upon him to do mighty incredible things. Defeating a lion, defeating an entire army, making a mockery of the Philistines and his final yeehaw down. The Bible is very nuanced when it comes to characters like Samson. But what's the message of Samson? The message of Samson is to allow God to use you to do mighty things, but also don't forget to be the mighty thing that God has also done. That's the story and that's the message behind Samson. So please stand as we conclude services with worship. I don't know where you're at today. Some of you may see yourselves as Samson, maybe committed in the identity as God's son or daughter, holy and set apart, but trapped by the world around you. You are not the first nor the last. but you are not meant to stay in that position you are not meant to die with the pagans you were actually called to raise them to life with your testimony of Yeshua will you move and gravitate towards that calling will you move past the outer identity and give up your heart also guys I know we have a prayer team available on either side that will be here during worship so I ask you to stand and if you need support if you need someone to stand with you in prayer if you just need someone to talk to about the things in your own life that are keeping you back Guys, we have a committed prayer team, and we're thankful to have them. Don't stop at being Samson. Move past it. Samson was mightily used by God. You're called to do more in Yeshua. Shalom. I'm Matthew Vandrells and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to cultivate a fellowship of image bearers that live the redeemed life only Yeshua can give. If this ministry has been a blessing to you, we would love

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