

August 16, 2026 Compromise Session 11 Judges 16:1-31

Nagging can wear a person down. Why do people nag? Because it works! Children learn from an early age that nagging can be a very useful tool to get what they want. One of my favorite childhood nags used while driving a long distance is, “Are we there yet?” In chapter 14 Samson succumbed to his fiancé’s nagging that wore him down. **Judges 14:17** *“Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people.”* Samson’s caving in to nagging only brought catastrophe to everyone. Jesus speaks truth to us in **Matthew 5:37** *“But let your Yes be Yes, and your No be No. For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.* There is much to learn from this lesson. One of the things is to not cave in to nagging, and that I do not nag at people (especially Dan).

Background Judges 13:1 *“Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.”* The tribe of Dan was most affected by the neighboring Philistines. God raised up a deliverer from that tribe. Samson was unique among the judges of Israel in that his selection was prophesied before his conception. An angel of the Lord appeared to Samson’s mother, who was barren, and announced she would bear a son. **Judges 13:5** *“For behold you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”* This would mean that the son could not touch any dead thing, cut his hair, or drink anything made from grapes. These outward signs showed that a person was dedicated to the Lord. For us, baptism is an outward sign that we have surrendered our life to Jesus. Samson did not appear to have much of a relationship with God, which affected some of his choices. Samson was largely self-serving throughout his life and demonstrated a willingness to compromise his Nazirite vow to get what he wanted. Samson’s downfall stemmed from the many compromises he made in his life.

Strength Departed (Judges 16:16-20) p. 102

Samson loved Delilah. **Judges 16:4** *“Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.”* Interesting that the name Delilah, means flirt. Samson’s love was most likely purely desire. There is no indication that Delilah shared Samson’s feelings, and when she was offered a large amount of money to betray him, she didn’t hesitate. Five thousand pieces of silver was worth more to her than Samson. Delilah’s own selfish ambition matched Samson’s and led to his defeat. Even with his super human strength, Samson could be weakened by nagging. Nagging weakened him before he met

Delilah, and she used nagging to coerce Samson to reveal the source of his strength. The Hebrew word for “nagged” means to torment, oppress, and harass. Wow! The evil woman wore Samson out. **Judges 16:16** *“And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death.”* That is the hold of Satan, to make a person so blind. Three times Samson had told Delilah what would make him lose his strength: being bound with fresh bowstrings (vs. 7), being bound with new ropes (vs. 11), and weaving his hair with the batten of the loom (vs. 14). Each of these three times when Delilah called the Philistines after Samson was bound, the Philistines were “lying in wait, staying with her in the room” (vs. 9). How stupid can a man or woman be? **Proverbs 1:7** *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* It is important to stay close to the Lord. Finally, Samson explained that his hair had never been cut because he was a Nazirite. He may have already been drinking wine, and he touched a dead thing when he took honey out of a lion carcass. The implication for Samson was that cutting his hair would be a complete rejection of his Nazirite vow—and a complete rejection of his commitment to God. By telling Delilah that cutting his hair would cause his strength to leave him, Samson chose Delilah over God. Maybe Samson wanted to be rid of the expectations and burden of God’s call upon his life and be like other men. Sometimes the world can tempt us into thinking that it has a better lifestyle. Delilah had acted on all three of the false claims Samson had made about the source of his strength. He surely must have known that Delilah would cut his hair and call the Philistines.

Vs. 18 Delilah realized Samson had told her the source of his strength. However, the real source of his strength was/is God, and when he severed the last connection, he became even less than other men. Delilah was certain this time Samson had told her the truth. She called the Philistine leaders to come and bring the money. While the enemy was in the next room, Samson fell asleep on Delilah’s lap. She had a man waiting close by to shave off Samson’s seven braids of hair. Everything worked perfectly according to Delilah’s plan. She succeeded in making Samson helpless as his strength left him while he slept.

Vs. 20 Of course, after Samson’s hair was cut and he was tied up, Delilah announced the Philistines were there. Samson may have thought it was business as usual and did not realize the Lord had left him. It is more accurate to say that Samson left the Lord. It did not mean that the Lord had altogether abandoned him. The Lord withdrew His strength from Samson. He must have been a long time away from the Lord to not notice His absence. Can you go a day without praying or reading/singing God’s word? It is possible to skip a time or two with God, but it is heavy on my Spirit, and I yearn to be with God. I can’t imagine not being with God all the time. Samson was a representative of the whole nation of Israel. The Israelites were driven by their own desires rather than any desire to please God. When they had victory over their oppressors, it was because of

God's intercession. It is as if to them God was like a genie in a bottle: they sought Him out when they needed something.

Samson Defeated (Judges 16:21-25) p. 104

Perhaps Samson's blindness helped him see. The lust of his eyes was what led him into most of his conflicts, and put him into the situation that allowed his capture. The world has many pretty things that can distract and allure us. Ironically, the man who lived his life by the lust of his eyes had his eyes gouged out. The man who could not be restrained was bound. The man who proudly went wherever he pleased was now forced to grind grain in prison like an animal. God was not finished with Samson. Even if we do get off track, God can still use what we messed up. Samson's eyes were gone, but his hair grew back.

Vs. 23 The Philistines celebrated their victory. Following the custom for victory celebration in the ancient Near East, the Philistines worshiped and thanked their god, Dagon, for the victory, which was capturing and subduing Samson. In the ancient world, when one group of people defeated another in battle, it was assumed that their god had defeated the god of the enemy. It was also customary for the victors to make offerings and even to bring plunder from the enemy's temples to put in the temple of their own god. In the case of Samson, he was the main war trophy. Samson's career was summarized in the statement: *"our enemy [Samson] who destroyed our land and who multiplied our dead..."*

Vs. 25 The Philistines were feeling pretty good thinking their god had delivered them from Samson. He was brought to the pagan temple from the prison. Seeing the once mighty enemy blind and broken was entertainment. The people enjoyed the sight. Samson would have needed help to find his way around or he would have stumbled and run into things. The Philistines placed him between the pillars. This would have given him something to lean on and would also have kept him visible but out of the way and on display. Like a trophy fish hung up by its tail, Samson was placed between the temple pillars. Archaeological evidence of Philistine temples suggests that the roof and upper story of this large temple were supported by two cedar pillars set on round stone bases.

Philistines Destroyed (Judges 1:26-31) p. 106

Samson had a plan when he asked to be led to the pillars supporting the temple. Many ancient temples had pillars both around the outer perimeter and within the central area of the structure. Samson appears to have been near some of the inner pillars of the temple of Dagon. These pillars were load bearing, and if they shifted or broke, the whole structure would collapse inward. The temple was full of leaders and dignitaries. Three thousand people were watching Samson entertain them from the roof, and more people were probably watching from the ground floor. Samson was probably played with, like a cat playing with a blind mouse, and tormented in front of the people for entertainment before he was put on display.

Vs. 28 “He called out to the Lord.” This is Samson’s first genuinely humble prayer to God. It shows a dependence on God’s power, not his. Samson asked God to remember him and act on his behalf. Second, he asked God to strengthen him, acknowledging that any strength he had came from God. The third thing he asked God for was to pay back the Philistines for blinding him. In this last request, Samson demonstrated a lack of understanding of his role before God. He seeks vengeance more than justice and payback more than serving God. His focus was on the wrong done to him rather than on delivering the Israelites from the Philistines’ oppression.

Vs. 29 Death, more than victory, is the theme of the end of Samson’s life. His last request was to die with the Philistines. It is important to remember that this heroic image does not fit with Samson’s overall character as demonstrated in the past. Samson was used to doing whatever he pleased. A life lived as a blind man, dependent on others, would not have been something he would have wanted. In fact, there is no indication that Samson was bringing down the temple for anyone else but himself. God used the event for other purposes, but He did so despite Samson. The verse concludes by noting that those Samson killed at his death were more than those he had killed in his life. This was his legacy: he was a killer of the Philistines.

Vs. 31 Samson may have forgotten his own people, but they did not forget him. The family buried the mighty warrior, and he judged Israel for twenty years. Both of his parents apparently were deceased, but his father’s entire family came and retrieved Samson’s body and buried him in his father’s tomb. Unfortunately, his time as judge cannot be deemed a success. The angel forecasted this outcome when he said that Samson would only begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines (*“and [Samson] shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”* 13:5). The story of Samson is fascinating. God provided a judge to help fight the Philistines even though the Israelites had not yet cried out for deliverance from their oppression. God raised up a judge from a barren woman who had not asked to be relieved of her barrenness. Samson did punish the Philistines to a limited extent, but did so because of his own selfish desires, not because he wished to honor God. He did not live up to his role as a deliverer. In this, Samson accurately reflected the character of Israel at the time of the judges: both did what was right in their own eyes. Thankfully, God was still working. He accomplished His purposes in spite of the deeply flawed nature of Samson and His people.

Things to think about:

- We should avoid putting ourselves in situations that will tempt us to sin.
- We must not compromise our faithfulness to God
- We should be confident that God does not abandon us in spite of our sin.