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Gideon: Weak but Chosen

Scripture: Judges 6:1-7:25

Theme: God's power is made perfect in weakness

1st-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: "Samuel Hears God's Voice" Theme: God speaks, and we need to listen. Introduction (Greeting & Connection): Start the lesson with a quiet moment of prayer, asking God to help Samuel (and the kids!) hear Him clearly. Ask a simple question like, "Have you ever heard someone say something very important to you? How did you feel?" to help kids connect with the idea of listening. Explain that Samuel was a young boy who learned a big lesson: God wants us to listen to Him, just like Samuel did. Story & Lesson (1 Samuel 3:1-21 , Simplified): Begin with a brief, age-appropriate retelling of the story. Samuel was asleep in the temple, and he heard a loud voice calling his name, "Samuel!", but he thought it was Eli, his priest. Eli told him, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening!" (1 Samuel 3:10). God spoke to Samuel, gave him a big job, and even saved Israel! The lesson is that God speaks to us too, but we must be ready to listen, like Samuel was. Key Takeaway & Application: End with a discussion: "How can we listen to God today?" You might share examples like praying with open hearts, reading the Bible carefully, or listening when friends share about God. Encourage kids to try something small, like asking God to help them listen for His voice one day. Remind them God loves them and always has something important to say! Closing & Encouragement: End with a heartfelt prayer and a cheer: "God speaks to us, and we're always welcome to listen! Let's be brave like Samuel!" Offer a fun way to reflect, like raising hands if they'd like to ask God something today. Keep it warm, positive, and full of hope!

Bible Story

Samuel Hears God's Voice

Once, in the town of Shiloh, a boy named Samuel lived in a special place where the Lord's priests kept the ark of the covenant, the box that held God's commands and promises. Samuel was very young, just a boy, and he often went to sleep with the priests so he could listen to the sounds of the temple at night. One evening, as Samuel was lying down,

he heard something strange: a deep voice calling his name, "Samuel!" At first, he thought it was Eli, the old priest who watched over him, but he was asleep, so Samuel thought nothing of it. But the voice called again, "Samuel!" He woke up quickly and ran to Eli, whispering, "Did you hear someone call my name?"

Eli knew Samuel was a child and didn't understand why God was speaking. He gently told Samuel, "Go back to bed, and God will call again if he wants you." Sure enough, soon after, the voice called once more, "Samuel!" This time, Samuel obeyed and went back to sleep. Eli repeated the same words, and again, the voice called. Finally, Eli realized that God wanted Samuel to listen carefully. "Speak, the Lord is here!" he said to Samuel, and Samuel answered, "I am here, Lord." God gave Samuel a big, important message to tell Eli, and Samuel wrote it down carefully.

The next morning, Eli was amazed. "The Lord has spoken!" he said, and he told Samuel to tell everyone about what God had said. Samuel was excited to share the news! God wanted Eli to take a new job as king of Israel, and he would be there to help him. Samuel also told Eli about a special promise: "The Lord will make a house for you, where a man like you will sit on a throne forever!" Eli was so happy, and Samuel knew this was a big, special job for God to give to Eli. Samuel learned that God speaks to us in quiet ways, and when we listen carefully, we can hear His voice too!

This story shows us that even when we're young, God wants us to listen for His voice. Just like Samuel, we can trust that God is always near us, even when we can't see Him. The next time you're quiet and listen, maybe you'll hear God's whisper too, just like Samuel did!

Why This Story Matters: Samuel's story teaches us that God speaks to us in special ways, and we should always be ready to listen. When we obey God, even when we're little, He uses us in big ways! Let's pray to hear God's voice every day, just like Samuel did.

Key Verse

Judges 7:2

God is always listening to you! One day, a young boy named Samuel was sleeping in God's temple, just like you might sleep in your bed. While he was sleeping, God called out his name three times, "Samuel, Samuel!", but Samuel didn't realize it was God talking because he was so tired. That's when an old man named Eli told Samuel, "Speak, for your servant is listening." This means that God is always ready to hear what's important in your life, no matter what you're doing or feeling. Sometimes, we might feel shy or quiet because we're afraid to talk to God. But just like Samuel, we can learn to trust God and say, "I want to tell you about my thoughts, my prayers, or my worries." Maybe you're worried about a friend, excited about a new school project, or just want to thank God for the things he's done, like making you and your family safe. God loves when we share our hearts with him, it's like a hug for our souls! Here's something fun to try: When you pray, say something simple like, "God, I'm listening!" and then share one thing you're thankful for or need help with. You might feel a little nervous at first, but remember, God already knows your heart, he just wants you to open it up to him. The more you practice talking to God, the easier it gets, just like Samuel did! God doesn't just listen, he hears every word, every question, and every "thank you." That means He's always there, watching over you, waiting for you to take that first step to talk to Him. So next time you feel brave enough, give God a little hug in your heart and say, "I'm listening, God!" He'll answer with love, just like Samuel learned. You can also imagine God as a big, kind whisper in the wind or a warm voice in your head, telling you, "I see you. I care about you. Talk to me!" The more you listen to that whisper, the more you'll feel God's love wrapping around you like a cozy blanket. And just like Samuel's story, you'll discover that God loves to hear you, just as you are!

Activities

Activity 1:

Children act out Samuel's obedience to God by practicing listening and responding like Samuel did.

1. Explain the Story (2 min): Read 1 Samuel 3:1-5 aloud, focusing on how Samuel heard God's voice and obeyed. Ask, "How can we listen to God like Samuel?"

2. Role-Play (5 min):
3. Sit in a circle. Pretend Samuel is lying down (like in the story).
4. One child holds a spoon and says, "God speaks!" while others close their eyes.
5. The child holding the spoon says, "The Lord calls Samuel!" (repeat a few times).
6. Praise the group for listening and responding.
7. Listen Challenge (3 min): Say, "God speaks to us through prayer, the Bible, and even our hearts." Give each child a card with a Bible verse (e.g., Psalm 34:10). Have them whisper it to their neighbor.
8. Take-Home Challenge: Give each child a paper heart to write/draw "How can I listen to God today?"

Activity 2:

Kids create a craft showing Samuel's lamp and practice "listening hands" to hear God's voice.

1. Explain the Craft (2 min): Show a picture of Samuel's lamp (like in the story). Ask, "How did Samuel hear God? What can we use to hear Him?"
2. Make the Lamp (5 min):
3. Give each child paper or clay to draw a lamp with a "burning flame" (use yellow/orange crayons).
4. Add a string or ribbon to hang it up later.
5. Listen & Share (3 min):
6. Read 1 Samuel 3:7-9 aloud. Ask, "What did Samuel say when he heard God?"
7. Have kids whisper a Bible verse (e.g., 1 Samuel 3:10) to a partner while holding their "lamp" up.
8. Take-Home Craft: Each child keeps their lamp and writes "God's voice calls me to..." (e.g., pray, read His word).
9. Both activities keep the lesson hands-on, interactive, and simple, perfect for little ones! Let me know if you'd like adjustments.

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for early elementary children (ages 6-8) based on the story of Samuel hearing God's voice (1 Samuel 3):
- How can we listen for God's voice like Samuel did?
- Samuel heard God's voice clearly, even though he was young and didn't understand at first. What are some ways you think God might try to speak to us today? Could it be through prayers, feelings, a special word someone says, or even a song? Why do you think God wants us to pay attention to these things?
- (Encourage them to think about how listening to God feels different than just hearing sounds around us.)
- What would have been hard about Samuel hearing God's voice the first time?
- When Samuel first heard God calling him, he thought it was his friend Eli calling him. Do you think it was hard for him to tell the difference? What might have made it easier or harder for him to obey God? How can we be brave like Samuel when we hear God's voice in our lives today?
- (Help them connect the story to their own fears or doubts about following God.)
- How did God change Samuel after hearing His voice?
- After Samuel obeyed God, God gave him a special job to help people. What do you think it means to obey God even when it's not easy? Can you think of a time when you listened to someone who was older (like a teacher, parent, or friend) and it helped you do something good? How does obeying God help us grow and be kind?
- (Guide them to think about how their own choices can make a difference.)
- How can we make sure we hear God's voice today?

- Samuel lived a long time ago, but God still speaks to us today. Sometimes it might feel like God is whispering, sometimes it might feel like a strong voice. What do you think helps us listen better, like keeping our hearts pure, praying often, or listening to people who care about God? Why do you think God wants us to pay attention to Him every day?
- (Encourage them to reflect on how they can stay connected to God through prayer and good choices.)

Prayer Focus

Here's a gentle, prayerful way to help young children focus on Samuel's story: "Dear Heavenly Father, We thank You for Samuel, who was just a little boy, full of questions and wonder. One night, when everyone was asleep, You whispered Your special voice into his heart. Samuel didn't know how to answer at first, he thought it was just his friends calling, but God reminded him: 'Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening!' (1 Samuel 3:9). Help us today to listen with open hearts, like Samuel did. When we feel quiet moments, teach us to trust You, just as Samuel did. Give us the courage to say, 'Yes, Lord,' even when we don't understand. And when we hear You, help us to share what You say, just like Samuel did. Amen!" Why this works for kids: - Samuel's example: It ties the story to his courage (even when scared). - Simple action: "Listen like Samuel" keeps it concrete. - Trust: The phrase "Your servant is listening" mirrors 1 Samuel 3:9, making it memorable. - Practical: Ends with a prayer to act like Samuel, sharing what God speaks. (Optional follow-up: Hold a group hand and whisper, "God whispers to us too, will we listen?")

>> Missions Spotlight

Among the Aymara people of Bolivia, who live at some of the highest altitudes on earth, there is a deep longing to hear from God. Missionaries share Samuel's story to show that the God of the Bible still speaks today through His Word and His Spirit.

-> To the Cross

As a boy, Samuel didn't yet know the Lord. God spoke, and Samuel responded, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.' Jesus is God's ultimate Word, the final and complete way God speaks to us. When we read Scripture, God is speaking, and we respond in faith.