

Purpose

- To learn about Samson
- To review the stories of Samuel, Saul, David and Jonathan

Materials

- Bibles
- Handouts

Background Information**SAMSON**

Close to the end of the long list of kings of Israel is Samson. Samson is an example of someone who might have done great things for the Lord but allowed himself to be distracted. Samson's mother had not been able to have children so she prayed to God to give her a child. God gave her a child but told her that the child would be strong and do well for the Lord if he never drank wine or cut his hair. Samson grew up and was known for his strength. He at one point killed a lion with his bare hands. The Philistines defeated the Israelites and ruled them. Samson killed a thousand of the Philistine soldiers with the jawbone of a donkey and then the Israelites overthrew the Philistines. Samson led the Israelites as judge for 20 years. Samson had followed God's instructions and had never cut his hair. Samson's downfall came when he fell in love with Delilah. Delilah tricked Samson into telling her the secret of his strength. Delilah told the Philistines his secret so they captured Samson, blinded him and cut his hair. This made Samson helpless. The Philistines then brought Samson to the temple to entertain the crowds. No one had noticed that Samson's hair was growing out and his strength was returning. Samson asked a servant to put his hands on two pillars of the temple. After praying to God to help him Samson pulled the pillars down and caused the temple to come crashing down. This action caused the death of more people than Samson had killed in his entire lifetime. Sadly it also killed Samson.

ELI, SAMUEL and SAUL

Israel had been ruled by judges for over 200 years at this point. Eli and Samuel are the last of those judges. Samuel had been born to Hannah near the end of Eli's life. Samuel grows up in the tabernacle as a priest-in-training under Eli and is well qualified to serve Israel as both a priest and a judge. The Israelites had again fallen away from God. It soon became clear that God was preparing Samuel to lead them back to God.

Samuel judges Israel well, saves them from the Philistines (again) and leads them back to God. When Samuel retires the Israelites decide they do not want another judge. They want a king. God is not happy about their request, but he agrees and tells Samuel to anoint Saul as Israel's first king. Saul is a skillful soldier who successfully leads the

nation into many battles against their enemies. Saul is never a success in God's eyes because Saul constantly disobeys God and does things his own way. Eventually God rejects Saul as king. This ended in ruin for Saul (as it does for us).

DAVID

While Saul is still on the throne, Samuel anoints David as Israel's next king. Young David then bravely conquers Goliath, the Philistine champion, and establishes a lifelong friendship with Jonathan, Saul's son. When Saul realizes that David will become king one day, he grows very jealous and tries to kill David on several occasions. David escapes into Philistine territory until Saul is killed in battle.

After years of running from Saul, David is finally crowned king over the tribe of Judah. The rest of Israel, however, followed Ish-Bosheth, Saul's son. David did not attempt to take the tribes by force, but placed the matter in God's hands. After a few years Ish-Bosheth was assassinated and the rest of the tribes finally put their support behind David. David moved the capital to Jerusalem, defeated the surrounding nations, and even showed kindness to Saul's family.

After restoring the nation to peace and great military power, David's personal life becomes entangled in sin. God had sent Nathan to David. Nathan was a prophet that served as God's spokesman to David. Nathan was always willing to speak the truth to David even when he knew great pain would follow. Nathan predicted the events in David's life. David had several children by several wives. David's children fight among themselves, kill each other and frequently rebel against David. He commits adultery with Bathsheba and then orders her husband killed in an attempted cover-up. David deeply regretted what he had done and sought God's forgiveness, but the child of his sinful act died.

When David grew old he called for Solomon, his son by Bathsheba, to come to him. When the time came for David to die he gave charge to Solomon. As had happened in the past; Solomon's brothers and sisters rebelled against Solomon and thus the story continues.

All the information concerning Samuel, Saul, and David was covered briefly last year. If someone mentions this explain they are getting the other side of the story.

Procedure

- Read the background information on Samson. Also read handout 44-1 for more information.
- Read information on Eli, Samuel, Saul and David. Handout 44-2 and 44-3 gives brief bios on these.
- Do handout 44-4 and return to me . Any questions please call me.