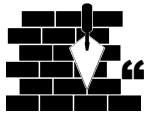


SAMSON - “Deserved Suffering” - part 1
(this portion of the Leaders Guide covers questions on pp 4-7a)



“Building Blocks”

1. **(Judges 13-16)** There is at least the possibility that Samson’s parents were *not* fully aware of the Mosaic instructions given to Israel regarding the Nazirite vow (Num. 6) because it is likely that they lived *at least* 200 years after the Exodus. And, they were living at a time when many Jews were “in the dark” regarding the Law (cf. Judges 2:8-10).
 The “entertainment” the Philistines were hoping to get from Samson would have been his humiliation, having him “perform” for them through taunting and teasing a blind man. They certainly were not thinking of feats of strength; they did not know his strength had returned and would have taken care if they had!
2. **(Q2)** Wedding celebrations in the ancient Near East (ANE) typically lasted seven days. They would have been characterized by festivities and food, of which grapes and wine would have most likely been a part. It is unlikely that the groom would *not* have imbibed.
 Samson had to have assumed that Delilah would “test” this fourth strength theory just like she had the previous three! The text tells us that Samson “broke” because he didn’t have the strength to withstand this woman. This is the same explanation given for what happened with his first wife (cf. Judges 14:17).
 Also, this was the one facet of the Nazirite vow that could *not* be renewed after violation because it signaled the end of the vow.
3. **(Q3)** The similarities between the story of Samson and John the Baptist are striking: barren mother, angelic announcement, prophecy about service to Israel, Nazirite, and some connection with the idea of deliverance.
(Q3) We mustn’t lose sight of the fact that Samson’s motivation for his “closing act” in the Temple of Dagon was *not* the glory of God or the honor of Israel. It was a desire for revenge for his own blindness. In the ANE, blindness was an automatic demotion to the world of “worthlessness,” especially for a man in his prime.
4. **(Q6-2 Sam12)** It is interesting that David’s initial response to Nathan is for “the man” to repay the wronged person with four sheep for the one stolen. This was in perfect agreement with the Law of Moses (cf. Exodus 22:1) It is interesting that the Law also forbade a man from sleeping with another man’s wife, but David was not as zealous for that law to be upheld, apparently! (Or perhaps more accurately, we see the serious difference between obedience to impersonal laws and those that involve pleasure.)
5. **(Q8-Ps119:67)** The point here is *not* that the psalmist was not scared to *disobey!* He now sees obedience to God’s Word as a form of “preventive safety.” Someone who nearly drowns in a canoe will have a different perspective on laws about life vests!



“Stumbling Stones”

1. **(Q6-Ps51)** It is tempting to think that God used Nathan to bring David’s sin to his attention for the first time. But, Psalm 51 clearly informs us that David had been struggling immensely on his own prior to Nathan’s rebuke. Nathan merely “forced a crisis” in which David finally broke and gave in to the conviction God had been bringing to bear on him.

2. **(Q7)** The statement of David's in Ps. 51:11 must be confined to its Old Testament context. The indwelling Holy Spirit had not yet been given. The Spirit "came" and "left" individuals, depending upon the purposes of God and their own responsiveness. David's prayer that the Spirit would not "leave" him was reasonable in light of what he had done, *and* how he had seen that happen to King Saul years earlier.
3. **(Q8-Ps103)** The "immensity" of God is something I need to keep in focus when suffering for my own sin. Sin is always "huge," but *never* in comparison to God Himself. All sin is still of human proportions, not divine.

(Q8-Ezra) We have to be continually careful to keep a perspective that is larger than time. If we focus on the present or the near future, we will lose sight of eternity and the very real truth that our sins—the same ones that are crushing us right now—are paid for, *and* were foreknown even prior to our conversion! Jesus said *not* to fear temporal suffering or those who cause it, but to fear God who executes eternal judgment (Matt. 10:28)
4. **(Q8-Ps119:71-2)** Because of the truth of this passage (i.e. God's Word becomes more valuable, personal and real in suffering), Satan will seek to keep me *out of it* rather than in it. Staying in the Word is a means of simultaneously "drawing near to God" *and* "resisting the Devil" (James 4:7-8) , both of which are essential when suffering from my sin.

(Q8-Jer31) We need to be very careful to separate (or at least *seek to*) "punishment" from "discipline" as Christians. The punishment for our sins—all of them—fell on Jesus. It is complete. There is no more that need be done (nor could be done, if Jesus is insufficient).

There is a huge difference between the two. "Punishment" involves suffering *for* my sin, but "discipline" involves suffering *from* sin. The purpose of discipline is to *stop* suffering from the same sin. In a very real way, suffering from sin seeks to reduce my suffering *through* suffering by reducing the *amount* I suffer from the same sin.
5. **(Q8-Hosea)** We are tempted to think that "distress" caused by our deliberate sin is less of a priority to God than distress caused by life on a fallen planet. We think God is like us; if someone is "in trouble" through their own folly, we want them to "learn a lesson." So, we tend to withhold help. Whether or not God comes to our aid at the time and fashion we want is up to Him. But, he *doesn't* think this way about our distress!

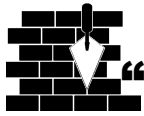


"Going Deeper"

1. **(Q5)** Share your results for this question. [Samson's motive here is certainly not pure; it was vindictive. But, there's not a single hint that he blamed God for his life.]
2. **(Q7)** What did you find that was "good" by re-reading this Psalm?
3. **(Q8-Ps103)** Which is inexhaustible, God's love or his anger? Which is exhaustible? What is the reasonable response to exhaustible anger and inexhaustible love?

SAMSON - “Deserved Suffering” - part 2

(this portion of the Leaders Guide covers questions on pp 7-8)



“Building Blocks”

1. **(Q1b)** It is very important to realize that at least part of the prodigal’s suffering was the consequence of *where* he was, not merely how he was living. The land that experienced the famine was *not* his home country. If he had remained home, this particular suffering would not have touched him.

Some of the suffering we endure is due to choices we made that are unrelated to the suffering. But, the initial choice set in motion circumstances and relationships that introduced the suffering.

2. **(Q1b)** We also need to understand the significance of the “job” the young man found himself in: a Jew “serving” swine! He had fallen from a life of luxury to one of want; from a life of leisure to one of labor; from one of social mobility to one of social stigma. A whole lot more than simply being “hungry” was happening here. His entire identity had changed.
3. **(Q1d)** We need to exercise great care so as not to forget the actual *context* of this parable, and end up forcing it to “teach” things it isn’t actually saying. Jesus’ whole point in this parable is a polemic against both the self-righteousness of the Pharisees and scribes, *and* their condemnation of Jesus for fraternizing with “sinners.” Luke 15:7 is a key verse for casting the context of this parable.

In this story, the “younger son” is clearly the “sinner” and the older son represents traditional Judaism (E.g. the Pharisees, etc.). The way this parable ended would have upset them.

4. **(Q1e)** We must be careful *not* to camp too much on the fact that the younger son’s motive in returning was selfish (E.g. hunger, safety, etc.). There is still a strong element of humbling oneself here. *If* his father *had* accepted the terms the son offered to him (i.e. servant rather than son), the young man would have found himself working, eating and living with the very people who had previously done all that for him!

(Q2) The father was operating on the principle of mercy in the face of humility. The older brother was *stuck* in the world of justice and “fairness.” In other words, his brother “deserved” what he got before he came home, but *not* what he received *when* he came home. He, on the other hand, believed that he “deserved” what his brother received (i.e. party, fattened calf. etc.) because of how he had lived. This is the heart of self-righteousness—that God “owes” me—which is the point of this parable.

5. **(Q4-Deut)** It is vital to consider the historical context of this passage. Moses is addressing the *children* of those who had come out of Egypt. The parent generation had all died during their 40 year wandering that was a punishment for their rebellion and unbelief (cf. Numbers 13-14). There was repeated grumbling and rebellions during this wandering period. God’s statement here is bigger than the parental sin 40 years earlier. God is clearly saying that He was using their suffering to reveal to them the true condition of their hearts, the necessity to heed God’s voice, and the assurance that He would meet all their creature needs during their suffering.

God’s statement, “*You shall remember **the whole way** the Lord your God has led you...*” is very important. They are to remember “*the whole way*”(ESV) or “*all the way*”(NAS). This is the same word that is used in the previous verse where God instructs them, “**All** the commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do...” He doesn’t just want them to reflect on the original rebellion that set everything into motion, or even the destination (how it all “turned out”). He wants them to recall the journey itself; everything in between the sin and the solution. Growth is *always* in the journey, not the destination.



“Stumbling Stones”

1. **(Q3)** Our true understanding of grace will be revealed by how we answer this question. If we perceive God as the “older son,” we likely do *not* understand grace and are likely to misunderstand mercy also. Given the context of this parable (esp. vs. 7), we are safe to assume a spirit of repentance on the part of the younger son. Also, it is very important for us to face the harsh reality that we typically want God to be “fair” when it applies to us more than others, *and* when we compare or contrast our lives with others who have more of what we want, or less of what we don’t want.

“Fairness” is a doctrine from hell. It robs God of His sovereignty *and* is intellectually dishonest, hiding our true selfish motives under a veneer of “justice.”



“Going Deeper”

1. **(Q1d)** Whose behavior is worse in this parable, the younger son or the older son? Which of the two do you relate to most?
2. **(Q2)** Who better represents your own perspective on people whose lives are a “mess” because of personal choices and/or sin, the father or the older son?
3. Look at 2 Cor. 7:10. In this verse, Paul separates “godly grief” from “repentance.” What do you think is the difference between these two things?
Which of the two takes more time? Why is the idea of time important here?
What other types of “grief” are often associated with sin that are *not* “godly grief”?
4. **(Q4)** What are the “requirements” on our part, for God to “restore the locust years” and “turn our mourning into dancing”?
5. **(Q4)** Is God interested in making our lives “better”?