The Lord Speaks to Samuel



Scripture Reference: 1 Samuel 3

Suggested Theme: God speaks to us in many ways. We should listen to God's words.

Memory Verse: "Your word is like a lamp for my feet and a light for my way." Psalm 119:105, ICB

Story Overview:

While young Samuel was sleeping, the Lord called his name. Not recognizing the voice, Samuel ran to the elderly Eli, mistakenly thinking it was him. When the voice continued to call Samuel, Eli told him to listen carefully. The voice must be the voice of the Lord. The Lord did speak to Samuel and told him that Eli's sons would not be the new priests of Israel. Samuel would be. Samuel served the Lord as long as he lived as a Priest, Judge, and Prophet.

Background Study:

Samuel came on the scene at the end of the time of the judges. Samuel was the last judge.

Click here for The Book of Judges: The Big Picture

The Bible does not tell us how old Samuel was when he received the call recorded in our lesson, but the Jewish historian Josephus says he was twelve. 1 Samuel 2:26 describes Samuel's growth physically, spiritually, and socially. He "grew in favour both with the Lord and men." This statement is used one thousand years later about Jesus (Luke 2:52).

At other times in history, God had often given messages to His prophets in visions. But while Samuel was growing up, He had rarely given such messages.

Eli was now old, and his eyesight was failing, so he needed young Samuel's help. On this particular night, Eli and Samuel had gone to bed, but the lamp in the temple, trimmed and filled with oil in the evening (Exodus 30: 7-8), had not yet burned out.

Samuel had never received any direct contact from the Lord. This is what is meant in verse seven, "Samuel did not yet know the Lord." Samuel had learned about the Lord from Eli and his parents, but he had not actually heard the voice of God. When God called Samuel, Samuel thought the voice was the voice of Eli. At first, Eli did not realise what was happening. After three times, Eli realised that God was calling Samuel. He told Samuel to answer God the next time he heard the call.

Samuel saw nothing, but the Lord was there, as He had been each time He had called. He told Samuel that the men of Eli's family would not be priests much longer because Eli's sons were contemptible (1 Samuel 3:11-14). Read more about that in 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 27-33.

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What a huge burden for a young boy to carry. He must have dreaded Eli asking about the encounter. But Eli told Samuel to tell him absolutely everything that the Lord had said.

Eli could not have been completely shocked at what the Lord told Samuel. Earlier, a “man of God” had come to Eli and told him that the Lord had revealed that Eli’s sons would not be the next priests after Eli. Because of their disobedience, the house of Eli would fall (1 Samuel 2:27-36). Read 1 Samuel chapter 4 to find out how Eli’s sons and Eli all died in one day.

As Samuel grew up, he became more and more recognized throughout all of Israel. Samuel was the last Judge of Israel. Through Samuel, the country became more unified. “From Dan to Beersheba” (1 Samuel 3:20) refers to two cities located at the northern and southern ends of Israel. Dan was located at the base of Mount Hermon in the most extreme northern portion of Israel. Beersheba was in the Judean-Negev area at the southern end of Israel. The phrase “from Dan to Beersheba” was an idiom meaning “all of Israel.”

Samuel’s ministry was a long, productive one. He was a circuit judge travelling from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah to Ramah to judge. He anointed two kings (Saul and David), though he did not live to see David crowned. All his life was devoted to doing the Lord’s work. Samuel served at a transitional time for Israel. He was the last Judge in the time of the Judges. He was a High Priest. And he was a Prophet in the time of the Kings. He was the only man to be all three (Judge, High Priest, and Prophet).

For more about Samuel’s early years, see God Answers Hannah’s Prayer and Samuel Become a Helper in the Tabernacle.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Collect a number of items that can be used to make a noise (alarm clock, mixer, hammer and nails, razor, crinkled paper, whistle, etc.) Sit behind a partition or somehow conceal the items while you make the sound. You could also yawn or clap. Let the children guess what the sound is. Discuss what it would be like to hear one of these sounds in your sleep. Would it wake you up? Would you be frightened? “In today’s story, we are going to learn about a time when Samuel heard something during the night. It was a voice.”

The Story:

Samuel loved God and loved to help Eli, the High Priest, in the Tabernacle of the Lord. Eli was old and almost blind, so Samuel often stayed near Eli in case he needed something. Samuel was growing into a nice young man. The people of Israel noticed how Samuel always tried to do and say the right things. Eli was very proud of Samuel.

Hophni and Phinehas were Eli’s sons. Usually, when a High Priest dies, his son is the next High Priest. That would mean that Hophni or Phinehas would be the next High Priest after Eli.

There was one very big problem. The people of Israel did not like Hophni and Phinehas. They were mean. Sometimes, they stole things. They did not love the Lord, and they did not obey Him. They would not be good High Priests.

One night, Samuel was lying down in the tabernacle. All of a sudden, Samuel heard a voice calling his name. Samuel quickly got up and ran to Eli’s room.

Samuel woke Eli up and said, “Here I am, Eli, you called me.”

“I didn’t call you, Samuel, go back and lie down,” answered Eli. Samuel went back and lay down again.

A little while later, he heard the voice again. “Samuel!” the voice said.

Samuel got up and ran to Eli again. “Here I am, Eli, you called me.” Again, Eli sent him back.

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Samuel heard the voice one more time. “What was going on here?” Samuel thought to himself. Once again, he ran to Eli’s bedside.

This time, Eli began to understand that something special was happening. This was not just any voice; this must be the voice of the Lord.

“Samuel,” Eli said, “goes back and lay down. When you hear the voice again, say: ‘Speak, for your servant is listening.’”

Samuel went back and lay down. Again, the voice called his name, “Samuel, Samuel!”

This time, Samuel answered, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Now, the Lord began to speak to Samuel. He told him Eli’s sons would not be the next High Priests. They were too wicked, and they did not love the Lord.

Samuel lay back down until morning, when it was time to open the tabernacle. Samuel did not want to tell Eli what the Lord had said. He knew that Eli would feel bad. But Eli told Samuel to tell him everything the Lord said. He told him not to leave one thing out.

Eli was very sad, but he knew Samuel was telling the truth.

After that first night, the Lord came and spoke to Samuel often. Samuel always listened carefully when the Lord spoke to him. As Samuel grew up, he learned more and more about what the Lord wanted him to do. Samuel told many people how to love and obey God. The people of Israel always listened to Samuel because his words were wise, and they were from the Lord.

After Eli died, Samuel became the High Priest, a Judge, and a Prophet. He is the only man to have been all three. Samuel served the Lord all of his life and grew to be a very old man, but he never stopped loving the Lord.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

View this slideshow and download it from the original source:
http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/samuel-listens/

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child’s spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- Who did Samuel think was calling him in the middle of the night? (Eli)
- Who really called Samuel? (The Lord)
- What did the Lord tell Samuel? (Eli's family would be punished; Eli's sons were wicked)
- Who was the next High Priest after Eli? (Samuel)
- What were the three jobs that Samuel did for the Lord? (Samuel was a Judge, High Priest, and Prophet)

Reflection:

- What is something you wonder about in this story?
- What question do you have for God about this story?
- Why do you think God wanted to talk to Samuel? Why did He want to use His voice to talk to Samuel?
- How do you think Samuel felt when he realised God was talking to him?
- How do you think Eli felt when he heard God's message about his family through Samuel?
- How would you feel if you woke up and heard God speaking to you?
- Have you ever heard God's voice or heard God speak to you?
- Do you know anyone who has heard from God or heard His voice?
- What are some other ways we can hear from God? (Ex: through the Bible, creation, the Holy Spirit, worship songs and hymns, dreams from God, a sermon, etc.)
- What can you do to listen to what God wants to say to you? (Ex: pray and listen for God, read the Bible, pray for God to send you dreams, sing and worship God, ask the Holy Spirit to help you hear from God, etc.)

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- Samuel Song
- God is Listening When We Pray (Song) English/Cebuano
- B-I-B-L-E
- Books of the Old Testament
- Books of the New Testament
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

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- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- A fun way to present this story is to have the children come to the gathering in their pyjamas. Everyone can pretend to “go to sleep” as Samuel did and then be woken by God’s voice.
- To emphasise the idea of listening (Samuel listened to God) make various sounds and let the children guess what they are. The teacher could make the sounds behind a curtain. Examples: drum, rattle, coins rattling, turning pages of a book, cards shuffling, or candy wrapper crinkling.
  You could also play various pre-recorded sounds if you have a smartphone or computer. Search for a free app or “everyday sound effects” online or download other sound effects to your laptop.
- Review basic bible facts (66 Books; 2 Testaments- Old with 39 books and New with 27 books; etc.)
- Review the names of the books of the Old Testament.
- Have “sword drills” where you call out a Scripture reference, and the first child to find and read it wins the round.
- Object Lesson: Bring a food item or candy bar to the gathering and place it in front of the children. Lay your bible beside it. Talk about how simply looking at the candy bar is not enough. It is not until we take it and eat it that we can enjoy it. The Bible is the same. Just carrying it around or looking at it is not enough. It is not until we read it that we can receive the benefits. Read a few Scriptures you have chosen beforehand. After discussing this with the children, let them enjoy the candy bar.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Make a miniature-size model of the story. If you teach over several weeks, you could add to the model to form a collection that reviews the stories. You can place the models in boxes. One box could display one judge. Samuel Box- (Covering 3 lessons on Samuel) Picture of mum and baby, baby items, sewing items, little coat, tabernacle pictures or model, picture of sleeping boy, pillow and blanket . . .

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page and puzzle worksheets (Calvary Curriculum)
- Colouring page call of Samuel (Sermon 4 kids)
- Games: Interactive group activities (Sermon 4 kids)

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- Printable Books of the Bible Bookmarks (DLTK)
- Other: Nice Collection of worksheets, puzzles, and colouring sheets (Free Sunday school curriculum)

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Date
2026/11/10

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