

TITLE

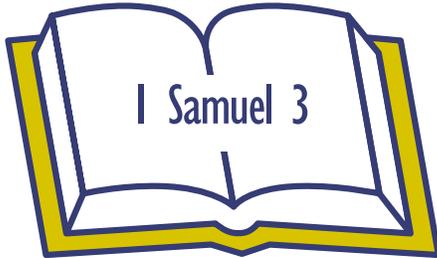
ARE YOU LISTENING?

OBJECTIVE



Students will participate in God's mission through being involved in listening prayer and identifying mission opportunities for their own family, school or group.

SCRIPTURE



BACKGROUND

What is listening prayer? The key to listening prayer is listening and obeying. So often our prayer is talking to God, going through our list, bringing people we love to him, asking him for help. None of these things are wrong, but listening prayer allows us to hear our Savior and what is on his heart. He longs to speak to his children, his sheep. The more we listen, the more we are in tune to hear. Children are remarkable in their hearing. They do not have many of the inhibitions and angst that we as adults have in trying to discern if what we heard was God speaking. They are able to hear and share.

MATERIALS

COMMUNICATION OBJECTS

NOTE CARDS, PAPER, WRITING & DRAWING TOOLS, TEMPLATE

BOARD OR CHART PAPER

EVALUATION CRITERIA

This is not a one-time activity but needs to be practiced regularly in order for students and teachers to become comfortable listening to God speak. Take some time to consider how this activity worked with your group. How did the children respond? Do you feel the learning goals were met? Is this something you could do again?

Outline

INTRODUCTION

- Recognize the voice.
- Retell the story of Samuel

Details

Recognize the Voice: invite someone from the church to participate. (perhaps the pastor or another Sunday School teacher or a child from the class). Students sit in the class with their eyes closed tight. Choose one student (or fairly well-known church member) to begin talking to the students. They should keep their eyes closed and try to guess who is speaking. Play again if you have time. Relate this to how we know the Shepherd's voice or how Elijah heard God speak in the still small voice.

Ask students to share what they know about prayer. Highlight the most common perception: talking to God. If listening comes up, connect it to today's lesson.

Read or retell the story of Samuel hearing God speak: 1 Samuel 3

Highlight the following aspects:

1. God wanted to speak to Samuel;
2. It took Samuel three tries before he knew it was God speaking;
3. Samuel obeyed God and told Eli what God had said, even though it was difficult.

Tell students that God wants to speak to us today, but we are so often asking and telling him things that we don't hear him speak.

Tell students that they are going to practice hearing God's voice.

If desired, move into a circle on the floor. You may like to have some candles lit to indicate a quiet setting.

STORY

- Practice Listening Prayer
- Pray for Thailand

Ask students to recall some of the things they've learned in the previous sessions about Thailand and the missionaries there.

Read John 10:27 and explain that Jesus speaks and that we can hear him. Ask God to speak about the missionaries in Thailand. He might tell us something to pray for, or he may give us some way to encourage them. He might even bring a Bible verse to our minds.

Say, "After I pray for us, I will read a scripture and then we will sit quietly for two minutes and listen." This could be longer or shorter depending on the age.

Pray, inviting the Lord to speak. Perhaps, have students hold their palms out and up as a sign that they are willing to listen and receive from God.

Read a scripture like Psalm 62:5, "Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him" (NLT).

Outline

Details

When time is up, invite students to share anything they heard. Be encouraging.

To encourage students to share, remind them about Samuel taking time to recognize God's voice. Record on the board or paper (from last week) what the students share.

After all have shared, depending on time, have a whole class prayer time (or ask for a few volunteers) based on what they heard.

Thank God for speaking.

ACTIVITIES

Write letters or draw pictures to be sent to the missionaries in Thailand.

Have students draw or write notes, letters, and/or cards to the missionaries. They should be encouraged to include the things they heard from God. They can also include prayer requests for their own families, school, or church. If there is no time, make it a home activity.

This would be a good opportunity for teachers to process this prayer activity with individual students while they are making their cards.

Send these to the missionaries.

CLOSING

Ask students to share about their listening experience.

Ask them what they learned from the story of Samuel.

Encourage them to take some time this coming week to listen to God about how to pray and help people at home, school, or in the neighbourhood. Encourage obedience to what God speaks.

Closing prayer or song on the theme of the lesson.

Additional Notes

INTRODUCTION

Communication Activity

Have a group of communication objects on a table: cell phone, map, newspaper, etc.

Have instructions written on the board

1. Observe the objects and answer these questions quietly to yourself.
2. What do these objects have in common?
3. What do they have to do with today's lesson?

As students come in, point them to the directions

After everyone has had a chance to look at the objects, invite sharing of answers

Telephone Game

Sit in a circle. Teacher whispers a message to the student next to them. Each student subsequently whispers to the next. The last person says what they heard out loud. The teacher reveals what he/she said originally. Connect this to the lesson idea of hearing God speak

Alternate Bible Illustrations instead of the story of Samuel.

- Martha and Mary (Luke 10:48-32)
- The sheep and the Shepherd (John 10:3-4)

STORY

Resources

Article by Seth Barnes, [Adventures in Mission](#)¹

[The Art of Listening Prayer](#)² by Seth Barnes

[Excerpts from Henri Nouwen on Listening Prayer](#)³

Notes on Listening Prayer

What is listening prayer? The key to listening prayer is listening and obeying. So often our prayer is talking to God, going through our list, bringing people we love to him, asking him for help. None of these things are wrong, but listening prayer allows us to hear our Savior and

1 http://www.adventures.org/a/articles/basics_of_listening_prayer.asp

2 <http://www.missionsresources.com/Samples/Art%20of%20Listening%20Prayer%20Sample.pdf>

3 http://pastoralplanning.com/2_Listening_Prayer.pdf

what is on his heart. He longs to speak to his children, his sheep. The more we listen, the more we are in tune to hear. Children are remarkable in their hearing. They do not have many of the inhibitions and angst that we as adults have in trying to discern if what we heard was God speaking. They are able to hear and share. As a young child of four, I told my mom that God spoke to me. When asked what he said, I responded, "Good Morning, Joy." Perhaps as an adult, I would have been too embarrassed to repeat this but as a young child, I was convinced that God could speak to me.

I encourage you to make this activity a part of your Sunday School whenever you can. You will be preparing your students for a life lived under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Pointers for Listening Prayer

- *create* an atmosphere that is conducive to quietness and free from distraction. Some people like to turn down the lights and use candles.
- *explain* what you are doing.
- *invite* the Holy Spirit to speak.
- *read* a Scripture.
- *allow* a quiet time for listening.
- *invite* students to share (nothing is too small).
- *affirm* and encourage.
- *thank* God for speaking.
- *follow up* on what you hear. This could mean obeying something that God has spoken to you to do, encouraging someone, sharing what you heard with someone, or reaching out to others.

ACTIVITIES

1. Set up a Skype call with a missionary family in Thailand. Have students ask questions about their work. (Arrange this through MB Mission.)
2. Have a listening prayer session to focus on your neighborhood or town. Allow students to hear God speak about those he wants them to reach. Following the prayer time, hold a discussion about ideas for reaching out in the community. Take one or several of the ideas and plan a special one-time or ongoing outreach/mission project with your students.