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**Dear heavenly Father, we worship You this morning with our tithe and offerings. We pray for the courage to put You first in our lives. In the name of Jesus, amen.**

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**APRIL 24, 2021**

## **When Samson refused to put God First**

Putting God first can be difficult. What can we learn from Samson, who refused to put God first?

Samson was born as a Nazarene. This meant he had to live a certain way. First of all, he should not drink wine, grape juice or anything that came from the vine. He should not touch dead bodies and—most famously—Nazarenes should not cut their hair.

Since his younger years, Samson was a strong and disagreeable boy. When he came of age, the Lord led him to a young Philistine woman. Meeting her is described in this way:

“Samson went down to Timnah together with his father and mother. As they approached the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him. The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat. . . .

Some time later, when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to look at the lion’s carcass, and in it he saw a swarm of bees and some honey. He scooped out the honey with his hands and ate as he went along” (Judges 14:5–9).

Did you notice it? Samson liked to live on the edge

between right and wrong. God’s instructions were clear: stay away from grapes and dead bodies. In this one short passage, he disobeyed both instructions. Later it would be easier for him to allow his hair to be cut as he had already chosen the rebellious route.

No-one wakes up one day and decides to reject God. There is always a series of small decisions when we fail to put God first. When we notice our strength hasn’t left us, we convince ourselves we are still on the right track. God invites us to put Him first today, so we are not victims of our enemy like Samson was.

When Samson woke up to the spiritual corruption of his heart, he immediately called out to God and God answered. In fact, the Bible tells the story that every prayer Samson prayed was answered. God was merciful with Samson and He will be merciful with us. Even if you were not faithful with your tithe and offerings in the past, you can always start today.

Samson refused to put God first. The consequences were terrible for him and the people around him. God’s love compels us to put His Kingdom first, while Samson’s example is a warning for us today. As the deacons collect the tithe and offerings, we are challenged to put God first.