** BIBLE 101**

Unit 2: Building Our Lives on God

*Samson – God Gives us Strength Like No Other*

**A Note to the Teacher:** The story of Samson and Delilah is often reduced to an admonishment of a wife for selling her husband out over a few silver coins. When looked at through a different lens, the story of Samson tells an important message of the strength that God gives us to share God’s love with the world.

This is a very active lesson, and should be a fun one for students and teacher alike. Students will naturally become a bit silly as you move through the exercises. Bring their attention back to the lesson of Samson by testing to see if they are getting stronger, asking them if they are ready to answer God’s call, etc. There is plenty of room for fun and faith development!

**Gathering**

As students enter the space, gather them in a seated circle.

**Say, “Before we dive in to this morning’s lesson, I need to know what I am working with. We are going to need to *serious* strength this morning, so I have a few questions for you about how strong you all are.”**

Explain that you are going to ask a few questions. If the answer is yes, students should stand up where they are. If no, they can remain seated.

Read the following questions, having everyone return to their seats between them.

1. Do you play a sport?
2. Do you enjoy playing outside or on the playground?
3. Can you carry several things at once?
4. Can you lift a gallon of milk?
5. Have you ever picked up an adult?
6. Have you ever lifted an elephant, a car, or a tree taller than 10 feet?

**Say, “That last one sounded silly, I know, but I was really hoping at least one of you would say yes. Oh well, we will have to make it work!”**

**Say, “Our lesson this morning is about a man named Samson. Have any of you ever heard of Samson?”** Give time for responses. **Say, “Some of you may have heard of his wife, Delilah, but Samson isn’t as popular a Bible character as Abraham or Jonah or Jesus. Nonetheless, his story has a very important lesson to teach us about building our lives on God.”**

For grades 2-5, have students turn to the book of Judges in their Bibles. For preschool – grade 1, the teacher should turn to Judges.

**Say, “In our world, a judge is someone who makes legal rulings in a court. In Bible times, a judge was a leader sent by God. The book of Judges tells the stories of some of the early leaders of the Israelite people. One of those leaders was a man named Samson. Before Samson was born there were many other judges. The Israelite people would forget about God and start worshiping the idols of the communities around them. God would punish them by allowing their enemies to conquer Israel. Eventually God’s people would cry out to God and God would send a judge to help them defeat their enemies. Finally Israel would enjoy a period of peace until they forgot about God again.”**

**Say, “When Samson was born, Israel had been taken over by the Philistines for 40 years. An angel appeared to a man named Manoah and his wife and told them that they would have a son. The child would be named Samson, and he would be set apart by God for a special mission. The angel also warned Manoah and his wife that they were never to cut Samson’s hair. Samson would have incredible strength and God would use him to save God’s people!”**

Read the rest of Samson’s story from the Tommi dePaula storybook Bible.

**Ask, “Where did Samson get his strength?”** Allow time for responses.

**Say, “God gave Samson incredible strength in order to save God’s people. Even Samson’s one weakness – cutting his hair – was not enough to keep him from fulfilling God’s mission for him.”**

Spend some time discussing the story with age-appropriate questions:

**Preschool-Grade 1:**

1. What happened when Samson’s hair was cut?
2. Did Samson stay weak forever?
3. How does Samson save the Israelite people from the Philistines?

**Grades 2-5:**

1. Does Samson’s story sound like the story of any other important Biblical figure? *Compare Samson’s story and Jesus’ story*
2. Samson is weakened when his hair is cut, but he regains his strength as his hair grows back. Do you have weaknesses that you are able to overcome?

**Strength Like Samson**

**Say, “God had a mission for Samson, and Samson was determined to fulfill that mission. He knew that it would cost him his life, but Samson used his strength to save the Israelite people and restore their faith in God.”**

**Say, “God has a mission for our lives as well. And God needs us to be strong in order to fulfill those missions!”**

Explain that this morning we are going to do a workout in order to help us become strong like Samson. If we are lucky, maybe we, too, will be strong enough to knock down the pillars of the building!

Lead the children through 15 minutes or so of exercises. Below are some examples, but the teacher should do what is most comfortable to him/her.

 25 Jumping Jacks

 5 Push-ups

 10 laps around the room

 20 sit-ups

 25 running men

 10 lunges

 30 seconds in downward dog

 5 burpees

 Touch toes

In older classes, invite students to lead their friends in additional exercises of their choosing.

*Periodically ask the class to stop and flex their muscles. Pretend to attempt to knock students over, testing their growing strength.*

When you get to the end of the workout, bring the group back to a seated circle.

**Say, “The Bible tells us nothing about Samson having to work out, he was naturally strong. God needed him to care for God’s people, and so he gave him strength. If Samson was able to knock a building down without doing a single push-up, we are certainly going to be able to do it now!”**

Have the class work together to attempt to knock down one of the pillars of the room. Make a big production of pushing and struggling. Insist that it must be possible.

**Ask, “What went wrong? God has called us to care for God’s people, and we have worked out as hard as we could, but we still don’t have strength like Samson!”**

**Say, “When we build our lives on God – when we allow God to give us a mission and we do what God asks us to do – God gives us incredible strength. But it isn’t the same kind of strength that Samson had. God does not give us strong arms or legs or abs. God strengthens a different muscle – our hearts! When God is our foundation, God gives us hearts strong enough to love our enemies and feed the hungry and clothe the poor and stand up for justice and be God’s hands and feet in the world.”**

**Say, “And the best news is, every time we use our hearts, they get even stronger! When we do God’s work and share God’s love with the world we can’t help but want to do more of it!”**

Invite students to share some of the ways they exercise their heart muscles in their daily lives. The teacher should also share.

**Closing/Cleanup**

When everyone is finished, work as a group to clean up the classroom.