

## Disciple Series Week 4 Readings

### Day 1

This week our daily readings are taken from the life of Samson. Read the passage, reflect and pray and also do the exercise that is provided.

#### **Read: The Birth of Samson (Judges 13)**

1-5 Again the Israelites did evil in the Lord's sight, so the Lord handed them over to the Philistines, who oppressed them for forty years. In those days a man named Manoah from the tribe of Dan lived in the town of Zorah. His wife was unable to become pregnant, and they had no children. The angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and said, "Even though you have been unable to have children, you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son. So be careful; you must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and his hair must never be cut. For he will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. He will begin to rescue Israel from the Philistines."

6-7 The woman ran and told her husband, "A man of God appeared to me! He looked like one of God's angels, terrifying to see. I didn't ask where he was from, and he didn't tell me his name. But he told me, 'You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food. For your son will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from the moment of his birth until the day of his death.'"

8-10 Then Manoah prayed to the Lord, saying, "Lord, please let the man of God come back to us again and give us more instructions about this son who is to be born." God answered Manoah's prayer, and the angel of God appeared once again to his wife as she was sitting in the field. But her husband, Manoah, was not with her. So she quickly ran and told her husband, "The man who appeared to me the other day is here again!"

11-13 Manoah ran back with his wife and asked, "Are you the man who spoke to my wife the other day?" "Yes," he replied, "I am." So Manoah asked him, "When your words come true, what kind of rules should govern the boy's life and work?" The angel of the Lord replied, "Be sure your wife follows the instructions I gave her. She must not eat grapes or raisins, drink wine or any other alcoholic drink, or eat any forbidden food."

15-18 Then Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, "Please stay here until we can prepare a young goat for you to eat." "I will stay," the angel of the Lord replied, "but I will not eat anything. However, you may prepare a burnt offering as a sacrifice to the Lord." (Manoah didn't realize it was the angel of the Lord.) Then Manoah asked the angel of the Lord, "What is your name? For when all this comes true, we want to honor you." "Why do you ask my name?" the angel of the Lord replied. "It is too wonderful for you to understand."

19-20 Then Manoah took a young goat and a grain offering and offered it on a rock as a sacrifice to the Lord. And as Manoah and his wife watched, the Lord did an amazing thing. As the flames from the altar shot up toward the sky, the angel of the Lord ascended in the fire. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell with their faces to the ground.

21-25 The angel did not appear again to Manoah and his wife. Manoah finally realized it was the angel of the Lord, and he said to his wife, "We will certainly die, for we have seen God!" But his wife said, "If the Lord were going to kill us, he wouldn't have accepted our burnt offering and grain offering. He wouldn't have appeared to us and told us this wonderful thing and done these miracles." When her son was born, she named him Samson. And the Lord blessed him as he grew up. And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him while he lived in Mahaneh-dan, which is located between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol.

**Reflect:** What can we learn about being Spirit-empowered from this passage?

**Pray:** Ask God to work in you by His Spirit to stir you like he did to Samson.

**Do:** Look for an opportunity to step out in faith with courage to do something God wants you to do.

## Day 2

Here is the reading for today from the life of Samson. Read the passage, reflect and pray.

### Read: Samson's Riddle (Judges 14:1-20)

1-4 One day when Samson was in Timnah, one of the Philistine women caught his eye. When he returned home, he told his father and mother, "A young Philistine woman in Timnah caught my eye. I want to marry her. Get her for me." His father and mother objected. "Isn't there even one woman in our tribe or among all the Israelites you could marry?" they asked. "Why must you go to the pagan Philistines to find a wife?" But Samson told his father, "Get her for me! She looks good to me." His father and mother didn't realize the Lord was at work in this, creating an opportunity to work against the Philistines, who ruled over Israel at that time.

5-7 As Samson and his parents were going down to Timnah, a young lion suddenly attacked Samson near the vineyards of Timnah. At that moment the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him, and he ripped the lion's jaws apart with his bare hands. He did it as easily as if it were a young goat. But he didn't tell his father or mother about it. When Samson arrived in Timnah, he talked with the woman and was very pleased with her.

8-9 Later, when he returned to Timnah for the wedding, he turned off the path to look at the carcass of the lion. And he found that a swarm of bees had made some honey in the carcass. He scooped some of the honey into his hands and ate it along the way. He also gave some to his father and mother, and they ate it. But he didn't tell them he had taken the honey from the carcass of the lion.

10-13 As his father was making final arrangements for the marriage, Samson threw a party at Timnah, as was the custom for elite young men. When the bride's parents saw him, they selected thirty young men from the town to be his companions. Samson said to them, "Let me tell you a riddle. If you solve my riddle during these seven days of the celebration, I will give you thirty fine linen robes and thirty sets of festive clothing. But if you can't solve it, then you must give me thirty fine linen robes and thirty sets of festive clothing." "All right," they agreed, "let's hear your riddle."

14-17 So he said: "Out of the one who eats came something to eat; out of the strong came something sweet." Three days later they were still trying to figure it out. On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband to explain the riddle for us, or we will burn down your father's house with you in it. Did you invite us to this party just to make us poor?" So Samson's wife came to him in tears and said, "You don't love me; you hate me! You have given my people a riddle, but you haven't told me the answer." "I haven't even given the answer to my father or mother," he replied. "Why should I tell you?" So she cried whenever she was with him and kept it up for the rest of the celebration. At last, on the seventh day he told her the answer because she was tormenting him with her nagging. Then she explained the riddle to the young men.

18-20 So before sunset of the seventh day, the men of the town came to Samson with their answer: "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" Samson replied, "If you hadn't plowed with my heifer, you wouldn't have solved my riddle!" Then the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him. He went down to the town of Ashkelon, killed thirty men, took their belongings, and gave their clothing to the men who had solved his riddle. But Samson was furious about what had happened, and he went back home to live with his father and mother. So his wife was given in marriage to the man who had been Samson's best man at the wedding.

**Reflect:** What can we learn about being Spirit-empowered from this passage? How was God using Samson even though it may have seemed like he was being rebellious?

**Pray:** Ask God to use you to do His work by empowering you by His Spirit like he did with Samson.

**Do:** Reflect on the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23 and ask God to grow them in you:

1. Love is giving yourself unselfishly to others even if they don't deserve it.
2. Joy is being cheerful and pleasant despite your outward circumstances.
3. Peace is mental and emotional calmness in the midst of problems.
4. Patience is a willingness to wait without complaining in difficult situations.
5. Kindness is being concerned about people.

6. Goodness is doing good deeds for people.
7. Faithfulness is trustworthiness in all situations and with everything you have.
8. Gentleness is being humble rather than proud, rough or revengeful.
9. Self-control is being disciplined in all areas of your life.

### **Day 3**

Here is the reading for today from the life of Samson. Read the passage, reflect and pray.

#### **Read: Samson's Vengeance on the Philistines (Judges 15:1-20)**

1-5 Later on, during the wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat as a present to his wife. He said, "I'm going into my wife's room to sleep with her," but her father wouldn't let him in. "I truly thought you must hate her," her father explained, "so I gave her in marriage to your best man. But look, her younger sister is even more beautiful than she is. Marry her instead." Samson said, "This time I cannot be blamed for everything I am going to do to you Philistines." Then he went out and caught 300 foxes. He tied their tails together in pairs, and he fastened a torch to each pair of tails. Then he lit the torches and let the foxes run through the grain fields of the Philistines. He burned all their grain to the ground, including the sheaves and the uncut grain. He also destroyed their vineyards and olive groves.

6-8 "Who did this?" the Philistines demanded. "Samson," was the reply, "because his father-in-law from Timnah gave Samson's wife to be married to his best man." So the Philistines went and got the woman and her father and burned them to death. "Because you did this," Samson vowed, "I won't rest until I take my revenge on you!" So he attacked the Philistines with great fury and killed many of them. Then he went to live in a cave in the rock of Etam.

9-13 The Philistines retaliated by setting up camp in Judah and spreading out near the town of Lehi. The men of Judah asked the Philistines, "Why are you attacking us?" The Philistines replied, "We've come to capture Samson. We've come to pay him back for what he did to us." So 3,000 men of Judah went down to get Samson at the cave in the rock of Etam. They said to Samson, "Don't you realize the Philistines rule over us? What are you doing to us?" But Samson replied, "I only did to them what they did to me." But the men of Judah told him, "We have come to tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines." "All right," Samson said. "But promise that you won't kill me yourselves." "We will only tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines," they replied. "We won't kill you." So they tied him up with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

14-17 As Samson arrived at Lehi, the Philistines came shouting in triumph. But the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon Samson, and he snapped the ropes on his arms as if they were burnt strands of flax, and they fell from his wrists. Then he found the jawbone of a recently killed donkey. He picked it up and killed 1,000 Philistines with it. Then Samson said, "With the jawbone of a donkey, I've piled them in heaps! With the jawbone of a donkey, I've killed a thousand men!" When he finished his boasting, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was named Jawbone Hill.

18-20 Samson was now very thirsty, and he cried out to the Lord, "You have accomplished this great victory by the strength of your servant. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of these pagans?" So God caused water to gush out of a hollow in the ground at Lehi, and Samson was revived as he drank. Then he named that place "The Spring of the One Who Cried Out," and it is still in Lehi to this day. Samson judged Israel for twenty years during the period when the Philistines dominated the land.

**Reflect:** What happens when the Spirit comes on us and empowers us to do something significant for God?

**Pray:** Ask God to empower you by His Spirit to something great this week.

**Do:** Reflect on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and ask God to give you his gifts to do great things for him!

1. Administration: To provide practical support to leaders or ministries.
2. Discernment: To know if a message comes from God, man or Satan.
3. Encouragement: To share a word of encouragement with somebody.
4. Faith: To trust God in a situation that looks impossible
5. Giving: To give generously to meet needs around you.

6. Healing: To pray for the sick and see healing take place.
7. Helps: To help others reach their potential and achieve goals.
8. Leadership: To help people work together to do God's work.
9. Knowledge: To get understanding about a situation from God.
10. Mercy: To act compassionately toward people who are suffering.
11. Miracles: To perform supernatural acts to bring glory to God.
12. Prophecy: To share a message from God to build people up.
13. Service: To identify and meet the needs of people around you.
14. Teaching: To communicate God's Word so others understand it.
15. Wisdom: To share wise insights so people know how to act.

#### **Day 4**

Here is the reading for today from the life of Samson. Read the passage, reflect and pray.

##### **Samson Carries Away Gaza's Gates (Judges 16:1-3)**

1-3 One day Samson went to the Philistine town of Gaza and spent the night with a prostitute. Word soon spread that Samson was there, so the men of Gaza gathered together and waited all night at the town gates. They kept quiet during the night, saying to themselves, "When the light of morning comes, we will kill him." But Samson stayed in bed only until midnight. Then he got up, took hold of the doors of the town gate, including the two posts, and lifted them up, bar and all. He put them on his shoulders and carried them all the way to the top of the hill across from Hebron.

**Reflect:** What do you think God wants to do through you that you cannot do without his help?

**Pray:** Ask God to use you to do something supernatural in this coming week!

**Do:** Look for an opportunity to step out in faith with courage to do something God wants you to do.

#### **Day 5**

Here is the reading for today from the life of Samson. Read the passage, reflect and pray.

##### **Samson and Delilah (Judges 16:4-22)**

4-7 Some time later Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek. The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, "Entice Samson to tell you what makes him so strong and how he can be overpowered and tied up securely. Then each of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver." So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me what makes you so strong and what it would take to tie you up securely." Samson replied, "If I were tied up with seven new bowstrings that have not yet been dried, I would become as weak as anyone else."

8-9 So the Philistine rulers brought Delilah seven new bowstrings, and she tied Samson up with them. 9 She had hidden some men in one of the inner rooms of her house, and she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson snapped the bowstrings as a piece of string snaps when it is burned by a fire. So the secret of his strength was not discovered.

10-12 Afterward Delilah said to him, "You've been making fun of me and telling me lies! Now please tell me how you can be tied up securely." Samson replied, "If I were tied up with brand-new ropes that had never been used, I would become as weak as anyone else." So Delilah took new ropes and tied him up with them. The men were hiding in the inner room as before, and again Delilah cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But again Samson snapped the ropes from his arms as if they were thread.

13-16 Then Delilah said, "You've been making fun of me and telling me lies! Now tell me how you can be tied up securely." Samson replied, "If you were to weave the seven braids of my hair into the fabric on your loom and tighten it with the loom shuttle, I would become as weak as anyone else." So while he slept, Delilah wove the seven braids of his hair into the fabric. 14 Then she tightened it with the loom shuttle. Again she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson woke up, pulled back

the loom shuttle, and yanked his hair away from the loom and the fabric. Then Delilah pouted, "How can you tell me, 'I love you,' when you don't share your secrets with me? You've made fun of me three times now, and you still haven't told me what makes you so strong!" She tormented him with her nagging day after day until he was sick to death of it.

17–20 Finally, Samson shared his secret with her. "My hair has never been cut," he confessed, "for I was dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as anyone else." Delilah realized he had finally told her the truth, so she sent for the Philistine rulers. "Come back one more time," she said, "for he has finally told me his secret." So the Philistine rulers returned with the money in their hands. Delilah lulled Samson to sleep with his head in her lap, and then she called in a man to shave off the seven locks of his hair. In this way she began to bring him down, and his strength left him. Then she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" When he woke up, he thought, "I will do as before and shake myself free." But he didn't realize the Lord had left him.

21–22 So the Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes. They took him to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and forced to grind grain in the prison. But before long, his hair began to grow back.

**Reflect:** What do you think God wants to learn in this chapter?

**Pray:** Ask God to help you stay faithful to him throughout your whole life.

**Do:** Reflect on the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22–23 and ask God to grow them in you:

1. Love is giving yourself unselfishly to others even if they don't deserve it.
2. Joy is being cheerful and pleasant despite your outward circumstances.
3. Peace is mental and emotional calmness in the midst of problems.
4. Patience is a willingness to wait without complaining in difficult situations.
5. Kindness is being concerned about people.
6. Goodness is doing good deeds for people.
7. Faithfulness is trustworthiness in all situations and with everything you have.
8. Gentleness is being humble rather than proud, rough or revengeful.
9. Self-control is being disciplined in all areas of your life

## Day 6

Here is the reading for today from the life of Samson. Read the passage, reflect and pray.

### Samson's Final Victory (Judges 16:23–31)

23–25 The Philistine rulers held a great festival, offering sacrifices and praising their god, Dagon. They said, "Our god has given us victory over our enemy Samson!" When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, "Our god has delivered our enemy to us! The one who killed so many of us is now in our power!" Half drunk by now, the people demanded, "Bring out Samson so he can amuse us!" So he was brought from the prison to amuse them, and they had him stand between the pillars supporting the roof.

26–27 Samson said to the young servant who was leading him by the hand, "Place my hands against the pillars that hold up the temple. I want to rest against them." 27 Now the temple was completely filled with people. All the Philistine rulers were there, and there were about 3,000 men and women on the roof who were watching as Samson amused them.

28–31 Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "Sovereign Lord, remember me again. O God, please strengthen me just one more time. With one blow let me pay back the Philistines for the loss of my two eyes." Then Samson put his hands on the two center pillars that held up the temple. Pushing against them with both hands, he prayed, "Let me die with the Philistines." And the temple crashed down on the Philistine rulers and all the people. So he killed more people when he died than he had during his entire lifetime. Later his brothers and other relatives went down to get his body. They took him back home and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, where his father, Manoah, was buried. Samson had judged Israel for twenty years.

**Reflect:** What would you like God to do through you as he empowers you supernaturally?

**Pray:** Ask God to do work supernatural through you by His Spirit so your life makes a difference in the world.

**Do:** Reflect on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and ask God to give you his gifts to do great things for him!

1. Administration: To provide practical support to leaders or ministries.
2. Discernment: To know if a message comes from God, man or Satan.
3. Encouragement: To share a word of encouragement with somebody.
4. Faith: To trust God in a situation that looks impossible
5. Giving: To give generously to meet needs around you.
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8. Leadership: To help people work together to do God's work.
9. Knowledge: To get understanding about a situation from God.
10. Mercy: To act compassionately toward people who are suffering.
11. Miracles: To perform supernatural acts to bring glory to God.
12. Prophecy: To share a message from God to build people up.
13. Service: To identify and meet the needs of people around you.
14. Teaching: To communicate Gods Word so others understand it.
15. Wisdom: To share wise insights so people know how to act.

## **Day 7**

Our reading today is taken from the book of Acts and describes the impact that the filling of the Holy Spirit had on the early believers and the growth of the church.

### **The Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost (Acts 2)**

1-4 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5-13 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!' Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?' Some, however, made fun of them and said, 'They have had too much wine.'

14-21 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

22-25 'Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

29-36 'Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the

Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 'Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.'

37-41 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.' With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

**Reflect:** How have you experienced the filling of the Holy Spirit in your life?

**Pray:** Ask God to fill you with His Spirit!

**Do:** Look for an opportunity to step out in faith with courage to do something God wants you to do.