LESSON 1

God’s Direction

Bible Readiness
To connect children's experiences with the Bible story of Samuel paying attention to God's direction, they will talk about their need for direction.

☐ Butcher paper, marker, beanbags

Bible Study:
1 Samuel 3:1-20
Children will study how Samuel pays attention to God's direction.

☐ Bible Story: Bible Discoveries, pp. 2-3, Bibles, Teaching Aid 2, pencils
☐ Bible Review: Optional: blankets or mats
☐ Memory Verse Practice: No materials needed

Bible Activity Choices
Children will explore ways to pay attention to God's direction.

☐ Scripture Search: Bible Discoveries, pp. 1, 4, Bibles, pencils
☐ Bible Study Locks: Discovery Pack, Project A, paper fasteners, Bibles
☐ Treasure Hunt: Index cards, tape; optional: small treats

Bible Response
Children will apply the Bible story of Samuel paying attention to God's direction by planning ways that they also can pay attention to God's direction this week.

☐ PraisePac CD and downloadable PDF song sheets (from Elementary Creative Teaching Aids), CD player, Friends, Lesson 1 and Family Faith Fun

Understanding the Bible
During the time of the judges, Israel was a loose confederation of tribes without a king. The primary authorities were usually the priests and prophets. At special times God raised up other leaders called judges. Samuel is generally considered to be the last effective judge (see 1 Sam. 8:1-3). He was also a priest and a prophet.

Samuel's mother, Hannah, had been unable to have children for many years—a terrible stigma for a woman in her culture. After fervent prayer, the Lord granted Hannah's request for a son, who she vowed to dedicate to the Lord's service. When Samuel was weaned, somewhere between ages three and five, he was taken to live at the tabernacle and underwent training for Levitical service.

Scripture does not state Samuel's age at the time of the Lord's visitation, but scholars place his age somewhere between six and twelve years old. During the period of the judges, revelations and visions from the Lord were rare (1 Sam. 3:1). This time of silence ended with Samuel.

Eli, the high priest, was judged by God because of his failure to discipline his sinful sons, who were also priests. God's judgment on Eli and his priesthood was not fulfilled immediately. Eli lived for a long time following the prophecy, and his priestly line continued on until the fourth generation (14:3).
When Teaching the Bible to Elementary Students . . .

For children this age to be able to pay attention to God's direction, as this week's Bible story from 1 Samuel 3 teaches, they need to know how to find their way around in the Bible. Second and third graders can learn how to look up a Scripture using book, chapter, and verse. They have the ability to pull simple information from a verse. They can offer conclusions based on what they read. Build on the children's abilities with these ideas:

• Use a children's Bible translation, or select simply worded verses from an adult translation.
• Ask simple fact questions about Bible verses to check comprehension before asking "why" and "how" questions.
• Encourage the children to ask their own questions about what they're reading in the Bible so that you know what they are having a hard time grasping.
• Check for understanding by having the kids say verses, especially memory verses, in their own words.

Early Bird Options

Free yourself up to greet children as they arrive by letting early arrivers fill their pre-class time with these independent activities.

Attendance—Before class, hang the attendance chart (Teaching Aid 1) at students' eye level. As children arrive, let the children mark their attendance.

Simon Says—Since the Bible story from 1 Samuel 3 focuses on following God's direction, give the children fun practice in paying close attention to directions by letting them play "Simon Says."
To prepare the children to understand the story of Samuel paying attention to God's direction (1 Sam. 3:1-20), begin with an activity and discussion about times when the children need direction.

Begin class by drawing five large circles on a length of butcher paper. Label the circles: God, Parent, Teacher, Friend, Other Person. As you print each name, have the class read it aloud to be sure all the kids can read the words. Place the butcher paper on the floor.

Every day we each need some kind of direction. We need advice and help and ideas for many things that we do. We get direction from parents and family, from teachers and coaches, from friends, and from God. I'm going to name some kinds of direction that you might need. After each one, toss your beanbag to the circle that has the name of the person that you would ask for this kind of direction.

Give each child a beanbag. Have the kids take several giant steps back from the butcher paper. They may stand on all sides. Read each of the following statements, pausing after each to let the kids toss their beanbags. After tossing each time, let volunteers tell why they chose as they did. (There are no right and wrong answers.) Then have the kids retrieve their beanbags and toss again after you read the next statement.

When you want help with a math problem
When you need directions to a friend's home
When you want to know how to make a good decision
When you want direction on how to put a toy together
When you face a problem that feels too big for you

After the game, have the kids set aside the beanbags, sit down with you in a circle, and join in discussion.

What other kinds of things do you need direction for? Let volunteers tell their ideas. (For cooking, for knowing how to get to a friend's party, for figuring out a problem, etc.)

What kinds of things would you need God's direction for? This may be a tough question for some children. Allow the kids to talk through their ideas and make suggestions. The children's thoughts might include needing God's direction for which friends to spend time with, how to forgive a hurt, how to deal with a hard problem, and so on.

What are ways that we find God's direction? (Through the Bible, prayer, Sunday school teachers, parents, etc.) The children will explore more answers to this question later in the lesson. This question will get them thinking about it now.

Tie to the Bible
In today's Bible story, a boy about your age was willing to pay attention to God's direction. Let's see what happened when he listened to God.
Children will study how Samuel pays attention to God’s direction.

Materials:
- Bible Study
  - Bible Discoveries, pp. 2-3
  - Teaching Aid 2
  - Bibles
  - Pencils
- Bible Review Activity
  - Optional: blankets or mats

With the children seated at a table, give out pencils, Bibles, and Bible Discoveries for Lesson 1. Have the children turn to pages 2-3 in Bible Discoveries. Also have the children open their Bibles to 1 Samuel 3.

If any children are unfamiliar with how to find a Bible verse, direct them to the table of contents in their Bibles. They should find the page number for the Book of 1 Samuel and turn to that page. Then show them how to look for the large number 3, which designates the chapter.

Hang Teaching Aid 2 in your classroom to reference throughout the quarter. Point out 1 Samuel on the books of the Bible list where today’s story is recorded. Today’s Bible story happens before any of the events pictured on the teaching aid.

Let the kids take turns reading paragraphs of the Bible story from Bible Discoveries. When a reader reaches the blank line and the Bible reference, have the class pause and find verse 8. Let a volunteer read aloud the verse. (The answer is in the second part of the verse.) Have the class talk together to decide on the answer and write it in their books. (For your convenience, the correct answer appears on the Bible Discoveries pages shown below.) After writing the answer, have the kids continue reading. Have the class read the memory verse in unison at the end.

Hello, I am Samuel, I am a prophet for God, and I live here in Israel. I’d like to tell you about something exciting that happened to me. It happened when I was about your age.

As a boy, I lived at the tabernacle (TAH-den-NIK-ul). That is the tent of worship where the Israelites bring their offerings to God. I served God by helping a priest named Eli (EEL-ee). I did all kinds of things to help out around the tabernacle.

But in those days, God did not speak to His people very often. And though I served in the tabernacle, I did not yet know God. I was learning about Him, of course, but I didn’t know Him.

One night I was sleeping. I woke up when a voice called to me. Of course, I thought it was Eli. Who else would call me? So I quickly got up and ran to Eli. But he said, “Samuel, my boy, I didn’t call you. Go back to sleep.”

So I went back to bed. I lay there wide awake. Suddenly I heard the voice again. “Samuel!”

I got up and ran to Eli. I didn’t want to miss what He had to tell me. But Eli told me, “I really didn’t call you, Samuel.”

So I went back to my bed. I couldn’t sleep at all! Then I heard the voice again. “Samuel!” Again I ran to Eli.

This time Eli just looked at me. I could tell he was thinking hard. Finally he said, “Samuel, I see it now. The voice is THE LORD calling you.”

Read 1 Samuel 3:5.

Eli told me what to do. “The next time the Lord speaks, tell Him you’re listening.”

I ran back to my bed. I really wanted to hear what the Lord had to say. Then I heard the voice. “Samuel! Samuel!” I said, “Speak, Lord. I’m Your servant, and I’m listening.”

Well, what God had to say scared me a little. God told me that He was going to punish Eli’s family. Eli’s sons were priests, but they kept sinning against God. And Eli didn’t stop them. They were hurting God’s people by being bad leaders.

God’s first task for me as a prophet was to give this bad news to Eli. It was hard, but I obeyed. Eli said that God was right. Ever since then I have been a prophet for God. God gives me messages for His people. I listen carefully, because I want to follow His direction.
LESSON FOCUS: Pay attention to God's direction.

Bible Review Questions

1. What did Samuel hear? Who did he think it was? (Samuel heard a voice call his name; he thought it was Eli.)

2. How did Samuel show he was eager to pay attention? (He got up out of bed three times and ran to find out what Eli wanted.)

3. How did Samuel show that he paid attention when God spoke? (Samuel listened carefully for God to call him. Then Samuel said that he was God's servant and that he was listening.)

4. What kind of direction did God give Samuel about Eli? (God told Samuel that He would punish Eli's family because his sons were being bad leaders and Eli didn't correct them.)

5. Would Samuel have heard God's direction if he hadn't been paying attention? (No.)

Some children may have questions about God audibly speaking to Samuel. If so, explain that in Bible times, on special occasions, God would appear to someone in some form or speak to someone with words the person could hear. This is not the way God usually speaks to us today. The Bible itself is called the Word of God.

Memory Verse Practice

Whisper one or two words of the verse to each child, depending on the size of your class, so that the whole verse is divided up among the children. At your signal, the children start looking for the kids who have the words on either side of theirs. For example, a child assigned “instruct you” will look for the children with “I will” and “and teach.” Once the kids have found the others with neighboring words, they link arms. Soon the kids will form one line in the correct order. Then have the kids say their assigned portion of the verse in order, down the line.

Memory Verse

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go.

Psalm 32:8

How does God speak to us today? How does He direct us? (Through the Bible; prayer or His Spirit; other Christians, such as parents, Sunday school teachers, the minister; etc.)

According to the memory verse, what kind of direction does God give us? (He tells us the way we should go, or how to follow Him and do what's right.)

Bible Review Activity

To reinforce Samuel's willingness to pay attention to God's direction, let the class reenact the Bible story. Divide the children into pairs. One child in each pair is Samuel and lies on a blanket (or just on the floor). The other child in each pair is Eli and sits off to the side. When you call out, “Samuel!” the children lying down get up and run to their partner, “Eli.” The children playing Eli say that they didn't call, and the Samuels go back to bed. Do this three times. The fourth time you call out “Samuel!” the children lying down call out, “Speak, Lord. I'm your servant, and I'm listening.”

If time permits, have the kids switch roles.
Children will explore ways to pay attention to God's direction.

To help the children explore ways they can pay attention to God’s direction, as taught in the Bible story from 1 Samuel 3, use as many of these choices as possible. Set them up to be done at the same time, and let the children choose from among them.

Treasure Hunt
- Index cards
- Tape
- Optional: small treats, such as stickers or candy

Samuel was careful to pay attention to God’s direction. Children practice paying attention when looking for God’s direction in this treasure hunt. Before students arrive, print short and clear directions on index cards to different spots in your room leading from one to another, numbering them in order. For example, put this card on the bulletin board: “1—Look under the table.” Then tape this card on the bottom of the table: “2—Look behind the door.” Tape this card to the back of the door: “3—Look on the bookshelf.” Continue with as many spots as you have convenient in your room. In the final location place an index card with the memory verse. You might also provide a small treat (such as stickers or individually wrapped candies) as an extra reward for paying close attention.

The kids may play this game individually, beginning whenever they wish and taking the time they need. Tell the kids to leave the clue cards where you put them so others following them have the clues in place. Also, ask the kids not to reveal the final destination to each other.

*Check with parents for any food allergies students may have.

Bible Study Locks
- Discovery Pack, Project A
- Paper fasteners
- Bibles

By assembling and using this craft, the children will practice finding God’s direction from the Bible for everyday situations they might face. Complete directions for assembling and using the Bible Study Locks (Discovery Pack, Project A) are on page 4 of Discovery Pack. You may need to demonstrate to the kids how to push a paper fastener through the craft and bend it open on the back.

After assembling their Bible Study Locks, the children will look up the six Bible verses and match them to the pictures. The answers are on the handle portion of the lock. If children need help looking up Bible verses, direct them to Bible Discoveries, page 1.

Scripture Search
- Bible Discoveries, pp. 1, 4
- Bibles
- Pencils

In order to pay attention to God’s direction, as taught in the Bible story from 1 Samuel 3, children need to know how to find their way around in the Bible. Page 1 of Bible Discoveries teaches the children how to look up a Scripture by book, chapter, and verse. If the kids want more practice in finding verses, they may look up some of the memory verses for the quarter, listed on the back cover of Bible Discoveries.

When finished with page 1 in Bible Discoveries, the children may work on page 4. As the children unscramble the words, they will discover six ways to learn God’s direction. The correct answers are:
1. God, Bible; 2. worship; 3. parents; 4. pray; 5. teachers; 6. friends; God’s directions are best.
LESSON FOCUS: Pay attention to God's direction.

4

Bible Response

Children will apply the Bible story of Samuel paying attention to God’s direction by planning ways that they also can pay attention to God’s direction this week.

Materials:
- PraisePac CD and downloadable PDF song sheets
- CD player
- Friends, Lesson 1 and Family Faith Fun

Use this time to help your students plan ways to pay attention to God’s direction this week.

We’ve seen that Samuel paid attention to God’s direction, and that we can pay attention to God’s direction too. Let’s plan how we can do this throughout the week.

What would help you remember to pay attention to God’s direction? Encourage kids to name a wide variety of ideas. Some children may have a hard time getting going on this brainstorming. If so, refer back to things like Samuel’s eagerness to pay attention, the Bible helps on the Bible Study Locks (Discovery Pack, Project A), and the ideas on Bible Discoveries page 4. Answers might include: reading the Bible or praying each day, practicing the memory verse each day, asking a friend to remind me during the week to pay attention to God’s direction, making myself a sign about paying attention to hang in my room, and so on.

To really follow Samuel’s example this week, let’s each pick one idea and plan to do it.

What will your plan be? Encourage each child to choose one idea. Encourage each child to plan how or when they will do their idea. For example, when they will make a sign, which friend they will ask for help, or what time each day they will pray.

Let’s talk to God right now about our plans. Have a prayer time where all the children can pray as they please. If the kids need help in knowing what to pray, suggest they pray this sentence, finishing it with the plan they chose: “Dear God, I want to pay attention to Your direction, so please help me to keep my plan to __________.” Close the prayer time by thanking God that He wants us to know His direction. Ask Him to help the children pay attention to His direction.

Prayer Time

Introduce the Unit 25 song from the PraisePac CD in the teaching aids packet. This song expresses a commitment to follow God’s direction. You may want to have the children listen to it one time through before singing along with it.

Before dismissing the children, have each child say to several other children, “Pay attention to God’s direction!”

Extra–Time Activity

If you have extra time to fill at the end of class, let the kids sing the Unit 25 song a couple more times to learn it better. Or the kids could listen to the song while drawing pictures that express what the song means to them.

TAKE–HOMES

- Friends, Lesson 1 and Family Faith Fun
- Bible Discoveries, Lesson 1
- Discovery Pack, Bible Study Locks