



REWIND

Every day, we're bombarded with messages around us that teach us to have confidence. Children are taught to build self-esteem. We hear voices that say, "believe in yourself" or "be true to your heart." Our society seems to value those who have a voice and garner a lot of attention. With Facebook, Twitter, or a blog, you can express yourself and have your own voice. You can get people to "follow" you, read your opinions, and see photos of what you're eating. All of these messages seem to be building a generation that's really prideful. People often believe that their opinion is best, and they don't listen to others. With accessible avenues to express ourselves, there's critical messages everywhere you look. Take a look at social media and you'll encounter folks who are preoccupied about themselves and what others think of them. (Hint: people's lives are never as perfect as they make them look in their Facebook photos.) Our society seems to elevate the prideful and forget about the humble. But what we learn from the Bible is that Samson became his own worst enemy because of his pride. And we see over and over again that God values humility. Let's see what Scripture says.

RETHINK

1. In what ways does our society promote the prideful?
2. Why do you think it's so hard to be humble?
3. Read Judges 14:1-3. Instead of listening to his parents, Samson insisted on marrying a Philistine woman. This meant that he wanted to marry a woman who worshipped idols. What message was Samson sending to his parents? To God?
4. Have you ever insisted on your own way instead of taking advice from someone wiser than you? What happened?
5. Proverbs 26:12 says, "Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." Do you agree or disagree with this? Why?
6. Have you ever witnessed the destructive nature of pride? How did someone's pride negatively affect things?
7. Read: James 4:6, James 4:10, Psalm 18:27, and Luke 14:11. What do you learn about pride and humility?
8. We can weaken pride and build humility by remembering our dependence on God. What is one way you can remind yourself of your dependence on God in order to build humility?

RESPOND

Pastor Todd asked a series of questions on Sunday to determine if you are prideful. Which of these stands out the most to you?

1. Do you ever think you are better than someone else?
2. Do you have a critical spirit? (Are you a complainer?)
3. Are you a control freak?
4. Are you a stubborn person?
5. Are you preoccupied with yourself and with what everyone thinks of you?

Pair up with someone in your group. Share about an area that you particularly want to ask God for help in. Pray together for each other.

RELATE

Memorize Luke 14:11-"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted."





Week 2

REWIND

Think about a time when you were angry. You could've been angry with a family member, a friend, a co-worker, or even a driver on the road. What caused your anger? Did someone do something to hurt you or offend you? How did you respond? Did you try to take revenge? In the passage we've been studying, Samson got angry and he decided to take revenge. He had gone against the counsel of his parents and married an idol-worshipping Philistine woman. After losing an interesting bet with some Philistine men, he killed 30 men of Ashkelon for their clothing to fulfill his wager. Afterwards, he found that his wife had married another man. Losing his temper, Samson took revenge by catching 300 foxes and tying them together in pairs by their tails. Lighting them on fire, he let them run around on Philistine property, burning their crops and trees. When the Philistines found out, they took Samson's wife and her father and burned them to death with fire. Vowing revenge again, they went to battle and Samson killed 1,000 Philistine men. Samson was so focused on revenge that he lost sight of his own wrongdoing. His anger blinded him to his own sin and the repenting he should have been doing.

RETHINK

1. Have you ever been angry and done something foolish? Has your anger ever driven you to say something you regret?
2. Read Judges 14:1-3. How would you characterize Samson's response to his father?
3. Now read Judges 14:4-15:16. How did Samson's foolish decision to ignore the wisdom of his father affect other people? Look at the decisions he made afterward. How would you describe them?
4. Share about a time when you were wounded when someone left their own anger unchecked. What did you learn from it?
5. When you get angry, do you tend to be a spewer or a stuffer? Spewers are the ones who have no problem letting their anger fly. Stuffers keep their anger deep down inside their soul. Which one of these are you often tempted to be like when you get angry?
6. Look up James 4:1. What is the cause of our anger and quarrels?
7. In the message last weekend, we learned three steps toward handling our anger appropriately:
(1) Stop giving yourself permission to get mad over things that don't matter. (Phil. 2:14-15)
(2) Start to handle your anger the way God tells us to handle it. (James 1:19)
(3) Take it out on the only One who can take it. (Romans 12:19)
Which of these do you think is the hardest for you to do? Pray about these together.

RESPOND

Find a spot in the room or the building for each of you to take some time on your own to reflect and journal. The small group leader will bring everyone back together to share and pray.

- Samson failed to take responsibility for his poor decision making. He was mad at the world, but in reality, he had created his own mess.
- Think about a time when you made a foolish or poor decision. Did you take responsibility for your mess?
- What makes you angry? Are you able to tell the difference between things that matter and things that don't?
- What areas related to anger do you need to improve in? Ask God to continue the work He is doing in this area.

RELATE

Memorize John 1:19 - "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."





Week 3

REWIND

Each of us has a journey of how we ended up here in New Mexico. Perhaps you moved here for school or a new job. Maybe you were born here and your parents or grandparents made the decision to live here. Trace back the decisions that led you to be in this city, at Sagebrush, or even in this small group. What is your family's immigration history? What's your journey? You'll see that being here is the result of a series of decisions that you or someone else made. One decision affected another, and now you're here. This past Sunday, Pastor Todd taught about how one decision can lead to the next. In the book of Judges, we get to see how Samson's decisions affected his life. Samson made some poor decisions, and each one affected the next. He ended up on a journey to self-destruction. After twenty years of faithfulness as the leader of God's people, Samson made poor choices. He ruined his life, one step at a time. It wasn't the result of one foolish decision. It was one foolish decision after another that led to his life being destroyed. Let's see what the Bible says.

RETHINK

1. Share about your journey of how you ended up here in New Mexico, or at Sagebrush, or in this small group. What were some key decisions that you or someone else made? How would things be different if one of those decisions were made differently?
2. Read Judges 15:18-20. What do we learn about Samson and his relationship with God?
3. Now read Judges 16:1. Gaza was the headquarters of the Philistines, about a 25-mile walk (almost a marathon!). It was about 56,250 steps to Gaza. He had all that time to think. What do you think was going through Samson's mind?
4. "How does a person wreck their life? They do it one step at a time." How have you seen this happen in someone else's life?
5. Read Judges 16:1-21. What led Samson to make the foolish decisions he made? What made him think that it would turn out okay if he stuck around with Delilah?
6. Satan promises so much pleasure when we are doing our own thing, but it leads to destruction. In order to get off the path of self-destruction, we have to stop telling ourselves that we are the exception to the rule. What are some examples of lies that people tell themselves in order to justify their destructive actions?
7. Another step in getting off the path of destruction is getting with a friend who we can share our weaknesses and struggles with. Can you think of someone who you currently do this with, or someone you can start this with?

RESPOND

Find your own quiet spot in the room, home, or building you're meeting in. Take some time to prayerfully write down your greatest weakness. Then write down what you would gain if you give in to it, and write down what you would lose. Sin will always cost you more than you want to pay. Pray that God would give you the opportunity to share with a friend your weakness so that you can find strength in your struggle. Also, pray that God would give you the opportunity to be a good friend to someone who would share their struggles with you. As you get back into your group, share with each other as you are willing, and pray for one another, focusing on the Savior who cleanses us from sin.

RELATE

Memorize Proverbs 27:6 - "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses."





Week 4

REWIND

One of the great things about going to the beach is getting in the water. At the beach, you typically see two kinds of people. The first absolutely love the water and run straight toward the ocean and jump right in to enjoy it. Among the second kind are the ones who cautiously approach the shore and stare at the water a bit. Perhaps they dip a toe into the water. Inevitably, someone else shouts, "Jump right in! The water's fine!" Maybe the person gets a bit closer, maybe even ankle-deep. The encouraging friend says, "Come on, come all in!" This image is like having a relationship with God. He wants us to be "all in" when we follow Him. He doesn't want just part of us, but all of us. We've been following the account of Samson in the Bible. Early in life, Samson made a vow to be completely devoted to the Lord. But Samson didn't take his vow seriously. He wasn't "all in" with God. And because of that, he ended up humiliated, stripped of his strength, and trapped in a Philistine prison. Let's see what happens to Samson.

RETHINK

1. Some people show great promise early in their lives, only to become a sad story. Todd shared about Kurt Cobain, Ryan Leaf, and Brittney Spears. Can you think of other examples like this? Perhaps another well-known figure, or someone in your life.
2. We exist for God. He is the one who made us. He has a plan and a purpose for your life. Our talents and resources are for His glory and His purposes. How does it make you feel to hear this?
3. Samson thought the world revolved around him. He used God when he wanted something from Him, but for most of his life, Samson did his own thing. Does this ever describe you? How so?
4. Here are three ways to ruin your life: (1) Be full of yourself. (2) Don't take your relationship with God seriously. (3) Ignore your sin and your greatest weakness and act like it isn't a big deal. Which of these stands out to you personally? How so?
5. Read Judges 16:21-31. Why do you think it took such terrible circumstances for Samson to finally turn back to God? How could things have been different if Samson had humbled himself, listened to his parents, and followed God closely the whole time?
6. Are you calling the shots in your life and putting your toe in the water? Or are you "all in" and fully in God's hands? Are there areas in your life that you need to surrender to God? Perhaps your career, your finances, or your goals and dreams?
7. What steps can you take this week to begin to become "all in"?

RESPOND

(Give everyone a sheet of paper and have some crayons, colored pencils, or markers available.) Draw a diagram of your life, however you'd like to represent it. Include your family, your career, your finances, your hobbies, and other prominent aspects of your life. Where is God in this diagram? Is He in the driver's seat or on the throne, or are you the one driving or ruling your life? Take turns sharing about your diagrams. After this, spend some time encouraging and praying for one other.

RELATE

Memorize Luke 9:23 - "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me."





Week 5

REWIND

Is your prayer life more like a TV dinner or a chicken pot pie? With a life like a TV dinner, everything has its own compartment: the work compartment, the school compartment, the friends compartment, the family compartment, and the faith compartment. In other words, prayer is limited to Sundays and small groups and the occasional prayer at meals. It never touches the other compartments of your life. With a life like a chicken pot pie, however, everything is one mass. Everything touches everything else. Faith is intertwined with family, friends, work, and school. On Sunday, Pastor Todd described a prayer life that is more like a chicken pot pie than a TV dinner. He asked us to consider having a day intertwined with prayer as we go through our lives, everywhere we go. As we acknowledge God's presence and live in constant conversation with Him, we'll become more aware of what God is doing and how He wants us to live. Let's see what Scripture says.

RETHINK

1. Growing up, what did you learn about prayer? Has your understanding of prayer changed over the years?
2. Prayer is a continuous conversation with God that leads us and guides us to make a maximum impact with the one life we have. What do you think about when you hear this statement: What kind of an impact would you like to have?
3. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing." Why do you think it's so hard for us to be in constant prayer?
4. Read Exodus 33:11 and Psalm 27:4. What do Moses and David teach us about prayer?
5. How does it make you feel that God is always watching in love?
6. If you were constantly reminded that you are not alone, and God is with you to provide help guidance, how could it change your decisions? For example, how would it change your marriage? How could it change how you spend your spare time? How could it change the way you approach your job or schoolwork?
7. What one step can you take this week to remind yourself of God's presence and to be in constant prayer? Perhaps it can be leaving sticky notes in places you'll see them, or setting your phone or digital watch to ring every 30 minutes, or wearing the prayer band that was handed out on Sunday. What do you think would work for you?

RESPOND

Pastor Todd shared that every day he prays over his body, that it would go and do what Jesus would have him go and do. He asks for

- a tender heart to see the needs of people around.
- hands to extend to make a new friend or meet a need.
- careful eyes to see things the way God sees them.
- an encouraging mouth to build up others.

Pair up with someone in your group. Take turns praying for each other, specifically for the body parts above.

RELATE

Memorize Colossians 3:17 - "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

