

BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

33. ARE YOU LISTENING?

Bible Base: 1 Samuel 3

Key Christian Belief: God wants His people to listen to Him.

Aim: To encourage children to listen to God.

Introduction

Ask children to be silent for thirty seconds and listen out for any sounds they can hear. Invite some to share what they have heard.

Ask them if they would have heard some of these things if they had not been listening. Point out that there are often things we don't hear, because we are not listening. For example - there may be a bird singing a beautiful song outside the window - but we don't hear it because we are busy with our work, concentrating on a game or watching television. Worse still, our parents or teachers may be talking to us - but we haven't heard because we haven't been listening.

Today's story will help us to know how to listen to God - so that we do not miss what He is saying to us.

Story

Explain that Samuel was a small boy who lived long ago and whose job it was to help the old priest Eli to look after the temple where people came to worship God. It may have been his job to sweep the floors, for example, or when visitors came to show them where everything was. Not only did Samuel work in the temple, however; he lived there too and so every night when the work was done, the lamps would all be blown out and Samuel would go to the part of the temple where his bedroom was, lie down in his own little bed and go to sleep.

As you tell the story, encourage children to join in with some actions, as if they are Samuel. Each time Samuel goes to bed, invite them to stretch, yawn, pull a blanket up round them and close their eyes. With their eyes closed, get them to imagine what Samuel might have heard in the dark, mentioning something different each time -e.g. the drip, drip, drip of a leaking oil lamp, the wind blowing gently outside, the barking of a dog, the scratching of a mouse... Leave a short pause each time as Samuel drifts off to sleep and then say 'Samuel, Samuel!' Invite the children at this point to open their eyes and cup a hand round one ear, as if they are Samuel listening to find out who is calling him and what for.

Act out Samuel tip-toeing along the hallway to Eli's room, having to waken a snoring Eli each time and then tip-toeing back to his own bed.

On the third visit to Eli teach the children the response that Eli gave Samuel, with the following actions:

'Speak, Lord'	(hands cupped outwards at either side of the mouth)
'your servant'	(hands together in bowing position)
'is listening'	(hands cupped around ears)

As you reach the appropriate point in the story, invite the children to say this with you, as if they are Samuel.

Explain that God had a message for Eli and wanted Samuel to pass it on to him. (There is no need to go into what the message was.) Even though it wasn't something that Eli wanted to hear, next morning Samuel told Eli everything that God had told him to say.

Exploring Christian Belief

This was the first of many times that God heard Samuel speak and passed it on to others. In those days, before the Bible was written, this was how God spoke to people. He chose messengers, called prophets; He told them what He wanted to say and asked them to pass the message on to His people.

Nowadays, God's message is written down for us in the Bible. It is very rare to hear God speak in a voice that you can hear out loud. These days, Christians believe that God more often speaks to us quietly in our hearts, especially when the Bible is being read or explained, helping us to know what it is He wants to say to us.

However, just like Samuel, **we need to be ready to listen**. The prayer that Eli gave to Samuel is a good one to pray every time you come to read or hear what the Bible says. Ask God to speak to you and to help you to understand what it is He wants to say to you and be ready to listen quietly in your heart.

And, just like Samuel, **we need to be ready to do what God says**. Eli taught Samuel to use the words 'your servant' in His prayer. Christians believe that God speaks to those who are ready to do what He says, no matter what it is. So whenever there is something you know God wants you to do, always be ready to do it. Then you can be sure that God will speak and keep on speaking to you!

God wants to speak to us. There are important things He wants us to know. What a pity it would be if we did not hear what He has to say to us because we weren't listening!

Prayer

Invite the children to say the words Eli taught Samuel, along with the actions you have taught them, at the end of each sentence you say, along these lines:

Each time I read or hear stories from the Bible...

When I'm not sure what to say or do...

When I need to be reminded of your love...

When there is something new I need to learn...

First thing every morning...

And throughout each day...