



## TODAY YOUR PRETEEN LEARNED

### JUDGES: MUSCLES, MORALS, AND MIRACLES

#### Samson's Final Choice

Samson's story comes to its tragic end in Judges 16:23-31. A captive of the Philistines, blind because they have gouged out his eyes, Samson is forced to perform at the temple of Dagon. At last Samson prays to God for strength and pulls the temple and its thousands of partying Philistines down on his own head. But through his death preteens learn that God can use people who decide to obey Him to accomplish extraordinary things.

God's mercy was greater than Samson's failures, and it is greater than ours today. Samson showed that God's grace has the final victory over all evil. Preteens were challenged today to choose to live God's way, knowing that His mercy surrounds them.



Do you show mercy regularly to the members of your family? Remember that your preteen needs you to model the kind of mercy God shows to us. Your preteen may have to suffer the consequences of his or her actions, but remember to **forgive every time.**

# PARENT CONNECTIONS

*for families of Preteens*

## PARENT POINTERS

**Does your family ever eat together?** Sadly, it has become uncommon for families to sit down to a meal as a unit. We have become so busy that it is rare for the whole family to even be in the same house together, let alone at one table.

The table is an important place to share ideas and encouragement, to be informal and have fun. Having others over for a meal is an excellent way to teach your children about hospitality and service.

Jesus thought mealtimes were important. Meals were often the times when He taught His disciples. He made it a point to share meals with all kinds of people, rich and poor, sinners and the righteous. He provided food for multitudes. And He asked us to remember Him when we eat and drink.

Think about what it could mean for your family if your mealtimes were something like this.

A common reason is, "Well, I don't cook." If you don't feel comfortable making a meal, consider picking one up. Or give cooking a shot, and just start off simple.

It may be that mealtimes have not been pleasant experiences for you or your children. Maybe there has been arguing or long,

uncomfortable silences at the table. To start off, have a family meeting and decide **when** you can have at least one meal together during the week. Then make up some mealtime rules that everyone agrees on. You can even have everyone sign a "contract" to make it more real.

Here are some mealtime tips:

1. Make sure the table is a place where people listen to each other. When one person is talking, the others must listen.
2. Make it a fun place to be. Look for smiles and not frowns or bored expressions by modeling a happy face that's more than skin deep.
3. Bring up an interesting life question, and use your mealtime to discuss it.

If your family doesn't have meals together now, it will take a while to get used to it. Don't give up after one try. Decide on something like a two- or three-month trial period, then look back and see what has happened.

—by Katherine Hendrixson

*Most families suffer from never spending enough hours together as a group. Instead of developing close, significant, intimate relationships, many dwell under the same roof more like unrelated boarders.*

—H. Norman Wright

(*Family Is Still a Great Idea* [Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Publications, 1992], 16.)



*The Incredible Journey* by Sheila Burnford is a classic story about courage, persistence, loyalty, and friendship. Whatever our age, stories about animals capture us. This seems to be particularly true of children. In this amazing story a Siamese cat, an old bull terrier, and a young Labrador retriever travel 250 miles through the Canadian wilderness to find their family. Separately, they would have died; together these three pets faced wild

animals, hunger, and the elements, but they make it home.

Pause throughout the story and ask your preteen to think about friendship. What can we learn about friendship from the relationships of these three animals? Life is hard for every one of us at times. Talk about the courage of the animals, particularly the cat's. Remind your preteen that God will help him or her to have courage when life is scary or hard. Don't limit yourself to these questions. Feel free to explore other issues the book raises.