



Date: _____

Series: Memorial Day (Summer)
Year 4, Lesson 1

Take Time to Listen to God

Primary Scripture: Matthew 3:1-17; Matthew 11:11,15. John the Baptist

Key Verse: Matthew 13:43, "Then the people who have God's approval will shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom. Let the person who has ears listen!"

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

On this Sunday, kids no doubt are eager and ready for summer vacation. They will probably be very excited. This is taken into consideration in this lesson with more time given to the learning games. More importantly, kids need to understand that as they go through their summer schedules, they need to take time to listen to God. They do this by reading the Bible and taking time to listen and talk with him. Oftentimes, this is a task that is neglected or forgotten because there are so many other things to do. This lesson will point to John the Baptist who, as the Bible states, was the greatest man who ever lived, other than Jesus. It also notes that those who are least in the kingdom of heaven are greater than he. Because we trust and follow Jesus as Savior and Lord, we have a place in his kingdom and have status in God's eyes that John could not have.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Jesus gives us status through his life and death in our place as sons and daughters in the kingdom.

Jesus in us: Jesus dwells within us so that we may daily enjoy his presence as we listen and obey his word and talk with him.

Jesus through us: As we spend time with God, he better directs our paths so that we, even like John the Baptist, might witness what God is doing to bring his kingdom into our lives.

Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

Kids, I'm going to ask you to do something that is usually very disrespectful to do to someone else. But in this case, I'm going to say that it's okay. I'm going to read something to you from the Bible. However, while I'm reading I want you to do this:

Put palms over both ears, close your eyes and say, "la la la la la la la la la."

Now let me see you practice that. La la la la la la la la la...

Practice this for about ten seconds.

Okay, as soon as I start reading, do your thing and stop when I look up from the Bible and quit reading. Are you ready to begin? Okay.

Read Matthew 13:43:

"Then the people who have God's approval will shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom. Let the person who has ears listen!"

Which of you kids could understand what I just said? None of you could. Why? That's because you intentionally did not listen. The Bible says that if you have ears, you should listen to what God says. This is one of those times.

Now, instead of putting your hands over your ears and saying, “la la la la la,” use your ears to listen to what God is saying. Listen so closely that you will be able to answer questions about what I read.

Read Matthew 13:43 again:

“Then the people who have God’s approval will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom. Let the person who has ears listen!”

People who have God’s approval will shine like what? (*The sun.*)

Where will they shine? (*In their Father’s kingdom.*)

What should the person who has ears do? (*He/she should listen.*)

Today we will worship God but not with our hands over our ears. We have ears so we can listen and hear God. He says to us, “If you trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you have God’s approval and you shine like the what? Right. You will shine like the sun. This summer we want to shine like the sun because Jesus lives in our lives. Let’s worship him now as one of the ways we shine like the sun.

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

Supplies needed: mirror and a flashlight or a window with the sun beaming in

When the Bible says, “We shine like the sun,” we are much like this mirror.

Hold up the mirror.

When the sun hits this mirror, it will bounce off so that other people see the reflection of the sun.

Since we don't have any sunshine in this room, let's imagine that this flashlight is the sun and we are like the mirror. It bounces off the mirror (you and me) and shines onto other people. But here is the problem.

Place your hand over the reflection to block the beam of light or have a volunteer come up to do that.

Sometimes we block God's shining on us. We do this when we don't take time to listen to him with our ears and let him speak to us.

He speaks to us when we read the Bible. He speaks to us when we think about what he says and when we pray to him. But forgetting to do those things gets in the way of how we can shine onto others. We don't want anything to get in the way of God talking to us. Let's pray to him now.

Prayer

Dear God, please show us if there is anything blocking the way between you and us that might keep us from shining for you. If we have been disobedient or have not cared about what you have said to us, we are sorry. We pray that you will forgive us so that we can be free and not want to do this anymore.

If we have not taken the time to listen to you or if we never read the Bible and pray, we are sorry. Please forgive us. If there is other sin in our hearts that leaves us angry with others or disobedient, Lord, we are sorry. We pray that you would forgive us for that so we will be free from that, too. Now shine in our lives so that we reflect the light of Jesus into the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

God let his light shine, and you have his approval because of your trust in Jesus. When God looks at you, he sees that you are completely forgiven and perfect in his eyes. He sees you shining to the world.

I hope you heard that. If you have ears, you should be listening. So now, let's praise him for what he has done when we sing our next song.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want to help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

Place the mirror in the offering plate to remind kids that they are a reflection of God's love to the world. Tell them that one of the ways they show God's love is by giving their offerings. Also, it is important to explain how their offerings are used to help people with your current mission project.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

Suggested in this portion of the lesson are two learning games that have to do with listening. Due to the special holiday weekend, kids may have extra energy and excitement as they anticipate summer activities. To encourage positive ways to expend this energy, you have the option of playing just one game or spending more time with two games. These games are designed to be a fun, active way to kick off summer. We also recommend that you go outside to play the games if the weather is nice. Instead of using tape for creating floor lines, chalk may be used outside.

Game 1: Human blindfold tic-tac-toe

Supplies: five sheets of paper with a large “O” marked on each and five sheets of paper with a large “X” marked on each. Five blindfolds, chalk to mark the ground outside, or tape to mark the floor if playing inside.

Teams are divided into boys versus girls. Choose five girls and five boys to play. Place blindfolds on each player and make them promise to not peek underneath. *(One way to avoid this is to crumple tissue paper over their closed eyes before applying the blindfold.)* Tape an “X” to each boy’s shirt and an “O” to each girl’s shirt.

Each player will be sent out, one at a time, by his or her team to stand on a life-sized tic-tac-toe grid drawn on the ground. Teammates give directions to their player about where to stand. At first, there will be all kinds of directions yelled for where to stand, making it hard for the player to distinguish where to go. To make it more interesting, tell them that they only have ten seconds to find their spot. If they don’t make it to their spot in ten seconds, they must stop wherever they are at the end of the time limit. This helps the game to move along and helps create excitement. Substitute new players for new rounds as time permits.

The problem to be solved in this game is who on the team should give directions. There will be so many voices telling a player where to stand that it is hard to know which voice to follow. When the game comes to an end, teams will figure out that when there is one person who gives directions, it is much easier for their player to follow.

After game is over, debrief with the following questions.

How is our life like the noisy and confusing teammates all giving directions at once? *(Sometimes there is an overload of input from a lot of different people and objects.)*

Where does some of the noise in your life come from? *(Radio, CD players, electronic games, telephones, TV, computer, barking dogs, friends talking, parents, teachers, etc.)*

How does this game show what it's like to try to hear God's voice when we want to make decisions? *(Sometimes it gets so busy in our lives that we don't know who to listen to and forget to listen to God's voice.)*

Game 2: Listen to find

Supplies: a small token for each team that is heavy enough to not blow away if playing outside, and smooth enough to write on. Leaders will need to write a team identifying symbol, number, or letter on each token. Also needed is a short stack of paper, pencils, tape and noisemakers such as pans and wooden spoons, or have kids simply clap their hands.

In advance of Kids Church, hide the token for each team somewhere in the play area making it difficult to find. Record the location of each token on a separate sheet of paper for each corresponding team. Tape off an area to the side for teams to stand during the game.

When ready to play, divide the group into teams of six players each. *(You can make teams of up to eight or nine players if desired).* Assign the teams a name, symbol or number according to how the hidden tokens are marked. Have teams send one member of their team out of the room or out of earshot. This person is called the Seeker. Give the paper with the hidden token's recorded location to a member of each team. These team members are called the Communicators. The Communicators tell the team member where the token is located. The Seeker is called back into the room and sent into the play area to find the token. As he/she gets closer to the token, the clapping or noisemaking of his/her team becomes faster. As he/she moves farther away from the token, the clapping or noisemaking becomes slower.

The challenge is for the Seeker to listen for the clapping clues to determine how close or far he/she is away from his/her team token. It will also be difficult for the Seeker to listen for his teammates' clues when everyone is making noise at once.

A second round of the game can be played with new Seekers sent out of the room, new communicators chosen and the token hidden again.

Repeat the game with new rounds as time permits. So, get ready for noise and let the fun begin!

Learning point

It's hard to listen and hear directions clearly when there is so much noise going on. Sometimes during summer, there are so many things going on that we may forget to put our listening ears on for God. Just like Jesus tells us, "Let the person who has ears listen."

The way to listen to God is to make time to tune out the noise and read at least a little bit from the Bible and then pray. You may take only five minutes but it will make a big difference. It will give God a chance to talk to you and give directions for a life of following him.

Bible Reading:

Help children pay attention by giving them a word or concept to listen for as you read. Consider letting a child read who could do so with excellence.

Supplies: Bible; large box filled with summer activity items such as swim fins, sports equipment, game boards, pillow, stereo, change of clothes (one "T" shirt and a pair of shorts), etc; a large suitcase; and The Visual Bible video: The Gospel of Matthew (order from: http://www.christiancinema.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=41)

The box needs to be so full of items that they cannot possibly be stuffed into a suitcase for summer camp. It will be comical trying to get all the items into the suitcase. One of the items might even be a small TV set. The scene will be especially effective when kids can't see what is in the large box until the items are pulled out one by one to be packed in the suitcase. The last item to be pulled from the bottom of the box is the Bible and it won't fit into the suitcase.

Invite a child to come up and be part of the interactive story. (Whisper to the child before you start the sketch that he/she is to pull the item you name out of the box and put it into the suitcase. The presenter can visually see what is in the box and list each item throughout the story.)

Meet Jerome

This is Jerome. Jerome gets to go to summer camp. Do you see how big his suitcase is? He can't wait for summer! There are so many important things to do. Well, let's watch Jerome pack.

Jerome packs for camp

Here are all the things he wants to do at camp.

Look into the box and have the volunteer pull out whatever you describe and place it into the suitcase. For example, you can say: "He wants to go swimming... here are his swim fins. Don't forget softball...etc." The last item is the Bible.

Oops, don't forget the Bible.

Let him pack the Bible and see that it won't fit.

There definitely is not enough room for the Bible so let's put that back into the box and get ready to go to summer camp.

What's missing?

So, what kind of summer do you think Jerome will have? There will be lots of activity, but I wonder if Jerome will miss one of the most important things to do. What is that most important thing to do? It is to take time to listen to God.

Well, Jerome, we might help you reorganize your suitcase in just a minute, but first have a seat back in the audience and let's take a look at someone that Jesus once talked about.

Matthew 11 explained

In Matthew 11, Jesus pointed to a man who was not at summer camp but was camping and living in the desert. He told everyone to get ready. Why was he in the desert? He was making sure he had plenty of time to listen to what God told him.

Jesus said, "Do you see John, the Baptizer, out in the wilderness? Why did you go to the desert? Did you want to see a man dressed in fine clothes? No, you'll find those men in palaces."

This man was a prophet. He was more than a prophet. He was the one sent before Jesus, the Messiah, to let everyone know that God's Son, promised to the world, was coming. Then Jesus said, "Look at John, the Baptizer. Of anyone ever born, no one is greater than John

the Baptizer. But if you are part of God's kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, even the least is greater than John, the Baptizer."

So, now let's take a look at John, the Baptizer, from the Bible in Matthew 3:1-15.

Video

Show Matthew 3:1-15 from *The Visual Bible* video, *The Gospel of Matthew* (order from http://www.christiancinema.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=41)

This verbatim account from the Bible will illustrate a view of John, the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. Notice that he directly confronted the religious people because they pretended to be religious but didn't really listen to God with their hearts or trust in God's salvation. Instead, they try to earn it by keeping just enough religious rules. Their lives were filled with religious rules.

Debrief

Sometimes our lives can be so full of too many things to do, even over summer vacation, that we don't stop to take time to listen to God. Today, I challenge you to set aside a special time in the morning, noon, afternoon, or night to be quiet. Talk to God and read a little bit from the Bible with no one else around. Why don't you make it a goal to read a whole book from the Bible, like the book of John? Read a little bit every day or the whole thing at once. How you do it is up to you.

Repack

Jerome, come back up here with me.

Have volunteer come back up to the front.

Jerome, let's empty all this stuff out of the suitcase. Kids, help me teach Jerome a better way to pack. What do you think he ought to put in first? The swim fins, the TV? The baseball bat?

Pause for responses.

If he puts those things in first, do you think he will have room for the Bible? No. Let's put the Bible in first. That shows the first thing that we do when we are busy with summer fun is to spend time with God. We do this by reading a little bit from the Bible and praying. If we do this, then we can really listen to what God wants to say to us. We can stop and say, "God, tell me what you want to say to me." God really does speak to us when we think about what he says in the Bible.



Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Invite kids and adults to talk about times they have set time aside to be alone with God or have heard from him as they read the Bible and prayed.

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

Make sure the kids give thanks for things they will do this summer and have them intercede for ways they can make sure they listen to God.

Options: (select one from the options below)

_____ **Prayer Line Option:** Kids line up and take turns stepping in front of the microphone to speak their prayers briefly.

_____ **Prayer Chair:** Adults or children with special prayer needs are invited to sit in the chairs. Kids gather around them, lay hands on their shoulders or knees, and take turns praying.

_____ **Popcorn Prayer:** The leader moves through the crowd with a microphone and turns it toward kids who are raising their hands to pray. The kids speak their prayers into the microphone.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the children through the Lord's Prayer, phrase by phrase, or let them pray the entire prayer along with you.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce song so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Supplies:

Power of the Cross:

- mirror and a flashlight or a window with the sun beaming in

Offering:

- mirror
- offering plate

Learning Game:

Game 1: Human blindfold tic-tac-toe

- five sheets of paper with a large “O” marked on each
- five sheets of paper with a large “X” marked on each
- five blindfolds
- chalk to mark the ground outside (or tape to mark the floor if playing inside)

Game 2: Listen to find

- small tokens for each student that are heavy enough to not blow away if playing outside and smooth enough to write numbers on
- pencils
- noisemaker such as a pan and wooden spoon (Simply clapping hands will work as the noisemaker, too.)

Bible Reading:

- Bible
- large box filled with summer activity items
- suitcase
- video from *The Visual Bible, The Gospel of Matthew* (order from http://www.christiancinema.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=41)