



### The Mighty

Even before Sampson was born, his strength was being established. The angel of the Lord prophesied Sampson's conception and instructed Sampson's mother to initiate a sacred vow that was to set her son apart for God's work. The angel declared that Sampson was to be the leader through whom God would begin Israel's deliverance from the Philistines. After Sampson's birth, the Spirit of God strengthened him and worked through him to accomplish victories and to lead God's people for 20 years.

People were awed by Sampson's strength. To his own detriment, even Sampson was impressed with his abilities. He all too often relied upon emotion and pride rather than on wisdom and humility. The man who had it all was willing to risk everything to feed his sensual and egotistical appetites. His last days were spent blind and in prison. He died exacting revenge.

### The Meek

Ruth's birth wasn't heralded by the Angel of the Lord. She was born a Moabite, a daughter of the nation that had denied Moses passage during the Exodus, a nation which had become a snare to the people of God. When given the chance to choose between self-preservation and selfless devotion, Ruth courageously and humbly chose the latter. This daughter of Moab became the picture of faithfulness. Her resume lacked Sampson-esque credentials and feats of strength, but her testimony proved that she was better "than seven sons" (Ruth 4:15).

God has granted that you have strengths and abilities. If you are a follower of Jesus, part of your resume clearly lists spiritual gifts given by God so that you will be able to do the work God has prepared for you. The question of the day, however, is whether we are more likely to depend on our God-given strengths and abilities or on the God who gave them to us.

### Personal Reflection and Application

*Keep a journal to address the following questions and topics.*

**AC** Spend some time this week reflecting on the focus of your dependence. On whom or what do you typically depend for your material needs? For direction? For comfort? For security? For your identity? For encouragement?

**AC** What is your working definition of humility? Examine your life for signs of humility and for signs of pride.

**Q** Orpah, Naomi's other daughter-in-law, did the sensible thing. She returned to her own people and to the possibility of a safer, more enjoyable life. Ruth did the courageous thing. She demonstrated devotion, even when devotion seemed absurd. To what extent have you chosen the "sensible" and "safer" path in your relationship with God? To what extent have you been courageous in your devotion to him—even to the absurd?

**P** *Overwhelm me with your greatness so that I might know that you and only you are worthy of being in charge.*



**Small Groups**

Opening Question: Describe one personal success that you experienced in the past three months and one personal failure that you committed.

**AC** Read the stories of Sampson (Judges 13-16) and Ruth (Book of Ruth). Compare and contrast their lives. In what ways are you like Sampson and in what ways are you like Ruth?

**AC** One of the significant differences between Sampson and Ruth is the character trait of humility—a quality that gets a lot of attention in the Bible. Examine the following passages to gain an understanding of how God understands and values humility. Numbers 12:3; Deuteronomy 8:1-5; 1 Samuel 2:1-10; 2 Kings 22:19-20; 2 Chronicles 7:13-14; Psalm 18:27; Psalm 25:9; Proverbs 11:2; 15:33; Micah 6:8; Zephaniah 2:3; Matthew 18:1-4; Luke 14:7-11; 18:9-14; Ephesians 4:2-3; Philippians 2:1-13; Titus 3:2; James 3:13-16; 4:4-10.

**Q** How might your small group help your church demonstrate Ruth-like devotion to God? How might you help your church to avoid the pitfalls into which Sampson kept stumbling?

**P** *Teach us humility.*

**One-on-One Relationships**

Humility receives extensive attention in the Bible. You can help your disciple participate with the Holy Spirit in developing a Christ-like, humble spirit. The following are some possible questions you can use to explore what godly humility might look like:

**Softballs**

*What might be some of the greatest acts of humility throughout history?*

*Who are some people who you would describe as being humble?*

*What role did humility play in your home growing up?*

**Hardballs**

*What scares you about becoming more humble?*

*In what areas of your life do you struggle with pride?*

*What parts of your life do you find hardest to trust into God's care?*

*What obstacles (external to you and inside you) keep you from depending on God more?*

*To what extent do you believe that God will lift you up if you choose to humble yourself?*

Study the texts identified in the *Small Groups* column.

**Families**

*Pick and tweak items below to fit your own family's context.*

**AC** As a family, act out the stories of Sampson killing the lion and then eating the honey and of Sampson's betrayal by Delilah. Talk about how pride and conceit can mess things up in our lives.

**AC** Have the family draw pictures of a donkey's jawbone and of a stalk of wheat. Read together the stories of Sampson and Ruth. At dinner each night, have everyone hold up their donkey's jawbone and share how they let pride get in their way during the day. Then have each person hold up his or her picture of wheat, and share how he or she demonstrated Ruth-like devotion to God.

**AC** Talk about Sampson and Ruth with your family. On one day, divide the newspaper between family members with the assignment to find examples of people *pulling a Sampson* and examples of when people demonstrated humility and courageous devotion. Share and reflect on your findings with each other.

**P** *God, help our parents model humility.*

*God, help our kids develop humility.*