

## SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Message Series: WEIRD STUFF IN THE BIBLE  
Message Title: Samson  
Speaker: Pastor Steve Walton  
Date: July 23, 2017

### Icebreaker:

What is the food that you crave? Do you always give in, always resist, or just indulge occasionally?

### Message Overview:

This week's message was the third in the *Weird Stuff in the Bible* series. Pastor Steve defined craving as "if it feels good, do it." He quoted popular song lyrics, "if it makes you happy, it can't be that bad." He described different kinds of cravings, and said that sometimes cravings can be good when we use them to achieve our goals. But sometimes our craving for material things, work success, or personal fulfillment can lead us to broken relationships and guilt. However, instead of just feeding an appetite, we can begin to starve our lives with our pursuit of the craving. We find a story of the power of cravings in Judges 13-16 – the story of Samson.

### Discussion:

(Leaders: The questions that follow are designed to stir reflection and discussion on this week's primary message points. Please read through them prior to your meeting, so you can be prepared to prayerfully pace your group well. And remember, as leader, your goal is to promote increased *biblical* awareness, as well as individual *self* awareness – a combination that with the help of the Holy Spirit, results in revelation and...transformation!)

**Read Judges 15:12-15.** Samson was the strongest man in the Bible – the strongest man who ever lived! He was tied up in a cave and faced a thousand Philistines, and defeated them all with the jawbone of a donkey.

The story of Samson is a good example of how to answer the question:

1. What do you do when your **craving** has **YOU**?

**Read Judges 16:1-21.** Samson went to Gaza. He had to cross enemy lines into enemy territory in order to go there. He wasn't told by God to go to Gaza. It wasn't his calling. He went where no one knew him. He went where no one knew his calling from God. He went there because he wanted to fulfill a craving, and he knew it wasn't of God. This craving led him to an affair with Delilah, which was his downfall.

Pastor Steve said Samson “had no idea that in that moment, he had traded his craving for his calling.” Have you ever made a trade that you knew later was a bad deal? How did you feel in hindsight?

2. Just because it **feels** good, doesn’t mean it is **good**.

Samson was the strongest man in the world, but he ended up a slave to his craving. Pastor Steve said “Our feelings are a bad indication of our future.” We make a lot of bad decisions when we follow our feelings instead of thinking through the consequences of our actions.

**Read James 1:13-15.** When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

When we hear stories of people’s downfalls, it often begins with a seemingly innocent decision. We buy something that is a bit over our budget. We text someone without our spouse’s knowledge. We watch something we wouldn’t watch with someone we know in the room. Hindsight is 20/20 because it allows us to clearly see the end result of an ‘innocent’ decision that doesn’t align with God’s calling.

Can you look back at decisions that you have made and see that the end result was not in line with God’s calling for you? Have you made a financial decision and then had to deal with debt, or an emotional decision and had to deal with relational hurt?

3. You can chase your **craving** or you can chase your **calling**. But you can’t chase both.

Pastor Steve said that if we chase our cravings, our calling will be lost. What is your calling? In general, if you are married, it’s to be a spouse. If you have kids, it’s to be a parent. If you are a Christian, it is to follow Christ. In addition to our general calling, some of us know our specific calling as well. Have you felt a calling from God in your life? Can you share it with the group?

Many of us have committed to following Christ, but then feel ourselves being pulled back into the world. Have you felt called by God, but then felt yourself being pulled away from that calling? Did you move away from your calling? If so, how did you or how can you move back to chasing your calling? If you have a story of pursuing your calling, can you encourage the rest of the group with your story?

4. You make fewer **mistakes** when you realize what’s at stake.

Have you ever gotten a haircut that you regretted? It might have been a bad choice on your part or on the part of the stylist, but you just wanted to put a bag over your head and go home and cry?

Sometimes we can feel defeated in our mistakes and want to hide and wallow in our misery. But **Read Judges 16:22**. Samson's hair grew back! That seems like an obvious statement. Hair grows back! But God put that statement into this story to encourage us. Just as hair grows back, God can grow us and He can conquer our cravings for entertainment, lust, money, food, or whatever your craving is. He can call us out of our craving and into freedom!

Jesus was sinless. He never gave into his craving. Samson was the strongest man in the Bible, but even he could not resist his craving. Jesus resisted his craving, and with his strength, so can you. The power of the Holy Spirit is available to conquer your craving. Your calling can grow back!

**Wrap-Up/Close:**

- Is there a craving that is getting in the way of your calling?
- If you had given up on your calling, God can renew it and grow it back!
- How can the group pray for you to renew your calling and conquer your craving?

**Throughout the Week: (Optional)**

- Pastor Steve encouraged us to spend time alone with God each day to remind ourselves of our calling and to renew our commitment to God. Spend time alone with God each day. Commit to Him to find and fulfill your calling and ask Him for His power to conquer your cravings.