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THE
SAMSON
SYNDROME

WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM THE

BADDEST BOY

IN THE BIBLE

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STUDY QUESTIONS

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

I HAVE PREPARED THIS SECTION FOR THOSE WHO LIKE TO go a little beyond the printed text of a book. If you enjoy exploring the nooks and crannies of your heart, these questions are designed to assist you. You will notice that some of the questions will require you to delve into some very personal areas. If you're using this study guide with a group, I would suggest that you be judicious in what you share. While it is very helpful to participate in a candid discussion with other Christians, it is also unwise and unnecessary to reveal extremely personal information that would prove embarrassing to yourself or others.

CHAPTER ONE: STRONG MEN TEND TO DISREGARD BOUNDARIES

1. Name some boundaries that society imposes on the average adult. Which of these do you find to be the most frustrating? Why?

- 2. Are there any boundaries in your life that are self-imposed? What are they? Why did you set them up? Have they accomplished what you hoped they would?
- 3. The Nazirite Vow was commonly taken for a period of thirty or sixty days by people who had a desire for a deeper, more intimate connection with God. How would you feel about undertaking an intensive program of self-discipline and personal sacrifice for two months? Would you be willing to give up television? Movies? Secular music? Red meat? Junk food? Secular literature?
- 4. Are there any "fences" in your life that you have allowed to fall into disrepair? What immediate steps can you take to start getting them back in shape?
- 5. It's often said that the grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence. Can you think of a time when you climbed over a fence in search of greener grass, only to realize later that you made a mistake?

CHAPTER TWO: STRONG MEN TEND TO STRUGGLE WITH LUST

- 1. Webster defines lust as "excessive" sexual desire. In your opinion, at what point does sexual desire cross the line and become excessive? Specifically, what behaviors do you consider to be out of bounds for the Christian? What Scriptures can you point to that support your ideas?
- 2. Samson's parents tried to convince him not to marry the girl from Timnah, but the intensity of his desire caused him to turn a deaf ear. What are some things parents can do while their children are still young and impressionable to make sure they are well equipped to honor God with their sexuality?

- 3. Samson's parents eventually gave in and supported his desire to marry the girl from Timnah. Should they have done this? Is there ever a time when parents should disassociate themselves from the actions of their children? If so, give some examples.
- 4. Humans are the only creatures on earth that are capable of understanding and enjoying romance. What does this imply? When was the last time you did something thoughtful and romantic for your wife that had nothing to do with sex? What could you do to fan the flames of romance that you have never done before?
- 5. Paul told Timothy to "run from anything that stimulates youthful lust" (2 Tim. 2:22). What stimulates youthful lust in one person may not affect someone else. What stimulates youthful lust in you? What can you do to separate yourself from those things?

CHAPTER THREE: STRONG MEN TEND TO IGNORE GOOD ADVICE

- 1. What's the best piece of advice you ever received? Who gave it to you? How do you feel it has impacted your life?
- 2. Can you think of some good advice you rejected? Who gave it to you? How have you suffered as a result?
- 3. Strong men like Samson are notoriously stubborn. The old joke is that a man can be lost for hours but will refuse to stop and ask for directions. In your opinion, what is it about strong men that makes them so stubborn?
- 4. Moses had Jethro. Tiger Woods has Butch Harmon. Even someone as smart as the President of the United States has a team of advisors. Is there anyone in your life that you depend

- on to give you counsel? If not, can you think of someone who might be able and willing to fulfill that role?
- 5. Is there a person in your life that you have trouble taking advice from, even though you know he/she is very wise? If so, why do you resist that person's counsel?
- 6. Is there someone who has trouble taking advice from you, even though you have valuable insights to offer? If so, what can you do to make yourself and your advice more acceptable?

CHAPTER FOUR: STRONG MEN TEND TO BREAK RULES

- 1. When Samson dipped his hand into the carcass of the lion and scooped up some honey, he broke the rules of his Nazirite vow. Does the fact that no one was there to see him do it mitigate the circumstances at all? Are all sins created equal?
- 2. Most people consider Samson's sexual sins to be his most grievous. What made the scooping of the honey particularly insidious? Can you name some harmless-looking sins that are destroying men's lives today?
- 3. While you were growing up, who imposed the most rules on you? A parent? Teacher? Guardian? Coach? How did you feel about that person while you were under his/her authority? How do you feel about that person today? In what ways have you benefited from his/her influence?
- 4. Have you ever knowingly broken a rule because you felt it was in conflict with God's will? Did you suffer for that decision? In what way? Would you do it again?
- 5. Is there a rule you're being forced to follow (perhaps at work) that you find oppressive? What is it? Can you see any purpose

for the rule? If you were going to try to get the rule changed, how could you do it without compromising your faith?

CHAPTER FIVE: STRONG MEN TEND TO OVERESTIMATE THEIR OWN CLEVERNESS

- 1. Have you ever done something that seemed like a good idea at the time, but turned out to be incredibly foolish? What was it? How did you suffer as a result?
- 2. The seven enemies of discernment are pride, liquor, anger, lust, greed, hatred, and impatience. Which of these were involved in Samson's foolish bet with his Philistine groomsmen? Which of these have tripped you up in the past? What steps have you taken to make sure they don't trip you up again?
- 3. Samson repeatedly made poor choices in two areas: He chose to hang out with the wrong people and he didn't control his sexual desire. Is there an area (or maybe more than one) where you have made repeated mistakes? Why do you think that is? What can you do to change that pattern?
- 4. Have you ever lost something precious because of a foolish choice? What was it? How has that loss impacted your life? Is there any way you can reclaim that blessing? If so, what would it take?

CHAPTER SIX: STRONG MEN TEND TO USE ANGER AS A TOOL

1. Think about some times when you have been extremely angry. What did you do? When your anger subsided, did you feel guilty? Did you find yourself having to make apologies?

- 2. Samson was angry because he was embarrassed by his Philistine groomsmen. What makes you angrier, being embarrassed or seeing injustice being done to someone else? In what way and to what extent does the object of your anger shed light on your character?
- 3. Have you ever used anger as a tool? Perhaps to control and intimidate your employees or your family members? If so, think about those people right now. How would you describe their feelings toward you? Do they love you or just tolerate you? Are they around you because they want to be or because they have to be? How might those feelings be changed if you were to stop using angry outbursts as a tool?
- 4. Do you find that your temper is getting hotter as you're getting older? Do you say and do things now in the heat of the moment that you wouldn't have considered a few years ago? If so, what do you think this means?
- 5. Make a list of ten things that really tick you off. Now go back through the list and identify each one as either a mountain or a molehill. (A mountain is a matter of grave importance where the health and well-being of people or the cause of Christ hangs in the balance. A molehill is a matter of lesser importance where, even if the worst were to happen, the damage done would be minimal and short-term.) What conclusion can you draw from this exercise?

CHAPTER SEVEN: STRONG MEN TEND TO REPEAT THE SAME MISTAKES

- 1. Do you have a besetting sin? What is it?
- 2. What has your besetting sin cost you? Can you name spe-

- cific losses you've suffered because you keep making the same mistake?
- 3. Was there a time when your besetting sin bothered you more than it does now? Have you grown comfortable with it? Have you given up hope of ever defeating it? Have you begun to rationalize it? What rationalizations have you employed?
- 4. One of the keys to overcoming a besetting sin is to surrender completely to the Lord. What, specifically, do you need to change so that the Lord can assume more control of your life?

CHAPTER EIGHT: STRONG MEN TEND TO HAVE BIG EGOS

- 1. The Bible lists pride as a sin God hates, yet we know that God wants us to have healthy self-esteem. In your opinion, what are the primary differences between sinful pride and healthy self-esteem? Do you see any indications of either in your own life?
- 2. Think for a moment about your close friends. Do they tend to be people who are on or above your social level? Or do you have close friends who could never do anything to raise your status or advance your career? Is it important to you to be friends with influential people? Are you a name dropper?
- 3. Can you name something you used to take great pride in, but no longer do? What happened?
- 4. Is there something you're currently competing for? A job? A promotion? A woman? Explain why it's important to you to have it. How will your life change if you get it? How will you feel if you don't get it?
- 5. Have you ever had a "Nehemiah moment"? (Nehemiah had to choose between status and service.) If so, describe the choice

you were faced with and explain the decision you made. If you had it to do over again, would you choose differently?

CHAPTER NINE: STRONG MEN TEND TO TAKE FOOLISH RISKS

- 1. Can you name a risk you once took that you later realized was foolish? Can you explain why you took it? What was the result?
- 2. Can you name a risk you once took that you felt simply *had* to be taken? What made it seem so important? What was the result?
- 3. Can you name a tempting risk you once considered taking, but didn't? If so, why didn't you? How do you feel about it now? Do you feel you made a mistake or a good decision? If somehow you were to get another opportunity to do it, would you?
- 4. Think about David's elite soldiers who risked their lives to fetch him a drink of water from the well in Bethlehem. Have you ever taken a great risk for no other reason than love? How did it turn out?

CHAPTER TEN: STRONG MEN TEND TO STRUGGLE WITH INTIMACY

- 1. There are seven factors that inhibit intimacy in a strong man's marriage. They are: busyness, ambition, impatience, distraction, money, women, and fatigue. Which of these do you think your wife finds the most frustrating? Show the list to your wife and see if she concurs. Now sit down with her and talk about how you can make improvements in these areas.
- 2. When was the last time you did something romantic and totally unexpected for your wife? If it's been a while, can you

- explain why? If you were to do something like that today, what would her reaction be? Right now, think of two or three romantic things you could do to surprise her.
- 3. Name your closest confidant, male or female, family member or friend. How long have you known this person? What is it about this individual that makes you feel so comfortable and willing to talk? Do you see those same attributes in yourself?
- 4. Name five things your wife loves to talk about. When was the last time *you* brought up one of those subjects? Pick the one you feel most comfortable with and think of a way to work it into a future conversation.
- 5. Make a list of things you and your wife share that are totally private . . . things that not another soul would know. You should be able to name at least five things. If you can't, you probably aren't respecting the privacy of your marriage the way you should. How can you do better in the future?

CHAPTER ELEVEN: STRONG MEN TEND TO TAKE TOO MUCH FOR GRANTED

- 1. Have you ever lost someone or something you thought you'd never lose? How did it happen? Do you believe you were somewhat responsible? What lessons did you learn?
- 2. Samson was betrayed by someone he assumed was on his side. Has that ever happened to you? What caused you to make that erroneous assumption? As a result of that experience, what changes have you made in the way you relate to people?
- 3. Think of some people your age or younger who have died from diseases or accidents. Picture their faces. Think of the days when they were still around. How does this make you

- feel about your own mortality? How well have you been taking care of your health? How long has it been since you had a physical?
- 4. Have you ever been to a place or had an experience that made you more appreciative of your blessings? In what ways did that appreciation manifest itself? Has that appreciation since begun to fade again? Is there something you could do to regain it?

CHAPTER TWELVE: STRONG MEN TEND TO LOSE SIGHT OF THE BIG PICTURE

- 1. Samson was distracted from his life's purpose and never got around to doing the one thing God intended for him to do. How would you define your life's purpose? As far as you are concerned, what is the "big picture" that you always need to keep in view?
- 2. Think of a few things that bring you great pleasure. Have you given too much of your time, attention, or money to any of them? How would your wife or your closest friends answer that question?
- 3. A mission statement clearly states a company's ultimate purpose and is designed to prevent the company from drifting off course. Have you ever written a *personal* mission statement? If not, take some time and do it. Consider your passions, your talents, and God's will for your life.
- 4. Do you have a mentor or trusted spiritual advisor? If so, how has this person helped you in the past? If not, can you think of someone who might be able to assume that role? How good are you at taking advice? Would a mentor find you to be agreeable or argumentative?

- 5. Does your life need to have the fat trimmed out of it? Are you constantly doing things that are urgent, but not necessarily important? Do you find your time being eaten up by busywork? If so, what specifically can you do to streamline your life so that you are able to focus on those things that are truly significant?
- 6. How often during a normal day do you think about God, heaven, or eternity? What are some things you could do to trigger more heavenly thoughts?