

**A three part programme
for 3-11 year olds exploring
the life of Samuel**

Mustard  Seeds
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faithful • creative • effective

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Our comprehensive range of printed material covers the entire 18 month to 18 year age range. It is used right around the world in over 27 countries and has been translated in part or in whole into twelve different languages.

We have conducted live children's ministry training in churches and theological colleges in South Africa, Singapore, Dubai, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Germany, Norway, Hong Kong, Australia and throughout the United Kingdom.

Mustard Seeds is our new range of electronic material and will ultimately be a comprehensive four year syllabus for 3 to 11 year olds.

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We firmly believe that the Bible is God's word to mankind and that it contains everything we need to know in order to be reconciled with God through faith in Jesus Christ and live in a way that is pleasing to him. Therefore, we believe it is vital to teach the Bible accurately to children, being careful to teach each passage's true meaning in an age-appropriate manner, rather than selecting a 'children's message' from a Biblical passage.

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Samuel

Week 1 Samuel, the Baby

pg. 6

1 Samuel 1:1-28

Aim : To teach that God generously answers prayers at just the right time as part of his good plan.

Week 2 Samuel, the Prophet

pg. 20

1 Samuel 2:12-18, 22-26, 3:1-4:1a

Aim : To teach that those who lead God's people must eagerly hear God's word, obey it and faithfully teach it to others.

Week 3 Samuel, the Judge

pg. 36

1 Samuel 7:2-17

Aim : To teach that God rescues and restores those who truly repent and come to him through Jesus.

Series Aims

- To teach that God always answers his people's prayers so as to bring about his good plans for them.
- To understand that God's word is essential for the growth of his people.
- To teach that those who lead God's people must hear, obey and teach his word.
- To understand that the normal Christian life involves ongoing repentance and faith.

Series Context

The story of Samuel marks a significant change in Israel's leadership. Samuel is the last of the judges and also the first of the prophets (cf. Acts 3:24, 13:20). Judges were individuals raised up by God to rescue his people from the discipline which he himself had inflicted because of their disobedience. This discipline was usually in the form of foreign oppression. Prophets were individuals called by God to speak his word to his people. Samuel fulfilled both of these roles as he not only led and mediated for Israel when he asked God to rescue them from the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:13), but he also faithfully brought God's word to Israel (1 Samuel 3:19-4:1). Samuel therefore forms an important bridge between the period of the judges and the establishment of kingship in Israel. He is a more passive judge than

his predecessors, not leading a military campaign, but mediating through sacrifice.

Although an exemplary leader, Samuel is only a shadow of Jesus, the perfect leader of God's people. Both were born in miraculous circumstances (1 Samuel 1:20, Luke 1:35); both grew in wisdom, stature and favour with God and man (1 Samuel 2:26, Luke 2:52); both faithfully spoke God's word to his people (1 Samuel 4:1, Luke 4:18-21); and both rescued God's people (1 Samuel 7:13, John 11:49-52). But Jesus alone perfectly reveals God's character and has provided eternal rescue from the consequences of sin.

Series Overview

This series explores three stages of Samuel's life: his birth, his call to be a prophet as a boy and his rule as judge. God carefully chose Samuel to lead his people and to teach them to live in faithful obedience to him. Each lesson covers two key aspects of life as God's people:

1. **God's sovereign rule** – even before Samuel was born God was clearly in control of events. He had prevented Hannah from having children and then gave her a son in answer to her prayer (week 1); he made sure that Samuel grew up in the temple and then called him to lead God's people (weeks 1 and 2); he gave the people his word through his chosen prophet (weeks 2 and 3);

and he answered Samuel's prayer by rescuing the Israelites from their enemies (week 3).

2. The people's response of faith – Hannah trusted God in her childlessness and pleaded with him to grant her a son (week 1); Samuel heard God's call and spoke the truth despite the difficult message he had to convey (week 2); Eli accepted God's word spoken through Samuel and so did the people (weeks 2 and 3); Samuel trusted God to rescue his people (week 3); and Israel demonstrated their faith by accepting the word of the Lord in the mouth of his prophet and repenting of their idolatry (week 3).

The life of God's people is much the same today: we must come to our sovereign God in faith and respond to his rescue in obedience. Unlike the Israelites, however, we have an even greater priest, prophet and judge who is able to save and sustain us as we trust in him and listen to his word.

Memory Verse

I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house, and they will minister before my anointed one always.

1 Samuel 2:35 [NIV]

Memory Verse Ideas

Separator: Before the lesson tape or glue a number of sheets of paper together to form one long strip. Write out the memory verse as one long word without any gaps between letters.

The children can tear the paper or draw a thick line to separate the words and work out the memory verse e.g. "Jesusaidlamthelighthoftheworld" would become "Jesus / said / I / am / the / light / of / the / world".

If you have a large group you could make two of these strips of paper and get the children to race in teams to complete the memory verse.

Human Scrabble: Assign a word of the memory verse to each child. If there are more words than children in your group assign more than one word to some of the children. Make sure they know their words. Get them to arrange themselves in order. Start at one end and get them to say their word(s) out loud.

After each round get the last child to move to the first position and take ownership of the first child's word who then gets the second child's word, and so on. Repeat as time (and enthusiasm) allows.

Popping Words: Divide the memory verse up into words or short phrases and write these on strips of paper. Place each paper strip into a balloon and inflate the balloon. Divide the group into teams and have one set of different coloured balloons for each team. The children take turns to collect and pop a balloon from the other side of the room. They bring

the strip of paper back to the group to arrange in the correct order. The first team to correctly assemble the verse and recite it out loud wins.

Using This Resource

This programme is designed to be adaptable. It can be used for a mixed 3-11s group or more age-specific groups.

Text in blue is generally applicable to younger children (3-7 years); green text is aimed at older children (7-11 years); and black text is applicable to all-age groups, at the leader's discretion.

Leaders are encouraged to engage with the study material in a devotional manner, seeking to apply God's word to their own lives before attempting to teach others.

We trust that you will be blessed as you do that. We also hope that once you have done that, your application of God's word to the children you teach will be more deliberate and relevant.

Note: All page numbers in this document are hyperlinked – simply click on the number to jump to that page.

Craft Symbols

We make use of the following symbols for the craft activities:



Apply glue here



Cut along this solid line



Cut out this shaded area



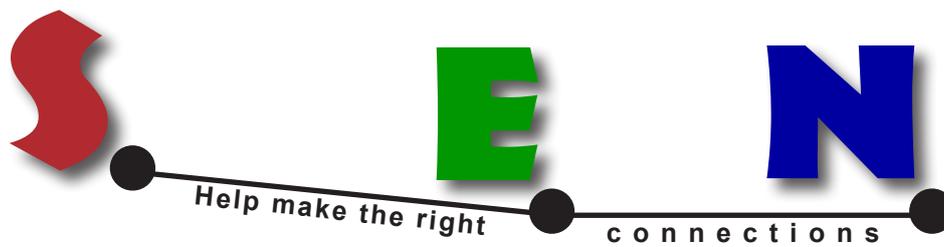
Fold outwards along this dashed line



Fold inwards along this dashed line



Staple here



A child with special educational needs (SEN) may provide some challenges to your group. It is therefore essential that you are well prepared for your lessons and that you have carefully thought about how to include all the children. You may need to make some changes to your existing programme to make it accessible for everyone.

A key principle to consider is that, as with all children in your church, each child is an individual and will have different needs, strengths and weaknesses. It is important that you get to know the children you teach as well as possible and that you make an effort to build a relationship with them.

In terms of the lesson itself, you may need to consider the following:

- A child with SEN may need to have an additional adult to support them.
- Consider the environment in which you teach and try to eliminate potential distractions. Where you are seated and where the children are seated, the temperature of the room and noise levels all affect the sense of calm and orderliness of the class.
- Think about the class size and ratio of adults to children.
- It may be appropriate, at times, for a troubled or disruptive child to be accompanied by an adult and to be moved away from the group to a quiet area. Here they can engage in something related to the lesson which is calming and quiet.
- Use clear and child appropriate language.
- When giving instructions; tell them to the whole group, demonstrate, then check that the child with SEN understands what needs to happen.
- Balance the amount of open ended and closed questions you ask.
- Be careful of rhetorical questions; the child with SEN will want to answer them.
- If a child wants to ask too many questions, which may distract from the lesson, tell them that for now we are going to listen and that later you will come back to their questions. **Make sure that you do spend some individual time with the child going through their questions.** You may find that by the time you go back to them, their questions have either been answered or forgotten or they are not that important anymore.

- Break up your lesson into different sections; short, sharp sections work best as this keeps children engaged and therefore able to manage their behaviour.
- Children with SEN like structure and routines; you may like to start the session with the same song or greeting time or keep the structure the same each week. For example; start with a song, a recap from last week, a short introduction to the new lesson, a song, the Bible story, a craft, the application and then a game for consolidation and further application.
- Use repetition (chants or songs with simple tunes to teach main Bible truths).
- Use lots of different kinds of aids to teach your lesson (movement, pictures, multimedia, props, music, textures, drama, etc.). Consider different learning styles.
- Use simple pictures (too much detail can be distracting).
- Think about how much reading and writing you are expecting the children to do; too much may cause the child with SEN to become anxious and distressed about failing.
- On worksheets, consider making them accessible by asking children to draw some of the answers, rather than write them. If there is a lot of writing or reading required, pair up the SEN child with an adult or with a more able peer. You can also write the answers on a board for them to copy down.
- Children with SEN may find it more difficult to think about application as this requires them to put themselves into a situation which is, at times, hard to do.
- For a child who is non-verbal, find out what their communication is from parents and try to use these as much as possible in your lessons and interaction (Makaton or BSL signing, eye gazes, communication switch boxes, symbols, photos, pictures, objects of reference, etc).

–Toni Edmonds-Smith
Special Needs Teacher

Samuel, the Baby

1 Samuel 1:1-28

Big Idea : Hannah was childless so she asked God for a son and promised to dedicate him to God; God answered her prayers and she kept her promise.

Aim : To teach that God generously answers prayers at just the right time as part of his good plan.



Leader's Study Notes

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-28 noting the timing of God's answer to Hannah's prayer.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

Samuel's birth occurs at a critical point in Israel's history. In those days "everyone did as they saw fit" – there was no king, but God raised up judges to rescue and to rule his people (Judges 21:25). At this time there was very little central leadership and the word of the Lord was rare (1 Samuel 3:1). There were, however, still a few faithful Israelites who sought and worshipped God.

1:1-2 There was nothing special about Samuel's family. Culturally it was not unusual for a man to have more than one wife, but it was certainly not God's plan for marriage. In the Old Testament barrenness was believed to be a sign of disgrace or that God had withheld his blessing.

1:3-8 Shiloh was the central place of worship; Israelites would have travelled there to sacrifice to the Lord. Eli was the priest at Shiloh and was considered to be Israel's leader (cf. 4:18). His sons also served with him at the temple, the place where the Tent of Meeting was at that time.

It was God who had prevented Hannah from having children until now. The reason for this becomes clear as the story unfolds (cf. 1:11, 27-28).

1:9-16 Peninnah's provocation and Hannah's barrenness led her to plead with God desperately for a son. She promised to dedicate him to God for life if he granted her request. Not cutting his hair would be a visible sign of his dedication. It was customary at the time to pray aloud; this could be the reason for Eli's misunderstanding.

1:17-20 God answered Hannah's prayer at just the right time – if Hannah had not had to wait for a son she would not have promised to dedicate

him to God. God gave Hannah a son whom he would raise up as a new leader for Israel (cf. 3:19-4:1a).

1:21-28 Hannah carried out her promise with her husband's approval. They made the traditional sacrifices at Shiloh, but Hannah also willingly gave up the son she had so fervently prayed for.

Reflect

- Can you think of a time when God seemed to be taking a long time to answer a particular prayer? What happened as a result of that delay? Was the outcome better than you originally imagined it would be?
- How does not knowing what will happen in the future force us to trust God to always do the right thing at the right time? Does this change the way that you pray?
- Give thanks to God that he always acts at the right time to bring about his purposes for his people. Ask him to help you to trust that his plans and timing are always perfect.

Series Intro Idea

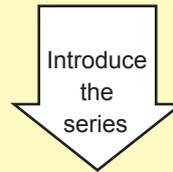
Option 1: Timeline. Enlarge the pictures on page 11 and place them randomly on a board or peg them to washing line/string. Can the children help you to arrange them in the correct order? [Creation, fall, flood, Abraham, exodus and Joshua's memorial stone (Joshua 24:25-27).]

Remind the children that after Joshua a number of judges led Israel. Samuel is the last of these judges.

Option 2: Provide two volunteers each with a disassembled construction toy. These need to be quite simple and different from one another. Only give one of the children an instruction sheet/picture of what they are required to build. Give them a minute to build their toys. Who succeeded and who did not? Why?

Explain that during the time of the judges in Israel people were not taking God's word seriously. The word of the Lord was rare; people were not used to hearing it and certainly weren't obeying it. This series is about Samuel, a man God used to speak his words to his people.

Session Outline



You could use one of the Series Intro Ideas on the left of this page. This will help to give the context for this lesson and the series as a whole.



Introductory Idea

Introduces this week's lesson.

Pose the questions at the end of the Introductory Idea. This gives children something to look out for in the lesson and helps their concentration. These get answered later in the session.



Teaching Plan

The core of the session.

The action of the Bible text is explained in an age appropriate and engaging way.



Game Idea

Not essential.

Reinforces the lesson aim in a fun way and provides a way of displacing energy!

Review the questions posed in the Introductory Idea.



Discuss and Apply

Not to be missed!

This is where the children can be quizzed on the content and meaning of the Bible story. Questions and discussion are needed to apply this Bible story to the children's everyday lives. They should do most of the talking.



Prayer Idea

Use the prayer idea or just encourage each child to pray about an aspect of the lesson.



Activity

An opportunity to reinforce the lesson. **For younger children, Activity A or B will be suitable. For older children, Activity C or D can be used to facilitate the Teaching or the Discuss and Apply section – some children prefer a lively discussion to completing written answers.**



Memory Verse

A fun way of remembering the key verse for the series.



Introductory Idea

Option 1: Most Wanted. Ask the children to call out things that they do not have, but would like to have. As they call these out write the ideas on a board or large sheet of paper. Once you have a suitable number listed ask the children to vote on which they most desperately want. It should become obvious that they do not all desire the same thing.

Explain that some people don't want an item because they already have it or because it doesn't appeal to them. Talk about how people are often willing to give certain things up in order to get what they desperately want. Ask some of the children what they might be willing to give up in order to have the thing that they desperately want? In today's true story from the Bible there was a woman who had desperately wanted something for a very long time. She was willing to give up something great to get it! [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Option 2: Most-Wanted-Gift Exchange. Before the lesson wrap about five presents individually. Only two of these need to have any appeal for the children e.g. a sweet or a fun toy. The other items should be very ordinary e.g. a potato or a folded piece of paper. Try to wrap them in such a way that it is not obvious what they are.

Choose five children and have them stand in a line. The order in which they stand will be the order in which they get to choose a present. Explain that the first child will choose a present and unwrap it. The second child will then choose a present and unwrap it. If they prefer the first child's present then they are free to swap with them. The first child has to give up what they have and receive the second child's present. If the second child prefers their own present, however, they can keep it. When the third child chooses and unwraps a present they can keep it or swap it with either of the other two children. Only the child whose turn it is to unwrap the present gets to force a swap. Continue until all the presents have been unwrapped.

Who ended up with the best present? Talk about why some children wanted to swap and others didn't. What were they willing to give up for the present they wanted? Why didn't they want to give up the best present? In today's true story from the Bible there was a woman who had desperately wanted something for a very long time. She was willing to give up something great to get it! [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to today's true story from the Bible to discover the answers to the following questions:

- Who desperately wanted something?
[*Hannah* (1:10-11)]

- What did she desperately want? [*A son* (1:11)]
- What did she promise to give up if she got it?
[*Dedicate (give) him to God* (1:11)]



Teaching Plan

This story has four scenes:

1:1-8 - Hannah's problem

1:9-17 - Hannah's prayer

1:18-20 - Hannah's prayer answered

1:20-28 - Hannah keeps her promise

Tell the story using the pictures on pages 12 and 13 or other appropriate visual aids. Resizeable colour versions of the pictures can be downloaded by logging into the profile used to purchase this resource on www.mustard-seeds.net. There is geographic movement in the story so you could move around the room with one side being the temple and the other Hannah's house. Alternatively you could act out the story by interviewing someone dressed to be Hannah and ask her to tell the story using a talkshow format.

The drama in the story comes from the fact that Hannah had waited a very long time to have a baby, but the Lord had prevented her from conceiving. This was made worse by Peninnah having many children and her taunting. Help the children to understand how sad and desperate Hannah must have been. Tell the rest of the story very simply – the overall flow is more important than the finer details.

For older children – tell the story as above and then use some of the following questions to draw attention to the main points of the passage:

- Why was Hannah so upset?
- What made her situation even worse?
- What did she ask God to do for her?
- What did she promise to do if he gave her a son?
- Why did Eli think she was drunk?
- Who was responsible for her not being able to have a child? Does this surprise you?
- How did God answer her prayer?
- Did Hannah keep her promise?



Game Idea

Option 1: For younger children – Pass the Baby. Play a version of the game 'Pass the Parcel'. Wrap a small baby doll in multiple layers of newspaper up to the head so that the layers can be removed one at a time. The children sit in a circle and pass the baby around from one person to the next while music plays. When the music stops the person holding the parcel must pass it to the next person to unwrap. You could include a sweet in each layer or simply hand one out to the child who

unwraps that layer. You can also shout 'change' at random intervals to make the parcel move in the opposite direction.

How did the children feel when they had to give the parcel to the next child whom they knew would get a sweet or the doll? Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible Hannah desperately wanted a baby, but she promised to give him to God if he answered her prayer. God gave her a son called Samuel and Hannah kept her promise – she gave away the thing she had received and most wanted.

Option 2: Give it Up. For this game you'll need two decks of cards: a regular deck for the first round of the game and a deck with all the black cards removed for the second round. Divide the group into two teams and have them stand in two lines at one end of the room. Divide the complete deck of cards into two stacks and place them facedown on two chairs at the other end of the room, one opposite each team. Show a black card to the one team and tell them that they are the black team and must collect ten black cards. Show a red card to the other team and tell them that they are the red team and need to collect ten red cards.

The children must run in relay one at a time to collect one card each from their team's stack of cards. If they draw the same colour as their team they take the card to their group. If they draw the other team's colour then they must give the card to the other team. The first team to get ten cards of the correct colour wins.

Play a second round, but replace the mixed stacks of cards with two piles of only red cards without the children seeing. How did the black team respond when they repeatedly drew a red card and had to give it to the other team? Were they discouraged? Did they give up? Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible Hannah desperately wanted a baby. She never gave up asking God to give her a son. In his good time God gave her what she asked for and she gave her son back to God.

Option 3: For older children – the Samuel Challenge. Before the lesson print the list of instructions on page 14 and cut the page in half as marked. Divide the group into two teams of no more than eight children and have them line up at one end of the room in their teams. If you have a large group you will need to print two copies of page 14 and divide the group into three or four teams instead. Place a small prize opposite each team at the other end of the room; they will need to collect this part way through the game.

The teams race to complete the challenges on their list. The first team to complete the challenges wins. However, as the last instruction is to give their prize to the other team you may need to encourage them to finish the race! Talk about why they were reluctant to finish. What was hard about the last instruction? Did they still feel like winners after giving away their

prize? Was it worth it? Give the winning team the remaining prize and then remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible Hannah desperately wanted a son, but she promised to give him to God if he answered her prayer. God gave her a son called Samuel and Hannah kept her promise – she gave away the thing she most wanted.



Discuss and Apply

This story clearly illustrates the relationship between God's sovereignty and prayer. God's people pray, asking God to act in various ways in our world, and God answers these prayers according to his perfect plan and his perfect timing. God always answers prayer. It may not always be what or when we want, but it is always answered. God either says 'yes', 'no' or 'wait' when we pray.

Begin by asking the children to share some of the things that they pray for. Are there any things for which they have prayed that do not appear to have been answered? Help the children to understand that God doesn't always give us what we ask for in prayer. Why is this? What reasons might God have for not giving us what we want when we ask for it? Why did God take so long to give Hannah a child? Would Hannah have promised to give her son to God if she had not been so desperate for so long?

Talk about how even Hannah knew that God was in control all that time. He was the one who had prevented her from having a child for so many years. In his good time God did give Hannah a son, Samuel, when she was desperate enough to promise to dedicate him to God. This is a difficult truth to understand, but as a result of all that had gone before God ensured that a godly man would be in the right place at the right time to lead his people (weeks 2 and 3).

This passage should encourage us to persist in prayer trusting God to answer in his good time and according to his good plan. Could you share an example of a prayer you have prayed which you thought God would answer immediately and he didn't? How long did he take to answer that prayer? Did the 'delay' change the outcome in any way?

Remind the children that there are many things that we pray for which will only be fully and clearly answered when Jesus returns. That may be tomorrow, but it may be many, many years away. We should not get discouraged or give up praying.

For older children – discuss as above, but then spend some time considering what God wants us to pray for. Hannah asked God for a son, but was willing to give him back to God. Samuel was part of God's plan to lead his people through a very difficult time in their history. How can the things that we pray for become part of God's big plan for the world? Does thinking about God's big plan for the world affect the kinds of things that we pray for? How many of

our prayers are selfish or impatient? How could we change what we pray for and how we pray that they will be answered in light of this story?

You could then think through some practical examples of things that the children usually pray for. Does anything need to change?



Prayer Idea

Get the children to draw around both of their hands on a piece of card and cut them out. Staple/stick the bottom of the hands together at the wrist so that the two hands look like praying hands. Get the children to think of some things to pray for that are part of God's big plan for the world. They can then write/draw this inside the palms of their cut out hands and take turns to pray for that thing.



Activity

For 3-7s – choose either Activity A (pages 15 and 16) or Activity B (page 17).

Activity A – Print page 15 (one copy for each child) and page 16 (one copy for every two children) onto paper.

Before the lesson use a craft blade to cut the bold lines either side of Eli's garment and the right side of Hannah's dress as marked on page 15. Cut out the strips with Samuel on them from page 16.

The children colour in the pictures. Help them to place the Samuel strip on top of page 16 and then push the left side of the strip through the slit in Hannah's dress and weave the right side under Eli's garment so that the arrow appears to the right of Eli. Pull the arrow to make Samuel move from Hannah's to Eli's side.

Remind the children that Hannah kept her promise to give the boy that God gave her back to serve in the temple.

Activity B – Make a baby's bottle. Print page 17 (one copy for every two children) onto paper or card.

Before the lesson cut along the bold lines as marked

The children colour in the pictures of Hannah and Samuel.

Help them to apply glue as marked and roll their page into a tube aligning the left edge with the dotted line.

Finally, apply a little glue to the inside of one of the bottle tops and press the two halves together.



Remind the children that Hannah kept her promise to give the boy that God had given her back to serve in the temple as soon as he was weaned.

For 7-11s – print either Activity Sheet C (page 18) or Activity Sheet D (page 19) onto paper for each child. Choose whichever is appropriate for your children and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.



Memory Verse

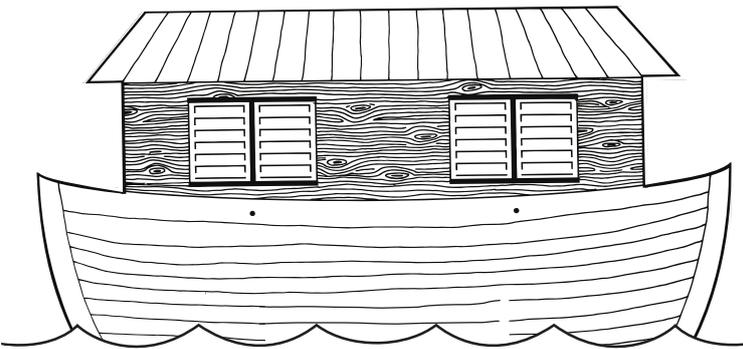
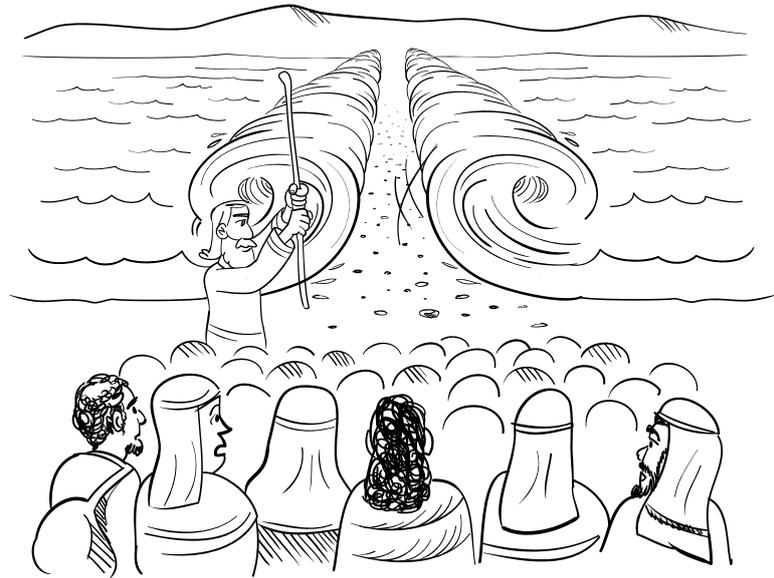
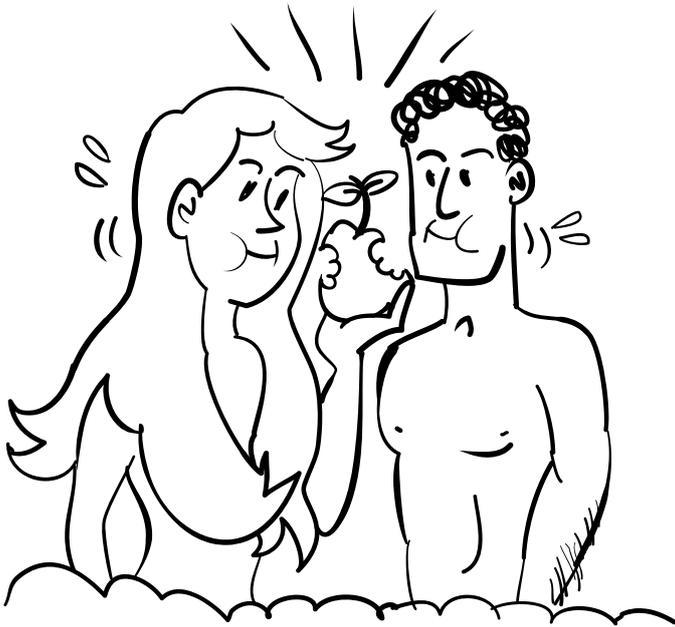
I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house, and they will minister before my anointed one always.

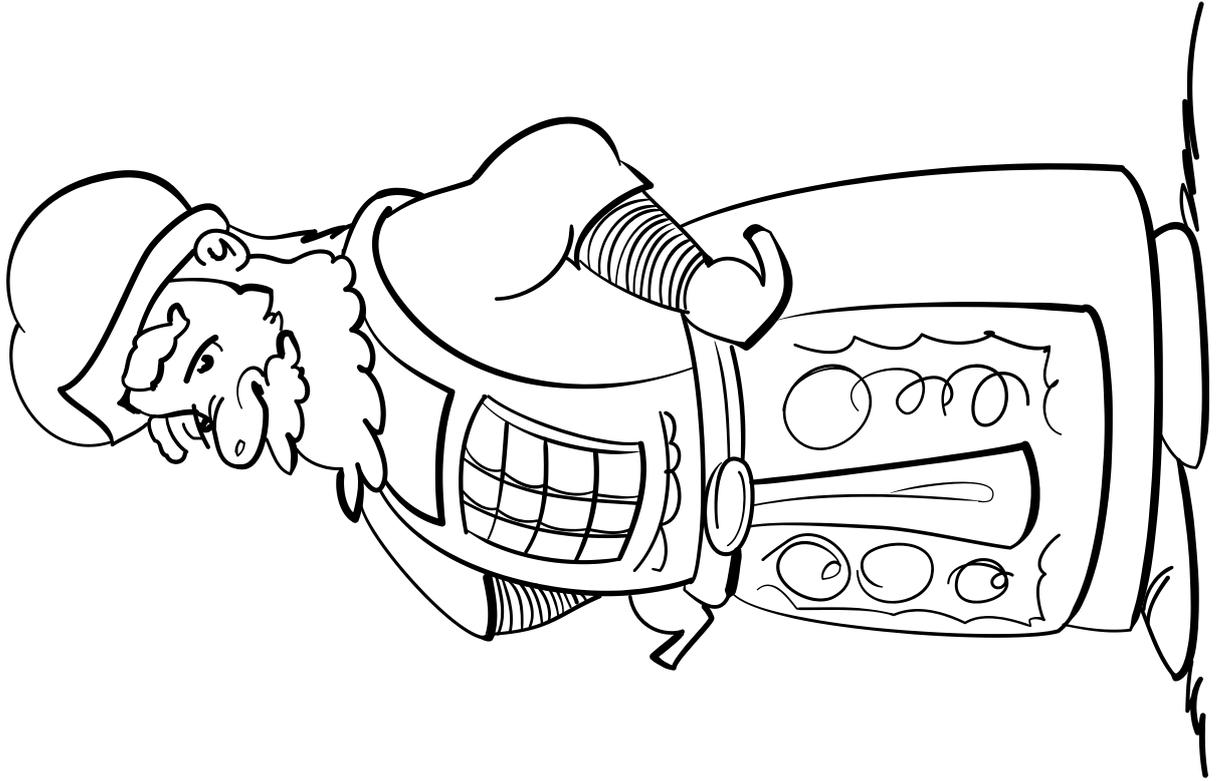
1 Samuel 2:35 [NIV]

Younger children can simply learn the first part of the verse.

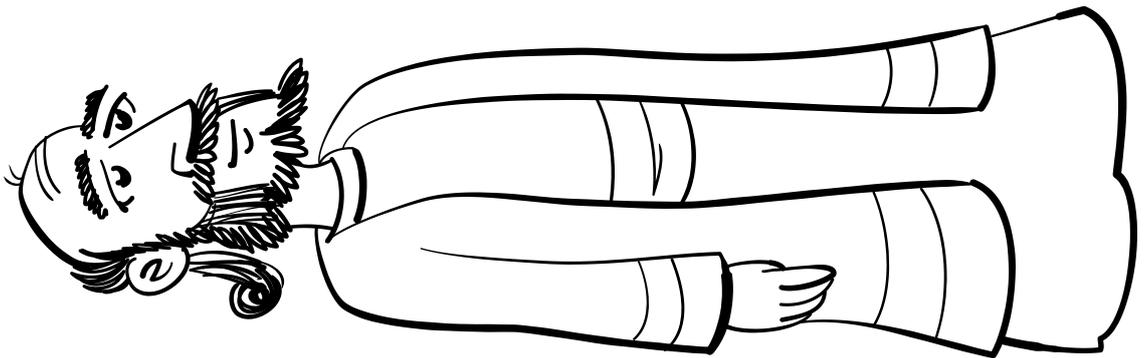


Samuel – Week 1
Series Intro Idea 1

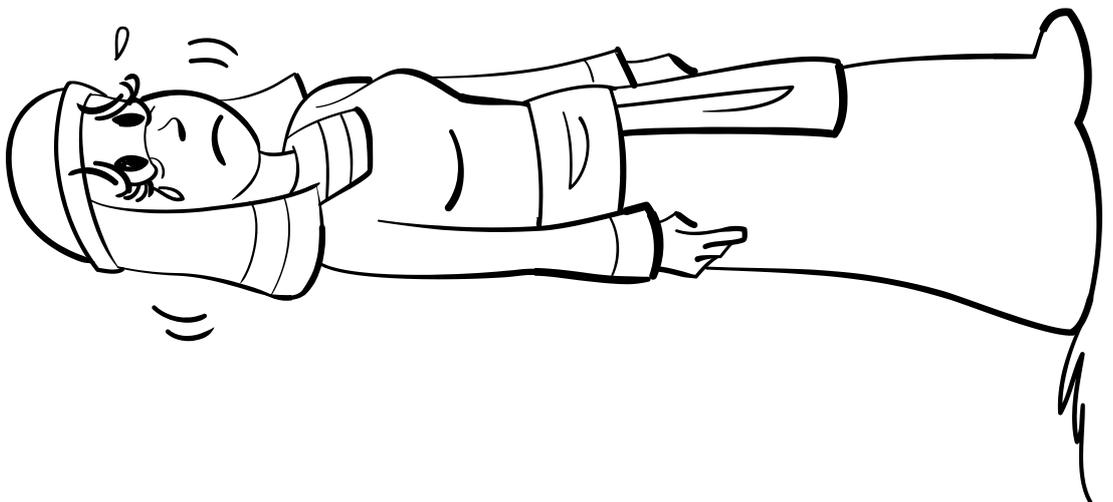




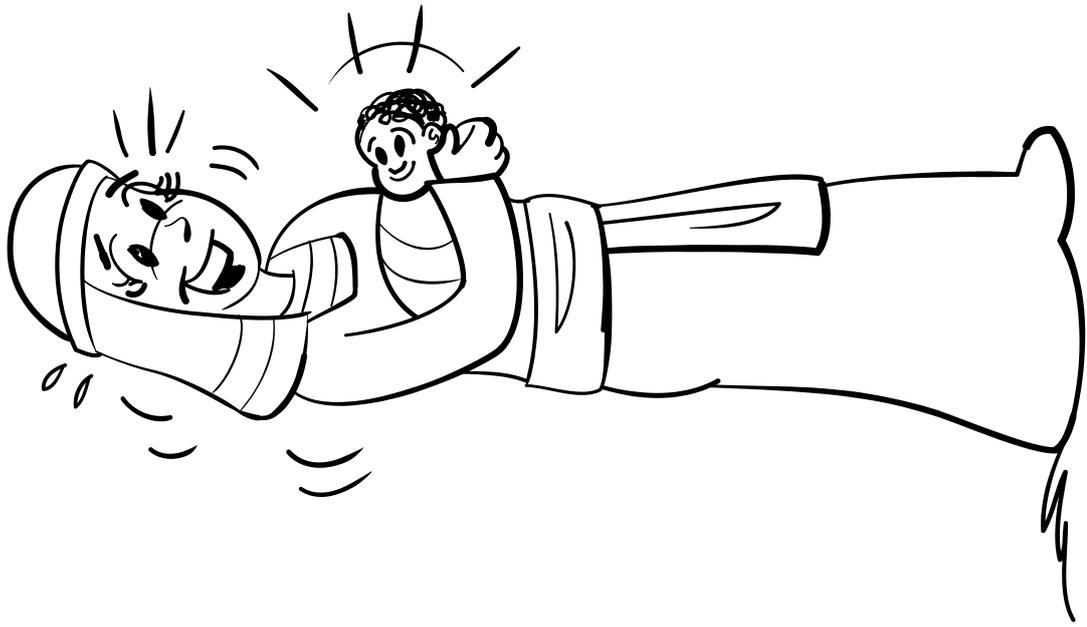
Eli



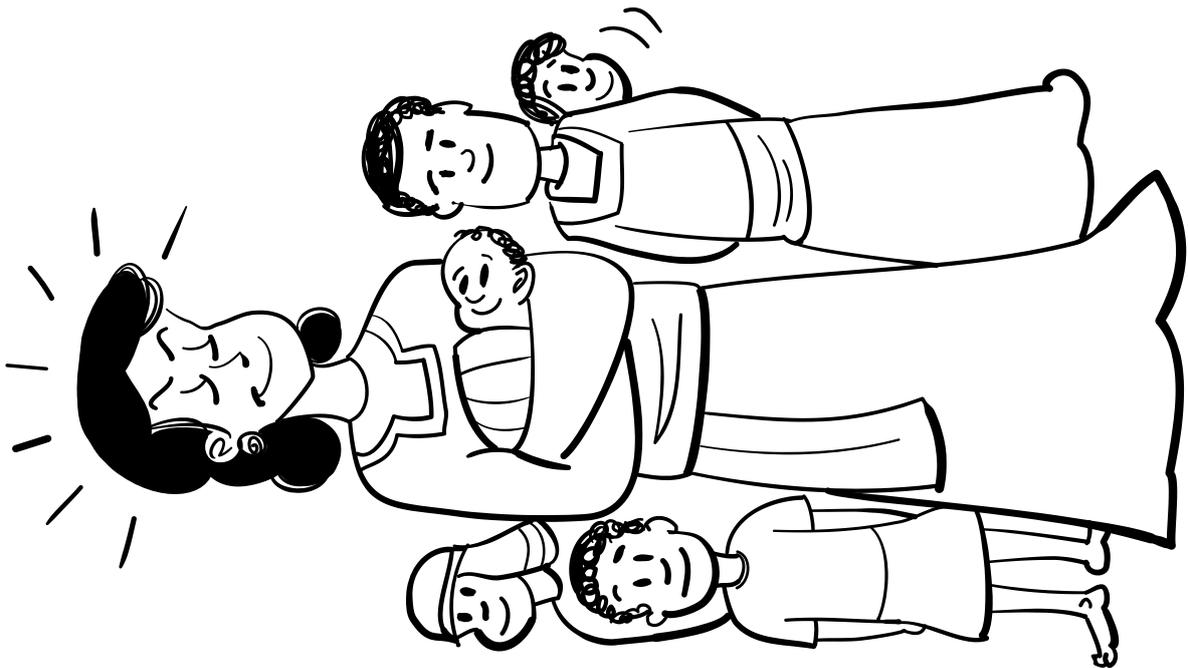
Elkanah



Childless Hannah



Hannah with Samuel



Peninnah and her children

The Samuel Challenge

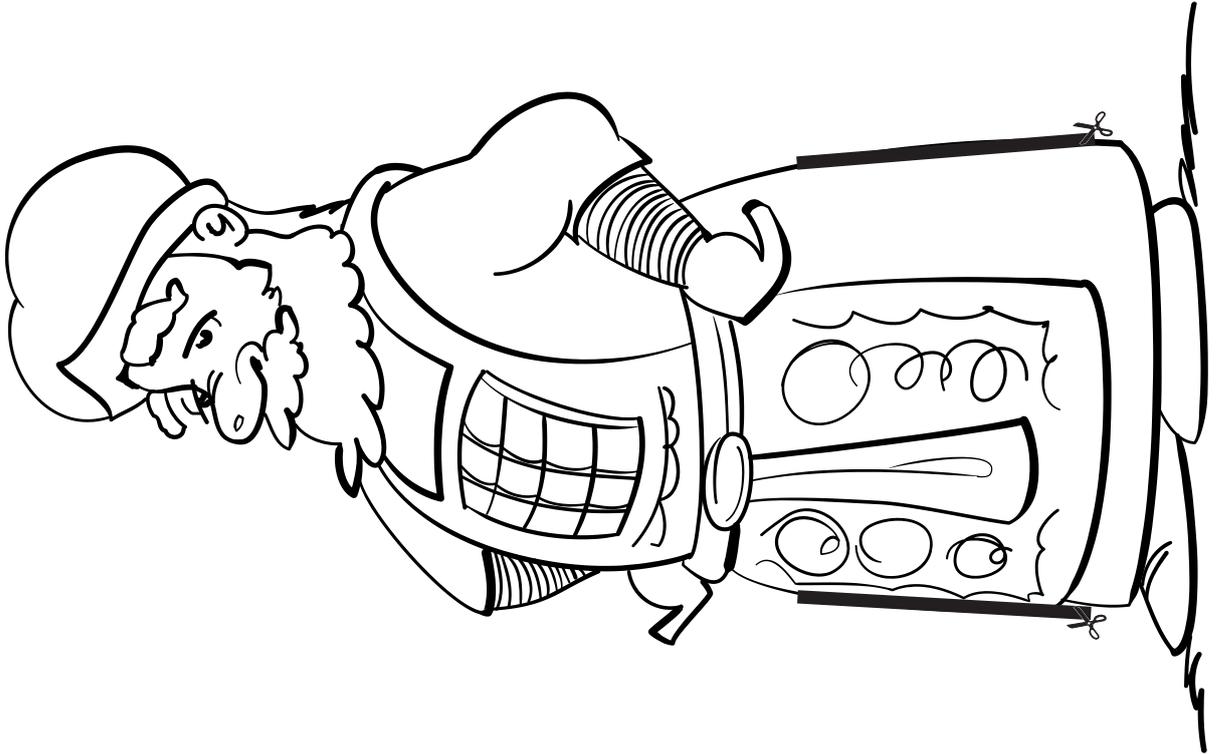
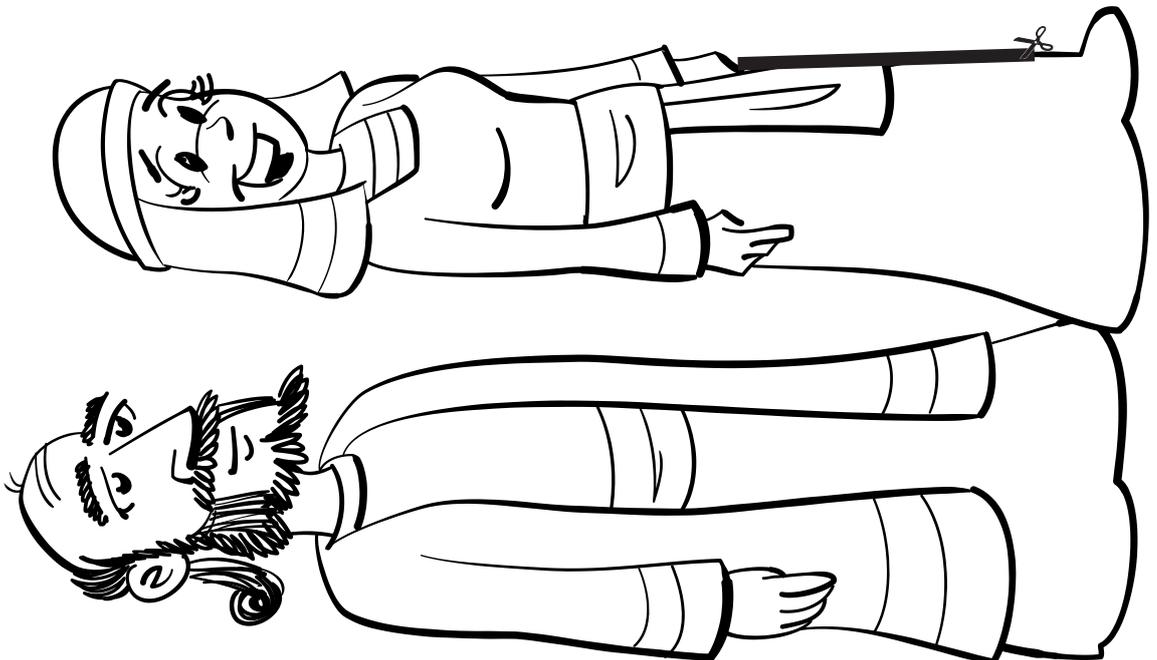
1. Fastest runner must run around the prize and back to the group.
 2. Tallest group member must stand up and sit down three times.
 3. All do five star jumps.
 4. Arrange yourselves in order of the month of your birthday.
 5. All clap ten times.
 6. Arrange yourselves in height order.
 7. One person must hop on one leg to collect the prize.
 8. Give the prize to the other team.
-

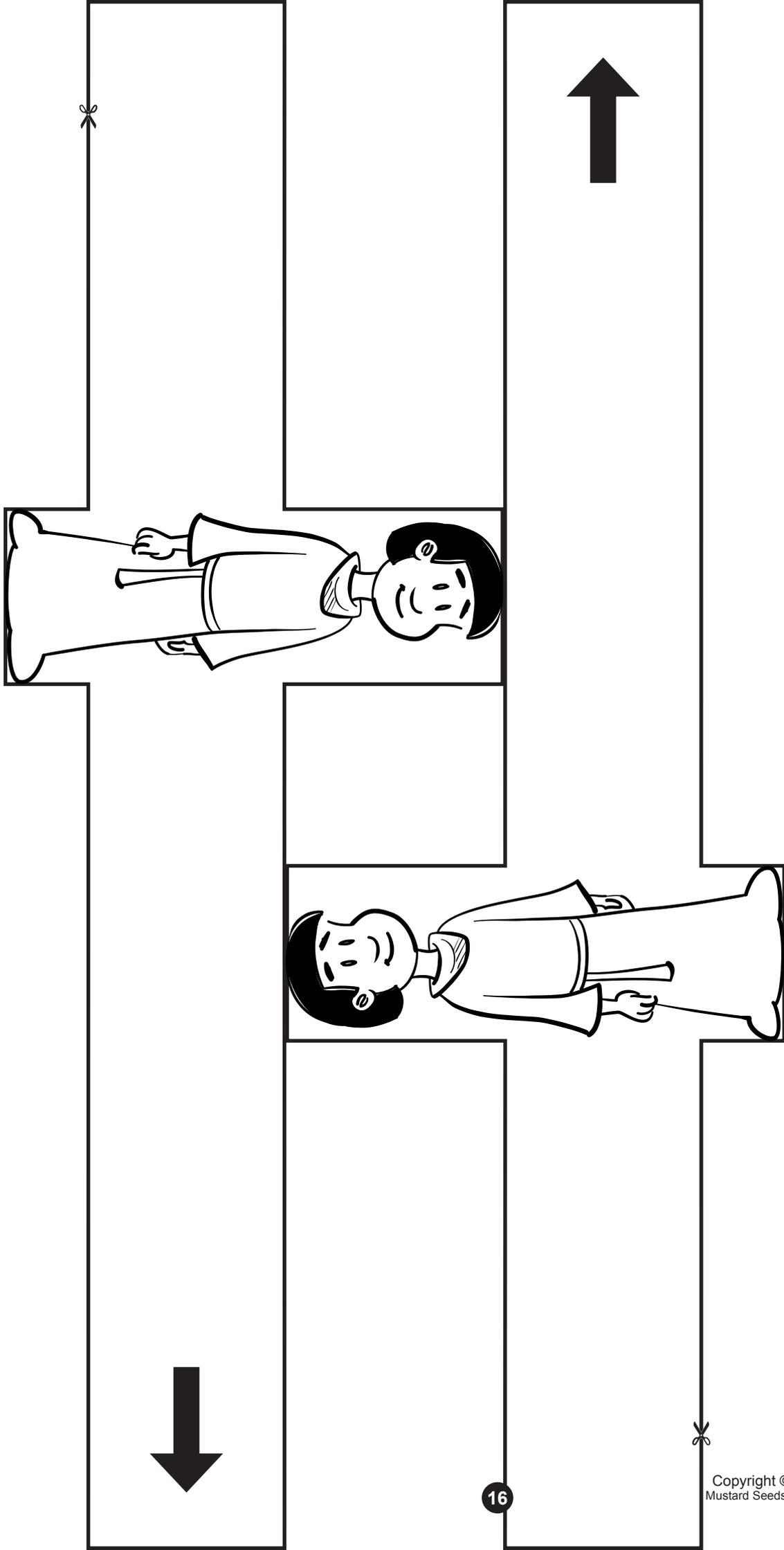
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3. All do five star jumps.
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5. All clap ten times.
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7. One person must hop on one leg to collect the prize.
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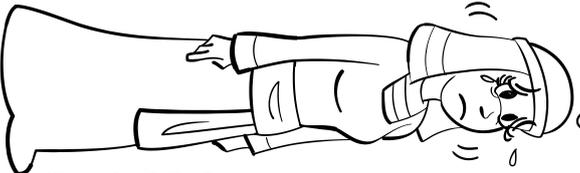
Hannah kept her promise to give Samuel
back to the Lord to serve in the temple.

1 Samuel 1:1-28





Hannah
really
wanted
a baby.



She
promised
to give
him back
to God to
serve in
the temple.

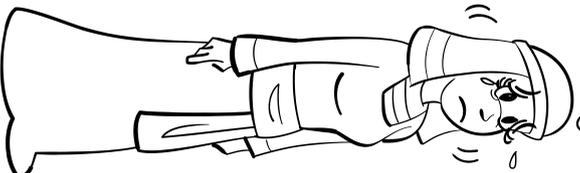
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1 Samuel 1:1-28



Samuel, the Baby

The true story can be found in 1 Samuel 1:1-28



Discover

Why was Hannah so upset? (1:2, 6) Tick two correct boxes

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elkanah had another wife | <input type="checkbox"/> Hannah had no children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peninnah kept teasing her | <input type="checkbox"/> She was tired from travelling |

What did she ask God to give her? (1:11) _____

What did she promise to give God if he did? (1:11) _____



Think Spot

Do you find this surprising?
Why/why not?

Did God answer Hannah's prayer as she asked? (1:20) Circle the correct answer
no / not yet / yes

Did Hannah keep her promise? (1:28) Circle the correct answer
no / not yet / yes

What happened to Samuel?

1. He was brought to the house of the L _ _ _ _ (1:24)
2. He l _ _ _ _ there his whole life (1:22, 28)
3. He w _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ the Lord (1:28)



Discuss



Does God always answer prayers? Does he always answer them the way that we want? Why/why not?
Why did God take so long to give Hannah a son? Would she have promised to give him to God if she had not had to wait so long?
Samuel grew up to be a godly man and leader of God's people. How did Hannah's prayer fit with God's plan? How can we make sure that our prayers fit with God's plan?

Samuel, the Baby

The true story can be found in 1 Samuel 1:1-28



Discover

Why was Hannah so upset? (1:2, 6) Tick two correct boxes

- Elkanah had another wife Hannah had no children
 Peninnah kept teasing her She was tired from travelling

What did she ask God to give her? (1:11) _____

What did she promise to give God if he did? (1:11) _____



Think Spot

Do you find this surprising?
Why/why not?

Did God answer Hannah's prayer as she asked? (1:20) _____

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What happened to Samuel?

1. He was brought to the house of the L _____ (1:24)
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3. He w _____ the Lord (1:28)



DISCUSS

Does God always answer prayers? Does he always answer them the way that we want? Why/why not?

Why did God take so long to give Hannah a son? Would she have promised to give him to God if she had not had to wait so long?

Samuel grew up to be a godly man and leader of God's people. How did Hannah's prayer fit with God's plan? How can we make sure that our prayers are bigger than our own desires? What needs to change so that our prayers fit with God's plan?



Samuel, the Prophet

1 Samuel 2:12-18, 22-26, 3:1-4:1a

Big Idea : Eli's sons were wicked and unfit to lead Israel so God revealed himself to Samuel and called him to be a prophet.

Aim : To teach that those who lead God's people must eagerly hear God's word, obey it and faithfully teach it to others.

The Story So Far

Week 1:

- Hannah was childless so she asked God for a son and promised to dedicate him to God.
- God answered her prayers and when he was older she gave him to Eli to serve in the temple.



Leader's Study Notes

Read 1 Samuel 2:12-18, 22-26 and 3:1-4:1a noting the contrast between Eli's sons and Samuel.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

The book of Samuel covers the transition in Israel from a priestly to prophetic leadership. Unlike the priestly office, a prophet did not simply inherit his position, but was specifically called by God and given his words to speak to the people. We see good reason in this passage for why this change took place – Eli's sons were not fit to serve as Israel's leaders!

2:12-18 The law made provision for the priests to be supported materially from the people's sacrifices with a particular portion of the offering (cf. Leviticus 7:34-36; Deuteronomy 18:1). Eli's sons, however, greedily demanded what was not due to them. They had no interest in God or their duties as priests, only what they could get for themselves. Samuel, by contrast, served God faithfully even as a boy.

2:22-26 Word of what Eli's sons were doing spread throughout Israel and their father heard the report. They had not only treated the Lord's sacrifices shamefully, but were also sleeping with women at the temple – just as their pagan neighbours did! These sins were not just against other human beings, but against God himself. Samuel, by contrast, grew in favour with the Lord and with people.

3:1-9 The rarity of God's word in Israel was a reflection of Israel's spiritual condition at that time. There was apparently no seeking after God or meditating on his word. Even Eli was unable to recognise the Lord's call when it first came to Samuel. Samuel had therefore not been taught to expect or recognise the word of the Lord.

3:10-14 God's revelation was one of judgement on Eli's household for the way in which his sons had treated the Lord. Eli himself had received a fuller version of this prophecy earlier (cf. 2:27-36). This would have been a shock to Israel because Eli and his sons were supposedly men of God.

3:15-18 Samuel faithfully spoke God's revealed word despite his initial fear of Eli's response. Eli accepted God's words as good and true, trusting that the Lord's wisdom was better than his own.

3:19-4:1a Samuel was recognised as a prophet of God by all the people and God continued to bring his word to Israel through him.

God has always chosen to reveal himself to his people by speaking. This was and is the only way to know God (3:7). He did this in the Garden of Eden, at Sinai and at countless other times in Israel's history. God's people are led by God's word and therefore a faithful leader is needed to speak them. God did this through Samuel then, but he has done this even more clearly today through his Son (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Reflect

- How do people in your society expect to hear from God? How do they try to know him?
- What was the role of the priest in Israel? How had Eli and his sons failed to be faithful priests in what they said and did?
- Give thanks to God that he has revealed himself clearly in the person and work of Jesus. Pray that he would help you to understand his word and to live in daily obedience to it.

Session Outline



Review

Review the previous lesson using the questions provided as well as any of the visual aids that were used for the previous lesson. This is helpful for children who may have missed that session.



Introductory Idea

Introduces this week's lesson.

Pose the questions at the end of the Introductory Idea. This gives children something to look out for in the lesson and helps their concentration. These get answered later in the session.



Teaching Plan

The core of the session.

The action of the Bible text is told as a story for younger children and explained. Or the Bible text is taught as a simple Bible study for older children.



Game Idea

Not essential.

Reinforces the lesson aim in a fun way and provides a way of displacing energy!



Review the questions posed in the Introductory Idea.

Discuss and Apply

Not to be missed!

This is where the children can be quizzed on the content and meaning of the Bible story. Questions and discussion are needed to apply this Bible story to the children's everyday lives. They should do most of the talking.



Prayer Idea

Use the prayer idea or just encourage each child to pray about an aspect of the lesson.



Activity

An opportunity to reinforce the lesson. For younger children, Activity A or B will be suitable. For older children, Activity C or D can be used to facilitate the Teaching or the Discuss and Apply section – some children prefer a lively discussion to completing written answers.



Memory Verse

A fun way of remembering the key verse for the series.



Review

Review the previous lesson using the following questions:

- Who desperately wanted something?
[*Hannah* (1:10-11)]
- What did she desperately want? [*A son* (1:11)]
- What did she promise to give up if she got it?
[*Dedicate (give) him to God* (1:11)]



Introductory Idea

Option 1: The Voice. Before the lesson record different leaders or children saying something. Play these back one at a time and ask the children to identify the person. Include an adult from the church whom the children probably won't know, perhaps the pastor or a celebrity.

Voices that we hear often are easier to identify than those we hear less often. In today's true story from the Bible Samuel heard something, but he wasn't sure what it was. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Option 2: Sounding Out. Before the lesson draft a list of simple words that can be described using only a noise e.g. cat, frog, bouncy ball, food, sneeze, puddle. **With younger children it may be helpful to stick to one category of noises such as animal sounds.**

Choose one child to 'describe' the first word on the list to the rest of the group. They cannot use any actions or words, only sounds. The child who correctly identifies the word being described can then do the next word on the list. Continue until all the words have been correctly identified. Were some harder than others to recognise? Were others easier to describe? Why? In today's true story from the Bible Samuel heard a noise, but he wasn't sure what it was. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to today's true story from the Bible to discover the answers to the following questions:

- What did Samuel hear?
[*Someone calling his name* (3:4, 6, 8)]
- What did he think this was?
[*Eli calling him* (3:5–6, 8)]
- What was it really?
[*The word of the Lord* (3:4, 6, 8, 10)]



Teaching Plan

Since this passage clearly contrasts Eli's sons (the assumed next leaders of Israel) and Samuel (the leader God chose to replace Eli), it will be helpful to get the children to see the differences between them. Use the figures on page 26 and the pictures on pages 27 and 28. Resizeable colour versions of all the pictures can be downloaded by logging into the profile used to purchase this resource on www.mustard-seeds.net.

Start by asking the children what they think makes a good leader. What are they like? What do they do? Explain that priests had been chosen by God to lead his people. When they got old and died their sons would take over as the new leaders. Remind them that Samuel, whose father was not a priest, was also working in the temple.

Place the boy Samuel on one side of a board and Eli's sons on the other. Place all the pictures which represent the various character attributes and actions between them. As you tell the story ask the children to help you choose the pictures which represent the attribute/action you have described and move it next to the correct figure/s. The pictures are as follows:

For Eli's sons: crown with cross (did not obey God); knife and fork (greedy); wedding rings with cross (did not obey God's laws for marriage); thumbs down face (people thought badly of them); ear with cross (didn't listen to God's word).

For Samuel: serving hands (served God in the temple); crown (lived with God as king); thumbs up face (people thought well of him); ear (listened to God's word); lips with tick (spoke the truth); Bible (received and spoke God's word).

Summarise the differences between the two characters and then tell the story of how God called Samuel (not Eli's sons) very simply using the pictures provided.

Finish by talking about how Samuel the man continued to bring God's words to the rest of the people. God had chosen Samuel to be the new leader of Israel. The first message that God gave Samuel to speak was a very difficult one – it was a promise that Eli's sons were going to be judged for their wickedness.

For older children – tell the story as above, perhaps reading through the passages directly from the Bible. Divide the group into two smaller groups and provide each with a set of the figures and pictures from pages 26 and 28. The children can look up the verses below for Eli's sons and Samuel and write the verse reference on the back of the relevant picture. Compare what the different groups got for each character and then talk about why they think God chose Samuel to lead Israel.

Eli's Sons:

2:12-17 (crown with a cross through it; knife and fork)

2:22-25 (wedding ring with a cross through it; thumbs down face; ear with a cross through it)

Samuel:

2:18, 3:1 (serving hands)

2:21, 26 (crown; thumbs up face)

3:10 (listening ear)

3:17-4:1a (lips with a tick; Bible)

You could also use some of the questions below to recap on the story:

- Who were Eli's sons? What job did they have? How did they abuse their role as priests?
- What did Eli say to his sons when he heard what they had been doing? What warning did he give them? Did they listen?
- What was Samuel doing in the temple? Who was he serving?
- Who called Samuel? Why was this surprising? Why didn't Samuel recognise God's call? Why didn't Eli recognise God's call?
- What did God tell Samuel? Why was he afraid to tell Eli? Did Samuel tell Eli the truth?
- What happened as Samuel grew up? How did God choose to speak to Israel? Who recognised that he was speaking God's words?



Game Idea

Option 1: For younger children – Copy Me.

Play a version of charades. Before the lesson draft a list of things that the children can act out e.g. monkey, chicken, driving a car, etc. Choose one child at a time to go behind a screen where a leader whispers to them what they must act out for the rest of the group. The other children need to imitate the action and guess what it's meant to be. The child who guesses correctly and most closely mimics the action wins that round and acts out the next word.

What made some of the words easier to guess? Could the children more easily guess words that were well acted out? Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible Eli's sons were not listening to God's word and were not living the way they should – they were a very bad example to the people. God chose Samuel to lead his people because he listened carefully to God's word, obeyed God's word and shared God's word with others.

Option 2: Descriptive. Play a version of the memory game. Before the lesson print pages 29 and 30 onto thick paper or card and cut along the bold lines. Place these facedown in a grid on a table or board. The children take turns to turn over any two cards. Instead of matching two pictures they need to match a picture with the correct word. If they find

a matching pair they keep the cards and may have another turn. If they fail to match two cards they turn them back over and the next child takes their turn. Continue in this way until all the cards have been matched correctly.

Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible God chose Samuel to lead his people. Unlike Eli's wicked sons Samuel listened carefully to God's word, obeyed God's word and shared God's word with others. What people saw in his life matched the words of God that he received and taught – Samuel's life was a picture of God's words.

Option 3: For older children – Hear, Live, Teach.

Divide the group into teams and have them sit in rows all facing the back of the room. You'll need a dividing screen between the teams to prevent the children seeing what the other teams are doing or how far they are in the game. You'll also need a list of words for the children to act out e.g. monkey, heart, baby, house, phone.

Invite the first member of each team to step outside the class so that you can tell them the special word that they need to act out. To begin they must tap the shoulder of the second child in their team to indicate that they can turn around. The first child can then act out that word to them. When the second child thinks they know what the word is they can tap the shoulder of the third child in the line. The third child may then turn around so that the second child can 'pass on' the word to them. The children cannot speak to each other even to confirm whether they have guessed the word correctly.

The game continues in this way until one team has passed the word all the way to the end. The last child may then shout out what they think the word is – they only have one guess so they will need to be certain! If they guess correctly they win that round; if they guess incorrectly the other team can continue to pass on the word and guess. If neither team guesses correctly the closest answer wins. The first child can then move to the end of the row before starting the next round of the game with a new word. Play several rounds of the game, keeping track of how many points each team has.

What made it hard to guess the word correctly? What else could the children have done to make it easier? Discuss the fact that wrong actions and no clear words caused confusion. Eli's son's actions were wrong and they weren't paying attention to God's words so God judged them. Samuel was different – he listened to God's word, obeyed God's word and faithfully taught the people God's word.



Discuss and Apply

This is a very important lesson because it helps us understand how God speaks to and leads his people today. The God of the Bible makes himself known through his words. The role of the prophet in Israel's history was critical; a prophet was called by God and given God's words to speak to his people. He was not free to change or adapt that word, but had to faithfully pass it on. From this passage we see that a prophet was not only to hear God's word, but also to obey it.

Later God chose to reveal himself through another young man who had been born in extraordinary circumstances – Jesus. He also grew in wisdom, stature and favour with God and men (Luke 2:52), but Jesus was not simply a good man. Jesus is the Son of God, the one who perfectly reveals God to us because he was 'face to face' with the Father before becoming a man (John 1:18). He is the perfect image of God and the perfect representation of God's being and divine nature. If we want to know what God is like then we need to know what Jesus is like. God chose to reveal himself to us today through the person and work of Jesus (cf. Hebrews 1:1-3). Jesus not only spoke God's words, but also perfectly obeyed them.

Help the children to understand that Jesus is the one who perfectly reveals God's word to us. We can read about him in the Bible and hear about him today through those who teach the Bible to us. These people need to study God's word carefully so that they can understand it, obey it and teach it to others. Share with the children about how you prepare to teach them. Explain that you study the Bible (hear God's word), try to live God's word (in the power of the Spirit) and then teach God's word.

Be honest with the children about the fact that you don't always get it right – no-one does, except Jesus. Although we do rely on Bible teachers to teach us God's word, Jesus is the leader we follow because he always does the right thing. He taught perfectly and he lived perfectly.

For older children – discuss as above, but then spend some time talking about the need to make sure that those who lead us are faithfully teaching and obeying God's word. The Bible is good and true, but human beings make mistakes. Do we simply accept everything that we hear or do we check it against what the Bible says is true? Even if our leaders are much older and wiser than us, what they teach needs to match what is said in God's word. What should we be praying for those who teach us the Bible?

You could also use some of the questions below to discuss the implications of this passage further:

- Why did the Lord reject Eli's sons? Why do you think he chose to call Samuel instead?
- How did the people respond to Eli's sons and the way that they behaved? How did they respond to Samuel? Why do you think they did this?

- How did Samuel prove his faithfulness to God? What were his words like? What were his actions like?
- In what ways is Jesus an even better leader of God's people than Samuel was? Think about Jesus' relationship with God, his life, his words and his eternal nature.
- What do you think are the most important qualities in someone who wants to be a Sunday school teacher, youth leader or pastor? How can we pray for our leaders to help them do this?
- When you study the Bible and get taught the Bible do you recognise it as God's word? How do you respond?
- How should we listen to and obey our leaders? Why is it important to check that their words match what the Bible says?



Prayer Idea

Pray for our leaders – talk about who leads your church and what they do. Encourage the children to pray that their leaders would take the study of the Bible seriously, that they would live it obediently and that they would teach it faithfully.

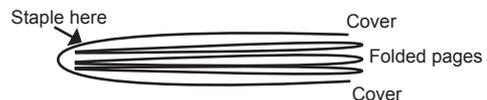


Activity

For 3-7s – choose either Activity A (pages 31 and 32) or Activity B (page 33).

Activity A – Print pages 31 and 32 onto paper for each child.

The children colour in the pictures. Help them to fold the pages as marked and cut along the bold lines. This will give you three folded pages and a Bible cover. Keeping those pages folded stack them on top of each other in the correct order with the open ends together on the left side. Place all of these inside the Bible cover and staple as marked to secure all the pages.



Remind the children that today's true story is found in the Bible in the book of 1 Samuel. The Bible is God's word. We should all listen to God's word, obey God's word and speak God's word to others.

Activity B – Print page 33 onto paper for each child.

Before the lesson cut the page in half as marked and use a craft blade to cut along the bold lines of the three windows.

The children colour in the pictures. Help them to

paste the picture of Samuel over the pictures of the ear, mouth and hands, being careful not to glue inside the blocks of the smaller pictures and carefully aligning the windows with the pictures.

The children can fold back the windows to see the pictures behind. Remind them that good leaders of God's people are those who listen to God's word, obey God's word and carefully teach God's word.

For 7-11s – print either Activity Sheet C (page 34) or Activity Sheet D (page 35) onto paper for each child. Choose whichever is appropriate for your children and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.

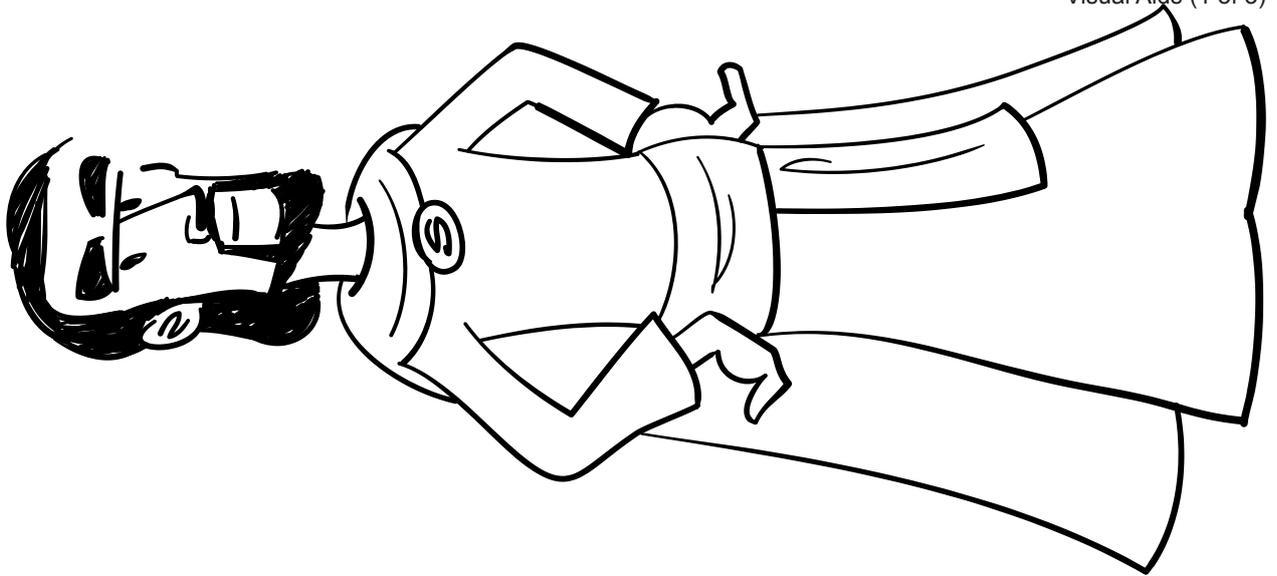


Memory Verse

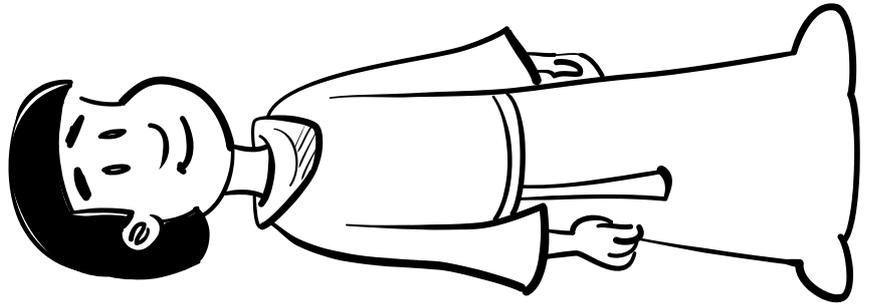
I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house, and they will minister before my anointed one always.

1 Samuel 2:35 [NIV]

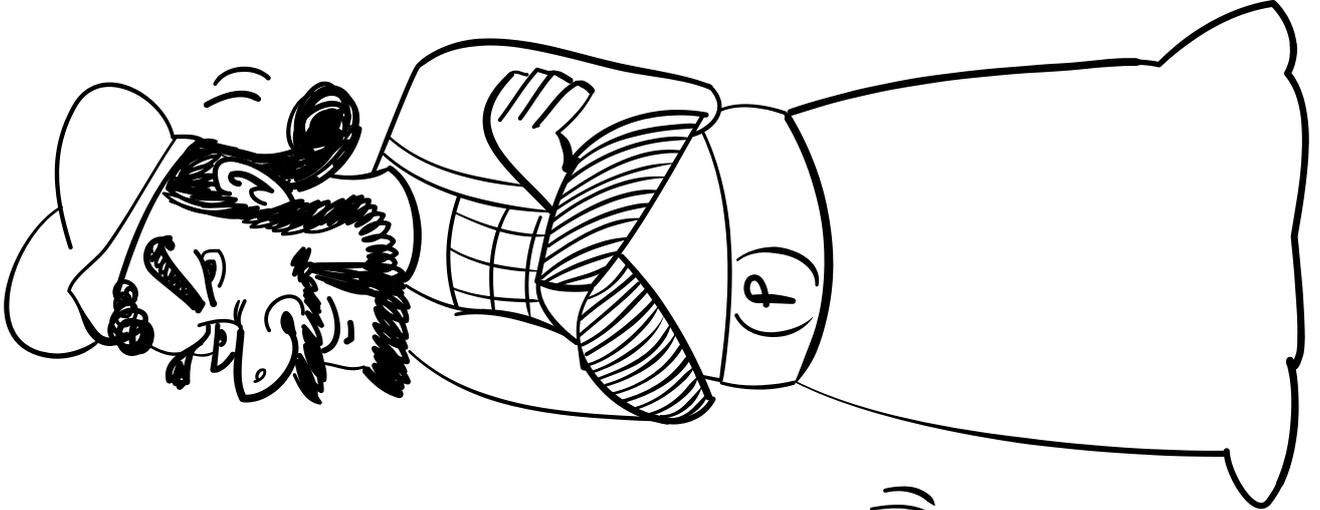
Younger children can simply learn the first part of the verse.



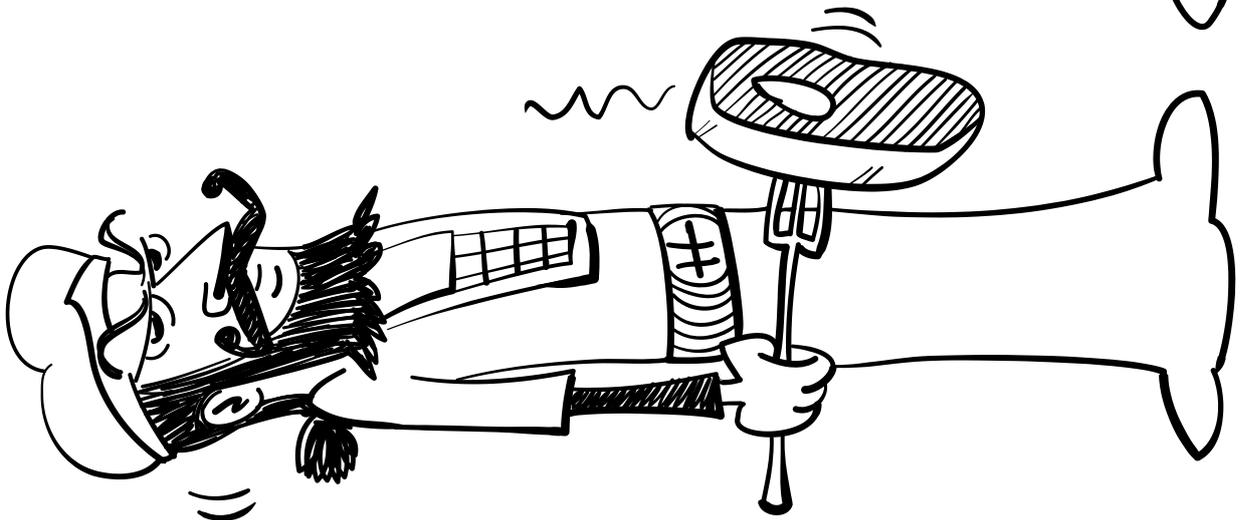
Samuel the man



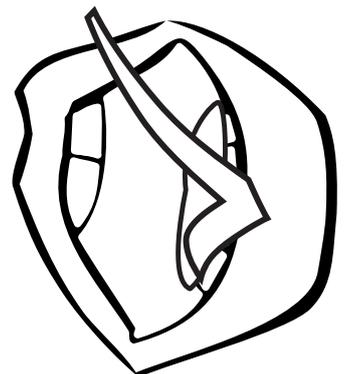
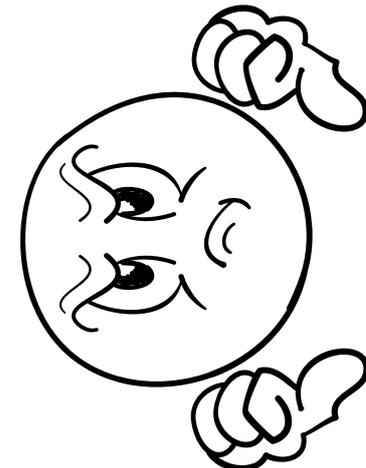
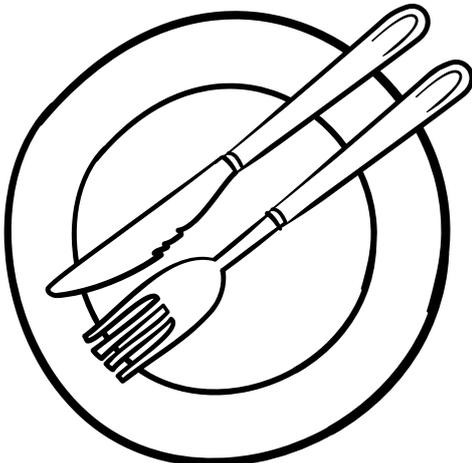
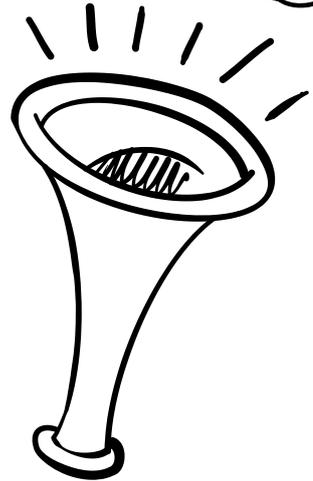
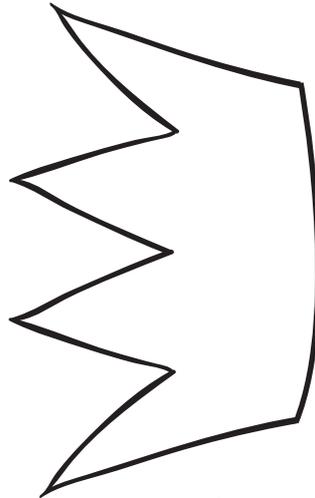
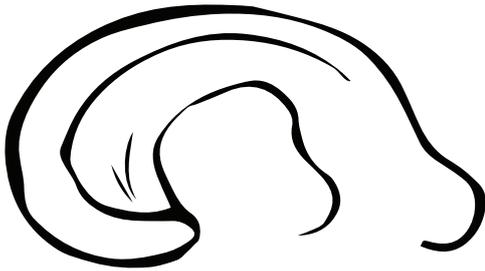
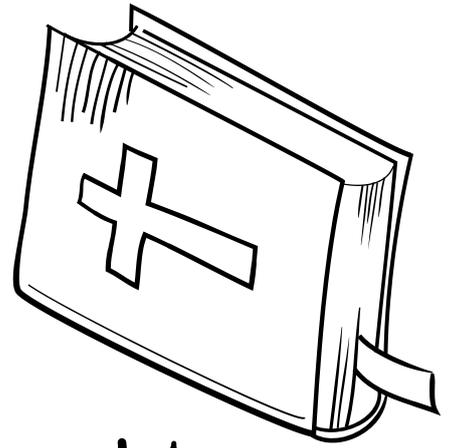
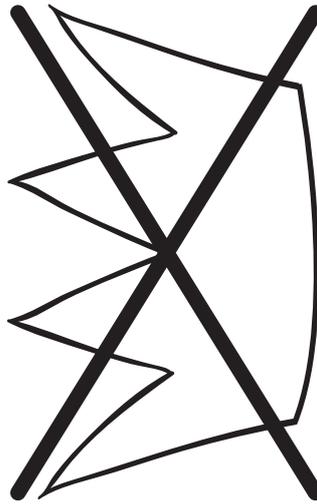
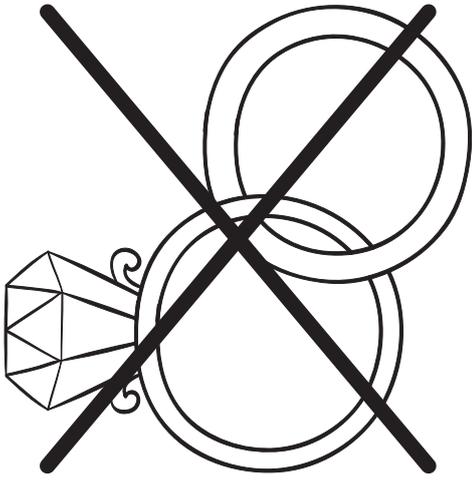
Samuel the boy



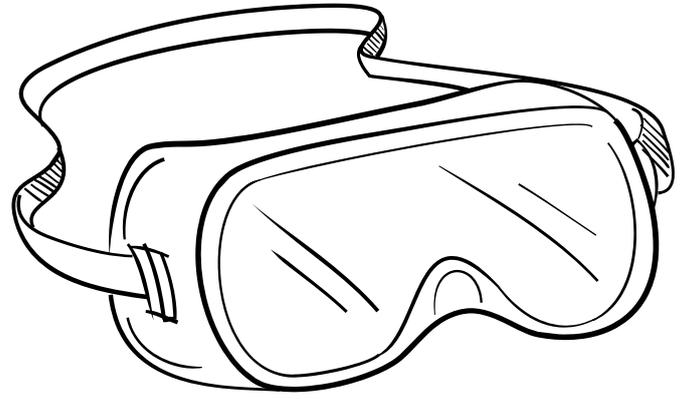
Hophni and Phinehas







Goggles



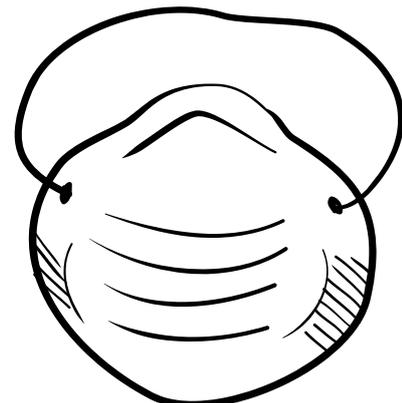
Ear



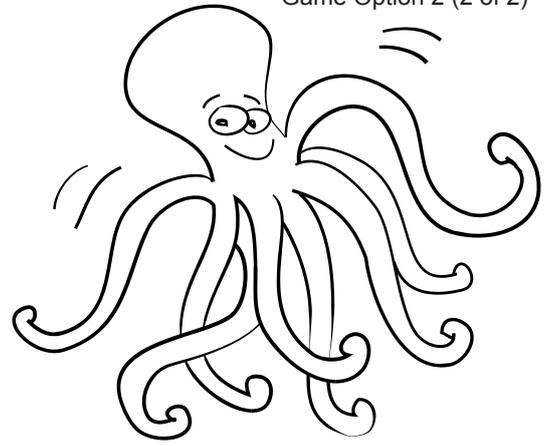
Headphones



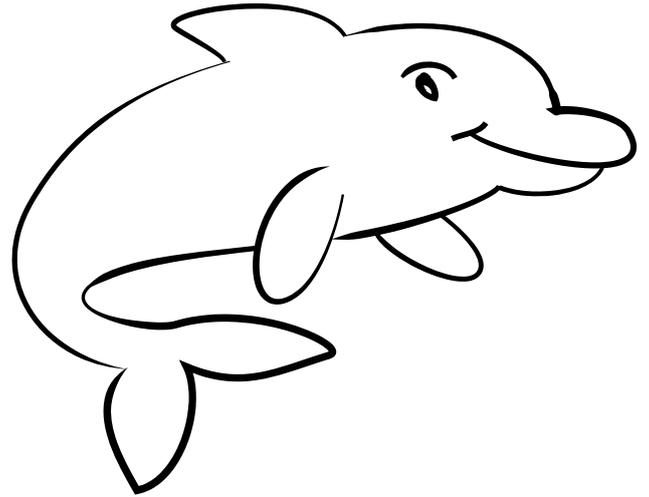
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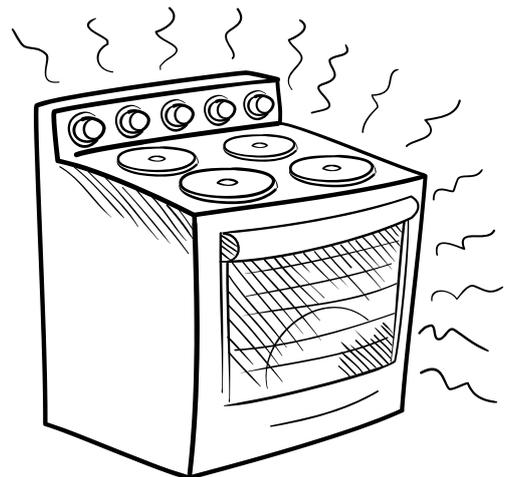
Dolphin



Bible



Oven



The story of Samuel

1 Samuel 2:12-4:1

Eli's sons were greedy and disobedient.



They were not good leaders for God's people.

1 2

God called Samuel, but...



...Samuel thought it was Eli.



This happened three times before Eli said it must be God calling.

God called Samuel again.



Samuel was a good leader of God's people because he...

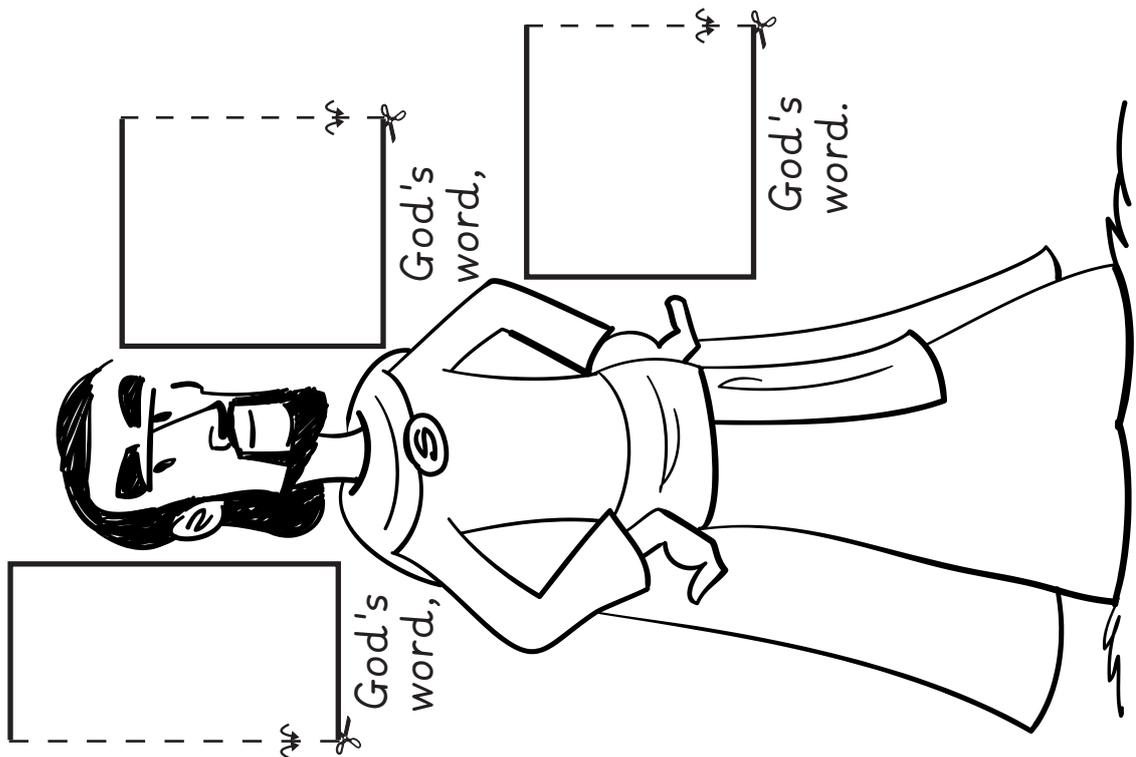


...heard, spoke and obeyed God's word.

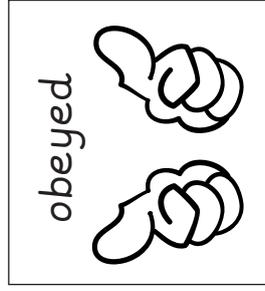
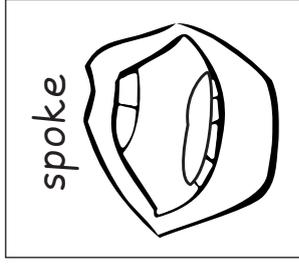
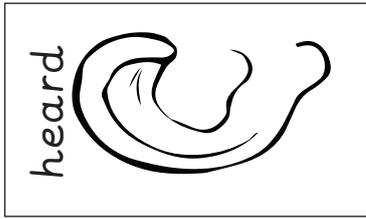
5 6

The Bible
God's Word

Samuel was a good leader for God's people because he...



1 Samuel 2:12-4:1a



Samuel, the Prophet

The true story can be found in 1 Samuel 2:12-18, 22-26, 3:1-4:1a

Discover



Who were Eli's sons? (2:13) Circle the correct answer

Servants

Prophets

Priests

Cooks

What wicked things did they do?

1. Took m _ _ _ from God's s _ _ _ _ _ before they should have (2:15, 17)
2. Did not obey God's laws for m _ _ _ _ _ (2:22)
3. S _ _ _ _ _ against God (2:25)

What did Samuel do at the temple? (2:26, 3:1) Tick the correct boxes

Copied Eli's sons

Grew in favour with God and men

Learnt about God and his word

Served God there



Think Spot

How was Samuel different to Eli's sons? Why should they have known better?

Who did Samuel think had called him? (3:4-5) _____

Who had really called Samuel? (3:10) _____

What did he tell Samuel? (3:12-14) He would j _ _ _ _ Eli's f _ _ _ _ .

What happened as Samuel grew up? (3:19-4:1a) Cross out the wrong words.

God was with **his people** / **Samuel** and spoke to him. Samuel **spoke** / **sang** God's word to the people and they **recognised** / **rejected** him as a **prophet** / **priest** .

Discuss

Why did God reveal himself to Samuel instead of Eli's sons?

How did Samuel's actions and words prove his faithfulness?

Why is this so important for a leader of God's people?

In what ways is Jesus an even better leader than Samuel?



Samuel, the Prophet

The true story can be found in 1 Samuel 2:12-18, 22-26, 3:1-4:1a

Discover

Who were Eli's sons? (2:13) Circle the correct answer

Servants

Prophets

Priests

Cooks



What wicked things did they do?

1. Took money _____ from God's _____ before they should have (2:15, 17)
2. Did not obey God's laws for money _____ (2:22)
3. Spoke _____ against God (2:25)

What did Samuel do at the temple? (2:26, 3:1) Tick the correct boxes

Copied Eli's sons

Grew in favour with God and men

Learnt about God and his word

Served God there



Think Spot

How was Samuel different to Eli's sons? Why should they have known better?

Who did Samuel think had called him? (3:4-5) _____

Who had really called Samuel? (3:10) _____

What did he tell Samuel? (3:12-14) He would judge _____ Eli's family _____.

What happened as Samuel grew up? (3:19-4:1a) Cross out the wrong words.

God was with **his people** / **Samuel** and spoke to him. Samuel **spoke** / **sang** God's word to the people and they **recognised** / **rejected** him as a **prophet** / **priest**.

Discuss

Why did God reveal himself to Samuel instead of Eli's sons?

How did Samuel's actions and words prove his faithfulness?

Why is this so important for a leader of God's people?

In what ways is Jesus an even better leader than Samuel?

When you study the Bible and are taught it do you recognise it as God's word? How do you respond?



Samuel, the Judge

1 Samuel 7:2-17

Big Idea : Samuel told Israel to get rid of their idols and turn back to God; the people obeyed and God gave them victory.

Aim : To teach that God rescues and restores those who truly repent and come to him through Jesus.

The Story So Far

Week 1:

- Hannah was childless so she asked God for a son and promised to dedicate him to God.
- God answered her prayers and when he was older she gave him to Eli to serve in the temple.

Week 2:

- Eli's sons were wicked and unfit to lead Israel.
- God revealed himself to Samuel and called him to be a prophet so that he could speak God's word to his people.

campaign. Samuel continued to intercede for them, sacrificing a burnt offering to the Lord. God heard Samuel's prayers and answered him by giving Israel a decisive victory over the Philistines.

7:12-17 The memorial stone was set up to remind Israel of the Lord's help and victory. Samuel continued to lead Israel by bringing the word of the Lord to them.

God always acts to rescue those who truly repent and trust in his promise to save. Once Israel repented and turned their backs on their many idols, God graciously defeated their enemies and came to dwell amongst them again.

God works in the same way today: he dwells with those who come to him in repentance, trusting in the death of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins.



Leader's Study Notes

Read 1 Samuel 7:2-17 noting how the people showed their repentance.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

God carried out his judgement on Eli's household just as he had promised (cf. 2:27-36, 3:11-14). Chapters 4-6 describe the judgement that God also brought on Israel as a nation. They had turned away from him and worshipped false gods (7:3-4) so the Lord sent the Philistines to defeat Israel. The ark, the throne of God and symbol of his presence among his people, was captured and eventually returned, but it was never restored to its proper place in the temple.

7:2-4 After twenty years the people finally sought the Lord, but true repentance was required. Samuel taught them what this would involve: getting rid of their false gods and turning back to love and serve God. The Israelites did as Samuel had instructed them.

7:5-6 Samuel promised to intercede for Israel, asking God to forgive them. Pouring out water and fasting were both signs of genuine repentance and confession of wrongdoing.

7:7-11 The Philistines saw the gathering and tried to seize the opportunity for war. Israel's religious assembly soon became a military

Reflect

- What is the difference between regret and repentance? Which do you see most of in the world around you?
- What does true repentance look like? How does it show daily in your life?
- Give thanks that God promises to rescue all those who truly repent and trust in him. Ask him to help you to turn away from sin and to live for him alone.

Session Outline



Review

Review the previous lesson using the questions provided as well as any of the visual aids that were used for the previous lesson. This is helpful for children who may have missed that session.



Introductory Idea

Introduces this week's lesson.

Pose the questions at the end of the Introductory Idea. This gives children something to look out for in the lesson and helps their concentration. These get answered later in the session.



Teaching Plan

The core of the session.

The action of the Bible text is told as a story for younger children and explained. Or the Bible text is taught as a simple Bible study for older children.



Game Idea

Not essential.

Reinforces the lesson aim in a fun way and provides a way of displacing energy!

Review the questions posed in the Introductory Idea.



Discuss and Apply

Not to be missed!

This is where the children can be quizzed on the content and meaning of the Bible story. Questions and discussion are needed to apply this Bible story to the children's everyday lives. They should do most of the talking.



Prayer Idea

Use the prayer idea or just encourage each child to pray about an aspect of the lesson.



Activity

An opportunity to reinforce the lesson. For younger children, Activity A or B will be suitable. For older children, Activity C or D can be used to facilitate the Teaching or the Discuss and Apply section – some children prefer a lively discussion to completing written answers.



Memory Verse

A fun way of remembering the key verse for the series.



Review

Review the previous lesson using the following questions:

- What did Samuel hear?
[Someone calling his name (3:4, 6, 8)]
- What did he think this was?
[Eli calling him (3:5–6, 8)]
- What was it really?
[The word of the Lord (3:4, 6, 8, 10)]



Introductory Idea

Option 1: Ask the children to share about things or situations that make them sad.

Why do these things make them sad? What could be done to change how they feel? How many of these were because someone did something which made them sad? Have any of the children ever been sad about something that they have done to others rather than what has been done to them? Why did their own actions make them sad? What could they do to take the sadness away?

Today's true story from the Bible is about a time when the people of Israel were sad and needed to do something because of this. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Option 2: Emotional Reactions. Before the lesson print pages 42 and 43 onto paper and cut along the bold lines. Place the emoticons in a column on one side of a board/wall and write a list of actions in a column on the other side e.g. cry, laugh, shake, cheer, shout, jump up and down, throw a tantrum.

The children can match the emoticons to the actions – there may be more than one action that is relevant in each case. Draw lines on the board to match them as you go. Talk about how some people thought that different actions were appropriate at different times.

With younger children start by explaining the emotion for each picture then, instead of having a list of actions, ask different children to point out the emotions associated with each action that you call out. Which face is the crying face? Do you ever cry when you are very happy? What face might someone have if they are jumping up and down? etc.

Point to the sad emoticon and explain that in today's true story from the Bible all the Israelites were sad and needed to do something because of this. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Option 3: Emotimatch. Before the lesson print pages 42 and 43 onto paper and cut along the bold lines. Choose about five different emoticons and write a short sentence for each about a situation where that emoticon might be relevant e.g. screaming emoticon, "When you find a spider in your lunchbox"; crying emoticon, "When you stub your toe."

Place the pictures of the emoticons on a board or wall. Read out the first sentence and choose one child to decide which emoticon they think is most relevant in that situation. There may be more than one 'correct' picture for each sentence. Continue reading out the sentences, choosing a different child each time.

Talk about how some people thought that different reactions were appropriate in different situations. Hold up the sad emoticon and explain that in today's true story from the Bible all the Israelites were sad and needed to do something because of this. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to today's true story from the Bible to discover the answers to the following questions:

- Why were the Israelites sad? [*They were sorry for turning away from God to idols (7:2-3)*]
- What did Samuel tell them to do? [*Get rid of other idols and love God wholeheartedly (7:3)*]
- What was the result? [*They did as Samuel said and God gave them victory (7:4, 12-13)*]



Teaching Plan

There is much that changes between Samuel's calling in chapter 3 and Israel's repentance in chapter 7. You will need to briefly summarise what has happened over these twenty years as Samuel grew up to judge Israel. God carried out his judgement on Eli's household as promised then he judged the nation for their idolatry – he sent the Philistines to defeat Israel and steal the ark, but eventually the ark was returned to Kiriath Jearim. Remind the children that the ark was the symbol of God's glory and presence with his people; they had turned away from him so he turned away from them.

You could act out the story with a leader playing the role of Samuel and the children playing the Israelites. You will need the following props:

- Model ark – box painted gold or covered in gold paper with two poles either side;
- Jug of water and a large flat basin;
- Idols – these could simply be sheets of paper on which you have asked the children to quickly draw a statue that they think the Israelites might have worshipped;
- Soft toy lamb or a picture/cutout of a lamb embellished with cotton wool;
- Toy shield and sword;
- Large stone or cardboard cutout made to look like a stone.

Begin by explaining Israel's situation as described above and place the ark on the other side of the room. Move the ark to 'Kiriath Jearim'. Explain that today's story happened twenty years later.

As you tell the story the children must have their idols with them and look sad, just as Israel did when they mourned after the Lord. Summon the children to 'Mizpah' and pour out the water into the basin. Tell them to get rid of their idols (you could provide a bin for this) and to declare together, "We have sinned against the Lord." You will need to inform the Israelites of the Philistines' plan to attack them. How do they feel about this? What should they do?

Continue acting out the story using the props as you go – the lamb can be 'sacrificed' when you ask God to rescue them from the Philistines; the sword and shield are for the battle that took place and Israel's victory; and the stone is to help Israel remember what God had done.

Finish by explaining that this led to a time of peace in Israel as long as Samuel continued to judge the people, bringing them God's word.

For older children – this is not a very long passage, but there is a lot going on. One competent reader could read the story out loud slowly while you act it out with the other children. You can then use some of the following questions to recap on the details of the passage:

- Why were the Israelites mourning? (7:2-3) What had happened prior to this? (4:10, 17-18; 4:22-5:1; 6:1, 19-21)
- What did Samuel tell them to do? (7:3) Did the people obey? (7:4)
- How did they show their repentance? (7:4-6)
- What did the Philistines do when they heard that Israel had gathered? (7:7) How did the Israelites respond? (7:7-9)
- What did God do when Samuel cried out to him on Israel's behalf? (7:19-11)
- What did Samuel do to help the people remember God's rescue? (7:12)
- What did Samuel continue to do for Israel? What happened while he was judge? (7:12-16)



Game Idea

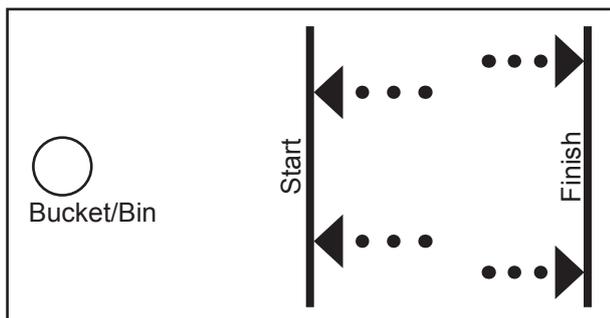
Option 1: For younger children. Before the lesson print page 44 onto thick paper/card (one copy for every six children) and cut along the bold lines to produce cards. Print one copy of page 45 onto paper and cut out the idols and repentance sign – this is the leader's set.

Place a bin in the middle of the room and place the idols around it facedown at random. Place the four leader's idols on a board or wall for the children to see. Each child will also need one of the idols they threw away during the storytelling time. The children move around the room, perhaps to music. When the music stops and you shout out "Repent!" the children must sit on one of the idols that are facedown on the

floor. Move the repentance sign above one of the leader's idols on the board; the children can then turn the idol that they are sat on over to see whether it matches the one you have indicated on the board. Those with a matching idol may throw the picture from the storytelling time into the bin in the middle.

For each round of the game turn the idols on the floor back over and move the repentance sign to a different idol on the board. Any child sitting on an idol that doesn't match the one with the repentance sign above it and not in possession of an idol (because they threw it away in a previous round) must collect one from the bin. Continue the game in this way for a suitable length of time. Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible the Israelites were sorry for the way they had treated God – they threw away the things that kept them from loving God as they should and turned back to him.

Option 2: Repentance Relay. Mark out two lines on the floor using rope or masking tape, one in the middle of the room and the other at one end of the room. Divide the group into two teams and have them line up in their teams behind the line in middle of the room facing away from the second line. Place a bucket/bin opposite each team at the other end of the room in the direction they are facing as in the diagram below.



Give each child an 'idol' – either the picture they threw away during the storytelling time or one of the idols from page 44 printed onto paper.

The first child in each team runs to the bucket; throws their idol away; turns around to run in the opposite direction; and starts a new line behind the one marked on the floor at the other end of the room. Once that child has sat down in their line the next member of their team may run and do the same, continuing to build up the line behind the first child. The game continues until all the children have 'repented'; the first team to be sat down facing the opposite direction that they started in wins.

Talk about what repentance looked like for the Israelites and what the children had to do in this game – which direction did they start in? Which direction did they finish in? What else did they have to do on the way? Remind them that repentance involves turning away from sin, getting rid of anything that stops us from loving God and turning to him with all our hearts.

Option 3: No Idols. Retrieve the pictures of idols used during the storytelling time from the bin. Explain to the children that idols are not only statues that people bow down to. An idol can be anything that is more important to us than God. Ask the children to think about what is the most precious thing to them on earth and to quickly draw that on the back of the idol page. These don't need to be works of art, just a simple drawing to represent their precious item/person.

Divide the group into two teams and have them stand either side of a length of rope or masking tape which divides the room in half. Neither team is allowed to cross the line into the other team's half. At the signal the children need to scrunch up their idols and get rid of them by throwing them into the other half of the room. They need to keep clearing their half of the room of idols until a suitable period of time has passed. Don't let the game go on for too long! The team with the fewest number of idols in their half at the end of the game wins.

Remind the children that the Israelites showed that that they were trusting God by throwing away their idols. Unfold some of the idols that the children drew and explain that none of those things are necessarily bad – most will be good gifts that God has given for us to enjoy, but none of them is more important than God. None of them should be things that we love more than him.



Discuss and Apply

This lesson clearly teaches the need for repentance. The Lord graciously rescues everyone who repents and trusts in Jesus, but there is a sense in which repentance is also meant to be ongoing – that was certainly the case in Israel's history and ought to be part of the normal Christian experience. At different stages in life we might find that we are drawn to different things. They capture our attention and steal first place in our hearts. As was the case with Israel, this may happen over a period of time and not be easily noticed. Daily repentance is necessary so that our hearts do not become hardened to sin; we must deal with idols in our lives straight away.

Help the children to understand that God gives us many good gifts, things that we can use and enjoy. This could be a precious toy or even a special person. But we must always remember that God, the giver of the gift, is more important than the gift. Our friendship with God should be the one thing that we treasure above everything else in this world. Talk about how different things compete for our attention at different stages in life. This could even include our family and friends, but nothing should ever get between us and our relationship with God through Jesus.

Explain how we are only able to see what has become an idol to us when we are listening carefully to God's

word. As we learn more about what God is like we learn to love him more and love everything else less. To repent is not simply to feel sorry about what we have done wrong, but to stop doing what is wrong and to do what is right instead. Help the children to think through some of the things that they might idolise at their age. Talk about each one and why they love them so much. How do these things compare to God? How long will each last? What is each able to do for the children? What would repentance look like in regard to each of these things? Does it mean that they throw them in the bin? Or does it mean they put each thing in its right place, beneath God and our friendship with him?

Remind the children that we cannot do this on our own, we need God's help and the power of the Holy Spirit to change our hearts.

For older children – discuss as above, but then consider why the Israelites' repentance led to their victory over the Philistines and what this looks like for us today. Repentance doesn't ensure that God will make us successful in this life – for the Israelites this was a sign that God was with them. He had allowed them to be defeated by their enemies as a sign of judgement. They had returned to him and so he faithfully turned back to them. When we come to God through Jesus by faith and repent of our sin we can similarly enjoy a restored relationship with God and have confidence that God will rescue us from the judgement our sin deserves.

You could also use some of the following questions to discuss the meaning of this passage further:

- What prompted the Israelites to repent? What were they seeking? Why do you think it took them twenty years to do so?
- What does it mean to repent? How is this different to regret/just feeling sorry? What did repentance look like for Israel? What should this look like in our lives today?
- Is repentance something we only need to do once when we trust in Jesus? Why/why not? Is there evidence in your life of ongoing repentance?
- In what way could the report of a Philistine attack be seen as a test of the Israelites' trust in God? What was their response? How should we respond when our faith in God is tested?
- Why did God give the Israelites victory over the Philistines? Who cried out on their behalf? Who can we come to God through today? (cf. 1 John 2:1)
- Does God always give victory in this life to those who repent and turn back to him? What was Israel's victory a sign of? How can we experience this restored relationship with God today?
- How does praying to God as our Heavenly Father show our dependence on him for all things?
- Why do you think Samuel set up a memorial stone? How easy is it to forget God's goodness and rescue? What could this lead to? How do

we keep reminding ourselves and others about God's kindness to us and rescue? How does remembering help us not to make new idols for ourselves?



Prayer Idea

Can the children think of one thing that is already an idol in their lives or has the potential to become an idol? Explain that many of these are good things and wonderful gifts from God to be enjoyed, but they should never take his place as the most important thing in our lives. Can they pray something in response to what they have learnt today about idols? Do they need to repent and 'throw away' an idol? God can help them to do that – they simply need to repent and ask. You could provide them with a piece of paper on which to write what the idol is and symbolically scrunch it up and throw it into a bin as they pray.



Activity

For 3-7s – choose either Activity A (page 46) or Activity B (pages 47 and 48).

Activity A – Print page 46 onto paper or card (one copy for every two children) and cut along the bold line.

The children colour in and decorate the picture of Samuel and the memorial stone. Encourage them to complete and colour in the person on the other side to represent themselves.

Help the children to fold and glue as marked to produce a triangular prism with Samuel and the stone on one side and the cross and child on the other.

Remind the children that Samuel told the Israelites to repent by throwing away their idols and remembering what God had done to rescue them. We don't have a stone, but we do have the cross.

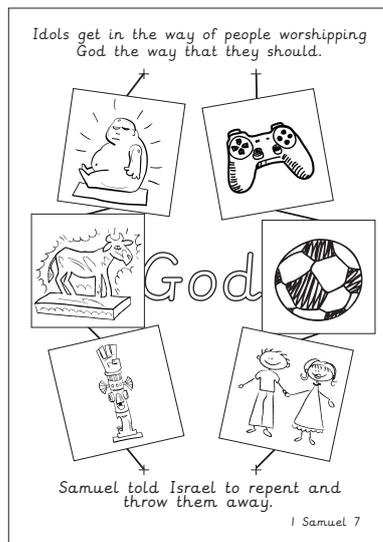
Activity B – Print page 47 onto card (one copy for every two children) and cut along the bold line as marked. Print page 48 onto card or paper (one copy for every four children). Each child will also require two 20cm lengths of shearing elastic.

Before the lesson make four small holes at the Xs on page 47 as marked then cut out all the squares on page 48 to produce a set of six squares for each child, three with idols and three blank.

The children colour in the pictures of the idols. Ask them to think of three things in their lives that might be, or could easily become, an idol then to draw those things on the three blank squares.

Help them to lay the squares facedown in two columns of three; one with the old idols and one with their own idols. Place one length of shearing elastic down the middle of each column of pictures and secure each picture with sticky tape. Turn the

columns over and push either end of the elastic through the top and bottom holes. Pull to remove the slack in the lengths of elastic and secure at the back of the page with sticky tape.



Show the children how to push the idols aside to clearly see the word 'God'. Remind them that Samuel told Israel to throw their idols away so that they could worship God properly and thank him for kindly rescuing them.

For 7-11s – print either **Activity Sheet C** (page 49) or **Activity Sheet D** (page 50) onto paper for each child. Choose whichever is appropriate for your children and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.

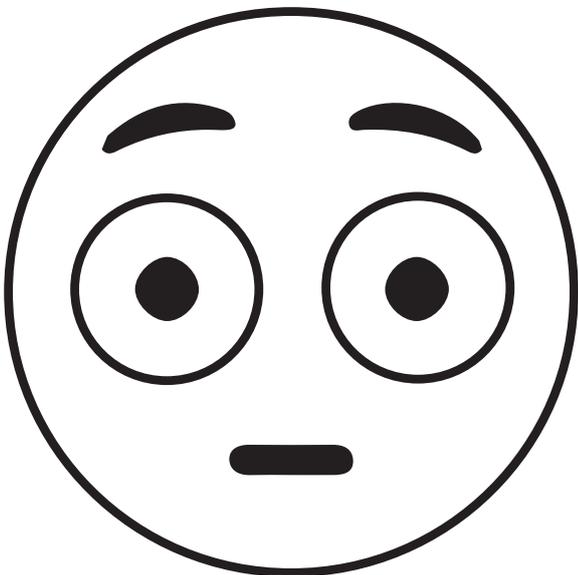


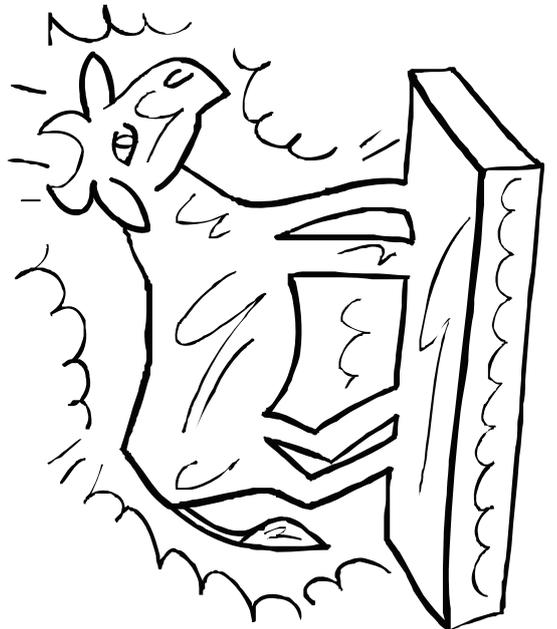
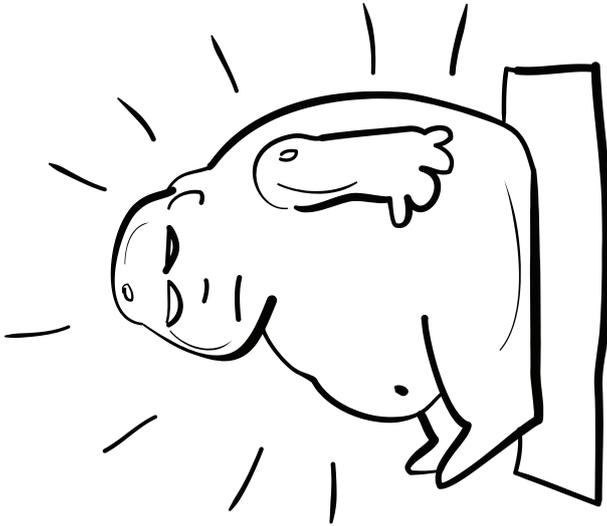
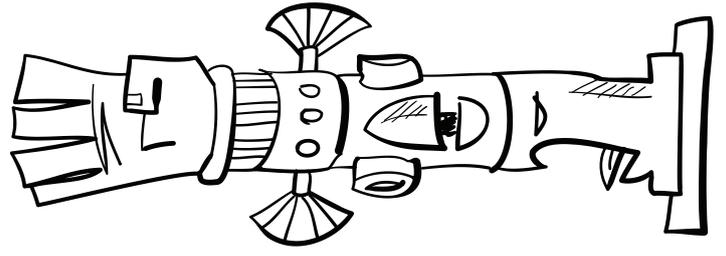
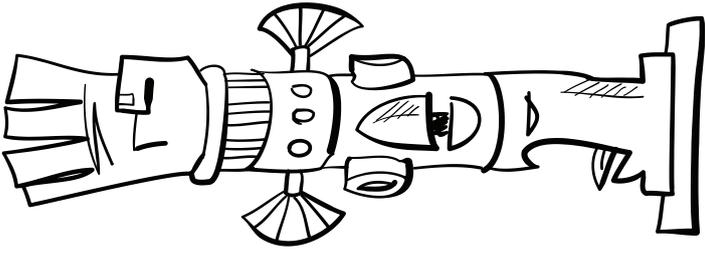
Memory Verse

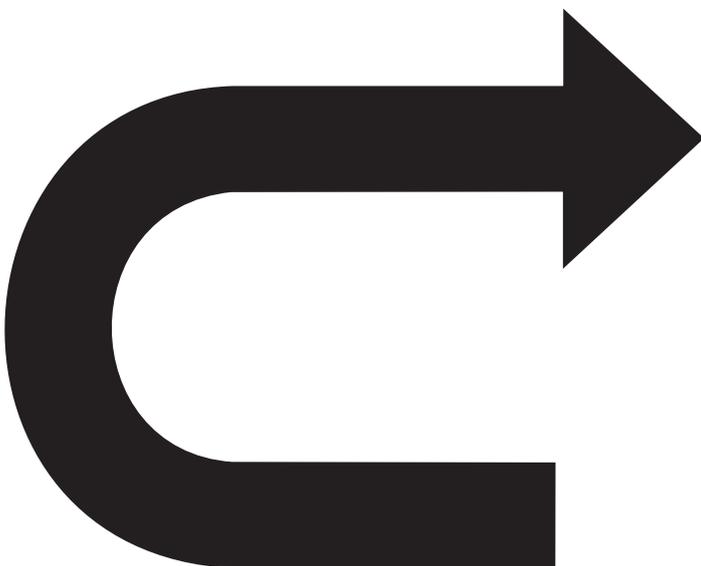
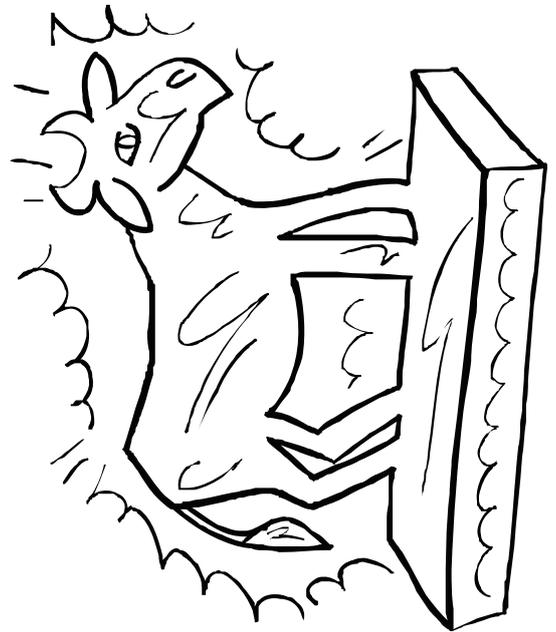
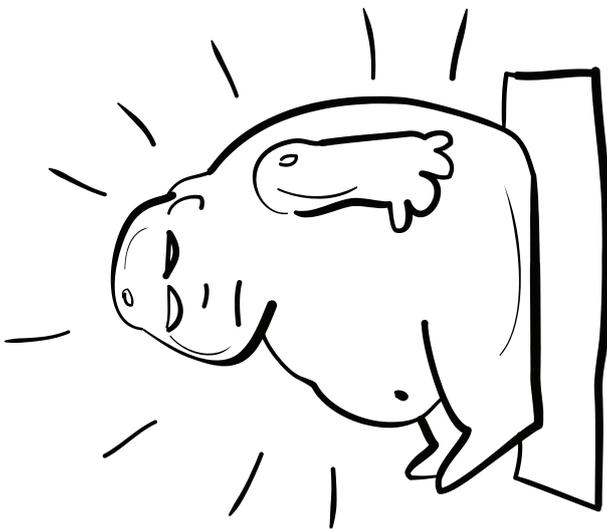
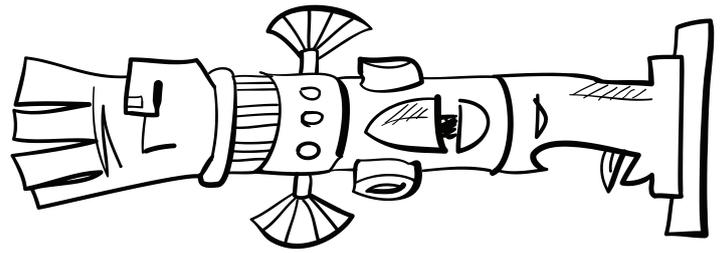
*I will raise up for myself a faithful priest,
who will do according to what is in my heart
and mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house, and
they will minister before my anointed one always.*
1 Samuel 2:35 [NIV]

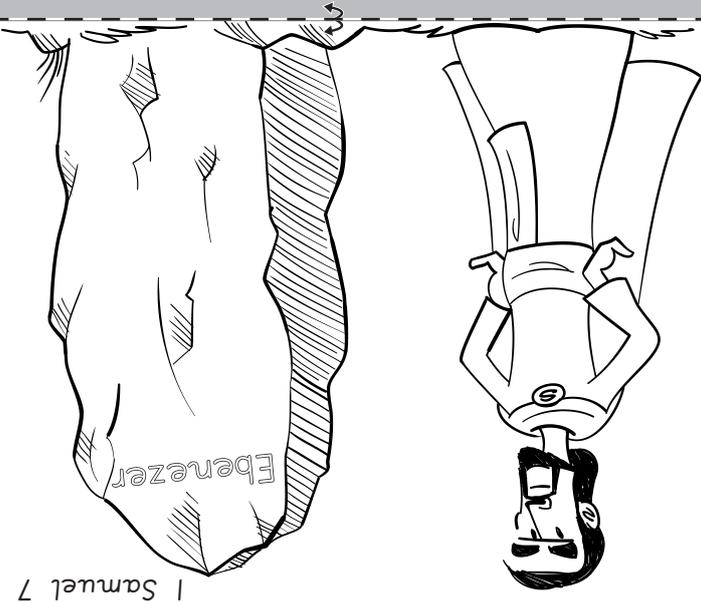
Younger children can simply learn the first part of the verse.





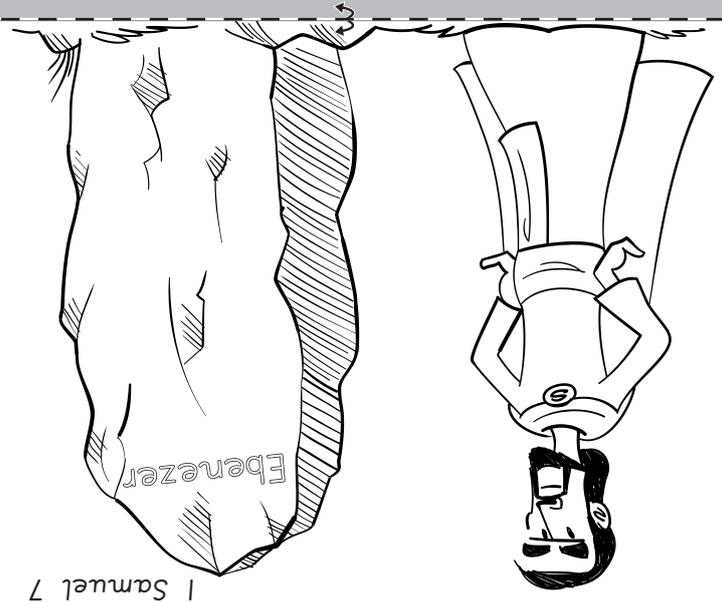






1 Samuel 7

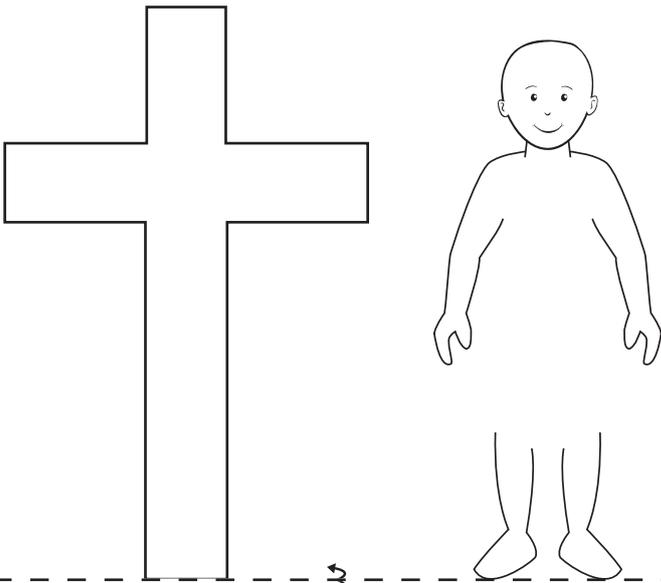
Samuel put up a stone to remind Israel of what God had done to rescue them.



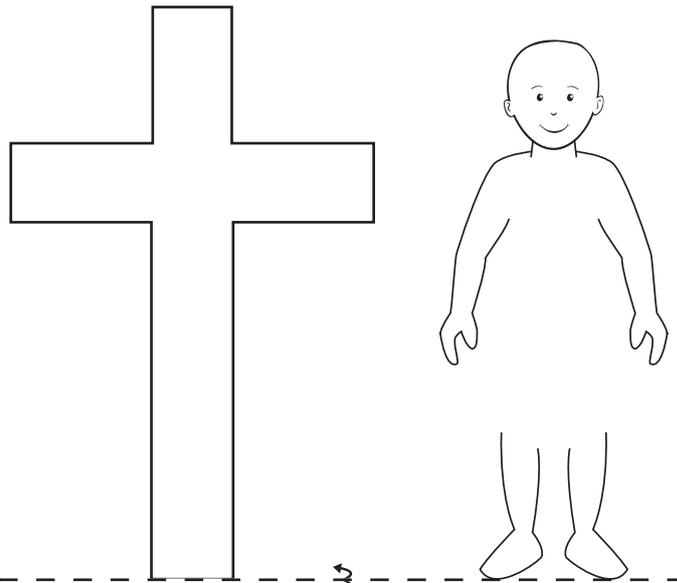
1 Samuel 7

Samuel put up a stone to remind Israel of what God had done to rescue them.

We have the cross to remind us of what God did to rescue us by sending Jesus to die in our place.



We have the cross to remind us of what God did to rescue us by sending Jesus to die in our place.



Idols get in the way of people worshipping
God the way that they should.

+

+

God

+

+

Samuel told Israel to repent and
throw them away.

| Samuel 7

Idols get in the way of people worshipping
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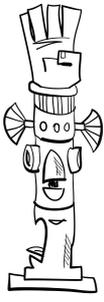
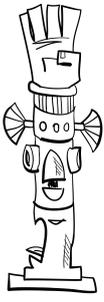
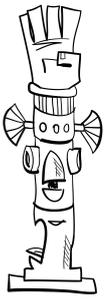
God

+

+

Samuel told Israel to repent and
throw them away.

| Samuel 7

Samuel, the Judge

The true story can be found in 1 Samuel 7:2-17



Discover

How many years was it before Israel sought God? (7:2) Circle the correct number

1 5 10 20 50

What did Samuel say they should do to show that they were sorry? (7:3-6)

Tick all the correct answers

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get rid of their idols | <input type="checkbox"/> Fast and pour out water | <input type="checkbox"/> Mourn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bring the ark back | <input type="checkbox"/> Confess their sin | <input type="checkbox"/> Serve God alone |



Think Spot

Why are these things a sign of being truly sorry?

How do we show that we are sorry today?

What did the Philistines do when they heard about this? (7:7)

How did Samuel and the people respond? (7:7-9) Cross out the wrong words.

The people were **angry** / **afraid** and asked Samuel to **pray** / **fight** for them.

Samuel prayed for Israel and **spoke** / **sacrificed** to God.

What did God do for his people? (7:9-10, 14)

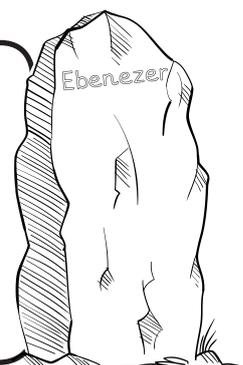
A _____ their prayer, d _____ the Philistines and gave them p _____ .

DISCUSS

What does repentance mean? What does true repentance look like? How is this different to just regret/feeling sorry?

Is repentance something we do only once when we trust in Jesus? Why/why not? Does your life show continued repentance?

Does God always give us victory in this life? What does he promise to those who truly repent?



Samuel, the Judge

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The people _____

Samuel _____

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DISCUSS

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Is repentance something we do only once when we trust in Jesus?

Why/why not? Does your life show continued repentance?

How did the Philistine attack test Israel's faith?

How should we respond when our faith is tested?

What was Israel's victory a sign of? Does God always give us victory in this life? What does he promise to those who truly repent?

