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A FEW GOOD MEN ... AND WOMEN

Bible Basis: Judges 16:1–31
Key Verse: [Samson] said, “Lord and King, show me that you still have concern for me. God, please make me strong just one more time.” —Judges 16:28, NIrV
Bible Point: God helps those who turn to him. I can depend on God.
Resource: The Story for Kids, Chapter 8: “A Few Good Men ... and Women”

STEP 1: COME TOGETHER

Stuff You Need: table, two chairs

As you begin, say, Who’s feeling strong today? Let’s see if you really are. Invite children to arm wrestle. (Don’t force anyone who doesn’t want to.) If your group is large, you might have a couple of volunteers wrestle where everyone can see. With a small group, pairs can wrestle at a table. Make sure children understand the rules. They can only use one arm, must stay seated, and elbows must stay on the table. Talk about:

• Tell me some other ways to know if someone is strong.
• How do people become strong?

Say, In our Bible story today, we’ll meet someone who was very strong, but what made him strong was his secret.

STEP 2: HEAR THE STORY

Stuff You Need: copies of The Story for Kids, Bibles, The Story Elementary Trading Card 8

Tell the story from The Story for Kids, Chapter 8. You can also have the children find Judges 16 and mark it in their Bibles. Either you or a child in your class can read the Scripture passages listed throughout the story.

Samson’s Strength

Ask three fluent readers to be narrators for this story. Ask others to play the non-speaking roles of Samson, Delilah, and a group of Philistine leaders. These children will act out what they hear the narrators saying. For instance, when the narrator says, “Delilah tied up Samson”, the actors will mime this action. If you’d like, you can have some simple props on hand, such as belts for lengths of leather, clotheslines for rope, and simple furniture for a set. Remind the narrators that they may need to pause for actors to catch up with the action.
Narrator 1: Even after God’s people moved into the land he had promised them, they had enemies. But they also had some heroes. When Samson was born, God made him really strong. He was so strong, he even ripped up lions for fun.

Narrator 2: No one could beat Samson, especially the Philistines—the enemies. The Philistines wanted to know Samson’s weakness. They got their chance when Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah.

Judges 16:5–6

Judges 16:7–9

Judges 16:10–12

Judges 16:13a–b

Narrator 1: A loom was a big contraption for weaving cloth and rugs. So while Samson was sleeping, Delilah took hold of the seven braids of his hair. She wove them into the cloth on a loom and called for the Philistine leaders to come again. Then she called out, “Samson! The Philistines are attacking you!” But when Samson woke up, he pulled up the loom without any trouble.

Narrator 2: Now Delilah was fuming mad. She said, “How can you say you love me when you won’t share your secret with me?” Day after day, she nagged him about his secret. Nag, nag, nag. Pester, pester, pester.

Judges 16:17

Narrator 1: Delilah had one more chance to get that money! She sent one more message to the Philistine leaders and they came with all the money they promised her. Delilah got Samson to fall asleep on her lap. Then she called for a man to shave off the seven braids of his hair.

Narrator 2: Then she called out, “Samson! The Philistines are attacking you!” Samson woke from his sleep and thought he could just shake himself free like the other times. He didn’t know the Lord had left him.

Narrator 3: The Philistines grabbed Samson and poked his eyes out. They put bronze chains around him and made him grind grain in the prison day after day. Samson had a lot of time to think about what he had done and what God could do. He had a lot of time to worry. And Samson’s hair began to grow back.

Narrator 1: One day the Philistines were having a huge party in the temple of their god. Some party guests called for Samson to put on a show for them.

Narrator 2: Samson knew this was his chance. He had made a huge mistake when he got involved with Delilah, but now he wanted to do the right thing. He wanted to show these enemies the power of the one true God. So he said to the servant who was guiding him, “Put me where I can feel the pillars that hold this temple up.”
Narrator 3: Read Judges 16:28. Then Samson reached for the two pillars and leaned hard against them. God had given him his strength back, and he pushed the pillars over. The whole building collapsed!

Narrator 1: Though he lost his strength when he cut his hair, Samson knew God would still hear him pray. He knew he could depend on the Lord. God gave Samson the strength to do one more superhero feat. We can depend on God!

After you have told the Bible story, give each child a copy of The Story Elementary Trading Card 8. Ask children to look at the picture and tell you what happened to Samson’s strength. As a class, read the key verse from the back of the card or from the Bible. Ask:

- What mistakes did Samson make in today’s story?
- How did God show that he doesn’t leave his children?

Say, Even though Samson made some huge mistakes, he turned back to God. When Samson needed him most, God was there.

Collect the cards for now. You’ll send them home with the children later.

**STEP 3: EXPLORE MORE**

Choose any or all of these activity options to help your class explore the lesson further.

**Option 1: Braid of Strength**

**Stuff You Need:** three lengths of clothesline about five feet long each, duct tape

Say, Samson was famous all through the land for his strength. Even the last thing he ever did showed that his strength came from God. God set him apart from birth, and he never cut his hair. Despite his mistakes, Samson learned he could depend on God. The Bible says he had seven braids of hair. Explain that you’re going to work together to make a group braid. (If you have a large class, make several braids.) Use duct tape to secure one end of the three lengths of clothesline to a table top, close together. Demonstrate how to braid by moving one of the side lengths to the middle, then moving the other side length to the new middle. Have children take turns braiding and completing this sentence: “I depend on God when I _______. “ Keep taking turns and braiding until you finish the length of clothesline. Use duct tape to secure both ends so the rope doesn’t unravel. You can display the braid in your classroom for a future reminder of this lesson. Ask:

- Why did Samson want God to make him strong one last time?
- What can we learn from God’s response to Samson’s last request?

Say, Samson’s story teaches us that when we turn to God, he’s there to help. We can depend on God.
Option 2: Balloon Strength

Stuff You Need: balloons, plastic trash bag, oversized sweatpants and sweatshirt.

Optional: newspapers

Gather a set of sweat clothes for every six to eight children you expect. Ahead of time, inflate five or six balloons for each group, tie them closed, and store in the plastic bag. Say, Samson was famous for his strength. Choose one person from your group to wear the sweat clothes, then use the balloons as muscles to make the person look strong. Children can also use newspaper to supplement the balloons. Allow a few minutes to work, then have the models show off their muscles. Ask:

- Where did Samson’s strength really come from?
- How can what we learn from Samson help us in our lives?

Say, Samson made some big mistakes, but when he turned to God, God was there. No matter what we do, God stays with us.

Option 3: Choices

Stuff You Need: Choices Activity Sheet, markers

Give an activity sheet and marker to each child. Talk with the group about the fact that Samson did get his strength from God and that there were some responsibilities attached to that gift. When Samson chose to tell Delilah his secret, he made a bad choice when it came to this special gift. Is it easy or hard to make right choices? On the Activity Sheet, there are six scenarios with two choices each. Have the children shade in the side of the barbell with the choice they would make. Some of the scenarios do not have one wrong and one right answer. Use the children's answers to promote discussion in class. Make sure to send this Activity Sheet home so the discussion can continue at home.

Option 4: Strength Comes From God

All of our strength comes from God.

- When we keep our bodies healthy, exercise, and respect our bodies, he helps us stay physically strong.
- When we work hard in school and use the intelligence God has given us, we become strong in mind.
- When we show respect and love for the people God has put in our lives, we become strong at heart.

Talk to the group about the strengths that we each have. What made them strong in these areas? It is important for us to recognize that everyone has many strengths so we can use the gifts we have from God to glorify him. It is also important to realize that if we feel weak we should ask God for guidance and help in developing strengths that we have or need.
Do the following activity:

Have the entire group stand and go the left side of the room. Stand in a line if possible. Let the children know that as you give them directions they must be honest and they must respect others in the group. Give the following directions, making sure you are giving the group enough time to follow the directions.

- **Step forward three steps if you are physically strong.**
- **Walk to the door if you are smart in math.**
- **Go to the center of the room if you are a good friend.**
- **Go back to your original spot if you are a good athlete.**
- **Sit down if you have been kind to someone today.**

Continue as long as you like with this to illustrate the many strengths that your class has. Say a prayer as a group, thanking God for the strengths you all have and promising him that you will use your strength for good.

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**STEP 4: GOING HOME**

Pray together that you will turn to God and depend on him. Make sure each child takes home a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 8*, Activity Shee(s)/Crafts, and the Parents’ Page.