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Are You Receiving?

Main idea

God want us all to be in communication with him.

Questions answered

by this program

- Does God ever communicate with people now?
- Will God hear me if I talk to him?
- Can anyone talk with God?
- What sort of things can talk to God about?

Bible Base

1 Samuel 3:2-11

For the leader

Children sometimes regard prayer as something very religious and strange, that's why this program seeks only to introduce the idea of 'talking with God', avoiding the words 'praying' and 'prayer'. Equating prayer with talking with God can be hard for us all. As you prepare this program spend some time reading some Old Testament conversations with God, like those in Genesis 18:20-33 and Exodus 3, and try to see them as prayer.

Note that we are concerned with talking *with* and not just *to* God. Prayer is not just talking with God but also listening to God. The fact that God speaks back in a variety of ways is crucial to an understanding of prayer.

Open the Pack

CHINESE WHISPERS

Whisper a message to someone, who whispers it to the next in line. The last person says it aloud to see how close it is to the original.

Comment: It's easy get the message wrong if we don't listen carefully and pass it on accurately.

Suggested message: 'Listen well, concentrate hard and pass on exactly what you hear and the end will be the same as the beginning.'

HUNT THE LOLLIES

***Needed**: A bag of sweets with enough for everyone.*

Choose a volunteer to go outside with a leader. Hide the unopened packet of lollies somewhere in the room and instruct the rest of the group to guide the volunteer to the lollies using the words 'hot' and 'cold'. Meanwhile the volunteer has been instructed not to listen at all to the group's instructions! After a minute stop the game and talk about what happened.

Play again with the volunteer following directions. When the lollies are found share them with the group.

Comment: This play is about someone who had trouble knowing what was being said until they listened very carefully.

Dig In

PUPPET PLAY OR DRAMA

***Needed:** 5 copies of Appendix 15,* Samuel and Eli Script *and costumes for Samuel and Eli or two simple puppets. (You can make a puppet from a wooden spoon with a stick strapped across the 'chest' for arms, some simple clothing and a face drawn on the spoon.)*

Ask five volunteers to present the script. (If possible allow the characters to read through the script in advance.)

Chew on it

Comment: Samuel knew how to listen and talk to *Eli* but he found it strange to listen and talk to *God* at first. Some people find the idea of communicating with God a strange one.

Pose the question:
What sort of things can we say when we talk to God?

TALK WITH GOD HANDS

Why? Something to take away as a reminder.

Needed: *Small paper plate for each child, hole punch, ribbon, felt pens, ready made 'Talk with God hand'.*

Show your 'Talk with God' hand and let the children make their own to take home. Talk about the meaning of the word on each finger.

'TALKING WITH GOD' BALLOONS

Why? To encourage those who talk to God to share with the others.

Needed: *Balloons and permanent markers*

Mention some of things you talk with God about then invite others to do the same, being as specific as possible.

Draw out the words 'praise', 'sorry', 'thanks' and 'ask' and 'listen'.

Give the children balloons to blow up, tie off and write a simple sentence to God. Gather the balloons together in a bundle.

Comment: This bundle of balloons represents our groups' conversation with God. We don't have to wait until we hear God talking. We can talk to God confident that he hears and answers us if we are ready to listen to him.

Close the Pack

Comment: We call talking with God 'prayer' and when we talk to God we are 'praying'. When we know and love God it's a very natural thing to do, but even if you don't, it's a way of getting to know God. You can pray whenever you like, just like you'd talk to a friend. You can talk aloud or just think your prayers in your head.

Declare a one minute 'talk with God time'. Encourage all the children to talk silently with God. They could tell God how they feel, say sorry if they have done something they shouldn't have, thank God for something good he has done for them or ask God to help them or a friend. You might then have a time for each person to say a sentence aloud to God. (They might like to say aloud what they wrote on the balloon.) Then encourage them just for a moment to listen and see if God says something to them. Invite any children who think they 'heard' God, to tell you about it after. Close the session with a prayer for the children.

Samuel and Eli script

Narrator 1: This is the story of a priest in God's temple ...

Eli: That's me. My name is Eli.

Narrator 1: ...and a little boy ...

Samuel: That's me. My name is Samuel.

Narrator 1: ...who was learning to be a priest. In those days God hardly ever communicated directly with people and he didn't appear to them in dreams very often. One night, Eli ...

Eli: That's me.

Narrator 1: ...was asleep in his room in the temple and Samuel ...

Samuel: That's me, the little boy who was learning to be a priest.

Narrator 1: ...was sleeping on a mat near the sacred chest in the temple. They hadn't been asleep for long when God called out Samuel's name.

Voice: Samuel. Samuel.

Narrator 1: Samuel jumped out of bed. He ran to Eli's room.

Samuel: That's right. I said 'Here I am Eli. What do you want?'

Eli: And I said, 'I didn't call you. Go back to bed.'

Narrator 1: So Samuel went back to bed.

Samuel: I did. But it wasn't long before I heard the voice again.

Voice: Samuel, Samuel.

Narrator 1: Samuel jumped up and ran to the old priest again. He said ...

Samuel: Here I am. What do you want?

Eli: And I said, 'I didn't call you. Go back to bed.'

Narrator 2: How many times does his go on?

Narrator 1: It happened one more time. Then Eli realised what was happening. He told Samuel to go back to bed and lie down and be ready to listen when it happened again.

Narrator 2: And did it?

Narrator 1: God came to Samuel and called his name again.

Samuel: And I said, 'I'm listening, God. What do you want me to do?'

Narrator 1: God talked to Samuel and told him what he was going to do and Samuel passed on God's message to the priest.

Narrator 2: I've got a question. Where did you hear this story?

Narrator 1: In the Bible.

Narrator 2: Is that the end?

Narrator 1: It is for now .But it wasn't for Samuel. It was just the start of Samuel's amazing life of being God's messenger.

Narrator 2: Can I take a bow then?

Narrator 1: I think we should all take a bow while everyone else claps.