



# Here I Am, God

**Goal:** To recognize God's call to faith by listening.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In 1 Samuel 3:1–4:1a

God's call to the boy Samuel marked the beginning of 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. At first, an elderly priest, Eli, thought she had drunk too much wine. Hannah gave birth to a son (1:12–18). As part of his dedication, Samuel lived in the temple with Eli.

Twice, when Samuel heard God call him in the night, he went to Eli, who misunderstood what was happening. With Samuel's third call and 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 said to the Lord: "Here I am, God. I'm listening. 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 question, "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 such as, "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

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 6, 15, 21

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

blanket or mats

snack

## Guided Play

choice 1: items that make noise when shaken, such as a baby rattle, dog chew toy, metal Christmas bells, tin of breath mints, small tambourine, small rain stick, handful of gravel or pebbles, and so forth

## Exploring

choice 2: envelopes, flannel fabric, large craft sticks, fabric scraps

choice 3: pastor or church leader

choice 4: copies of

**GN 1**

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

### Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Use **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

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

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Before the session, place items that make noise in paper bags, one item per bag, for “Guided Play” choice 1. Close the bags.

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 2 and choice 3 require more prep.

### Welcoming and Guided Play

**TD** **B** **M** **MS** **F** **SD**

Greet children as they arrive and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time. Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers that you do not know personally. Tell them today’s story is about the call of Samuel, a young boy who became a prophet—a messenger for God. Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

- 1. What’s That Sound?**—Invite the children to gently shake or manipulate each bag and say what they think is in each bag. Open the bags to find out what is in each bag. Listen again to the sound each item makes.
- 2. Housekeeping Corner**—Invite the children to play in a housekeeping corner. Engage them in conversation about what they are doing. Tell them that they will hear a story about a young boy who helped an older man who could not see well. The young boy would help prepare food, sweep the house, and light the lamps.
- 3. Listening**—Instruct the children to find a place against a wall. Tell them that you will give them instructions to join you, and they need to listen carefully. Use directions, such as take one giant step, turn in a circle, take two tiny steps, take a hop, or those of your own choosing.

**T** *Transitions can be difficult for children. Do not force reluctant children to join a group activity. Instead, allow them to observe quietly from their own play area or to listen to a story read to them by an adult helper until they are ready to join the group.*



## Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Hello, Hello! How Are You?”—**SCM 21**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

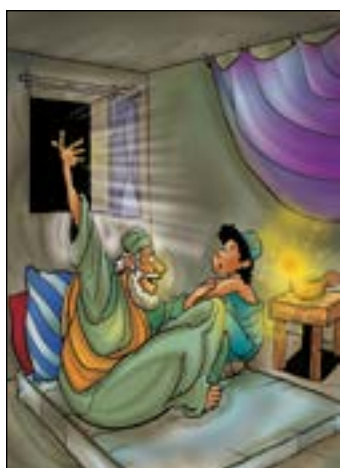
### Call and Response L

Write the children’s names in a column on a sheet of paper. Tell the children that you will call each name, and when they hear their name to respond, “I’m here!” Then invite the child to come put a sticker by their name and say, “I’m here!” again.

### Helper Song T M MS

Using the tune “If You’re Happy and You Know It,” teach the children the following song:

If you’re a helper and you know it,  
nod your head. (*nod, nod*)  
If you’re a helper and you know it,  
nod your head. (*nod, nod*)  
If you’re a helper and you know it,  
what you do will surely show it.  
If you’re a helper and you know it,  
nod your head. (*nod, nod*)



Today’s story can be found in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com).

### Hearing the Story L

Open the Bible to 1 Samuel 3 so the children will know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about a young boy named Samuel who was called by God to be a prophet—a messenger for God.

Read **SCM 6**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

After you have read the story, form two groups and have them move to opposite sides of the story corner. Tell one group that they are Samuel, and tell the other group that they are Eli. Call out, “Samuel! Samuel!” Tell the Samuel group to get up and run to the Eli group and say, “Here I am. What do you need?” Instruct the Eli group to sit up and say, “I didn’t call you. Go back to bed.” Tell the Samuel group to go back and lie down. Repeat these actions two more times. At the third time, tell the Eli group to respond, “God is calling you. Say, ‘Here I am. What do you want me to do?’” Tell the Samuel group to go back and lie down. Call “Samuel! Samuel!” one more time and have the Samuel group sit up and say, “Here I am. What do you want me to do?”



## EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE

### 1. Listening Game



Tell the children that they are going to play a listening game where they have a turn to see if they can tell whose voice is calling their name. Use the following directions to explain how the game will be played:

- ▼ One child will sit on a chair facing away from the rest of the children.
- ▼ Tap one child in the group to be the “speaker” and call out the child’s name who is sitting in the chair. Everyone else must be quiet.
- ▼ The child in the chair tries to guess who called out his or her name. Depending on the size of your group, the child in the chair may have up to three guesses, with the “speaker” calling out the child’s name again after each incorrect guess.

Let every child who wants a turn at being the child in the chair have one. Have the “speaker” be different children, but you will want to repeat some children so that the child listening doesn’t guess by process of elimination.



If flannel is not available, cloth scraps or napkins will work.

Wooden girl- and boy-shaped craft sticks may be available at craft stores and online.

### 2. Samuel! Samuel!



*Before the session, seal envelopes and cut off one of the narrow ends of the envelopes. Cut rectangles of flannel the size of the envelopes.*

Remind the children that Samuel was sleeping each time he heard his name called, and he jumped up to see who called him. Tell them they are going to make Samuel in his bed. Give each child an envelope and a rectangle of flannel. Instruct them to glue the flannel to one side of the envelope. Give them each a large craft stick and tell them to draw a face on one end of the craft stick. Have them put the craft stick in the open end of the envelope. Call out “Samuel! Samuel!” and encourage the children to pull out their craft sticks and say, “Here I am. What do you need?” Repeat several times. Then tell the children to turn the craft stick over and draw their face on the other side. Have them put the craft stick, with their face up, in the envelope. Call out each person’s name and invite each child to respond, “Here I am. What do you want me to do?”

Children may add clothing to each side by gluing on fabric scraps.



### 3. Samuel Was a Special Boy

L B

Invite your pastor or another leader in your church to share how God called them to serve in a particular task in the church. Remind the visitor that they are talking to a group of three- to five-year-olds and to keep their narrative simple, answering questions such as: What did God call you to do? How did you know that God was the one who called you?

Encourage the children to ask questions. Invite the visitor to share in the snack time.

To end, sing a song based on the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” as a reminder of Samuel’s call:

Samuel was called by God, called by God, called by God.  
Samuel was called by God, and that’s what our God did.

Just like him, God calls us too, calls us too, calls us too.  
Just like him, God calls us too, and that’s what our God does.

Listen for God’s voice today, voice today, voice today.  
Listen for God’s voice today, and then say, “Here I am.”

**L** *Listening to a story or guest speaker can be a challenge for children who struggle with attention and get easily distracted. Consider giving them a task such as note taking or asking them to listen for a specific word or phrase. Creating a focus can aid these children in their attention to the person speaking.*

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

### 4. Coloring Page

C FM

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of Samuel. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What did Samuel do to help Eli?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How did Samuel help God?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How did Samuel feel about being God’s messenger?”

**T** *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as squatting down, jumping up, circling arms, and so forth.*



## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Call the children together, singing “God Is So Good”—**SCM 15**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate. Remind the children that Samuel was a helper to Eli, and then God called Samuel to be God’s helper. Ask the children how they can be a helper for someone this week.

Call the children to snack time. Invite the children to repeat each line of the following prayer:

Thank you, God, for the food before us. /  
Thank you, God, for the friends beside us. /  
Thank you, God, for the love between us. /  
Amen. /

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), listen! God is calling you to help others. Look for ways to be a helper. The grace of God is with you.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

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Eli told Samuel to tell God, "Here I am."

