

Can you hear something?

Listening to God – Having ears to hear

Meet a child named Samuel. God spoke and Samuel learned to listen.

Arrival

Big ears on a headband

You will need:

- Pipe cleaner
- Marker
- Clip art ears (optional)
- Paper plate
- Scissors
- Glue.

What you do:

1. Cut a paper plate in half and shape one half into an ear shape, place it face-down on the other half and use it as a template so that you've got a right ear and a left ear.
2. Colour if you wish and tape a pipe cleaner to top of paper plate ears to create a headband for the ears.



Story 1 Samuel 3: 1-11

The boy Samuel served the Lord under Eli. In those days the Lord did not speak directly to people very often. There were very few visions.

Eli's eyes were so weak he was almost blind. One night he was lying in bed. Samuel was also in bed in the Lord's Holy Tent. The Ark of the Covenant was in the Holy Tent. God's lamp was still burning.

Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, "I am here!" He ran to Eli and said, "I am here. You called me."

But Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back to bed." So Samuel went back to bed. The Lord called again, "Samuel!"

Samuel again went to Eli and said, "I am here. You called me." Again Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back to bed."

Samuel did not yet know the Lord. The Lord had not spoken directly to him yet.

The Lord called Samuel for the third time. Samuel got up and went to Eli. He said, "I am here. You called me."

Then Eli realized the Lord was calling the boy. So he told Samuel, "Go to bed. If he calls you again, say, 'Speak, Lord. I am your servant, and I am listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in bed.

The Lord came and stood there. He called as he had before. He said, "Samuel, Samuel!"

Samuel said, "Speak, Lord. I am your servant, and I am listening."

The Lord said to Samuel, "See, I am going to do something in Israel. It will shock those who hear about it."

Interview

Who are you?

My name's Samuel, Hannah's son. I work in the temple with Eli the priest and his sons. I quite like it, but I really miss my mum sometimes 'cos I only get to see her once a year. But then again, I'm learning a lot about how to serve God.

Where are we?

Well, obviously we're in the temple in Jerusalem, the one Solomon built. It's MASSIVE! I hope you have noticed that everything's very clean and highly polished. That's my job, that is, amongst other things.

Story in the form of a pantomime

This is a sketch for three people – a child or young person to play Samuel, someone dressed as an old man in a nightshirt and nightcap and with glasses and an ear trumpet to play Eli, and a man dressed up as a dame to play Hepzibah. You will need some bedding on the floor, a shiny cup or plate and a duster.

Dame: *(Looking over shoulder as though speaking to someone in the wings.)* What do you mean, there's no dame in the story of Samuel and Eli? *(Shakes head at the audience.)* Honestly, that Bible misses out all the most important characters. Let me introduce myself. I'm *(adjusts dress)* Hepzibah and I'm here to tell you the story. Now, let's get started – where has that Sam got to?

(Samuel has come into the scene while Hepzibah was talking, cleaning a temple cup. By her final words, he has come up behind her and as she turns to look for him, he moves to stay behind her)

Audience: He's behind you.

Dame: *(Looking behind her.)* Oh no he isn't!

Audience: Oh yes he is!

Dame: Oh no he isn't!

Audience: Oh yes he is!

(Samuel taps Hepzibah on the shoulder and she turns round to see him and jumps in the air in surprise.)

Dame: Oh, you silly boy. I'm all discombobulated now *(fans her face with her hand to calm herself down)*. What are you supposed to be doing anyway?

Sam: Well, I'm the temple boy, so I serve Eli the priest and do all the jobs that need



doing around the temple. See that shiny gold cup there? I polished that, I did. You can see your face in it.



Dame: *(Looking at herself in the cup.)* You've done a lovely job there. Look – how very beautiful! *(Obviously referring to her reflection rather than the cup, maybe flicking her hair or applying some lipstick.)*

Sam: I can't stand here talking to you all day. I need to catch up on my beauty sleep. And by the look of it, you really need to catch up on yours too!

Dame: Well, I... *(looks indignant, but is interrupted by Eli wandering in. He is dressed in nightshirt and nightcap and clearly has difficulty seeing.)*



Eli: Samuel, Samuel. Where are you, lad? *(Stumbles up to Hepzibah and starts to feel her face and shoulders, thinking she's Samuel.)* Ah, there you are, my boy! Goodness, your hair's been growing... and what's this? You're a bit young for growing a beard, aren't you? And... *(hands start to move to Hepzibah's chest area, but she slaps his hands away just in time.)*

Dame: Hands off! I didn't come here to be insulted.

Eli: Why, where do you usually go?

Dame: Harumph! *(Stomps off in a huff.)*



(Samuel taps Eli on the shoulder from behind. Eli turns round and jumps in surprise.)

Eli: Ah, there you are. Come on boy, it's past your bedtime.



(Sam takes off his little linen apron and settles down to sleep on the floor, resting his head on a pillow and pulling a blanket over himself. He yawns and sleeps while Eli sings a lullaby, encouraging the audience to join in. Eli then wanders off to the other side, puts his teeth in a glass by the bed, straightens his nightcap and settles down to sleep some distance away.)



Voice: Samuel, Samuel. *(Samuel mutters in his sleep, turns over and goes back to sleep. The voice calls his name again, slightly louder. Samuel turns over and goes back to sleep. The voice calls his name a third time, this time really loud, and Samuel wakes and sits bolt upright.)*

Samuel: I'm sure I heard Eli calling me. Poor old fellow, he probably wants a glass of water. I'd better go see what he wants.

(Samuel goes to Eli and shakes him and Eli wakes with a splutter.)



Eli and Samuel: What do you want? *(Said at the same time.)* After you. No, after you. No...

Eli: Spit it out, boy.

Samuel: You called me.



Eli: Oh no I didn't.



Samuel: Oh yes you did!

Eli: Oh no I didn't.

Samuel: Oh yes you did!

Eli: Oh no I didn't.



Samuel: Honestly. You really are getting forgetful in your old age, Eli. But if you don't want anything, I'll just get back to sleep.

(Both return to sleep.)

Voice: Samuel. Samuel! *(Same routine as last time. Samuel could mutter something like "I want to ride the pony" in his sleep as he turns over.)*



(Samuel goes to Eli and shakes him and Eli wakes with a splutter.)

Samuel: You called me.

Eli: Oh no I didn't.

Samuel: You did, you did, you did.



Eli: I didn't, I didn't, I didn't.

Samuel: Oh yes you... hold on, I'm not doing all that again. You definitely called me. I heard you.



Eli: I didn't call you, child. You must have been hearing things. Now get off to sleep and leave me in peace. I was just having a lovely dream ... It's OK, unicorns, I'm coming... *(the last sentence in dreamy voice.)*

(Samuel heads back to bed muttering, "YOU were having a lovely dream? YOU want to be left in peace? What about me? What about poor Samuel? Don't I deserve a good night's sleep too?")



Voice: Samuel. Samuel! *(Samuel wakes straight away this time and storms over to where Eli is asleep. He shakes him none too gently and Eli wakes with a splutter.)*

Samuel: Look, this is getting silly. You called me. I know you did. I heard your voice calling "Samuel, Samuel" *(imitating the voice.)*



Eli: Hmmm... I know that voice.

Samuel: You don't think it's Hepzibah, do you? She sounds a bit rough when she's had ...

Eli: No, no, no. That mysterious voice isn't Hepzibah and it certainly isn't me either. Sounds to me like it might be God calling.



Samuel: God? As if! You're just taking the Michael!

Eli: Go back to bed, and if you hear the voice again, just say: "Speak, Lord, your



servant is listening.”

Samuel: Speak Lord, your servant is listening. Ok, got it.

(Eli goes straight back to sleep. Samuel makes his way back to bed, repeating “Speak Lord, your servant is listening” over and over to help him remember it. He gets into bed, pulls up the covers.)



Samuel: That old fool thinks I was born yesterday. But I’ll play his little game. I’ve learned my lines so let’s see what happens when he calls me again. *(Goes back to sleep.)*

Voice: Samuel, Samuel.

(Samuel opens his eyes wide.)

Samuel: Hey “God” *(does air-quotes as he says the word God)*, I can hear you but I can’t see you. Where are you?



God: I’m behind you.

Samuel: Oh no you’re not.

God: Oh yes I am. Behind you, in front of you, in fact all around you. But never mind that, you’ve gone off script. That was not what you were supposed to say. Let’s try this again, shall we?



Samuel: Ah yes, sorry. Take two. *(Returns to sleep.)*

God: Samuel, Samuel.

Samuel: Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.



God: That’s better. Samuel, you may only be a young boy, but I’ve seen how you serve me in the temple and how you care for Eli now he’s such an old man. Even though he can’t see too well, you shine the cups in my temple until you can see your face in them. You are really devoted to serving me well and I have important things to say to you.



Samuel: Oh my! It really is God. I’m actually listening to God. And God is actually speaking to me. I can’t wait to see Hepzibah’s face when I tell her. Talk about discombobulated! Nobody will ever believe this!

God: Samuel, they will hear what I tell you and it will make their ears tingle. You are going to be my spokesperson. I have chosen you.



Samuel: Your servant is listening, Lord. Tell me what you want me to do.

(Samuel puts his hand to his ear as though listening intently, nodding and then suddenly gasping. Hepzibah wanders in.)



Dame: So, why did God choose Samuel? What did God say that made Samuel gasp in surprise? What lies in store for Sleepy Sam? Find out in the next instalment of ... dum dum DUM... THE BIBLE.

Interview continued

What's happened?

It was quite funny, actually... or would be if it weren't so amazing! I had just gone to bed when I heard someone calling me, and naturally I thought it was Eli. He's blind, you know, so he relies on me a lot and I like to help him if I can. I heard the voice a few times and each time I went running to see what Eli wanted, but it turned out it wasn't Eli at all. Goodness, I hardly dare tell you who it was – you'll never believe me. It was. Actually. God! It was God... It wasn't a big boomy voice like you imagine – it was more of a ... I don't know... It was more like I heard it with my heart more than my ears. I felt sort of hot, but then also sort of shivery and frightened and proud all wrapped up into one. Can you believe that? God spoke. To me. And I listened.

What can we take back with us?

You can listen to God anywhere, but I think lots of people do hear God's voice when they're sleeping or resting so why not take my pillow with you. Oh, and I think you should take Eli's ear trumpet. It helps him listen so it might help people in the future listen to God too!

Bible verse

John 10: 27 "I am the good shepherd; my sheep know my voice and I know them."

Video

<https://youtu.be/P13ulsFW7OA>

Wondering together

- I wonder what God's voice might sound like.
- I wonder whether God has ever spoken to you.
- The people listened to Samuel when he shared God's message – I wonder how you can share what you know about God with everyone in the church.
- I wonder why God chose Samuel instead of Eli.



Craft/creative response

Model eardrum

The eardrum vibrates when soundwaves hit it and the brain interprets the vibrations as sound.

You will need:

- A container such as a mixing bowl or bin etc
- Stretch a sheet of plastic wrap firmly over it, if necessary securing it with a plastic band.

What you do:

1. Place 20-30 grains of rice or sugar on the surface.
2. Now make a loud noise nearby, such as banging on a baking tray etc, and watch those grains dance with the vibrations.
3. Alternatively, put a phone playing loud music inside a large cup or bowl before stretching the plastic wrap over the top and sprinkling rice or sugar on it.

Decorate a pillowcase

God can very often speak to us through our dreams or during that sleepy time when we are just drowsing between being awake and being asleep. Make a pillowcase that can remind you to listen for God's voice.

You will need:

- Sharpies or fabric pens
- Plain pillowcase.

What you do:

1. Put a sheet of cardboard or white paper inside the pillowcase so that the colours do not go through to the other side.
2. Decorate your pillowcase using Sharpies or fabric pens. Sharpies will bleed slightly into the fabric, which can create a nice effect, whereas fabric pens will give a sharper image, which is ideal if you want to write something.
3. What are you going to draw or write? How might you decorate your pillowcase to remind yourself to listen for God's voice? Maybe you could write the words, "Speak, Lord, I'm listening" – the words Samuel used when he was listening to God.



Paper straw panpipes

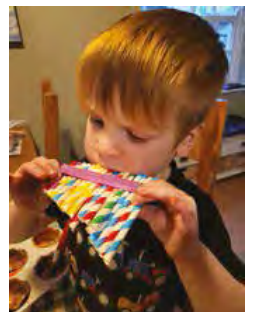
(Quiet sounds to listen to)

You will need:

- Paper straws, preferably thick ones
- Decorative 'washi' tape or ribbon
- Two lollipop sticks
- Double sided Sellotape
- Glue
- Scissors.

What you do:

1. Begin by laying a lollipop stick down and measuring how many straws are needed to fill the length of the stick.
2. Next, glue the individual straws together and then use the double sided tape to stick the lollipop sticks onto the straws.
3. You can decorate the lollipop sticks with decorative tape and/or stickers.
4. Finally cut the straws diagonally to create your panpipes!



Small group prayer

Listening for God – listen and think

You will need:

- A recording of various sounds – maybe chosen from online
- A sand timer (two-three minutes) or digital timer
- Small group.

Get everyone to find a comfy spot where they can sit in a space of their own and close their eyes if they feel comfortable. Create some space for them to listen to the sounds around them and be still, use the timer so that those who struggle with being still will be able to watch the sand or numbers. Ask everyone to be still and listen carefully. Using the sound file or your own sound effects, play each sound for a few moments. Pause between each one and leave space for silence.

Wondering questions

- I wonder, what did you hear?
- I wonder, how did the sound make you feel?
- I wonder, how did you feel in the silence?



A prayer to end

Dear Jesus,

Thank you that you speak to us through what we see and hear. Help us to listen, as well as speak, in prayer. Amen.

Games

Listening Eggs

You will need enough plastic eggs for the players to have one each. Sort the eggs into pairs (not necessarily of the same colour) and into each set of eggs put something small which will make a noise when the egg is shaken – eg rice, lentils, macaroni, beads, paper clips, sand, small stones, tiny bells, washers, bird seed etc. Think about the age and ability of your group as you choose the different items, as younger children may need things that are easier to distinguish, while older ones could be given more of a challenge. Mix the eggs up and give one to each player.

The aim is to find the person who has the same item inside their egg purely by listening when you shake the egg. How quickly can the group match all the pairs?

Blindfold Fetch

Place beanbags or small balls randomly around the hall. Each team chooses a volunteer to be blindfolded. By following the directions shouted to them by their fellow team members, the blindfolded person has to go and pick up a beanbag or ball, bring it back to their team and drop it in a bucket. You may choose to make the rule that someone different has to put the blindfold on and go next or that the same runner can go each time, but you will want this rule to be consistent through the game for all teams.

The aim is to be the first team with five beanbags/balls in their bucket. With everyone shouting at once, the blindfolded people will need to listen very carefully to decide whose instructions to follow! After the game, you could discuss how we hear lots of different things which can distract us from listening to God, but we need to focus really hard on blocking those things out and listening to what God is saying to us because that is the most important thing we can ever hear.

Recipe

Our recipes and food activities are themed to our days. If you are using them, it would be helpful to consider also serving fruit and a healthy drink. Alternative suggestions to cope with allergies are in brackets.

How noisy is your snack?

You will need:

- Biscuits (gluten free biscuits)
- Crisps/pretzels (gluten free pretzels)
- Marshmallows (or something similarly quiet)
- Apple
- Carrot.



What you do:

1. Lay out an array of snacks which create different, or no, sound(s) when eaten. See suggested foods above.
2. Encourage everyone to try each snack and to listen and really think about what sort of noises occur while eating them. Perhaps there is no sound. Be aware of whether the noise changes as you chew the food.

Whole group prayer

You will need a fairly large ball of wool or string.

John 10: 27 I am the good shepherd; my sheep know my voice and I know them.

In the Bible verse, Jesus the good shepherd knows his sheep. God knows each of us by name.

Standing in a larger circle, using the ball of wool or string holding firmly onto the end, pass it to someone in the group and say: "God knows you (name) and loves you." That person then holds the wool and passes the ball onto someone else in the group and says: "God knows you (name) and loves you." Continue until everyone has had a turn; this will create a spider's web across the group. As you finish, the leader should say, "God knows us and loves us all" and add a simple blessing as they continue to hold the wool and then say together Amen.

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you
and give you peace. Amen.

