



# 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, 28, 30,  
32, 36–39

**Music & Melodies** (MM)  
2017–2018

## Responding

### Claiming

step stool, smart phone  
or camera

### Offering

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

### Bonus Activity

copies of **GN 2**

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post the visual schedule shown in **SCM 36–37** to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM 38–39** 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” requires 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 might 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 28**. 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 a several moments of quiet. 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 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 reads 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 or 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

Play and sing "You Call Us, God"—**MM 4; SCM 30**. Turn off candle.



## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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



### Claiming God's Grace

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 might 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.

Once complete, gather around the words in a circle, and allow the children 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.

### Celebrating God's Grace



Play "Here I Am," a game similar to the yard game, "Mother May I."

- ▼ Select one person to be "It" and to stand opposite the group.
- ▼ The rest of the group should line up shoulder to shoulder facing "It."
- ▼ "It" may offer instructions; for example, "Sally, take two bunny hops," or "David, take three giant steps."
- ▼ When a child hears their name, before moving, they must say, "Here I Am!" and then do the suggested action.
- ▼ If a child forgets to say, "Here I Am," they lose their turn that round.

The game continues until each child has made it across to "It." Suggested actions are: giant steps, baby steps, bunny hops, frog leaps, and kangaroo jumps.

After completing the game, comment on the fun that it was to hear your name and respond. Wonder what would have happened if Eli hadn't suggested to Samuel that it was God calling, or if Samuel hadn't answered, "Here I am."

Consider writing, "Here I Am" large enough for children to see the letters.



### Offering God's Grace

*Before the session, cut the helping charade cards from GN 1 and place them in a container.*

Tell the children that God's call often leads to helping others.

Begin the game of charades by having a child draw out one of the cards and acting out the activity. You may need to whisper the activity to them if they are not yet able to read. Work as one group to guess what the helping activity might be. Invite all children who wish to participate to have a turn. If time permits, play again.

Conclude the game with a discussion about how we can offer our help to others and have the children commit to one thing they can do this week.

### Bonus Activity



Provide copies of GN 2. 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 trace the words, "I will listen to God," on the front of the ear.

Invite children to spend time writing or drawing how they listen 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. Express your feelings. Your storytelling time can be a powerful opportunity to witness to your relationship with God. Leave a chance to invite some children to tell their stories if some perceive they have a call from God about something.

After a few moments, ask the children to close their eyes, spending 30 seconds in silence. Ask if they heard anything in the silent time.

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.



## 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 32.**

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. /

As you send them forth, say to each one:

*(Name)*, you are a child of God. Listen for God’s call to you.

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

Ask parents and caregivers for their e-mail addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit [gracesightings.org](http://gracesightings.org).

Pick up toys.

Make my bed.

Set the table.

Feed a cat.

Walk a dog.

Collect canned  
goods.

Hold the  
door open  
for someone.

Make a card.

Bake cookies.

Make a sad  
friend laugh.

Draw a picture  
to cheer  
someone up.

Say a prayer  
for others.







