

# “To Have and to Hold”: Mr. and Mrs. Samson’s Attempt at Mutual Possession

JUDGES 14:1-20

**T**o have and to hold” can mean the exquisite delight of belonging to another forever. “You are mine and I am yours” is the joy of the covenant, both God’s covenant with his people and that of a human husband and wife. Adam’s “At last!” was a cry of relational joy that he had now found someone to whom he could belong. But “to have and to hold” by itself could be nothing more than the mutual possession of each other’s bodies. As such, it is nothing more than married lust. Unfortunately, one of God’s appointed spiritual leaders is our example of this perversion of God’s design for marriage.

Samson was one of Israel’s judges (see “Bird’s Eye View” at the beginning of this studyguide). Judges were God-appointed charismatic leaders who rescued the twelve tribes of Israel in moments of national crisis. The story of Samson’s supernatural birth and destiny is told in Judges 13:1-25. The more famous

romance associated with this enigmatic biblical personality is his "marriage" to Delilah. In reality, this was not even a "second marriage" but rather a dangerous affair with a foreign woman who may well have been a prostitute. So we will concentrate our study on Samson's first marriage to an unnamed Philistine woman. It is remarkable because it shows us not only how not to marry but how our gracious God persists in loving people who marry the wrong way and for the wrong reasons.

✧ 1. What does the phrase "married lust" mean to you?

#### READ JUDGES 14:1-7.

✧ 2. What indications are there in the text that Samson's relationship with the Philistine woman started off on the wrong foot?

*Note: The Philistines were a foreign uncircumcised people who were even more unclean than the other neighboring peoples the Israelites were forbidden to marry (Exodus 34:16). Marrying a woman from the enemies of Israel would have been especially offensive for a Nazirite like Samson who was dedicated to God—in his case, for life (Judges 13:3-7).*

✧ 3. Samson's divinely given strength enabled him to overpower a lion as he and his parents traveled to arrange the marriage (verses 5-7). In what way was his "gift" of power both a blessing and a temptation as he contemplated getting a wife?

#### READ JUDGES 14:8-20.

4. In the marriage customs of the day, the wedding consummation would take place the first night, but the feast would last for seven days with the bride and groom present. In this case the groomsmen (normally provided by the groom's family) were provided by the bride, possibly because the wedding was in a foreign country or was repulsive to the Israelites. What pressures would this mixed marriage have placed on Samson? on the Philistine woman?

✧ 5. What similar pressures have you seen placed on couples in marriages today in which one partner is

a believer and the other is a nonbeliever? (See 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.)

- ♣6. What evidence is there that Samson's riddle was not an innocent game?
- ♣7. Why would the accusation "You don't really love me" have been especially painful for Samson?

*Note: This same accusation was Samson's breaking point in his second marriage with Delilah (Judges 16:15).*

- ♣8. In what circumstances in your own marriage could such an accusation be manipulative?

In what circumstances could it be helpful for a wife (or husband) to say, "If you really want to love me, I need you to...?"

- ♣9. Judges 15:20 summarizes Samson's importance with these words: "Samson led [or judged] Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines." What was the "fatal flaw" in this great spiritual leader?

It is frequently noted that sex, money, or status can destroy a great spiritual leader. Why is sex a special area of vulnerability for a person who has the power and anointing of the Spirit (14:19)?

10. What practical steps can we take to make sure our own marriages are not reduced to married lust?