



Here I Am, Lord

Goal: To recognize God's call to faith in still and quiet.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In 1 Samuel 3:1–4:1a

God's call to the boy Samuel began his life as an important prophet in Israel.

Samuel's birth was unexpected. His mother Hannah prayed in the temple to God for a son whom she would dedicate to the Lord. Eli had thought she had drunk too much wine. But Hannah gave birth to a son (1:12–18). As part of his dedication, Samuel lived in the temple with the old priest, Eli.

When Samuel heard God call him in the night, he twice went to Eli who—again—misunderstood what was happening. With Samuel's third trip to Eli, the priest got the message. God had called the boy Samuel, in the still and quiet of the night, to tell Eli that the wickedness of his household would be judged by God. Samuel had said to the Lord: "I'm listening," Samuel answered. "What do you want me to do?" (3:10). Samuel conveyed the message to Eli and "everyone in the country knew that Samuel was truly the LORD's prophet" (v. 20) and Samuel spoke to the whole nation (4:1).

Samuel recognized God's speaking to him. He received God's grace in his call by God and, in gratitude, became the Lord's prophet to Israel.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Beginning the conversation with the story, "Have you ever been surprised in the middle of the night?" would be a good introduction to this vivid story of God calling Samuel, a young boy who had been given back to God by his grateful mother, Hannah. Children of all ages can share their own reactions to what it must have been like for Samuel and for Eli to know that God was very close. Another connection with the lives of children is that just like Samuel, we never know when God will show up, when we will be called to respond with God's love and grace.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Children will enjoy hearing this story about God's call to Samuel during the night. As you tell the story, pause to invite them to wonder about the story. Ask open-ended questions like, "What do you think it would have been like to leave your family and go and live with an elderly priest when you were a young child?" or "What do you think Samuel was thinking when he heard the voice calling him?" Inviting their responses is a great way to help them be attentive to the many ways God calls people to work for justice and peace in the world, even them!

*God, open my ears to your call as I seek
to help the children do the same. Amen.*



Supplies

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio recordings
(see p. vii)

broom

small lamp

small rugs/mats

costumes (optional)

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) 4, 18, 19, 30, 32,
34, 38–41

Music & Melodies (MM)
2017–2018

Responding

Claiming

step stool, smartphone
or camera

Praying

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Bonus Activity

copies of **GN 2**

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Post the visual schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM 40–41** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Claiming God’s Grace” and “Offering God’s Grace” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG A B M MS

Greet the children by name and with the words, “The grace of Christ be with you.” Prompt the children to respond with the same words.

Invite children to help set the scene. Provide a Bible, **SCM 18**, a broom, a small table lamp, and small rugs/mats (or quilt for making a pallet on the floor). Note **SCM 18**—imagine who may live in a place such as the one pictured.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities and suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Encourage conversation as children create the space.

Singing

Play, sing, and move to “For the Beauty of the Earth”—**MM 2**; **SCM 30**. Wonder together what the most beautiful part of creation each person saw this week. For each response, prompt the group to say: “Thank you, God.”

Praying

D SD

Turn on the candle.

Ask everyone to think about what their favorite ice cream flavor is. Invite them to all answer at once. Follow up by asking a couple of children what another child’s favorite flavor was. Comment that it is hard to hear others when we are busy talking.

Wonder aloud if hearing God is the same way—do we hear God most easily in the quiet or when we are talking? Allow time for children to respond and then offer several moments of quiet so children may sit silently. End the silence with this spoken prayer:

God of creation,
help us to hear you,
give us hearts that hear your call.
In Jesus’ name. Amen.

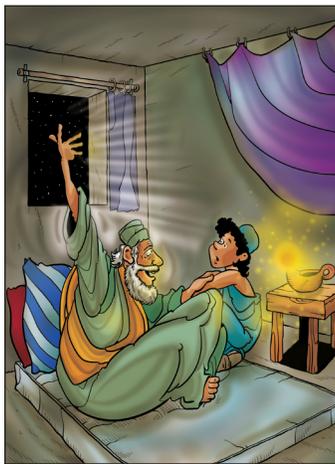


Preparing to Hear the Story C L

Invite the children to recall if they have ever been surprised in the middle of the night. Allow children to share their experiences, including how they felt being woken unexpectedly.

Draw attention to the space the children created earlier and explain that Samuel was a young boy who lived in the sanctuary with Eli, the priest. Imagine what kinds of things one would do if they lived in the sanctuary.

Invite a helper to hold **SCM 19** in front of the group. Offer that at certain points in the story, you will point to your helper who will hold up **SCM 19** and everyone should read the words together.



Hearing the Story C L

Invite a child to find 1 Samuel in the Bible. Place the open Bible among the items prepared earlier.

Read **SCM 4** or ask a volunteer to read. Use your voice and expressions to make the story lively.

Each time you reach Samuel's words, "Here I am," prompt your helper to raise **SCM 19** indicating that the group should read together.

When the story indicates that Samuel is lying down, invite children to close their eyes, pause for a few silent beats before reading that Samuel has heard his name.

Conclude the reading with, "Word of wisdom, word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Reflecting on God's Grace C L

Use these questions for reflection:

- ▼ I wonder, "What did Samuel think when he realized he was hearing God's voice?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did Eli feel?"
- ▼ I wonder, "Are there grown-ups who help you hear God? How?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How do we learn to listen for God?"

Place small rugs/mats around the room. Guide children to work in pairs or trios, taking turns pretending to be Samuel and Eli (and a narrator if a group of three). Provide costumes if desired.

Allow groups to act out the story, switching characters if they want. Remind children: three times Samuel lies down, hears God call, and runs to Eli. The fourth time he does as Eli said, and says, "Speak to your servant." Invite children to ad-lib their parts.

Singing

Sing "You Call Us, God"—**MM 4; SCM 32**. Turn off candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.



Claiming God's Grace

MS

Wonder together if God still calls children today to do God's work. Consider the ways kids do things, big and small, to serve God. Imagine together ways God may be calling the children present today.

Invite children to work together using objects in the room to make the words "Here I Am" as large as possible. If you have ample floor space, consider having the children use their bodies to form the letters. If you have tables, make the letters as large as the tables.

Once complete, gather around the words in a circle, and allow them to take turns saying the name of the person to the right while that child answers, "Here I am!" Invite children to sit around the words. Stand on a step stool above them and snap a picture.

Option: Print the photo to give to children next week. Please check your church's Safe Sanctuary policy before sharing the picture, but if it is appropriate, consider sharing the photo in the church newsletter or on the screens in your worship space.

Praying God's Grace

D

Provide copies of **GN 1**. Invite children to cut out the ear, fold along the dotted line, and glue the flap on a sheet of construction paper. Ask them to write the words "I will listen for God," on the front of the ear.

Invite children to spend time writing or drawing a prayer on the other side.

While the children work, talk about how you experience God's call or God's presence in your life. Describe particular moments. Children love stories, and your story will be exciting to them. Use simple language, images, and word pictures. Describe your feelings. Your storytelling time can be a powerful opportunity to witness to your relationship with God. Leave time to invite some children to tell their stories if some perceive they have a call from God about something.

After a few moments, ask children to complete their prayers. Ask them to close their eyes, spending one or two minutes (whatever your group is capable of) in silence.

Ask if the silence was uncomfortable. Wonder how we hear God in words (music, talking, etc.) and how we hear God in quiet moments. Affirm that Samuel heard God in the quiet and also in Eli's teaching of how to answer God. Offer a prayer giving thanks to God who speaks to us.



Offering God's Grace



Invite the children to do a brainstorming activity. Explain that God's call often leads to helping others. Ask the children what needs they see in the world. Work as a group to do something special to help others in response to God's call. Brainstorm possibilities, for example:

1. Make "no-bake" cookies for a homeless shelter or shut-ins within your congregation. Box them up nicely and include a "happy note" signed by the children. While you work, talk about and pray for those you are helping.
2. Make cards for someone hospitalized or homebound. Make the "blessing cards" bright and cheerful. Ask the children to write a prayer in each card. Ask the group to think about what they would like to receive if they were stuck at home. Address the envelopes and mail them one per week or every other day.
3. Plan and organize a food or toy drive. Together, select a beneficiary organization (food bank, homeless shelter, crisis center, children's home) and a collection date and place. Make posters to put around the church to announce the event. As a part of your planning, include prayers for those in need. If the children cannot complete the activity they chose during the session, make a plan to follow up on the activity during the next session. Consider presenting the group's plan to the deacons, session, or other group, to encourage wide cooperation.

If time allows, make preparations to carryout the planned activity in the following week.

Bonus Activity



Remind children that while it was still and quiet, Samuel heard God's words. Hand out copies of **GN 2** and pencils. Work as a group to complete the Sound Scavenger Hunt by taking a walk around the church. Have the children mark the sounds they hear.



Ages 8-10

Here I Am, Lord

September 24, 2017



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LG

Invite the children to gather and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Sing “Listen to the Word That God Has Spoken”—**MM 23; SCM 34.**

Explain that you are going to say a prayer together. You will say a line and they will repeat it.

God called Samuel’s name. /

God calls my name, too. /

Samuel listened to God. /

I listen to God. /

Samuel spoke for God. /

I can speak for God, too. /

Ask parents and caregivers for their e-mail addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit gracesightings.org.

As you send them forth, say to each one:

(Name), you are a child of God. Listen for God’s call to you in the coming week.

Encourage the children to send one another out by calling each other by name.

