

# Don't Compromise

Judges 16:4-6, 13-21

**4** Some time later, he fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the Sorek Valley. **5** The Philistine leaders went to her and said, “Persuade him to tell you where his great strength comes from, so we can overpower him, tie him up, and make him helpless. Each of us will then give you 1, 100 pieces of silver.” **6** So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me, where does your great strength come from? How could someone tie you up and make you helpless?”

**13** Then Delilah said to Samson, “You have mocked me all along and told me lies! Tell me how you can be tied up.” He told her, “If you weave the seven braids on my head with the web of a loom—” **14** She fastened the braids with a pin and called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are here!” He awoke from his sleep and pulled out the pin, with the loom and the web. **15** “How can you say, ‘I love you,’” she told him, “when your heart is not with me? This is the third time you have mocked me and not told me what makes your strength so great!” **16** Because she nagged him day after day and pleaded with him until she wore him out, **17** he told her the whole truth and said to her, “My hair has never been cut, because I am a Nazirite to God from birth. If I am shaved, my strength will leave me, and I will become weak and be like any other man.” **18** When Delilah realized that he had told her the whole truth, she sent this message to the Philistine leaders: “Come one more time, for he has told me the whole truth.” The Philistine leaders came to her and brought the money with them. **19** Then she let him fall asleep on her lap and called a man to shave off the seven braids on his head. In this way, she made him helpless, and his strength left him. **20** Then she cried, “Samson, the Philistines are here!” When he awoke from his sleep, he said, “I will escape as I did before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the LORD had left him. **21** The Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles, and he was forced to grind grain in the prison.



# Exploration

Sin makes you stupid. If we are honest, we have all found ourselves doing and saying things that we never would have thought we would do or say because of the power of sin. Perhaps the worst mistake students or anyone, for that matter, can make when it comes to temptation is to think it is not a big deal. It is a dangerous proposition not to take temptation seriously—this is what led Samson to compromise the mission God had given him, endangering the people of Israel God had raised him up to protect. Take some time to discuss the power of temptation with students, particularly with regard to inappropriate relationships. Samson's desire for Delilah so overtook him that he was unable to think clearly and he made decisions that were destructive to both himself and God's people. In this session, challenge students to take careful stock of their priorities and desires. The mission God has given us is too precious and too important to compromise it for the fleeting pleasures of sin.

## CONTEXT (JUDG. 13:1–21:29)

Samson's story is recorded in Judges 13–16. The statement, "the Israelites again did what was evil in the LORD's sight" (13:1), makes one final appearance in the book and is the prelude to Samson's story (see also 2:11; 3:7,12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6). Because the Israelites once again slid into an evil lifestyle, the Lord allowed them to be oppressed by the Philistines. The Angel of the Lord announced to a childless family from the tribe of Dan that they would have a son (13:2-3). This boy, Samson, would be dedicated to God from birth (13:4-5).

The Angel of the Lord consecrated Samson as "a Nazirite ... from birth" (13:5). Two kinds of Nazirites are found in the Bible. Some took a Nazirite vow only for a specific period. Others were Nazirites based on a lifelong vow. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul is an example of the former (Acts 18:18; 21:22-26). Samson and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15-17) are examples of lifelong Nazirites. According to Numbers 6:1-21, Nazirites were prohibited from drinking wine (vv. 3-4), cutting their hair (v. 5), or touching any dead thing (vv. 6-7).

The Nazirite vow is a key aspect for understanding Samson's life. He violated the prohibition against touching any dead thing when he scooped honey from the carcass of a lion he had killed (Judg. 14:5-9). We are never told he drank wine, but we can assume he did as part of the wedding feast he hosted, since such occasions were characterized by merrymaking with wine (Judg. 14:10-12; John 2:1-11). The word for "feast" in Judges 14:10 comes from the Hebrew word "to drink." Before his interaction with Delilah (the focus of this session), Samson the Nazirite already had violated all but the prohibition against cutting his hair.



# Conversation

Take some time to consider and discuss the following quick response questions with students in your group.

› **Do you think compromise is a good thing or a bad thing? Explain.**

› **When was the last time you compromised on something? What things can we not afford to compromise on?**

When it comes to minor decisions like where to eat lunch or what movie to watch, compromise is a no-brainer. It also a key to healthy relationships—if you truly care about your friends and family, you will often compromise your desires and agenda for theirs. There are, however, things in the Christian life that we must never compromise on. For instance, we must never compromise our faith in who Jesus is (John 10:30, 14:6) and what He came to do (Luke 19:10). In today's session, students will encounter another area of their lives as Christ followers that they must never compromise on—their mission. Samson, while empowered by God with unsurpassed strength, was not strong enough to overcome temptation and as a result, compromised the mission God had given him. Challenge students to devise a plan to fight against the ever-present temptation to compromise their integrity for the sake of Christ and the mission He has given us.

## CONTEXT

› **What do you know about Samson (see Judg. 13:24-25)? What was the purpose of his Nazarite vow?**

Samson was bound by a Nazirite vow even before birth. Furthermore, the Spirit of God gave Samson extraordinary strength (see 14:6). Although other judges won great victories, none had such physical prowess as Samson did. Whatever the eventual failings of the man, Samson was unique among the judges for the great gifts God had given him. Yet the divine blessing (13:24) also implies that Samson was marked for a special purpose. God didn't bless Samson just because He wanted the boy to be happy and to live an easy life. God wanted Samson to be ready and able to fulfill His mission.

› **What made Samson worthy to serve as a judge for the nation of Israel (see Judg. 14:6; 15:14-16)?**

Samson miraculously delivered Israel from the attacks of the Philistines for a period of 20 years. He was able to do so because the Spirit of the Lord "rushed upon him." God did not choose to use Samson because he was smarter, stronger, or more capable than others. Samson's story demonstrates God's power, wisdom, and strength as God used him to do what Samson never could have done on his own. Oftentimes we shrink away from engaging in the mission God has given us because we think we are ill-equipped or unqualified. We must remember, as Christians, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit—we have everything we need to serve the Lord and engage in His mission.







# Conversation

## JUDGES 16:4-6

Instruct a student to read Judges 16:4-6 aloud and then discuss the following questions.

Before Samson met Delilah, he had been married to a Philistine woman. His parents were upset about this marriage, but it was “from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion against the Philistines” (14:4). Samson fought against the Philistines, who killed his wife in revenge. Samson then demonstrated his famous God-given strength as he escaped from his bonds and slaughtered 1,000 of the Philistines who had come to kill him (15:12-16).

› **What did the Philistines want? What did Delilah want? What methods did they use to get what they wanted?**

› **What pressures are you facing that may compromise the mission God has given you? How can we grow to be more aware of the pressures around us?**

Verse six is rather matter of fact. It tells us that Delilah asked Samson to tell her where his great strength came from. However, we know that Delilah was not the only one conspiring against Samson—she was advised in how to seduce and trick Samson by the lords of the Philistines. Furthermore, she was promised 1,000 pieces of silver from each of the lords if she succeeded in her task. In other words, Delilah did not merely walk up to Samson and ask him bluntly. She likely was quite subtle. Very few people walk directly into destructive compromises in sin. Rather, those who fall into sin, usually make many smaller compromises before falling into truly destructive patterns that hinder the mission God has given us.

## JUDGES 16:13-21

Verses 7-12 tell us of two instances in which Delilah asked Samson to tell her the secret of his strength. Both times Samson lies to her and as a result, Samson overcomes the Philistines who sought to ambush him. In verse 13, Delilah yet again presses Samson to tell her the source of his strength and the judge yet again lies to her.

› **What tactics did Delilah use to influence Samson (v. 15)? How does this relate to the tactics Satan uses to tempt us?**

› **Did Samson have any reason to trust Delilah? Why did he give in (v. 16)?**



# Leader Prep

Again, the Philistines supplied Delilah with new ropes and waited as Delilah bound Samson. But again Samson thwarted her efforts by snapping the new ropes “like a thread” (v. 12).

## JUDGES 16:13-15

Verse 13 records Delilah’s third attempt to discover the secret to Samson’s strength. After Samson did not answer her direct question (v. 6), Delilah acted in a cunning, calculating, and manipulative manner. As in the second attempt (vv. 10-12), Delilah again accused Samson of mocking her. One senses tension between Samson and Delilah as Delilah accused Samson of lying to her. Delilah asked for the third time, *Tell me how you may be tied up*. As previously (16:7,11), Samson offered an absurd reply. He told Delilah if she would integrate his hair with the fabric being woven on a spinning wheel he would become as weak as any man. Samson courted disaster with this tease in that his hair represented the key to his strength.

Evidently Samson lay down beside the loom. Bordering on the comical, he allowed Delilah to weave his long hair into the fabric and tighten it with a weaver’s pin. One can visualize Samson, a giant of a man who once killed a lion empty-handedly, a man feared by the Philistines, with his hair woven into a spinning wheel as though he was a child whose hair had been accidentally caught in the apparatus. The process of having his hair woven into the wheel obviously didn’t concern or disturb Samson because he fell asleep. As previously (vv. 9,12) Delilah jostled him from his slumber with the announcement the Philistines are here! This attempt proved fruitless as well.

All three initial attempts got Delilah no closer to Samson’s secret. In this verse, Delilah appealed to the fact that Samson loved her. Unfortunately for Samson, he failed to recognize the fact that Delilah did not reciprocate his love.

We might ask, How could Samson have been so unperceptive? How did he not see the real Delilah and her intentions? In two words: misguided love. For the first and only time in the Samson narrative (chaps. 13–16), the writer informed readers that Samson “fell in love” (16:4). In previous chapters Samson “saw a young Philistine woman” (14:1) and “saw a prostitute” (16:1). But Judges 16:4 reveals that he fell in love. He allowed his feelings for Delilah to cloud his judgment to the extent that he made poor decisions and compromised his potential.



In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit empowered individuals for specific tasks. Notice “the Spirit of the Lord took control of” Samson and he killed a lion with his bare hands (14:6). Again, “the Spirit of the Lord took control of” Samson and he killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey (15:14-15). When he failed to obey the Lord, the Holy Spirit departed from him.

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# Conversation

This was not the first time that Delilah tricked Samson into doing her bidding (Judg. 14:17). Furthermore, it is clear that Samson did not trust her as he deceived her three times before finally giving in. It could not be more clear that Delilah was not to be trusted. Furthermore, the secret she was asking Samson to divulge was one that had the power not only to destroy Samson, but also God's people who the Lord had called Samson to protect. The stakes were incredibly high and yet, Samson gave in. Given what he knew about Delilah, it seems absurd, almost comical that Samson would do so. This illustrates the power of sin. If Samson, a man called by God to deliver His people, could fail to stand against temptation, we should not be overconfident. Sin, if left unchecked, will wreck us and the lives of the people around us. It is not to be taken lightly.

Delilah's tactic was to claim that Samson was mistreating her (v. 10, 13) and that he did not really love her (v. 15). When we break down her tactics, they are even more dubious than they appear. God created marriage to be a one flesh union—meaning that married couples were to be emotionally, spiritually, and physically intimate—they were to share everything, including their deepest secrets. Delilah used this to her advantage, claiming that he didn't love her because he would not share this information. Samson's soul was "vexed to death." His problem seemed to be that he stuck around too long. He listened one too many times to Delilah's accusations. In contrast, like Joseph, he should have fled temptation (Gen. 39:6-18; see also 2 Tim. 2:22).

## › What were the consequences of Samson's compromise (vv. 19, 21)?

Samson's moral failure not only rendered him vulnerable to attack, but also had the potential to compromise the mission God had given him. Ultimately his compromise led to his capture and his eyes being gouged out.

## › What spiritual ramifications did Samson's actions have (v. 20)? Why do you think Samson was not aware that the Lord had left him?

If we give attention to voices that seek our spiritual harm and toy with temptation long enough, we will begin to lose sensitivity to the Spirit's guidance (Matt. 13:14-15). While we should not fear the Spirit leaving us (John 10:27-29; 14:16-17), Samson's experience should sober us to the reality of what is at stake when we are toying around with temptation. When in the throws of temptation, your students' livelihood, both physically and spiritually, is on the line. Further, temptation cannot be divorced from mission. Giving into sin not only distracts us from the mission God has given us but, if left unchecked long enough, can damage and even destroy our witness. Don't let students off easy this week. If they are serious about following Christ, now is the time to get serious about identifying the areas of their lives where they are most vulnerable and may already be failing spiritually. Challenge them to set their minds to the critical tasks of overcoming temptation and uprooting sin in their hearts and lives.

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**GO DEEPER OPTION:** Read 1 Timothy 1:12-20, taking note of those who made shipwreck of their faith. Challenge students to avoid a similar fate by looking to Christ for strength and rooting their hope in the gospel.

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# Leader Prep

We recognize the beauty of the love between a man and a woman. God inaugurated marriage as He instructed a man to leave his father and mother in order to bond with his wife (Gen. 2:24). Such bonding cannot be accomplished without love. The issue with Samson was not his love for a woman but the kind of woman he loved

## JUDGES 16:16-20

Delilah's persistence ultimately overwhelmed Samson's resolve; he told her the whole truth. Of the three requirements of the Nazirite commitment: abstaining from wine, not touching any dead thing, and not cutting one's hair (Num. 6:1-8; Judg. 13:5), Samson had kept only the last one. When describing himself as a Nazirite to God from birth, Samson used a generic word for God instead of the covenant name for the Lord. This suggests a lack of intimacy with God. He showed an amazingly foolish spiritual blind spot by revealing: If I am shaved, my strength will leave me.

Oblivious to the situation, Samson fell asleep on Delilah's lap. He would ultimately be destroyed in the very place where he felt the most secure, by the one in which he placed his greatest trust.

Samson was willing to break his Nazirite vow to God and compromise his standing with the Lord for the love of a woman. The real tragedy in Samson's life occurred not when the Philistines subdued him, but when he compromised his potential by trusting a pagan woman rather than the Lord.

Delilah woke Samson one last time with the Philistines are here! He awoke, saying "I will escape as I did before." The strong man did not know that the Lord had left him. The Lord was the source of Samson's strength. When he lost the presence of the Lord, he lost his strength. But Samson did not even realize it! It seems that his heart was so far from God that, apart from his lack of strength, he never would have noticed God's absence from his life.

The end of Samson's story is told in the remainder of chapter 16. When he was brought into a pagan temple to be mocked, Samson prayed to God for strength to take revenge on his Philistine enemies. He then pushed over two support columns, causing the temple to collapse and kill many Philistines. Samson also died in the disaster.

Samson was an imperfect instrument. He compromised his devotion to the Lord, yet God still used him to deliver His people from their enemies. The lesson here is not that Samson is a model for Christians to follow; the lesson is the danger of spiritual compromise.



Since the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Christians receive the indwelling Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation and He remains in us permanently, providing eternal security (see John 10:27-29; 14:16-17). Nevertheless, by our disobedience we grieve the Holy Spirit and can hinder His work in us and through us.



# Application

## CENTRAL TRUTH

*The mission God has given us requires fighting temptation and uprooting sin.*

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➤➤ **ITEMS 4 & 6 (LEADER PACK)** Show students the **Judges of Israel** pack item. Point out the area in which Samson served as a judge. You might also consider reminding students of the **Judges Cycle** (Pack Item 6) and point out how the story of Samson reflects that cycle.

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## NOW WHAT?

- › **What are some of the key areas where you are tempted to give into sin? How can we guard against spiritual compromise in these areas of our lives?**
- › **Why might temptation be particularly difficult to overcome in the context of dating? How should this change the way you approach such relationships?**

Samson's decision to share the source of his strength with someone who clearly did not have his good in mind, was laughably foolish. Samson, however, was not a fool, he was a human being caught in the throws of temptation who gave in. Students who are infatuated with someone of the opposite sex are similarly vulnerable to destructive decision making. Challenge single students to be very careful about entering into dating and encourage students who are already in relationships to acknowledge areas where their desires may be dictating their behavior in unhealthy and potentially destructive ways.

- › **Do you have a plan for fighting the sin in your life? For overcoming temptation? If not, journal a plan now and make plans to share it with a trusted friend this week.**

All our sinful actions are rooted in sinful attitudes (Mark 7:23-27). Therefore, it is not enough to eliminate sinful behavior without first identifying the selfish desires that motivated them. Challenge students to consider what they were wanting when they gave into sin. If they are having trouble developing a plan for fighting sin and overcoming temptation, encourage them to talk to you or another leader or minister who can hold them accountable and encourage them.

- › **How might focusing our time, energy, and resources on the mission God has given us help us achieve victory over sin?**



## PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Finish your group time with these thoughts and encourage students to memorize the verse listed for this session. Memorizing God's Word allows it to dwell in us and allows Him to speak through His Word in our times of need. Also encourage your group to take advantage of the Keep on Digging section in their Personal Study Guides and to take the truths of this section and apply them to their lives.

- › **Dwell:** Read 1 Corinthians 10:12-14. Have you identified the means of escape God provides when you face temptation? How might knowing that God provides an escape, give you confidence in your fight against sin? What idols or potential idols might you need to flee from this week? Journal your answers to these questions.
- › **Memorize:** Judges 17:6
- › **Pray:** Thank God for promising to always provide us a means of escape when face temptation. Thank Him also for Jesus, who, though He was without sin, became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). Pray that God would help you to see that fighting sin is essential to living on mission for Christ. Pray that God would help you and your group to determine to put the sin in your lives to death for the purpose of pointing others to Christ.

## KEEP ON DIGGING

Read each of the following verses and journal what each says about temptation and how you might overcome it.

- › Luke 4:1-13; 22:40
- › James 1:13-18
- › 1 Corinthians 10:6-14



For an expository verse-by-verse sermon outline/discussion guide that complements this session with a study in Galatians, see [lifeway.com/ETBWIN17JJR](http://lifeway.com/ETBWIN17JJR). For **free** training, go to [MinistryGrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible).