



What's Chapter 8 of "The Story" all About?

"You're not all bad, Samson, but your eyes always find what they shouldn't."

--Samson's mother in Cecil B. DeMille's 1948 "Samson and Delilah"

What happens in the Bible (the upper story)? The Bible is: (1) the true, "triumph story" of how God is restoring his creation (heaven, earth, humans and animals) in fulfillment of his own pre-time desire for a family of loving, serving and fully alive sons and daughters; and (2) how this restoration effort cost him everything.

What happens in the book of Judges (the lower story)? Chapter 8 is: (1) the true, grisly story of Israel's downward spiral into idolatry, immorality and violence after the death of Joshua when the nation was led (and often misled) by a series of 12 civil-military-spiritual leaders (judges) of widely varying quality; and (2) how we can learn from their successes and failures.

Today's TAKEAWAY: If our eyes are watching God, we will resist present perspective (which is often deceptive), and we will reject sudden impulses (which are often destructive), and we will prosper over time as we remain strong and courageous. Why? Because God's eyes are always watching those who consistently believe and carefully obey, despite their many stumbles.

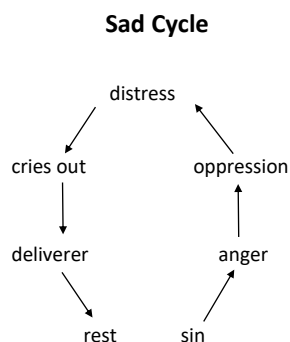
Unlocking the Book of Judges with two sad phrases and the story of one blind "strongman"

The two phrases are combined in the very last verse of the book of Judges:

Judg. 21:25 *In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

- I. "no king" — The absence of central, incorruptible capability-creating leader.
- II. "what was right in his own eyes" — The absence of common agreement about what to do and what to avoid, what is good and what is bad.

Judg. 2:16 *Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.*



Major Judge	Enemy	Years of oppression	Years of peace after deliverance	Scripture
Othniel	Cushan-rishathaim	8	40	3:3-7
Ehud	Eglon, king of Moab	18	80	3:12-13
Deborah & Barak	Jaban, king of Canaan	20	40	4:1-5:31
Gideon	Midian	7	40	6:1-8:35
Jephthah	Philistines	18	6 [no rest formula]	10:6-12:7
Samson	Philistines	40	20 [no rest formula]	13:1-16:31

The Samson Story: Tracing the theme of seeing and not seeing.

Judg. 14:1-2 *Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines. ² Then he came up and told his father and mother, “I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife.”*

Judg. 14:3b *But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes.”*

Judg. 14:8-9a *After some days he returned to take her. And he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and behold, there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey. ⁹ He scraped it out into his hands and went on, eating as he went.*

Judg. 16:1 *Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and he went in to her.*

Judg. 16:21 *And the Philistines seized him and 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.*

Judg. 16:23-24 *Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, “Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand.” ²⁴ And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, “Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us.”*

Judg. 16:28 *Then Samson called to the LORD and said, “O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.”*

Questions to talk about.

1. What did you learn about the Book of Judges that you didn't know before?
2. Remember Judges 21:25, the last verse of the Book of Judges. It's on the other side of this page. How does it speak to modern times?
3. Darren traced the “sight” theme through the story of Samson. Samson was always looking in the wrong place. How do you keep your eyes fixed on the Lord. How did Moses maintain his ministry as a deliverer? (See Heb. 11:25-26).
4. One theme of Judges is that every human life will advance God's dream through either dream-advancing *obedience* or through dream-advancing *defiance* because God is infinitely creative. But only dream-advancing obedience brings personal blessing, honor, and wellbeing. Talk about God's sovereignty.
5. Samson's code was, “see the pleasure, snatch the pleasure, feel an insult, inflict an injury.” Consider the instinct towards vengeance when we get angry. How we do attempt to do this in relationships? What is the consequence to us?
6. Samson wasted his potential. “Samsonism” is when spiritually gifted young people squander their potential to help deliver others through evangelism and service because of “Philistine fascination.” Discuss this concept.
7. Judges leaves us with the idea that we will need a king to transform us. Even the Spirit coming on Samson now and then wasn't enough to change him permanently. We need a special king, one to forgive us and to make us capable of serving God faithfully (Phil. 4:13). We know who that King is, and as we look at him, what happens? (See 2 Cor. 3:18).