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8 November 2026 · Wellington Letter of Christ Church

Overcoming Temptation

Guard your heart and stay rooted in your calling and community.

Small Group Guide · Judges 16:18–21

Bible Passage

Judges 16:18–21

Sermon Summary

After defeating 1,000 Philistines, Samson spent 20 peaceful years as Israel's judge. Yet he fell into sin again through a woman in Gaza and Delilah. Like sin crouching at Cain's door, sin waits patiently for an opportunity. When we drift away from our calling and community, we give it an opening. Samson lied three times before revealing his secret. Likewise, when we let our guard down, everything can unravel. To overcome temptation, stay rooted in the calling and community God has given you, guard your heart daily, and keep your focus on God alone.

Read Together

1. Genesis 4:7 · The warning quoted in the sermon, "Sin is crouching at your door", gives us a picture of sin waiting for an opportunity.
2. Proverbs 4:23 · "Above all else, guard your heart." The sermon links this verse to the second key: keeping your heart focused on God.
3. Judges 15:20 · "Samson led Israel for twenty years." The sermon uses this verse to help us reflect on how easily we become complacent when life is going well.

Good to Know

The preacher explained that Samson probably wore his long hair in seven braids rather than loose. His three false answers—fresh cords, new ropes, and loom threads—came ever closer to revealing his real secret: his hair. Eventually, all seven braids were shaved off.

Discussion

1. Getting Started

1. When something has gone well for a long time, it is easy to think, "I'll be alright", and let your guard down. Can you share a recent time when you felt that way?
2. Samson spent 20 peaceful years as Israel's judge before falling into sin with the woman in Gaza. Why do we still need to be careful, even in areas where we have been faithful for years?

2. Exploring the Word

1. In Judges 16:1, after 20 years as a judge, Samson goes to Gaza and meets a woman. Why might the Bible record this brief encounter without even telling us her name?
2. Think about God's warning to Cain, "Sin is crouching at your door", alongside Samson's story. What does the sermon's message—that sin can wait ten or twenty years for an opportunity—mean for you?
3. Samson left the place God had called him to and went to Gaza, giving sin an opening. Have you been drifting away from what God has called you to do, or from the community he has placed you in?
4. Samson lied three times, but Delilah's constant pressure wore him down and he revealed his secret. When someone keeps pushing you, do you stand your ground or find yourself giving in?

3. Going Deeper

1. Delilah did not love Samson, but the offer of 5,500 silver shekels swayed her. The preacher asked, "Wouldn't we be tempted too, with that much on offer?" What amount of money or other offer might tempt you to compromise? Share only what you feel comfortable sharing.
2. The preacher shared two stories: a pastor in Auckland who faithfully stayed the course for 35 years, and a respected pastor who fell just before retirement. As you reflect on these stories, what can help us remain faithful to the end?

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4. Putting Faith into Practice

1. Have you been thinking, "I'll be alright", while neglecting part of your walk with God—early morning prayer, small group, or serving? This week, make a point of going back and getting involved again.
2. Like Samson, you may face ongoing pressure or temptation this week that makes it hard to guard your heart. How will you ask God for the strength to stand firm and resist temptation when that happens?

This Week's Challenge

1. On Tuesday evening, talk honestly with your spouse or a family member about an area of your walk with God you have been neglecting.
2. To prepare for pressure to do something wrong at work, write down this short prayer today: "God, help me keep my eyes on you alone." Keep it in your wallet or save it as a note on your phone.

Try one challenge this week, and share how it went when your group next meets.

Pray Together

- Ask God to show us where we have drifted away from our calling and community, and to give us the strength to return.
- Ask God for the strength to guard our hearts when temptation does not let up.
- Ask God to help us keep our hearts focused on him alone each day.

Closing Prayer

Father God, Samson served as a judge for 20 years, yet fell when he let his guard down. Keep us from becoming overconfident where we have been faithful for years. Remind us that sin is crouching at the door of our hearts. Keep us rooted in the calling and community you have given us. When others pressure us, help us guard our hearts rather than give in as Samson did when he revealed his secret. Keep our hearts focused on you alone and help us stay alert each day. Give us strength to resist temptation and live faithfully this week. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.