

Middle School Sunday School Lessons by



Year 3: Session 1 – Getting to Know Samuel the Prophet

Class 1: 1 Samuel 3:1-20 – God speaks to Samuel for the first time

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- New forms of communication will not always go smoothly – expect mistakes to happen!
- “Listening prayer” is, at one point in everyone’s life, a new form of communication
- When learning new forms of communication, having teachers and community to help us with hearing it and speaking it is a very helpful thing.
- In today’s story, we see how Samuel doesn’t know how listening prayer works on his own – someone has to instruct/help him.

Materials needed:

1. Movie clip (on rfour.org website)
2. Devices to show movie clip
3. Handout with timeline on it and Rebus puzzles on it (or a way to digitally show the timeline and Rebus puzzles to the whole class via TV screen or projector). If you decide to print out a handout, see the last three pages for what to print.

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- Here’s the opening question for today’s class. One of the teachers will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, the teacher will answer first.
- Once the teacher answers the question, we’ll go around the circle.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- Here’s this week’s question: What’s something new that you’re learning right now or something new that you’re dealing with in life right now?

TELL/TRANSITION TO VIDEO CLIP

- One of the things that we’ll see in today’s scripture story is that a new type of communication is being attempted.

- So to get started, we're going to watch a brief video clip (with captions) of the mistakes that can be made when new types of communication are attempted.
- The video clip is actually a number of different scenes from the TV show "Modern Family."
- One of the characters is named Gloria, and English is her second language.
- Because it is a newer form of communication for her, she makes some mistakes and sometimes she is misunderstood.
- Let's see what happens

VIEW CLIP

ASK

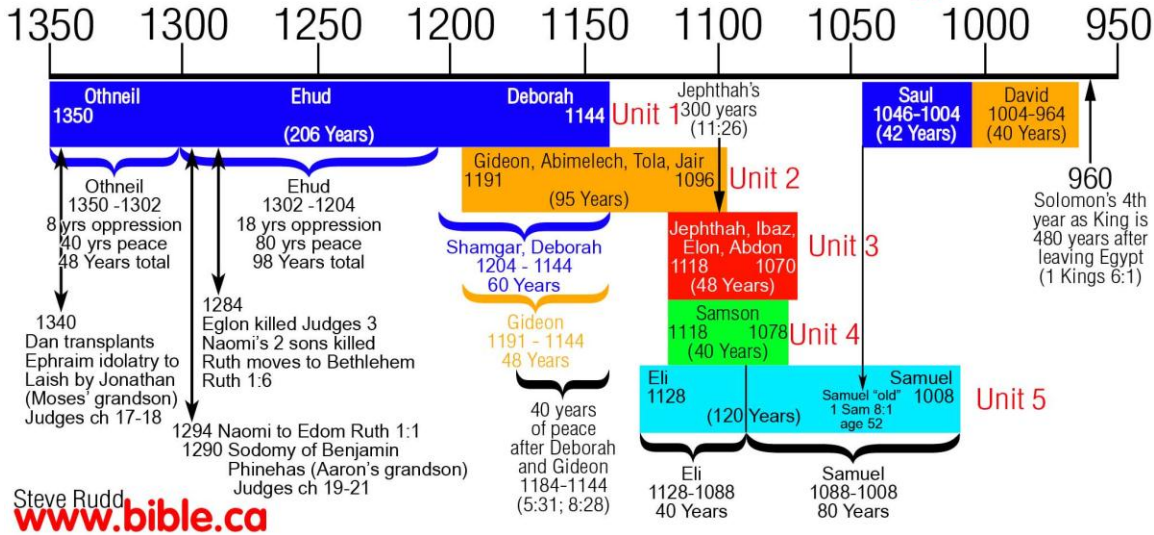
- What caused most of the communication confusion (Gloria's pronunciation and lack of familiarity with the idioms of American sayings)
- In what ways did the confusion usually get straightened out? (People who were familiar with both her and the English language could mostly interpret what she was saying for other people; in other words, it took more than one person for Gloria to communicate correctly)

BACKGROUND to scripture story

- Today, we will be introduced to the prophet, Samuel.
- The story we're about to hear and discuss takes place after the Israelites were in captivity in Egypt but before they have any kings.
- It's been about 300 years since the Israelites left Egypt. During those 300 years, there have been judges who have helped lead the Israelite.
- Samuel is a pretty significant person because he's the transition from judges to kings. When Samuel gets older, he anoints (i.e. chooses with God's blessing) the very first king of Israel, King Saul. Later on, he also anoints the second king of Israel, King David.
- Here's one possible timeline to use when thinking about Samuel's life (from <http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-exodus-route-date-chronology-of-judges-1350-1004bc.jpg>) (see next page):

Chronology of Judges Timeline

The five Indivisible Units of Chronology



- But before Samuel grew up and did all that anointing of kings, Samuel was a kid.
- In today's story, he's probably about 10 years old. And he's about to experience a new type of communication.
- Let's see if he experiences anything like Gloria did in the video clip.

READ SCRIPTURE 1 Samuel 3:1-20 (recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse)

1 Now the boy, Samuel, was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. **2** At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; **3** the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was.

4 Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" **5** and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. **6** The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." **7** Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. **8** The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. **9** Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if God calls you, you shall say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." " So Samuel went and lay down in his place. **10** Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

11 Then the Lord said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. **12** On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. **13** For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. **14** Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated [make amends/atone] by sacrifice or offering forever." **15** Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. **16** But Eli called Samuel

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and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." **17** Eli said, "What was it that God told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." **18** So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."

19 As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. **20** And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.

ASK (Questions that help clarify what actually happened in the story – answers are in parentheses)

1. What time during the day or night does the story take place? (night time, probably like 2 or 3 a.m. The lamps in verse 3 were to be burn throughout the night [as long as possible] and then trimmed and relit at sunrise. Because they had not burned out *yet* hints at a lateness of hour. Also, remember that because they did not have electricity, then they went to bed when it was dark and got up when it was light – which meant depending on the time of the year, they could be in bed for a good 12 hours...which would help explain why Samuel is awake – he’s well-rested.)
2. Who do you think Eli is? (He’s the high priest – both the spiritual leader of the people, and in some ways, the judge/leader of the people, too)
3. Verse 2 – how old do you think Eli is? (he’s pretty old – his failing eyesight is a clue)
4. So there Samuel is, laying down at night, but not asleep. It’s quiet, and then he hears his name being called. So what does he do in verse 5? (goes to Eli).
5. How many times does this happen? (3 times)
6. What happens the 3rd time Samuel goes to Eli in verse 9? (Eli realizes that God is “making contact” with Samuel and tells Samuel what to do if it happens again)
7. What does God tell Samuel is going to happen to Eli and his sons? (verse 11-14: Not good things.)
8. So does Samuel pass this news on to Eli? (Yes. He doesn’t want to, but Eli tells him to. Verse 17 and 18)
9. In verse 20, how does Israel respond to Samuel as he grows up? (sees him as trustworthy)

TELL

- First, let’s talk a little about God’s language of “punishing Eli” because that’s scary language and a very different side of God than what we see of God in most of the Jesus stories.
 - One reason for this language is that the author is trying to let us know that because of who Eli is (Eli was the high priest – the religious leader and political leader all rolled into one), the ways that he had misled the Israelites was NOT okay and should never be repeated.
 - Another reason for this language is due to the theology of the time: The Israelites gave God the credit for EVERYTHING that happened. If it was good, bad or indifferent, it was due to God, according to the Israelites.
 - So, one way to think about this is to think about sports.
 - Can you tell me what the coach is supposed to do in sports?
 - That’s right -- the coach tells you what to do.
 - The coach teaches the individual players and then comes up with a plan that the players are supposed to follow.
 - And if you don’t listen to the coach, it’s likely that as an individual and as a team, you are NOT going to do very well, right?
 - But even if is the players who are not listening, often it is the coach that gets blamed, right? We see this happen at the pro level a lot.

- So if you think about God as a coach in this story, and Eli as a star player, we see that Eli is not listening to the coach, which means Eli is going to get cut from the team (aka punished).
 - But because the Israelites give God the credit for everything, how they tell the story then is that even though Eli, the star player, didn't listen and screwed up – it is still God's (the coach's) fault – so that's why when bad things happen to Eli and his sons, God gets the blame/credit.
- Second, we can learn some important things about listening prayer in today's story:
 1. Listening prayer is more likely to happen when distractions are few (Samuel hears God at night, when things are quiet)
 2. Listening prayer is more likely to happen when we are thinking about God and like who God is. Samuel is thinking about God in general (it's his work to attend to God stuff, but it was also Eli's job, too). But, where Samuel is sleeping helps us know that Samuel liked God, wanted to be close to God, had his mind on God.
 3. Listening prayer is more likely to happen when we have someone to instruct us, like Eli instructed Samuel (although Eli didn't do much, his little bit of teaching helped Samuel out).
 4. It's important to share what we hear during listening prayer, like Samuel did with Eli, so that we can determine whether what we heard or not was right. (In chapter 2 of 1 Samuel, another prophet tells Eli the same thing as Samuel tells Eli in chapter 3)
 5. As we practice listening prayer, what God helps us to see and understand makes us trustworthy to other people, which is what we see in verse 20 that says

TRANSITION

- "Prayer" is "communication with God."
- Now, communication is no easy thing, even between two people, not to mention between a person and God, who is invisible and doesn't speak in the same ways that we do.
- We saw the difficulties of new communication in today's video clip: Gloria and the people around her don't always understand each other.
- We also saw the difficulties of new communication in today's scripture story: We see how Samuel needs help to understand what God is saying to him.
- To get better at new forms of communication, we have to practice and become familiar with the communication.
- We're going to do an activity now, where we practice a new form of communication.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY – Roslyn

- The rebus puzzle is a form of communication that takes the arrangement of images and words to create a common saying.
- For example, the phrase for this rebus puzzle...



...would be, “Top Secret” because the secret that is being pointed to is at the top.

- So, the next thing we’re going to do is see how good we are at understanding the messages that the Rebus puzzles are trying to tell us.
- Because a community of people can better understand a new form of communication, we’re going to do this together.
- [Hand out the sheet with the rebus puzzles on them or put the puzzles on the TV/computer screen]

DO Activity (as a Group)

CONCLUSION

- As we can see from the scripture story, video clip and activity, new forms of communication results in mistakes.
- But the more we practice and the more we ask for others to help us, the less likely miscommunication will take place.
- This also holds true when it comes to listening to God.
- When we talk to others about God, and about what we think God is trying to communicate to us, then like Samuel, we’ll be better able to understand what God is communicating to us.

CLOSING PRAYER

Timeline (for Handout)

Chronology of Judges Timeline The five Indivisible Units of Chronology

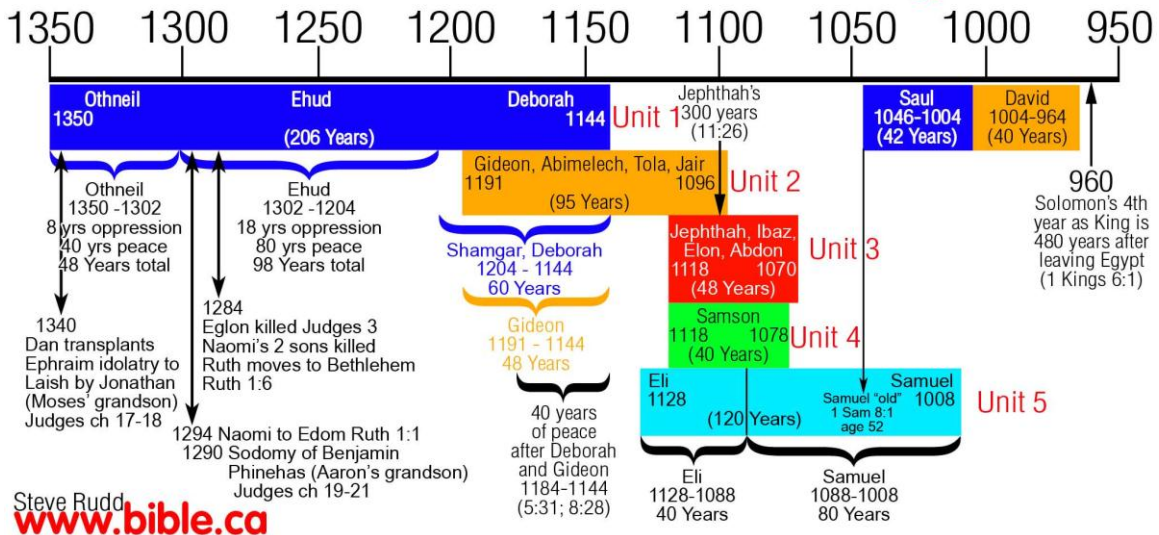
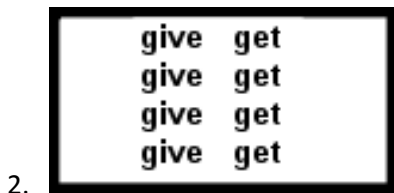


Figure out the Rebus Puzzles (HANDOUT)

Write down the message that you think each picture is trying to communicate. There are correct answers for each puzzle, but if your explanation makes a lot of sense, we'll be willing to count your answer as correct.



1. Answer _____



2. Answer _____



3. Answer _____



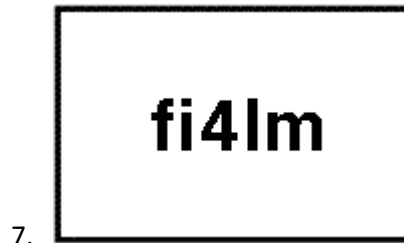
4. Answer _____



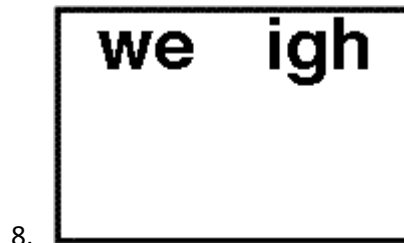
5. Answer _____



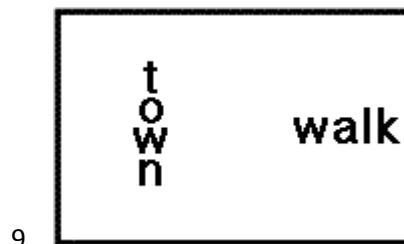
6. Answer _____



7. Answer _____



8. Answer _____



9. Answer _____

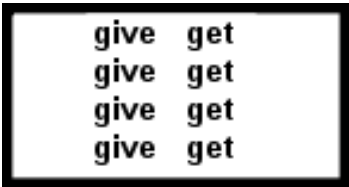


10. Answer _____

ANSWER SHEET (not for handout)



1. Space Invaders



2. 4give and 4get



3. Head 4cover



4. Try 2under stand



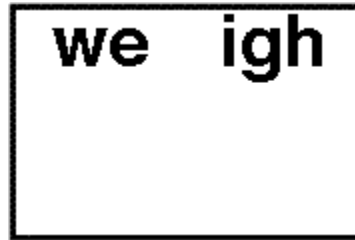
5. With with e's (ease)



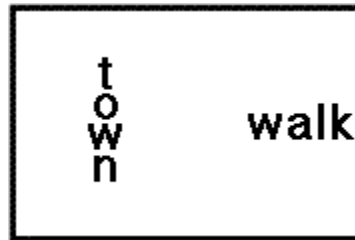
6. Running on empty



7. Foreign film



8. Divided highway



9. Downtown sidewalk



10. Lounging around the house

Puzzles are from http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/riddles/rebus_puzzle.htm and <http://www2.stetson.edu/~efriedma/rebus/>