

## Middle School Sunday School Lessons by

**rfour.org**

**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

- Introduce the concept of “Listening prayer”
- Highlight how new forms of communication will not always go smoothly – expect mistakes to happen!
- Illustrate how a team effort can help with better understanding new forms of communication.

### Materials needed:

1. Some way to play and show movie clip on rfour.org site for this lesson (a *Modern Family* montage)
2. 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 two 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

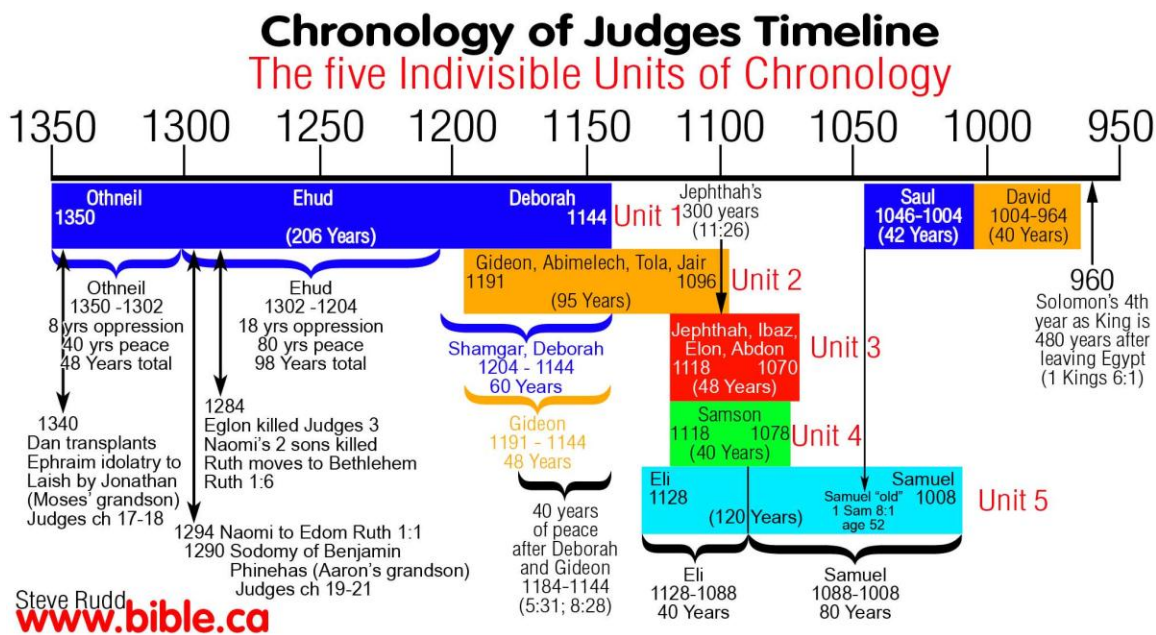
## VIEW CLIP

## 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 about 300 years since the Israelites left Egypt, but before they have any kings.
- Instead of kings, Israel has had "judges" (sometimes they are warriors, sometimes they are prophets) who have helped lead the Israelites.
- Samuel is a pretty significant person because he's the last judge, really, and near the end of his "career," the Israelites decide they want to move from having judges to having kings.
- In fact, Samuel eventually 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):



- 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 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** (answers are in parentheses)

1. What time does the story take place? (night time -- 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 might explain why Samuel is awake – he's well-rested.)
2. Since the story doesn't tell us, any guesses about who 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? (story doesn't say, but his "failing eyesight" is a clue that he's pretty old)
4. Verse 4 – Who calls to Samuel? (God)
5. Verse 5 – Who does Samuel think is calling him? (Samuel thinks it's Eli calling)
6. How many times does Samuel think Eli is calling him? (3 times)

7. Verse 8 – What does Eli realize the third time Samuel interrupts his sleep? (That God must be “making contact” with Samuel)
8. Verse 9 – What does Eli then tell Samuel to do? (Next time he hears his name being called, Samuel should say, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”)
9. Verse 11-14 – Now that Samuel knows who is talking, what does God have to say to Samuel? (That nothing can save Eli and his family – yikes!)
10. Verse 15 – Does Samuel want to share this with Eli? (Nope)
11. If you were 10 year old Samuel, would you want to share that news with 60ish year old Eli?
12. Verse 18 -- Does Samuel actually tell Eli? (Yes, basically because Eli commanded him to do so)
13. In verse 20, how does Israel respond to Samuel as he grows up? (sees him as a trustworthy prophet)

## TELL

- There are two parts to prayer: Talking to God and listening to God.
- Today’s story tells a few things about the listening part of prayer.
- First, some things about the listening part of prayer.
  - Listening prayer is more likely to happen when distractions are few (Samuel hears God at night, when things are quiet)
  - 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.
  - What we hear in prayer may not always be good news and we may not like what we hear.
  - 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.
    - (Note: In chapter 2 of 1 Samuel, another prophet tells Eli the same thing as Samuel tells Eli in chapter 3)
- I especially like how that last point (that it takes a community to hear God) is highlighted in today’s story
- We see how Eli isn’t listening for God or has forgotten how to listen for God, but Samuel *is* able to hear God.
- However, Samuel needs Eli’s experience and expertise to be able to understand what he’s hearing.
- Because Eli was part of Samuel’s first step in listening in prayer, Eli then follows up with Samuel to see what he heard
- This follow up by Eli is helpful to Samuel because otherwise Samuel probably would not have shared with Eli what he had heard from God.
- But because Samuel did share with Eli what he had heard, then Eli could give feedback to Samuel (based on other things Eli had been hearing) that Samuel had correctly understood God.
- To help us think about how this team effort helps people better hear and understand communication, let’s do the following activity.

## EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- A “rebus puzzle” is a form of communication that uses 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.

- These are tricky (which is probably why they call them “puzzles”). They require that we know certain phrases ahead of time and can interpret the pictures in a creative/imaginative way.
- So, we’re going to see how good we are at understanding the messages that the Rebus puzzles are trying to tell us.
- But, let’s work together on these puzzles as a class.
- Let’s collectively use our experiences and expertise to decipher this new form of communication.
- [Hand out the sheet with the rebus puzzles on them or put the puzzles on the TV/computer screen]

## **DO Activity (as a Group)**

### *Recommendations:*

- Even though all the puzzles are on one handout, encourage the class to work on one at a time and to share their thoughts about the puzzle out loud.
- If they get stuck, give them clues based on the answers (listed on last page of lesson)

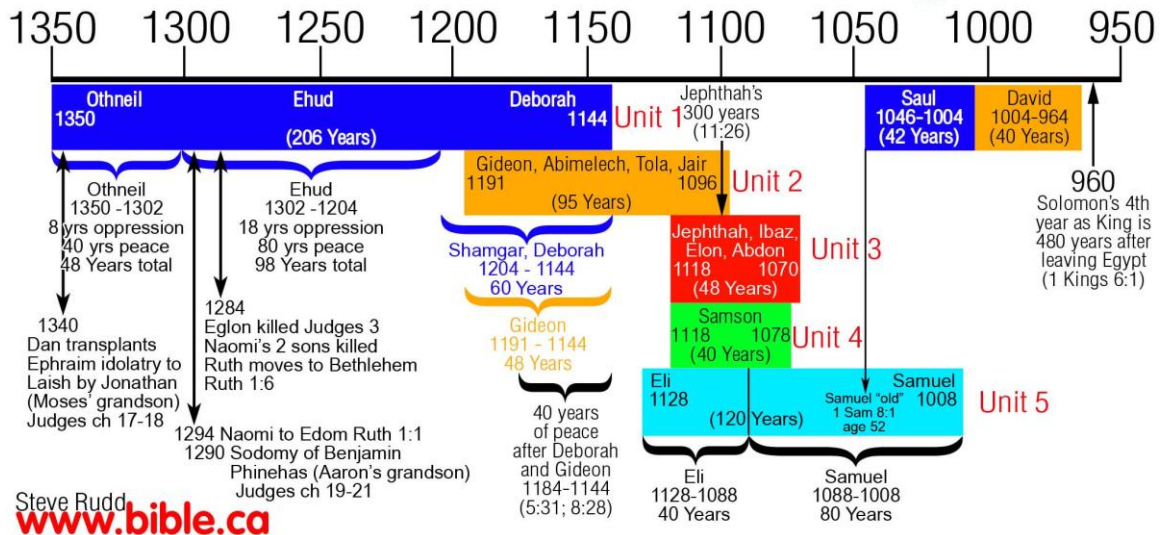
## **ASK / TELL**

- What did the more difficult puzzles have in common with each other?
- Do you think you did better or worse by doing these puzzles with the group?
- I know I certainly would have done worse by myself. I’m terrible at these types of puzzles.
- Which brings me to wanting to review what we’ve discussed today:
  - “Prayer” is “communication with God” with both talking and listening.
  - And, 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.
  - For instance, we saw the difficulties of newer forms of communication in today’s video clip when Gloria and the people around her didn’t always understand each other.
  - We also saw the difficulties of new communication in today’s scripture story: We saw how Samuel needed help to understand what God was saying to him.
- And that’s what I hope we remember about today’s story – that the more we ask for help from others when it comes to listening to God, the less likely miscommunication will take place.
- 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

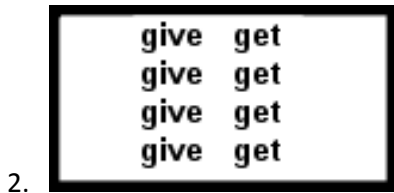


**Figure out the Rebus Puzzles (HANDOUT)**

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 \_\_\_\_\_



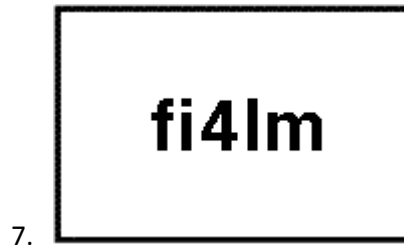
4. Answer \_\_\_\_\_



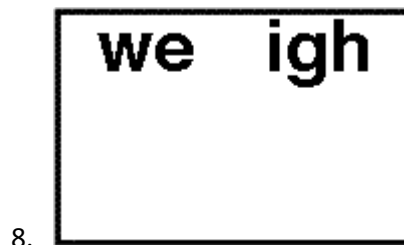
5. Answer \_\_\_\_\_



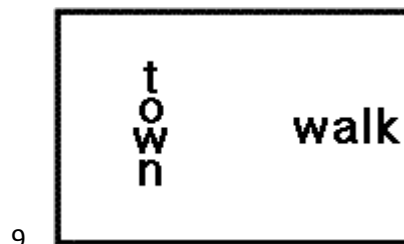
6. Answer \_\_\_\_\_



7. Answer \_\_\_\_\_



8. Answer \_\_\_\_\_



9. Answer \_\_\_\_\_

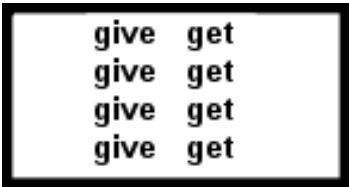


10. Answer \_\_\_\_\_

ANSWER SHEET (not for handout)



1. Space Invaders



2. 4give and 4get



3. Head 4cover



4. Try 2under stand



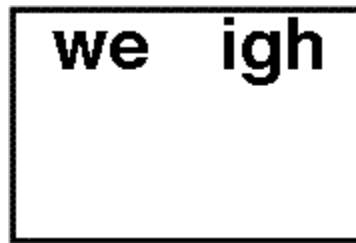
5. With with e's (ease)



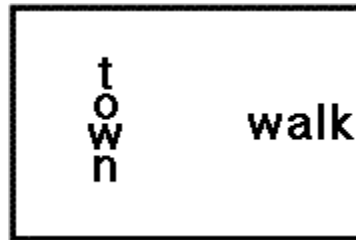
6. Running on empty



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](http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/riddles/rebus_puzzle.htm) and <http://www2.stetson.edu/~efriedma/rebus/>