

S T U D Y G U I D E

THE
LIFE
OF



SAMSON

W. ROBERT GODFREY

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The Life of Samson

W. Robert Godfrey



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

Renew your Mind.

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Contents

Introduction	3
Study Schedules	5
1. The Riddle of Samson	6
2. The Need for Judges	13
3. The Need for Samson	20
4. The Promise of Samson.....	27
5. The Selfishness of Samson.....	34
6. The Calling of Samson.....	41
7. The Foolishness of Samson	48
8. The Humiliation of Samson.....	55
9. The Victory of Samson	62
10. The Christian Context for Samson	69

Introduction

A man of incredible physical strength and debilitating moral weakness, Samson was nevertheless God’s instrument to rescue Israel from the Philistines during the era of the judges. In light of these contrasts, we are faced with this key question: What, exactly, are we to make of Samson and his place in the Lord’s purposes? In this series, Dr. W. Robert Godfrey considers the life of Samson, highlighting vital theological lessons and exploring what this judge tells us about Christian living.

This study guide is a companion to the video teaching series. Whether you are using the DVDs, streaming the videos on Ligonier.org, or going through the course in Ligonier Connect, this resource is designed to help you make the most of the learning experience. For each message in the series, there is a corresponding lesson in this guide. Here is what you will find in each lesson:

INTRODUCTION	<p>The introduction is a brief paragraph that summarizes the content covered in the lecture and considered in the study guide lesson.</p> <p>How to use: Use the introduction to each lesson to get a sense of the big picture before watching the video. Refer to these statements as you work through the study guide to remind you of what have already covered and where you are headed.</p>
LEARNING GOALS	<p>The learning goals are the knowledge and skills the study guide lesson will endeavor to equip you with as you work through the lecture content.</p> <p>How to use: Familiarize yourself with the goals of each lesson before engaging its contents. Keeping the overall purpose in mind as you watch each video and reflect on or discuss the questions will help you get the most out of each lesson.</p>
KEY IDEAS	<p>The key ideas are the major points or takeaways from the lecture.</p> <p>How to use: Use these ideas to prepare yourself for each lesson and to review previous lessons. They describe specifically the knowledge each lecture is communicating.</p>

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	<p>The questions are the guided reflection and/or discussion component of the lesson that are intended to help you prepare for, process, and organize what you are learning.</p> <p>How to use: Reflect on individually or discuss in a group the questions in the order in which they appear in the lesson. The  icon indicates where to play and pause the video for questions that address specific segments of the lecture.</p>
PRAYER	<p>The prayer section offers suggestions for how to close the lesson in prayer with respect to what was taught in the lecture.</p> <p>How to use: Consider using each lesson's prayer section as a guide to personal or group prayer. These sections follow the ACTS prayer model, which you can learn more about in R.C. Sproul's Crucial Questions booklet <i>Who Is the Holy Spirit?</i> This helpful guide is available as a free e-book at Ligonier.org.</p>
REVIEW QUIZ	<p>The review quiz is a set of six multiple-choice questions that appear at the end of each lesson.</p> <p>How to use: Use each quiz to check your comprehension and memory of the major points covered in each lecture. It will be most beneficial to your learning if you take a lesson's quiz either sometime between lessons or just before you begin the next lesson in the study guide.</p>
ANSWER KEY	<p>The answer key provides explanations for the reflection and discussion questions and answers to the multiple-choice questions in the review quiz.</p> <p>How to use: Use the answer key to check your own answers or when you do not know the answer. Note: Do not give in too quickly; struggling for a few moments to recall an answer reinforces it in your mind.</p>

Study Schedules

The following table suggests four plans for working through *The Life of Samson* video teaching series and this companion study guide. Whether you are going through this series on your own or with a group, these schedules should help you plan your study path.

	Extended 12-Week Plan	Standard 10-Week Plan	Abbreviated 6-Week Plan	Intensive 4-Week Plan
WEEK	LESSON			
1	*	1	1	1–2
2	1	2	2 & 3	3–5
3	2	3	4 & 5	6–8
4	3	4	6 & 7	9–10
5	4	5	8 & 9	
6	5	6	10	
7	6	7		
8	7	8		
9	8	9		
10	9	10		
11	10			
12	*			

* For these weeks, rather than completing lessons, spend your time discussing and praying about your learning goals for the study (the first week) and the most valuable takeaways from the study (the last week).

1

The Riddle of Samson

INTRODUCTION

Samson is a puzzling character. What are we to make of him? Is he an example of faith or disobedience—or both? The English poet John Milton called Samson a “mirror of our fickle state.” In this lesson, we will consider the reasons why the story of Samson deserves close examination and his place in the context of the book of Judges.

LEARNING GOALS

When you have finished this lesson, you should be able to:

- Identify the goals for this study of Samson
- Summarize the purpose of the book of Judges

KEY IDEAS

- Proper Bible study requires us to consider both the big picture of Scripture and the specific context of what we are studying.
- The book of Judges is a record of Israel’s spiritual decline.
- The story of Samson serves as a mirror in which we can see ourselves as we really are.

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

🕒 Before the Video

What Do You Think?

- What do you already know about Samson? What do you think of his story?
- Why are you undertaking this study of Samson? What do you hope to get out of it?

Scripture Reading

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. . . . And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised.

—Hebrews 11:32–34, 39

- What does this passage tell us about Samson? How does it assess his life?

🕒 During the Video

▶ *Play the video; pause at 12:57.*

What Samson Teaches Us

- How is Samson both a mirror and a riddle?
- Dr. Godfrey highlights three lessons we will learn from this study of Samson. Summarize in your own words what Dr. Godfrey intends to address in these lessons.
 - Spiritual failures
 - Relevance to Christ
 - Importance of context

▶ *Play the video to the end.*

The Context of the Story

- How many judges does Dr. Godfrey see in the book of Judges? What is the significance of this number?
- Who are the two most prominent judges in the book of Judges? What makes them the most important?
- The book of Judges is not a comprehensive survey of all of Israel's judges but a series of snapshots that communicate a particular message. What is that message?

🕒 After the Video

- How does the book of Judges point to Christ? How is this made especially clear in the stories of the best judge, Deborah, and the worst judge, Samson?

If you are in a group, read together the account of Deborah in Judges 4–5. Then, work together to create a list of the qualities that marked Deborah as a good judge. Save this list and be prepared to return to it in lesson 7, “The Foolishness of Samson.”

- Hebrews commends Samson for his faith and mighty deeds (Heb. 11:32–40), yet the story of Samson in Judges portrays him not as a savior of Israel but as Israel itself in all its spiritual failings. How can Samson be both a failure and faithful?

If you are in a group, have the members name Samson’s memorable acts and discuss whether each is evidence of faith or failure.

- What are the two most important concepts you learned in this lesson? Why did these stand out to you? How do you think these concepts will affect the way you see Samson’s story?

If you are in a group, have each member identify one or two concepts that were most outstanding to them and discuss their significance together.

PRAYER

- Praise God for the sovereignty and love He displays in His care for His people.
- Confess your frequent unreceptiveness to God as He speaks through His Word.
- Thank God for His gift of Christ, the perfect Judge to whom Israel’s judges pointed.
- Ask God to cause you to take to heart the lessons He has for you from the life of Samson.

REVIEW QUIZ

1. Dr. Godfrey highlighted a few reasons why it is valuable to study the life of Samson. Which of the following is *not* one of those reasons?
 - a. It is a story that points us to Christ.
 - b. It is a story that helps us see how to study the Bible properly.
 - c. It is a story that helps us see the salvation of Israel.
 - d. It is a story that warns about spiritual failures to avoid.
2. Which of these leaders in the book of Judges was not actually a judge?
 - a. Gideon
 - b. Deborah
 - c. Samson
 - d. Barak
3. Which of these judges in the book of Judges was closest to a perfect judge?
 - a. Deborah
 - b. Othniel
 - c. Gideon
 - d. Ehud

-
4. How many judges are discussed in the book of Judges?
 - a. 12
 - b. 13
 - c. 6
 - d. 7

 5. The book of Judges provides us with a comprehensive history of the period from Joshua to Saul.
 - a. True
 - b. False

 6. Which of the following statements best summarizes the spiritual trajectory of the judges?
 - a. With exceptions, they tended to represent the worst of Israel's sinfulness.
 - b. Each subsequent judge experienced greater longevity and blessing.
 - c. The judges followed the decline of Israel, experiencing shorter and shorter reigns and less and less blessing.
 - d. The faithfulness of the judges is sporadic; there is no pattern of spiritual decline.

Answer Key—The Riddle of Samson

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

🕒 Before the Video

What Do You Think?

These are personal questions. The answers should be based on your own knowledge and experience.

Scripture Reading

- What does this passage tell us about Samson? What is this assessment of his life?

This passage tells us that Samson, despite what we know (or will learn) about him from the book of Judges, is commendable on account of his faith. That faith, furthermore, is evident in his actions.

🕒 During the Video

What Samson Teaches Us

- How is Samson both a mirror and a riddle?

Samson is a mirror in that through him we can see ourselves as we truly are. Samson is also a riddle since we know from Scripture that he was a man of great sin and great faith. The key to understanding Samson's story is to see how both of these can be true of the same person.

- Dr. Godfrey highlights three lessons we will learn from this study of Samson. Summarize in your own words what Dr. Godfrey intends to address in these lessons.

Spiritual failures: The story of Samson is a series of warnings about spiritual failures to avoid. One of the main lessons we learn from Samson is what not to do.

Relevance to Christ: Samson and the rest of Israel's judges point to Christ. They are imperfect saviors of Israel who highlight the need for the only perfect Judge/Savior, Christ Himself.

Importance of context: This series will examine the story of Samson in the context of the whole of Scripture (the big picture) and the specific context of Samson in the book of Judges. Both contexts are necessary for Bible study and to learn the lessons God has for us in the life of Samson.

The Context of the Story

- How many judges does Dr. Godfrey see in the book of Judges? What is the significance of this number?

Dr. Godfrey identifies twelve judges, although he admits that the precise number is debated among scholars. He argues that this number is supported by the evidence of the biblical record and is likely given the significance of the number twelve. It represents the tribes of Israel and therefore speaks to both the composition of God's people and how God relates to His people.

- Who are the two most prominent judges in the book of Judges? What makes them the most important?

Gideon and Samson are the two most prominent judges. They are given the closest and longest attention of any of the judges. Also, their stories are the most complex and mixed in terms of the lessons they teach.

- The book of Judges is not a comprehensive survey of all of Israel's judges but a series of snapshots that communicate a particular message. What is that message?

In the book of Judges, God is giving us a series of snapshots that show the spiritual decline of Israel. The diminishing reigns and shrinking families of the judges reflect the gradual reduction in Israel's blessing.

🕒 After the Video

- How does the book of Judges point to Christ? How is this made especially clear in the stories of the best judge, Deborah, and the worst judge, Samson?

The judges are imperfect and therefore insufficient saviors of Israel. The book of Judges makes it clear that Israel needs a perfect and all-powerful Savior. Samson is the culminating judge, the picture of how far Israel had fallen and how incapable human judges were to save the nation. Even Deborah, the best judge (who was too good to be used as an example of God's weak and needy leaders in Hebrews), could not save God's people.

- Hebrews commends Samson for his faith and mighty deeds (Heb. 11:32–40), yet the story of Samson in Judges portrays him not as a savior of Israel but as Israel itself in all its spiritual failings. How can Samson be both a failure and faithful?

Samson's spiritual failures and faithfulness are not mutually exclusive. The book of Judges shows us the specific context of Samson's largely dishonorable and disappointing life. The letter to the Hebrews shows us the bigger picture of Samson's significance in light of how God used him.

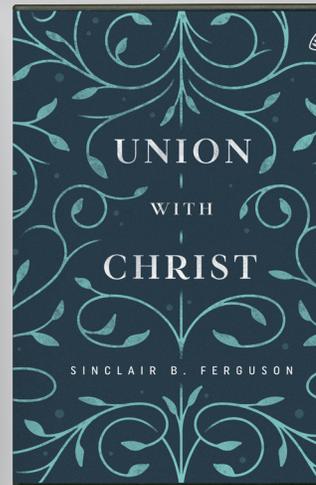
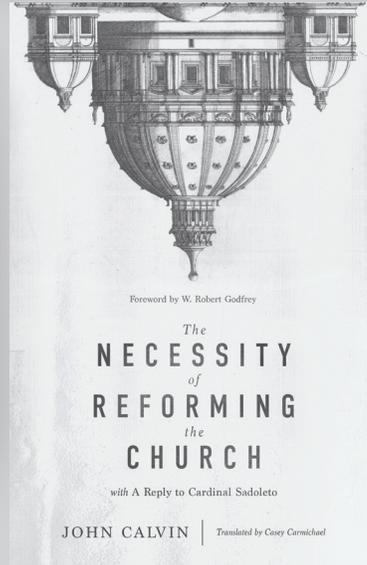
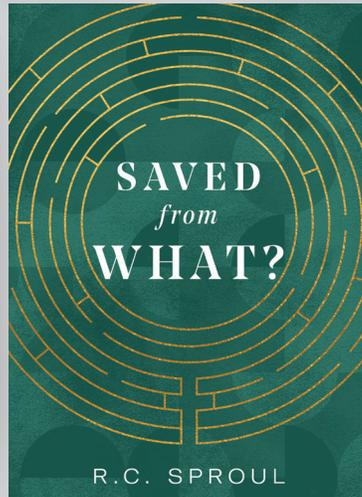
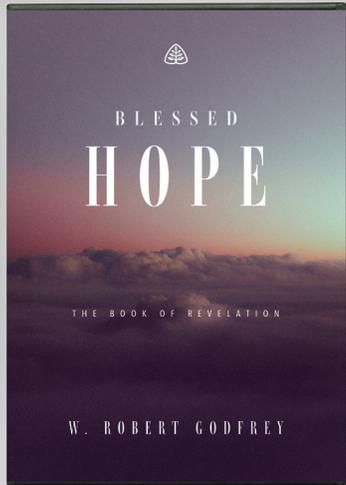
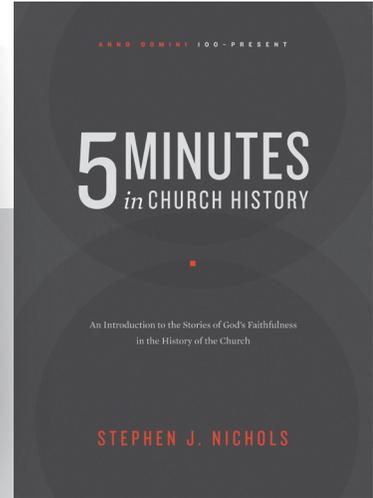
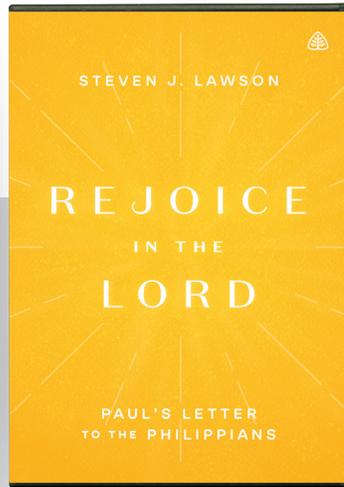
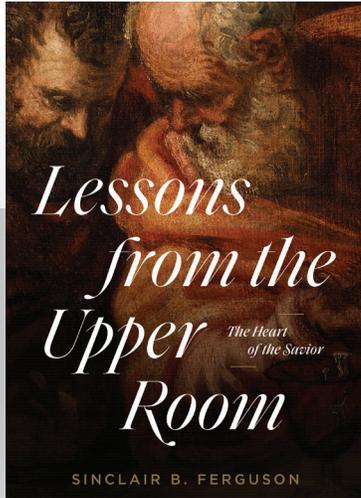
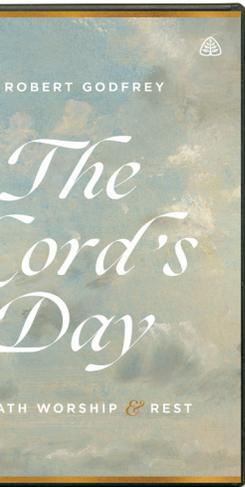
- What are the two most important concepts you learned in this lesson? Why did these stand out to you? How do you think these concepts will affect the way you see Samson's story?

The answers to these questions should express what you considered the most outstanding and personally relevant lessons from this lecture.

REVIEW QUIZ

1. **C.**
All of the judges in the book of Judges were appointed to save Israel, including Samson. But Samson doesn't represent a savior of Israel; he is Israel. His life reveals all the weaknesses and spiritual failures of the nation. In this way, Samson's story points to Christ, the only perfect Judge and Savior.
2. **D.**
Barak is a prominent figure in Judges, but he was not a judge himself. He served in a supporting role to Deborah, who was the real judge at the time.
3. **A.**
While Othniel, Ehud, and Deborah were all very positive judges, Deborah most closely portrays a perfect judge. When the fathers in Israel failed, God raised up a mother in Israel to lead them. Of course, she was not perfect. Deborah, like the rest, points to the need for the truly perfect Judge, Christ Himself.
4. **A.**
While the book of Judges is not exhaustive in its coverage of Israel's judges, it does address twelve of them. However, we're only given significant detail about six of them, the "major judges": Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson.
5. **B.**
Rather than an exhaustive history of this period, Judges provides a series of snapshots to trace the spiritual decline—and suffering—of Israel. It also focuses only on specific areas, since the judges ruled regionally rather than covering the whole country.
6. **C.**
The general spiritual trajectory of the judges is decline. Whereas the earlier major judges ruled forty years, the last three minor judges ruled less than ten years each, reflecting a decrease in God's blessing. The spiritual decline of the judges followed the spiritual decline of Israel as a whole.

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the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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