

LIFEGROUP NOTES: JUDGES 13-16

As ever, please use (or discard!) these ideas as is most suitable for your group. Don't feel you have to use everything.

Sermon Summary: Samson's story highlights Israel's continuing decline. He lived in a time when the Israelites had accepted life under Philistine rule, and though he himself had many privileges from birth, he lived a reckless life of self-indulgence. Yet God had promised that Samson would begin the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines, and in spite of Samson's failings, God kept His word. Indeed, He worked through Samson's faults to bring about His own purpose of judgement on the Philistines. In his dying prayer, Samson turned to God and found a place among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. Thus his story becomes another example of the grace of God which shines so brightly in the midst of human sinfulness and folly, and which leads us to Jesus, our perfect Deliverer.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. See 13:1. Note that there is no mention of even a cry of misery from the Israelites, let alone a cry of penitence. What does this indicate about their spiritual condition? Consider the parallel with the church in the West at the present time: we are pitifully weak, yet are we crying out to God as we should? If not, why not?
2. See 13:2-7. In what ways was Samson's life especially blessed by God from the beginning? What advantages have you enjoyed from your birth and background? How have you used these for the Lord? Are there ways in which, like Samson, you have failed to make the most of them? If so, why – and how might you build on God's gifts to you from now on?
3. Note some of the ways in which Samson's immaturity shows itself: 14:1-3; 12-13; 15:3-5,7; 16:1. In the end, the accumulation of Samson's weaknesses led him to disaster. Consider areas of immaturity in your own life. How do they affect you, and how might you deal with them as a Christian?
4. Consider how God used Samson's immaturity and waywardness to break Israel's comfortable co-existence with the Philistines (see 14:1-4; 14:19; 15:11; 15:14-16; 16:28-30). What does this show of God's sovereignty and grace, and how might this encourage us when we are conscious of our own failings?
5. See 16:28. Samson finally prayed, and God heard him at the last. What will it take to teach us to pray sincerely? And how does Jesus assure us we will be heard (Jn 15:16)?

Responding in Prayer

- As you look at your own life, and that of CBC and your Lifegroup, in the light of this study, what are you going to pray for now?

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