



Wondering with Children & Youth Children & Youth as Theologians A 10- 15 Minute Discussion

This session has been adapted from the 2016 Practice Discipleship Curriculum on *Wonder*. The full session can be downloaded at www.nemnsynod.org/Discipleship or www.practicediscipleship.org

SESSION DESCRIPTION

The most important thing we can do for children and youth is help them think theologically. Thinking theologically does not require us to memorize and recite Martin Luther or James Cone. Rather, it requires us to see our world through the lens of biblical faith that is humble, prophetic and hopeful. Brazilian education theorist, Paulo Freire claims all education is always either about domestication or praxis. Christian education in service of domestication spoon-feeds dogma and doctrine to young people for the sake of initiation and institutional maintenance. Christian education in service of praxis draws from the lived experiences of our young people, helping them understand, interpret and draw power from these experiences as encounters with earthly forces of death and God's power of resurrection and redemption. Douglas John Hall defines theology as God's people seeking to discern good news that will actually displace someone's bad news. Helping young people think theologically empowers them to proclaim Christ's good news into their neighbors' lives. This lesson will help you imagine way of helping children, youth and their families to think theologically.

BIBLICAL FOCUS

1 Samuel 3:1-21

MATERIALS NEEDED

Bible or to save time, handouts of 1 Samuel 3:1-21 with sensory words of sight & hearing from God underlined.

DISCUSSION PLAN

Read through 1 Samuel 3:1-21. Encourage participants to pay attention to words of sight & hearing from God.

Eli is helping Samuel think theologically, which means pondering about God's ministry in the world. Every young person is a Samuel who needs an Eli.

- How is our role with young people similar to Eli's role here with Samuel?

When our "Eli's" help us as "Samuel's" to think theologically, then we start to hear & see things differently.

- Who were the Eli's in your life that helped you hear & see God active in your life?
- How did this help you perceive things differently once you were able to hear & see God active in your life?

Eli's call was to help Samuel hear God's call in Samuel's own life. However, things do not turn out well for Eli, as he receives bad news.

- Are we (personally/the church/the world) willing to allow our young people to reflect so deeply on God's action and call in the world and in their lives, that it results in them uncovering our flaws & mistakes we have made?
- How do we allow ourselves to push our young people to think theologically, even if it highlights our mistakes?



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1 Samuel 3:1-21

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The **word** of the LORD was rare in those days; **visions** were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose **eyesight** had begun to grow **dim** so that he could **not see**, was lying down in his room; the **lamp of God** had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD **called** "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The LORD **called** again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the **word** of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord **called** Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he **calls** you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is **listening**.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." Then the LORD said to Samuel, "**See**, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both **ears of anyone who hears of it tingle**. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever." Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him." As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD. The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.