

The Book of Judges, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 12: Samson and Delilah; Strength Restored

Judges 16:1-31

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

What is doctrinally at stake in this chapter is the nature of God's presence and the seriousness of drifting away from it. Samson is the proof that gifting is not the same as godliness, and that a person God has genuinely used can lose the LORD's nearness so gradually that he does not even notice it is gone. The chilling line, 'he knew not that the LORD was departed from him' (16:20), stands against every comfortable assumption that grace is a possession we can presume upon while we toy with sin. The whole weight of the lesson must press the warning of the New Testament: 'let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall' (1 Corinthians 10:12), and the call to exhort one another daily 'lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin' (Hebrews 3:13). This chapter is one of Scripture's clearest answers to the notion that a saved person can never be lost. Yet it is equally a witness to mercy, for the same God who departed from a presumptuous man answered a broken one, and named him among the faithful (Hebrews 11:32). The teacher must hold the warning and the grace together without letting either one swallow the other.

The lesson also aims squarely at the student's own spiritual formation, because Samson's tragedy is not exotic. The danger he fell into is the most ordinary danger in the world: erosion. He did not renounce God in a single dramatic act. He simply handled holy things carelessly, returned again and again to the same sin, and presumed that the LORD would always be there because the LORD had always been there. Every person in the room is somewhere on that slope. The questions are designed to move the student from admiring or pitying Samson to examining his own slow drifts, the small carelessness with purity or honesty or conscience that feels harmless because the consequences have not arrived yet.

Finally, the chapter points forward to Christ and to repentance. Samson's last prayer, offered out of blindness and bondage, is a picture of the mercy that meets every penitent who finally bows. The goal is not despair but return. The teacher should leave the class sober about the reality of falling away and warmed by the reality that God remembers the broken who call on Him, drawing near to God in the confidence that He will draw near to us (James 4:8), so that the student walks out having named his own area of drift and taken one concrete step back toward the Lord.

Question 1

Student Question:

According to Judges 16:1–3, Samson goes in to a prostitute in Gaza and yet still tears the city gates loose and carries them up a hill. What does this teach us about the difference between God using a person's gifts and God approving a person's life? Why is it dangerous to treat continued ability or success as evidence of God's approval?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter opens with Samson in Gaza, deep in Philistine territory, going in to a prostitute (16:1). The narrator records it flatly, without commentary, which is its own kind of indictment. This is the man set apart from the womb, the deliverer of Israel, and he is spending himself on the very people he was raised up to oppose. The slide that will end in Delilah's lap begins here, with a man treating his consecrated life as if it were his own to squander.

And yet the very next verses show him tearing the gates of Gaza, posts, bar, and all, and carrying them to the top of a hill toward Hebron (16:2–3). The strength is undiminished. This is the trap the chapter wants us to see early: God can still use a man's gifts long after the man has stopped guarding his heart. The hands work even while the soul leaks. We must never read continued ability, success, or usefulness as a divine stamp of approval on how we are living.

There is a sober principle here that runs through all of Scripture. The gifts and the calling are one thing; the daily walk is another. Balaam prophesied truly while loving the wages of unrighteousness. Judas worked miracles with the Twelve. A preacher can preach well, a teacher can teach truth, a worker can produce results, all while privately decaying. Gaza is the warning written in stone: do not measure your standing with God by what you can still do.

The deeper tragedy is that Samson seems to feel no alarm. He escapes Gaza by night with a display of raw power, and there is no sign of repentance, no sense that he has crossed a line. The very ease of his escape may have hardened him. He got away with it, so he goes looking for the next woman. Getting away with sin is one of the most dangerous things that can happen to us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Gifting and usefulness are not the same as godliness or God's approval (Matthew 7:22–23; Numbers 22–24, Balaam).
- Continued success or ability after sin can dangerously deceive us into thinking all is well.
- Returning to known sin without alarm is evidence of a hardening conscience, not of safety.
- The deliverer of Israel here spends himself among the very people he was called to resist, a picture of a believer at home in the world.
- God's longsuffering is not the same as God's endorsement; He may withhold immediate consequences while the heart erodes.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it more spiritually dangerous to 'get away with' a sin than to be caught in it? What does getting away with it tend to do to the conscience?
- How do we tell the difference between God blessing our lives and God simply being patient with us while we drift?
- What 'gates of Gaza' victories in our lives might be tempting us to assume we must be right with God?

Question 2

Student Question:

Samson keeps returning to the same kind of sin, first in Gaza and then in the valley of Sorek (16:1, 16:4). What is one pattern in your own life that you keep returning to, and what have you been telling yourself to excuse going back?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The geography of the chapter tells the story. Samson sins in Gaza (16:1), then almost immediately we read that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek (16:4). He does not learn. He does not turn back. He moves from one entanglement to the next, drawn again and again to women among Israel's enemies, exactly the kind of alliance his Nazirite calling should have made unthinkable.

This is the nature of a besetting sin. It is not usually a single, isolated failure but a groove worn deep by repetition. We tell ourselves that this time is different, that we have it handled, that the last time taught us our lesson. Samson surely told himself something like that as he walked into the valley of Sorek. The pattern is the danger, more than any single act, because the pattern shapes the heart.

The honest student will recognize the machinery of self-deception at work. We excuse the return with familiar lies: it is not that serious, everyone struggles with this, I will deal with it later, God understands. Every one of those sentences is a brick in the prison Samson is walking toward without knowing it. Naming the lie is the first step toward breaking the groove.

The good news, which the rest of the chapter will make plain, is that even a long pattern is not beyond the reach of God's mercy when a person finally turns. But mercy does not erase the consequences already set in motion, and the wise reader does not presume on it. The point of this question is not to despair over the groove but to stop walking deeper into it today.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Besetting sin is a pattern worn by repetition, not merely an isolated act.
- Self-deception works through familiar excuses ('not that serious,' 'I will deal with it later').
- Failing to learn from past failure is itself a warning sign of a hardening heart.
- Each return to a known sin makes the next return easier and the conscience quieter.

- God's mercy reaches the groove, but consequences already set in motion may still run their course (Galatians 6:7–8).

Discussion Prompts

- What sentences do we say to ourselves to make going back to a sin feel acceptable? Name a few out loud.
- Why does each repetition of a sin make the next one easier? What is happening to the conscience?
- What is one specific groove you keep walking back into, and what would 'stopping today' actually look like this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

In Judges 16:4–17 Delilah wears Samson down 'day after day' until 'his soul was vexed to death' (16:16), and he finally tells her everything. What does this passage teach about how temptation actually works, not usually as one great assault but as steady, patient pressure? How should that change the way we guard ourselves?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Delilah's method is the heart of this section, and it is worth slowing down over. She does not overpower Samson. She wears him down. 'She pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death' (16:16). This is temptation's most effective form, not a single overwhelming assault but steady, patient, daily pressure that exhausts the will until resistance simply collapses.

Notice that Samson plays along the whole way. He gives her three false answers, each one inching closer to the truth (16:7, 16:11, 16:13). He is flirting with disclosure, treating his consecration like a game of riddles. He thinks he is in control of the conversation. He is being managed like prey. The man who could snap ropes could not say a simple, final no and walk away from the valley of Sorek.

This is how most of us are actually defeated. We are rarely toppled by a temptation we never saw coming. We are worn down by one we keep entertaining, keep returning to, keep flirting with, until one tired day the wall finally falls. The lesson for our own guarding is severe: the time to flee is early, while the urging is still merely annoying, not after the soul is already vexed to death.

Scripture's counsel is the opposite of Samson's. 'Flee youthful lusts' (2 Timothy 2:22). Make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife rather than reason with her daily (Genesis 39:12). Samson's failure was not a single bad decision; it was a thousand small refusals to leave.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Temptation most often defeats us through steady, patient pressure rather than a single great assault.
- Flirting with sin, getting close to the line without crossing it, is itself the path to falling.
- The will can be worn down ('vexed unto death') until resistance collapses; we overestimate our endurance.
- The biblical strategy is to flee early, not to reason with temptation daily (2 Timothy 2:22; Genesis 39:12).
- Staying in proximity to a known temptation is presumption, not strength.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is daily, low-grade pressure often more dangerous to us than a sudden, dramatic temptation?
- Where in your life are you currently 'reasoning with' a temptation instead of fleeing it?
- What does it look like, practically, to flee a temptation 'early' before your soul is worn down?

Question 4

Student Question:

Samson treated the secret of his consecration as a toy, hinting and lying and flirting with what was holy (16:7, 16:11, 16:13). What is something genuinely sacred in your walk with God (your purity, your conscience, your honesty) that you have started to handle carelessly?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Samson's treatment of his secret is the spiritual core of his failure. The unshorn hair was the outward sign of an inward consecration, the visible mark that he was set apart to God from the womb (Judges 13:5). Yet he handles this holy thing like a parlor trick, offering false versions of it to a woman who is plainly trying to destroy him (16:7, 16:11, 16:13). He has lost all sense that it is sacred.

That loss did not happen at the valley of Sorek. It happened gradually, over years of touching dead bodies, feasting with Philistines, and treating his vow as an inconvenience to be managed. By chapter 16 the consecration means so little to him that he is willing to barter it for the affection of Delilah. The carelessness with the holy thing is the symptom; the dead reverence underneath is the disease.

The question turns this toward us, because every believer holds sacred things: a clean conscience, sexual purity, honesty before God, the lips that confess Christ. These can be handled carelessly long before they are handed over outright. We make small jokes about what once

made us tremble. We grow casual with a boundary we once guarded. The casualness is the warning we usually ignore.

What guards the sacred is not white-knuckled vigilance but renewed reverence, a recovered sense of awe at what God has set apart in us. Samson needed to remember that he belonged to God before he ever met Delilah. So do we. The fence around the holy thing is held up by love and fear of God, and when those weaken, the fence is already half down.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The outward sign (the hair) was sacred only because of the inward consecration it represented.
- Reverence for holy things erodes gradually long before any outward surrender occurs.
- Believers hold sacred trusts (purity, conscience, honesty, confession) that can be handled carelessly.
- Casualness and joking about what once made us tremble is an early warning of decay.
- The fence around holy things is held up by reverence and love for God, not mere willpower.

Discussion Prompts

- What is something sacred in your walk with God that you used to guard carefully but now handle casually?
- How does reverence (a recovered sense of awe) protect us better than mere willpower?
- What would it look like to 'remember you belong to God' before temptation, the way Samson should have?

Question 5

Student Question:

Judges 16:17 ties Samson's strength to his Nazirite consecration to God, the unshorn hair being the outward sign. What does this teach about the relationship between the outward sign and the inward reality of being set apart for God? Why was the hair never the true source of his strength?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

At last Samson tells the whole truth: 'There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb' (16:17). It is crucial to see what he says and what he does not say. He ties his strength to his consecration to God, signified by the hair. The hair was never a magic charm. It was the outward token of a life belonging to the LORD, and the strength flowed from God, not from the follicles.

This distinction matters enormously, because it guards us from a superstitious reading of the story. Samson was not strong because of his hair the way a battery is charged. He was strong

because the LORD was with him, and the hair was the sign that he was set apart for the LORD. When the sign was violated, what really departed was not a substance in the hair but the presence of God, as the next verses make heartbreakingly clear (16:20).

This is a pattern God uses throughout Scripture: outward signs that point to inward realities. Circumcision pointed to a circumcised heart (Romans 2:28–29). Under the new covenant, baptism is the appointed point of obedient faith where one is buried with Christ and raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3–4; Acts 2:38), an outward act joined to an inward reality God Himself works. The sign is never a charm; it is meaningful because of the God who attached His promise to it.

For Samson, the lesson is that the sign and the reality belonged together. He could not keep the strength while despising the consecration, because the strength was always God's, given to a man set apart. When he let the sign be violated, he was really saying he no longer cared about belonging wholly to God, and the reality went with the sign.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The hair was an outward sign of consecration, never a magical source of power; the power was always God's.
- God repeatedly joins outward signs to inward realities (circumcision to the heart, Romans 2:28–29).
- The sign is meaningful because of God's attached promise, not because of any power in the thing itself.
- Despising the consecration could not coexist with keeping the strength, because the strength belonged to God.
- Under the new covenant, baptism is the appointed outward act of obedient faith united to the inward reality God works (Romans 6:3–4; Acts 2:38), not a mere charm or empty ritual.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it important to see that the hair was a sign and not the actual source of Samson's strength?
- How does the danger of treating the hair as a 'charm' warn us against treating any outward act as magic?
- What inward reality should each outward act of obedience express, and how do we keep the two together?

Question 6

Student Question:

The text says Samson rose and shook himself 'as at other times' and 'did not know that the LORD had departed from him' (16:20). When has your spiritual life felt 'as at other times' on the surface while something had quietly gone wrong underneath, and how would you even know?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here is one of the most quietly devastating sentences in the Bible: 'And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him' (16:20). Everything looked the same to Samson. He felt the same. He expected the same result. The only thing that had changed was the one thing that mattered, and he could not feel it gone.

This is the most frightening possibility in the spiritual life: that things can feel 'as at other times' on the surface while the presence and power of God have quietly withdrawn underneath. Samson had presumed on the LORD's nearness so long that its absence registered as nothing at all. He had grown so accustomed to grace that he no longer noticed whether it was there.

This is why Scripture commands us to examine ourselves rather than to coast on familiarity (2 Corinthians 13:5). The feeling of normalcy is not the same as the reality of fellowship with God. A person can keep all the outward motions, attend the assembly, sing the songs, even feel fine, while something underneath has gone wrong. The surface deceives precisely because it stays smooth.

How would we even know? Not by feelings, which lied to Samson, but by the Word that searches us, by an honest conscience, by the willingness to be examined, and by the fruit of our lives over time. The mercy in the verse is that Samson's failure is recorded so that we might check ourselves while there is still time, before the Philistines are upon us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Spiritual life can feel 'as at other times' on the surface while God's presence has quietly withdrawn.
- Feelings of normalcy are not reliable evidence of fellowship with God; the surface can deceive.
- Presuming on God's nearness dulls our ability to notice its absence.
- Self-examination by Scripture, conscience, and fruit is the safeguard, not how we happen to feel (2 Corinthians 13:5).
- The verse is recorded so we will check ourselves before the consequences arrive, not after.

Discussion Prompts

- How can a person's spiritual life feel completely normal while something underneath has actually gone wrong?
- If feelings can deceive us like they deceived Samson, what are more reliable ways to examine our true condition?
- When was a time you discovered, after the fact, that you had drifted further than you realized?

Question 7

Student Question:

Judges 16:20 says, 'he knew not that the LORD was departed from him.' What does this verse teach about the danger of presuming on God's presence? How can a person who once served God lose that nearness without realizing it, and what does Scripture say about how we keep from drifting (Hebrews 2:1, James 4:8)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the heaviest truth of the surface narrative: 'he knew not that the LORD was departed from him' (16:20). The presence of God, which Samson had treated as a permanent fixture, had withdrawn, and a man who once moved in the Spirit's power now stood weak as any other man. The departure was real, and it was the direct fruit of a long presumption that God would always be there no matter how Samson lived.

The sobering doctrine is that a person genuinely used by God can lose that nearness. This does not happen by a single misstep but by sustained drift, by treating grace as a guarantee that frees us to toy with sin. The New Testament repeats this warning to Christians in the plainest terms. 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God' (Hebrews 3:12). The danger is real for the saved, not merely the lost.

Scripture also tells us how the withdrawal happens and how it is prevented. It happens through the 'deceitfulness of sin' that hardens us little by little (Hebrews 3:13), which is why we are told to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, 'lest at any time we should let them slip' (Hebrews 2:1). It is prevented by drawing near: 'Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you' (James 4:8), and by daily mutual exhortation among the saints (Hebrews 3:13). Drift is the default; nearness must be pursued.

The pastoral aim is not paralyzing fear but watchful nearness. We are not meant to live terrified that God will abandon us on a whim, for He is faithful. We are meant to take His warnings seriously enough that we do not presume, keeping short accounts with sin and staying close to Him. Samson's tragedy is a mercy to us if it makes us draw near today rather than assume we always have tomorrow.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A person genuinely used by God can lose His nearness through sustained drift and presumption (Hebrews 3:12).
- The withdrawal comes through the 'deceitfulness of sin' that hardens gradually (Hebrews 3:13).
- We guard against it by heeding the Word ('lest we let them slip,' Hebrews 2:1) and daily exhorting one another.
- Drawing near is our part and a sure promise: 'Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you' (James 4:8).

- The warning is aimed at the saved, refuting the idea that nearness, once had, can never be lost.
- The proper response is watchful nearness and short accounts with sin, not paralyzing dread, since God is faithful to the one who draws near.

Discussion Prompts

- How can someone who once walked closely with God lose that nearness without realizing it has happened?
- What does Scripture say is our part in maintaining nearness to God (Hebrews 2:1; James 4:8)?
- How do we take this warning seriously without falling into anxious, joyless fear of God abandoning us?

Question 8

Student Question:

After his eyes are put out, Samson is bound and set grinding in the prison house (16:21). Where has sin in your own life cost you something it promised it never would, and what 'grinding' have you found yourself doing that you never meant to do?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The consequences arrive in a single brutal verse: 'the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house' (16:21). The eyes that lusted are put out. The man who roamed freely is bound. The deliverer who broke every cord is now grinding grain like a beast in the very city where his sin began. Sin paid its wages with grim precision.

There is a haunting symmetry here. Samson's eyes had led him astray again and again, 'she pleased him well' in his eyes (14:3), and now the eyes are gone. Gaza, the scene of his first recorded fall in this chapter, becomes his prison. The free man is now turning a mill he never chose. Sin had promised freedom and pleasure and delivered blindness and slavery, which is precisely what sin always does though it never advertises it.

This is the lie of every temptation laid bare. Sin says it will give and never take, satisfy and never enslave, please and never cost. Samson believed it for years. The bill came due all at once. 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap' (Galatians 6:7). The grinding in the prison house is sowing and reaping made visible.

For the student, the question is not academic. Sin always costs more than it said it would, and the cost often takes a form we never imagined: a broken relationship, a captive habit, a lost reputation, a deadened heart, a 'grinding' we never meant to be doing. Naming that cost

honestly is part of repentance, and seeing it clearly is part of why God recorded Samson at the mill.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sin pays real wages; the consequences in this verse are precise and severe (Romans 6:23; Galatians 6:7).
- There is a haunting symmetry: the eyes that lusted are blinded, Gaza becomes the prison, the free man is bound.
- Sin promises freedom and pleasure but delivers blindness and slavery; it never advertises its true cost.
- The cost of sin often takes a form we never imagined (a captive habit, a broken bond, a deadened heart).
- Honestly naming what sin has cost us is part of genuine repentance.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the picture of a blind, bound Samson grinding in prison expose the lie that sin tells about itself?
- Where has a sin in your life cost you something it promised it never would?
- What 'grinding' (a consequence you never meant to be living with) has sin produced in your own life?

Question 9

Student Question:

Judges 16:22 says, 'the hair of his head began to grow again,' and at the temple Samson prays, 'O Lord GOD, remember me' (16:28), and God grants strength for a final act of faith, so that Samson is later named among the faithful (Hebrews 11:32). Hold two truths together from this chapter. First, the sober warning: a man God genuinely used drifted, presumed on grace, lost the LORD's presence, and reaped blindness, bondage, and death, which is why the New Testament warns the saved 'let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall' (1 Corinthians 10:12; Hebrews 3:12-14; 2 Peter 2:20-22). Second, the deep mercy: God answered a broken, repentant man one last time. How does Samson's story refute the idea that once a person is saved he can never fall away, while still magnifying the mercy of God toward the penitent?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Now the chapter turns, and the turn is everything. Almost in passing, as if whispered, we read, 'Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven' (16:22). It is a small line, but it is the door of hope. God is not finished with Samson. The sign begins to return, and with it, the possibility that the man might yet belong wholly to God again. Mercy is quietly at work in a prison house.

At the temple of Dagon, with the lords mocking and crediting their idol for delivering Samson (16:23–25), the broken man prays as he has not prayed in the whole book: ‘O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once’ (16:28). Here at last is a humbled Samson, leaning not on his own strength but pleading for God’s, asking to be remembered. God answers, granting strength for a final act, and Samson brings down the temple, killing more in his death than in his life (16:30). Hebrews 11:32 later names him among the faithful.

Hold the two truths the chapter forces together. First, the sober warning. A man God genuinely used drifted, presumed on grace, lost the LORD’s presence, and reaped blindness, bondage, and death. This is exactly why the New Testament warns the saved, not the lost: ‘let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall’ (1 Corinthians 10:12). Believers can become ‘again entangled’ and end worse than the beginning (2 Peter 2:20–22), can ‘depart from the living God’ (Hebrews 3:12), can ‘fall from grace’ (Galatians 5:4). Samson is Scripture’s vivid refutation of the doctrine that once a person is saved he can never be lost. The danger is real, and presuming on grace while toying with sin is the road to ruin.

Second, the deep and undeserved mercy. The same God who departed from a presumptuous man answered a broken one. Samson did not earn his way back; he turned, and pleaded, and God in mercy remembered him. This is the gospel shape of repentance: not that we are too far gone for God, but that the penitent who finally bows is met by a God rich in mercy. We must not soften the warning to magnify the grace, nor soften the grace to magnify the warning. Samson teaches us to fear drifting and to trust the mercy that meets the one who turns, and both together point us to Christ, in whom God remembers and restores all who come to Him in obedient faith.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- ‘The hair began to grow again’ (16:22) signals God’s mercy quietly at work toward a ruined man.
- Samson’s final prayer (16:28) is the first humble, dependent prayer in his story, the posture of repentance.
- The warning: a man God used drifted, presumed, lost God’s presence, and reaped ruin; the saved must ‘take heed lest he fall’ (1 Corinthians 10:12).
- Scripture plainly teaches the saved can fall away (Hebrews 3:12; 2 Peter 2:20–22; Galatians 5:4), refuting ‘once saved, always saved.’
- The mercy: God answered a broken, penitent man and named him among the faithful (Hebrews 11:32); the penitent is never beyond grace.
- The warning and the mercy must be held together, not played against each other; both point us to Christ who restores all who turn to Him.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Samson's story show that a person God once used can genuinely fall away, against the idea of 'once saved, always saved'?
- How do we honor the seriousness of the warning without despairing of God's mercy toward the broken and repentant?
- What does Samson's last prayer ('remember me') teach us about how God meets a person who finally turns back to Him?

Question 10

Student Question:

Samson's hair grew back, but more than that, his heart finally bowed in prayer (16:28). Name one specific area of slow, quiet drift in your own life where Jesus is calling you back now, before 'the LORD has departed' goes unnoticed. What is the one step of return He is forming in you through this chapter?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter does not end in the rubble of Dagon's temple by accident. It ends with a man who, blind and bound, finally bowed his heart in prayer. The hair grew back, but the deeper miracle is that the heart turned. That is where God is aiming with each of us through this chapter, not at admiring Samson's last feat of strength, but at the quiet return that made it possible.

The most important word in this whole study, for your own life, may be the word 'drift.' Samson did not decide one morning to lose the LORD's presence. He simply drifted, carelessly, comfortably, presumptuously, until the day the Spirit was gone and he could not even feel it. The mercy of God in recording this is to ask each of us, before that day, where are you drifting right now, while it still feels 'as at other times'?

This is a question for one specific area, not a general resolution to do better. Perhaps it is a purity you have grown casual about, a prayer life that has quietly thinned, an honesty that has begun to bend, a relationship slowly pulling you from the Lord, a sin you keep returning to and excusing. Name the one. The whole point of Samson at the mill is that we would not need to be ground down before we turn.

And here is the gospel hope that frames it all: the same God who answered a blind, broken Samson answers the one who draws near to Him today. 'Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you' (James 4:8). Jesus is forming in you, through this chapter, not despair but return, one concrete step back toward Him this week, taken now, while there is still time, and with the full confidence that He remembers and receives all who come.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The chapter aims not at admiring Samson's strength but at the heart that finally turned back to God.

- The key danger is drift, gradual, comfortable, presumptuous, the loss of God's presence felt as nothing.
- Genuine response means naming one specific area of drift, not making a vague resolve to improve.
- God meets the one who draws near today with mercy, not condemnation (James 4:8).
- Jesus forms in us return rather than despair; the step back is to be taken now, while there is time.

Discussion Prompts

- In what one specific area of your life are you currently drifting, while everything still feels normal?
- What is the single concrete step of return Jesus is calling you to take this week, before the drift goes further?
- How does the promise that God answered a broken Samson give you confidence to turn back now rather than later?