

THE WEAKENED JUDGE

Samson
Judges 16:4–31
1068–1049 BC

OVERVIEW

BIBLE TRUTH

God is my strength.

BIBLE VERSE

God, the Lord, is my strength. Habakkuk 3:19

LEARNER GOAL

I understand that God gives us strength in many ways.

LAW & GOSPEL

Sin weakens me and makes me a target for the devil's temptations, bringing guilt and destruction.

God loves me, in spite of my sin and weakness, and puts on me Christ's victory over sin, death, and the devil.

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

God grants Samson great strength to defeat the enemies of God's people. Seeking to overcome Samson, the Philistines bribe Delilah to find the source of Samson's strength. Samson deceives Delilah each time she tries to uncover the secret, but he finally reveals the key to his power. Shorn and blinded by the Philistines, Samson is brought to entertain thousands of revelers at the feast to Dagon. Identifying the house's supporting pillars, Samson prays, and God grants him power to bring down the temple, killing everyone.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read Judges 16:4–31 and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

MORE TIME Read the leader devotion, found in the digital resource center.

IN DEPTH Read Judges 14–15 and study notes in *TLSB* for the full Samson narrative.

SUPPLY LIST

FOR THIS LESSON

- Puppet
- Jump rope, ribbon, carpet square
- White paper cups, potting soil, grass seed
- Cut-up fruit or vegetables and dip
- Cardstock, yarn

FOR EVERY LESSON

- Bible
- Device with prepped music
- Copies of downloadable activity page
- Copies of Enduring Faith Page
- Supply Box

LAUNCH

Plan your lesson by reading through the options in each section. Choose the activities that will best fit your learners, and mark those boxes to guide you as you teach the lesson.

BEGIN

- Follow the Order of Opening Worship, use the Lesson Opening, or do both (part of the planning resources in the digital resource center).
- Sing songs, using music found in the digital resource center or your own favorite songs.

PRAY

Dear heavenly Father, thank You for Your Holy Word, which makes us strong in faith so we can be helpers and show love for others. Amen.

SAY

- Hi, boys and girls! Can you show me your muscles? Today, we'll hear about how God made a man named Samson strong so he could help God's people.
- We've already learned about many of God's people who were strong. Can you think of some? Today, we're going to learn about someone whom God made physically strong to rescue His people.

LEARN

Show your Bible, and remind the children that all the stories in God's Word are true.

TELL THE BIBLE NARRATIVE

Choose one of the options on the next page to tell the Bible narrative.

DO THIS!

Use one or both of the following activities to talk about the Bible narrative as you read it.

- FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE YOUNGER** As you read the narrative aloud, direct students to make a muscle with their biceps and say "God is my strength" every time you say "Samson."
- FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE OLDER** First, quickly review the rules for the traditional game of rock, paper, scissors, and play a round or two. Then, tell students you are going to play a full-body version to review this true narrative. Delilah and the Philistines are the scissors (*make a scissors movement with arms*), Samson is the rock (*make a round shape with arms in front and flex muscles*), and God covers all for the win (*stretch arms out as if to give a wide hug*). As you read the narrative again, do the large motions when you come to Samson, Delilah and the Philistines, and God. Then, play a full-body version of the game of "Samson, Delilah, God."

TALK ABOUT IT

Choose the questions that best fit the learning level of your group.

- Who made Samson strong?
- What foolish things did Samson do?
- How does God give you strength when you feel weak?

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Guide discussion, using these key points.

- God gave Samson his strength so that he could be a good judge and leader for the Israelites. But Samson did not put God first. Samson put his own wants first, and he had a weakness for women.
- Samson loved a woman who was an unbeliever and a Philistine, the enemies of the Israelites. He ended up telling Delilah the secret of His great strength. Even when Samson made bad choices, God worked through him to help the Israelite people.
- Sometimes when we are the weakest, that's when God's strength can come shining through us the clearest, because we know it's not our strength but God's. (Read **2 Corinthians 12:7-10** to read how the apostle Paul dealt with being weak.)



CHRIST CONNECTION

Samson's death meant the temporary rescue of the Israelites. Jesus' death and resurrection rescues us from death forever.

BIBLE NARRATIVE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

STORYTELLING DIRECTIONS: Have children flex their muscles whenever you say “Samson.”

Some enemies called the Philistines came and ruled over God’s people. The Philistines didn’t believe in God. God’s people prayed, “Dear God, help us fight these enemies.”

God listened to the prayers of His people. One day, He sent an angel to tell a man and woman that they would have a special baby boy. “One day, when your boy grows up, he will save God’s people from their enemies,” the angel told them. The angel also told them, “God makes this special promise. He does not want you to cut your boy’s hair. God will make him strong.”

When their baby was born, his parents named him Samson. God kept His promise. He made Samson very strong so he could help God’s people. Samson did many good things to help God’s people. When he fought the enemies, God helped him win.

But one day, Samson did a foolish thing. He became friends with a bad woman named Delilah. Delilah was a Philistine. Remember, the Philistines were enemies of God’s people. Delilah wanted to know why Samson was so strong. Over and over, she begged him, “Why are you so strong? Please tell me!” But Samson would tease her and play tricks on her. He would tell her one thing, but not the true reason for why he was strong. So she kept on pestering him, “Tell me the secret of your strength.”

Finally, Samson got tired of her pestering and told her. He said, “I promised God never to cut my hair. And God

promised to make me strong.”

Delilah waited until Samson went to sleep. Then, she ran to tell the enemy Philistines what Samson’s secret was. “Hurry and cut his hair now while he’s sleeping,” she said. And they did. When Samson woke up, he wasn’t strong anymore. The enemies tied him up. They also hurt his eyes so he could never see again.

One day, the enemies were having a big party. They brought Samson to the party so they could make fun of him and of God. They put Samson between two big pillars of the building they used to worship their false god. Samson prayed to God, “Oh, Lord, please make me strong just one more time. I want to help save Your people.”

Then, Samson began to push on the pillars that held up the temple-church of the false god. Crack! Creak! The big pillars began to break. They fell to the ground. The temple-church of the false god fell down, too, on all the enemies. God had answered Samson’s prayer. The Lord gave Samson strength to help His people.

God made Samson special. God gave Samson his great strength so he could serve God and God’s people. But Samson wasn’t strong enough to take away his own sins. Only God can do that. That’s why God sent Jesus. Jesus is stronger than anything or anyone, even the devil. Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins and rose again. He did that so we could be forgiven and live with Him forever.

BIBLE NARRATIVE FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Once again, Israel turned away from God. So God brought in a strong people called the Philistines. The Israelites suffered so much that they prayed to God for help. God sent the angel of the Lord to an Israelite woman. The angel told the woman she would have a baby boy, and the hair on his head must never be cut. The angel said, “He will begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.” The woman named her baby Samson.

Samson grew up, and God gave him great strength. Once Samson killed a lion with his bare hands. But Samson didn’t want to help Israel; he only wanted to do things that made him feel happy. But then the Philistines did things that made him mad, so he burned the crops in their fields and killed many Philistines. Then, he went to hide in a small cave in the mountains of Israel.

The Philistines came into the mountains to find him. The Israelites were scared, so they tied up Samson and handed him over to the Philistines. But the Spirit of God rushed upon Samson. The ropes melted off his arms, and he killed one thousand Philistines.

Sometime later, Samson loved a beautiful Philistine woman named Delilah. The Philistine rulers promised to

give her a lot of silver if she learned how to make Samson lose his strength. Over and over, Delilah asked Samson to tell her his secret. Whenever he wouldn’t tell her, she cried and said he didn’t love her. Finally, she wore him out and Samson said, “If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me.” While Samson slept on her lap, a Philistine man sneaked in and cut off his hair. The Holy Spirit left Samson, and the Philistines caught him. They made him blind and put him in prison. But Samson’s hair started growing again.

One day, all the important Philistines gathered in the temple of their false god Dagon to thank him for helping them capture Samson. They brought Samson out to make fun of him. Samson asked a young man to lead him to the two pillars that held up the roof. Leaning against the pillars, he prayed, “O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once.” Samson pushed with all his might. The pillars snapped, the roof fell down, and many, many Philistine rulers were killed. Samson died too. His brothers came and buried his body in the tomb of his father. Samson had been a judge for Israel for twenty years. Even though Samson made many mistakes, God used him to rescue His people.

LIVE

Choose from the following activities and crafts to help connect Bible learning to life.

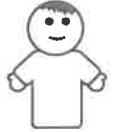
Up-and-Down Rhyme

Squat down on the first line of the rhyme and gradually get higher with each half line until you are standing on tiptoes. Say, **God is always with us. / Everywhere we go. He will always help us / 'Cause He loves us so. When we're helping others, / God will help us too. Giving strength to help us / Do what we should do.** Squat back down as you say each word of the next line: **Thank / You / God / for / what / You / do. / Thank You!** Stand and jump!



Puppet Talk

Puppet jumps up and down. He says he is exercising because he wants to be strong like Superman and help people. Tell him exercising is good, but God wants us to be strong in faith too. For that, we need the Bible. It tells about Jesus. He is stronger than Superman! Superman is pretend. Jesus is real. Only Jesus is strong enough to take away our sins. Through His Word, He helps us grow strong so we can show His love for others.



Tug-of-War

Tie a ribbon in the middle of a jump rope. Place a carpet square underneath that spot. Divide into teams and play tug-of-war. Then say, **Good job! You all are strong! Samson was strong too. But Jesus is even stronger and braver. Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins and rose again. He did that so God would forgive us and we could live with Him forever.**



Samson's Hair Craft

You will need plain paper cups, potting soil, grass seed, and markers. Help each child draw Samson's face on the outside of a cup. Fill each cup with potting soil to the top; this will be the hairline. Sprinkle grass seed on the soil and cover with a thin layer of soil.



Set the Samson faces on a windowsill and keep them well watered. The grass seed will grow and make "hair" that the children can trim and regrow as they retell the Bible story.

Healthy Snack

Serve cut-up fruit (e.g., apple slices, strawberries, banana slices, halved grapes) or vegetables (broccoli, carrots, celery) and dip. Talk about how nutritious food helps our bodies grow strong and healthy.



Samson Bookmark

Cut cardstock in 8½ x 2-inch strips. Punch a hole in the top and loop yarn through for Samson's hair. Let students draw Samson's face below. In the remaining space, have students write "God is my strength." The rest of the bookmark can be decorated however they want to remind them of God's love for us.



Body and Faith Workout

Many of us do exercises to strengthen our bodies. Make a list of physical exercises and do some of them (push-ups, jumping jacks, etc.). Make a second list of ways to strengthen ourselves spiritually (prayer, worship, reading God's Word, etc.). Make a schedule for practicing and improving faith skills, just like we practice a sport.



LEAVE

SAY

On our own we are weak, but there are many ways that God makes us strong.

PRAY

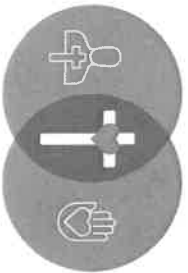
Dear Jesus, thank You for being our strength and for conquering death and the devil for us. Help us to use our strength from You to share Your love with others. In Your name we pray, Jesus. Amen.

THE WEAKENED JUDGE

LESSON 7

Judges 16:4–31

GOD IS MY STRENGTH.



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God strengthens my weakness through His Word and Sacrament.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I face temptations which threaten to weaken my faith, but the Holy Spirit strengthens me through the Word.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on previous learning for each age.

ADULT

I can summarize how God was the strength of Samson and how He continues to be our strength today.

YOUTH

I can describe how God was Samson's strength and how God is my strength also.

ELEMENTARY

I understand that God gives us strength in many ways.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God gives me strength to serve Him and others.

BIBLE VERSE

God, the Lord, is my strength.

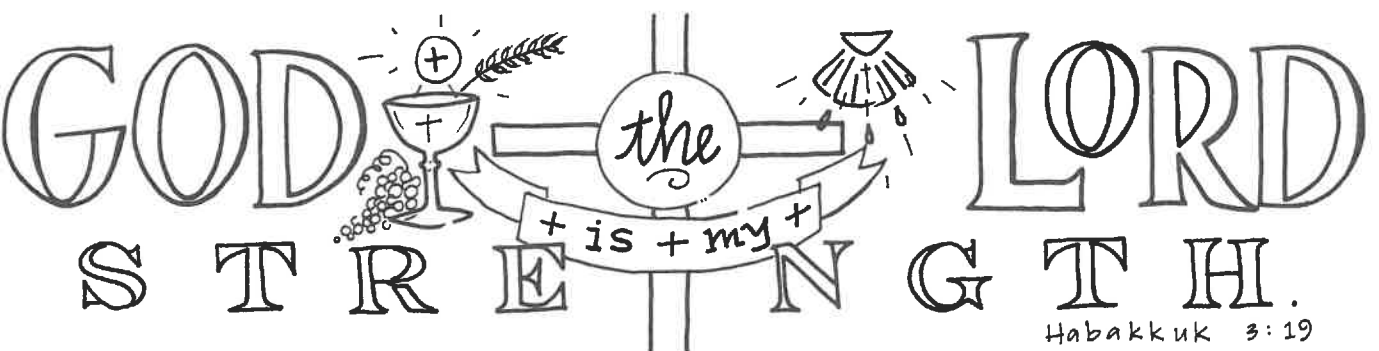
Habakkuk 3:19

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

God grants Samson great strength to defeat the enemies of God's people. Seeking to overcome Samson, the Philistines bribe Delilah to find the source of Samson's strength. Samson deceives Delilah each time she tries to uncover the secret, but he finally reveals the key to his power. Shorn and blinded by the Philistines, Samson is brought to entertain thousands of revelers at the feast to Dagon. Identifying the house's supporting pillars, Samson prays, and God grants him power to bring down the temple, killing everyone.

TAKING IT HOME

- ▶ *On the Go*—Look around. What is the heaviest thing you see? How heavy is the burden of sin compared to the weight of that object?
- ▶ *At Mealtime*—How did Samson lose his strength? Think of a time you gave in to temptation. What were the consequences of your sin? How did God save you?
- ▶ *Something to Do*—God made Samson very strong. Sit together and identify one strength of each person in your family.
- ▶ *Before Bed*—Who was the real source of Samson's strength? How does God strengthen your faith? What are three ways you can thank God for never leaving you?



Leader Devotion LESSON 7
THE WEAKENED JUDGE—SAMSON
JUDGES 16:4–31

BIBLE TRUTH

God is my strength.

BIBLE VERSE

God, the Lord, is my strength. Habakkuk 3:19

LAW & GOSPEL

Sin weakens me and makes me a target for the devil's temptations, bringing guilt and destruction.

God loves me, in spite of my sin and weakness, and puts on me Christ's victory over sin, death, and the devil.

DEVOTION

There is a theater that specializes in creating musical versions of favorite Bible stories. They openly admit that much of the content of these musicals is based only loosely on the actual biblical text, relying instead on imagined events surrounding the central story. In 2018, this theater introduced the musical version of Samson.

While the concept of a singing and dancing Samson might seem a little silly, the production does a pretty good job of explaining Samson's role as a judge for the children of Israel. The dramatic final scenes show Samson's sacrifice to overcome the enemy. Christ died for His people. Unlike Samson, Christ fulfilled the Law and bought forgiveness and eternal life.

Pray: "O Father, I, too, am a defeated sinner, spiritually blind and in bondage to the devil according to my sinful flesh. Remember me, Lord. Give me strength to carry out what You have called me to do. May Christ, in His sacrifice pull down the works of Satan and deliver me from captivity. In His name I pray. Amen" (T^LS^B, p. 413).

LESSON 7 OPENING

THE WEAKENED JUDGE—SAMSON

What do we use these weights for? We lift them for exercise, to make our muscles stronger. A lot of people enjoy testing how strong they are. They see how much weight they can lift. Once they can lift a certain weight, they increase the weight even more, just to see how much their muscles can take. It can be fun to know exactly how strong you are!

Someone in our Bible lesson today has an incredible amount of strength. Strength is the power we use to do something. The Bible says several times that God is our strength. Listen to some of those verses:

“The LORD is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation” (Exodus 15:2).

“The LORD is my strength and my shield; in Him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to Him. The Lord is the strength of His people; He is the saving refuge of His anointed” (Psalm 28:7–8).

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

What does it mean to have God as our strength? God is the power that we can rely on! We can't rely on our own strength. There are times in this life that things seem too difficult for us to do. Sometimes, we have to do things that are really hard, like saying goodbye to a loved one. Other times, people attack what we believe. Sometimes, it might even feel like we don't have the strength to get out of bed in the morning!

But God promises that He is our strength. He will help us in times of trouble. He will save us from sin and death, by the power of Jesus Christ. He will keep us safe from danger. Psalm 73:26 says, “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” God promises to be the power that we need, even though we are weak by ourselves.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:10–11, “The God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Trust in the love of God, and in His strength, today and every day.

Pray: Dear God, thank You for being our strength. Thank You for sending Jesus to conquer sin, death, and the devil for us. Give us the strength we need today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

LESSON TEXT

Judges 16:4–31

BIBLE TRUTH

God is my strength.

FAITH FOCUS

Confession

LAW & GOSPEL

Sin weakens me and makes me a target for the devil's temptations, bringing me guilt and destruction.

God loves me, in spite of my sin and weakness, and puts on me Christ's victory over sin, death, and the devil.

BIBLE VERSE

GOD, the Lord, is my strength. Habakkuk 3:19

VISUAL HELPS

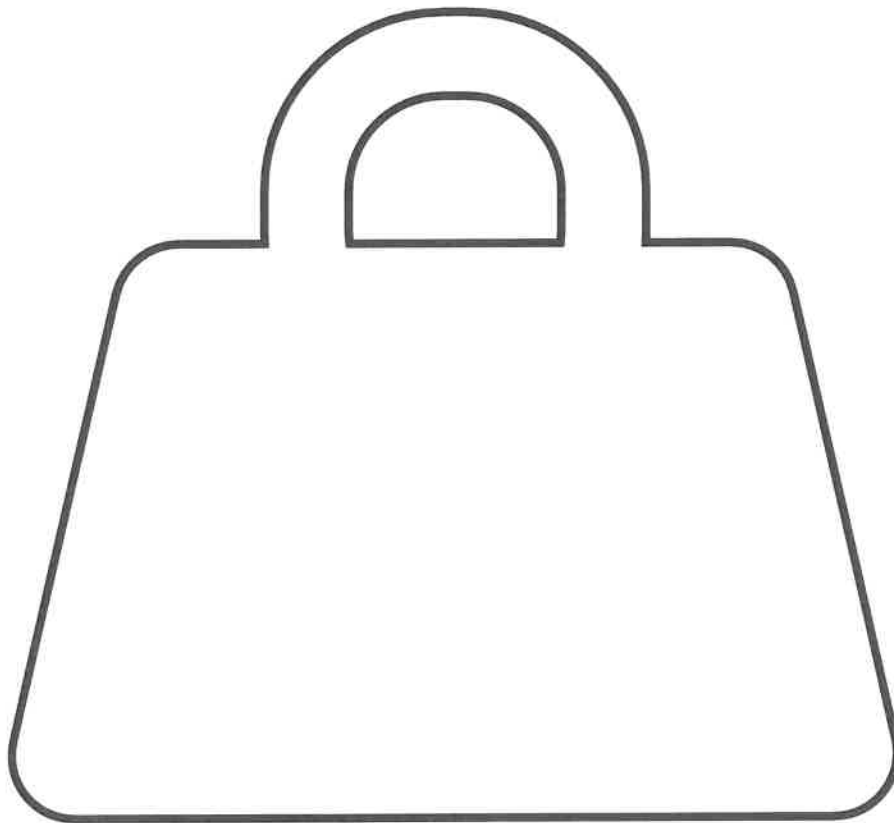
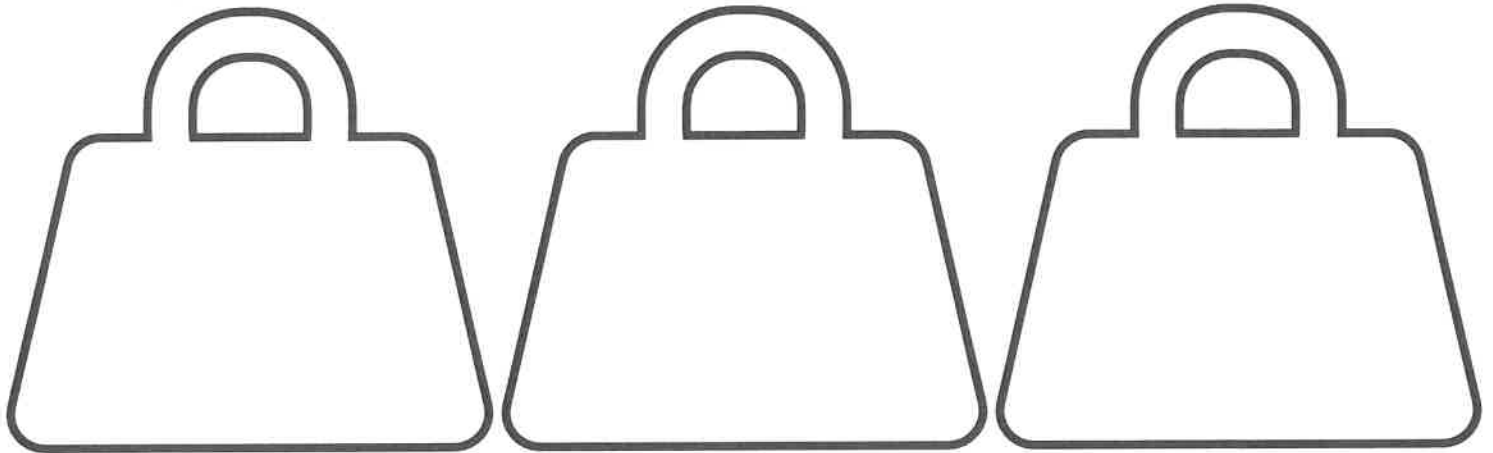
Small dumbbells

THE WEAKENED JUDGE—SAMSON

Unit 5, Lesson 7

Our Source of Strength

Directions: On the three small weights below, write three facts about Samson's strength, one fact per weight. On the large weight, write about a time when God's strength helped you in a tough situation.



GOD, the Lord, is my strength. Habakkuk 3:19