

**1 Sam. 3:1–10**

**(11–20)**

*Ps. 139:1–6, 13–18*

*1 Cor. 6:12–20*

*John 1:43–51*

# God Speaks

**Goal for  
the Session**

*Tweens will enjoy the story of Samuel’s call and reflect on the ways in which God might be speaking to them.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on 1 Samuel 3:1–10 (11–20)

#### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Richard Boyce

This passage stands at the beginning of the stories of kingship in Judah and Israel, a time when God’s people grew weary with the occasional service of the judges who rescued them when their disobedience had made them prey to their enemies. Now Israel began to long for a king. From the beginning, this concentration of power in the hands of a human being was fraught with difficulty. Who will speak the truth to power? In this “nice little” story, a new office begins to emerge, preparatory to the later emergence of the king: the office of “trustworthy prophet of the LORD” (v. 20). Human speaking and hearing now become one of the main means by which the light of God’s revelation breaks into the affairs of this world.

#### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Joseph L. Price

To be called by God is an act of spiritual intimacy and divine urgency. To be called by God means that God knows one’s name and, in knowing one’s name, exercises a powerful influence on the person. To be called by God also indicates a need for immediate response because the Almighty has indeed summoned one to a specific vocation or course of action. The story of Samuel’s call establishes his authority, empowers his transfer of priestly leadership from Eli to Saul, and reinforces hope in God—that God will refresh and renew.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Donna Schaper

What this passage recommends to us is that we begin to make decisions based on the tingle of hope. Oddly, the passage assures us that what God is going to do will make both ears tingle. Let one ear tingle with fear. Fear is legitimate under most of the circumstances of most of our lives. Fear is spiritually legitimate. A lot has gone wrong. A lot of danger lurks. But listen now with the other ear. Hear what Samuel was reluctant to hear: God is going to do a new thing, which will make both of our ears tingle.

#### NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Lawrence Wood

This comic, tender, tragic story really does come from modern life. In an age of divine reticence and the all-too-human failings of religious leaders, it speaks to every servant weighed down with fatigue or regret. Are we Samuel? Are we Eli? Can we really be sure which? And what shall we do if the living God comes into our troubled temple? It is Eli, ironically enough, who tells us what to say: “Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.”

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

**1 Samuel 3:1–10  
(11–20)**

## Focus on Your Teaching

Tweens know what it is like to have their name called. They understand that it invokes a sense of anticipation—not always positive—and requires a response. The idea of God speaking is abstract, and tweens might have a hard time recognizing this in their own lives. Exploring different ways God communicates will help them broaden their understanding. Just as Samuel needed Eli to help him recognize God’s voice, so we can act to help young people recognize God’s affirmation and call on their lives.

*God of love, I give thanks that you long to communicate with your people.  
Give me the wisdom to recognize and affirm the ways you are speaking to  
the tweens in my group. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- ☐ Color Pack 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 32
- ☐ Resource Sheet 1 from December 31, materials listed there
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheets 1, 2
- ☐ *Singing the Feast, 2023–2024*; CD player
- ☐ newspapers
- ☐ fine-tipped markers

**For Responding**

- ☐ option 1: Internet-connected device (optional)
- ☐ option 2: computer or Internet-connected device, paper, pens
- ☐ option 3: small plastic containers with lids; clean, dry sand; plastic forks; small natural objects (pebbles, twigs, shells)

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

As young people arrive, greet them by name and ask about their week. Lead the opening ritual as described on Resource Sheet 1 from December 31. This week’s “Star Stuff” trivia question is:

Small, dense neutron stars that give off light and radio signals as they spin are called:

- a. pulsars (*correct answer*)
- b. red dwarf stars
- c. wormholes
- d. quasars

Display Color Pack 14 and read aloud the caption. Offer the following prayer or one of your own:

*Light-giving God, as we explore the Scriptures today, shine your light into our hearts, so that we may see how to follow in your ways. Amen.*

Form two groups to sing “You Are My Beloved Child” (Color Pack 32; track 26 on *Singing the Feast, 2023–2024*) one group sings the first part of each verse, the other sings “hallelujah.”

Introduce the session focus by inviting conversation about hearing one’s name called:

- ✂ Who are some of the people who call out your name regularly?
- ✂ What are some of the reasons they call out your name?
- ✂ How might it feel to hear your name called out in the night? Has this ever happened to you?

Comment that today’s Bible story is about a young person who heard his name being called one night.

**You Are My Beloved Child**

You are my beloved child,  
hallelujah,  
You are my beloved child,  
hallelujah.

And my face has smiled on  
you, hallelujah,  
And my face has smiled on  
you, hallelujah.

Then says God to everyone,  
hallelujah,  
Then says God to everyone,  
hallelujah.

You're God's daughter,  
you're God's son,  
hallelujah!  
You're God's daughter,  
you're God's son,  
hallelujah!

God can speak in so many ways. Here are a few possibilities: through art, movies, the Bible, sermons, circumstances, books, a deep-down feeling, serving others, words of friends, and poetry. Be prepared to share your own story. How has God spoken to you?

**EXPLORING**

Introduce the story by explaining that the Bible says it takes place “in the house of God.” This may have been the temple, but it is more likely to have been the large sacred tent that God told Moses to set up for worship. A tween named Samuel lived in this place with a priest named Eli. The name *Samuel* means “someone who comes from God.” Samuel’s mother gave him that name because Samuel was the answer to her prayers for a son.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (God Calls Samuel). Recruit volunteers to read the various parts. Ask the rest of the group to create the sound effects shown in italics. Provide newspaper pages for making rustling sounds. Make the sound of footsteps by slapping thighs with the palms of hands.

After completing the drama, invite tweens to share their initial thoughts and reactions to the story. Discuss:

- ✿ Why do you think Samuel didn’t recognize God’s voice?
- ✿ How do you think Samuel felt when he realized it was God, and not Eli, calling him?
- ✿ Why do you think God spoke to Samuel? (If you have time, read vv. 11–20 to find out what God said to Samuel.)
- ✿ Eli helped Samuel recognize God’s voice. Who might help you recognize God’s voice?

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (God Speaks) and prepare to display Color Pack 15, 16, and 17. Invite volunteers to read through the sections on the resource sheet. As each section is read, show the corresponding Color Pack image. Encourage tweens to tell of their experiences. Ask:

- ✿ How else might God speak to us?

Stand in a circle. Choose one player to begin. This player starts by saying, “I can listen to God.” The rest of the group responds by saying, “How can you listen to God?” The player then says, “I can listen to God like this,” names one way God might speak, such as “through nature, through nature,” and then performs a small gesture such as opening and closing one hand. The group repeats the words and the gesture. The next player repeats the first response and adds a second suggestion and gesture, and the group then repeats both. You probably won’t get all the way around the circle before everyone is laughing and mixing up the order of gestures and suggestions. At that point, stop the game and start over.

Play some reflective worship music, such as “Music for Meditation” (track 16 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024) and invite tweens to take a quiet moment to think about the ways God has spoken to them and ways that God might speak to them in the future. Place Color Pack 18 in the middle of the group, and write the following question at the top of the page: *How might God speak to us today?* Provide fine-tipped markers for learners to use to write their responses to this question in the speech bubbles.

**EASY  
PREP**

As there are only two characters in the story, encourage tweens to play talking props. They could be the sacred chest, the tent entrance flaps, or a lamp stand. Affirm creativity and humor.

## RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Drama** The story of Samuel's call reminds us that sometimes we need help to recognize God's voice. Encourage the group to retell the story of Samuel and Eli in their own way. If possible, find a way for tweens to showcase their drama by performing it for other groups or making a video to be shown. Option: The video of this Bible story at [bit.ly/FOWSamuel](http://bit.ly/FOWSamuel) might provide some humorous inspiration.
- 2. Video** God longs to communicate with us and will do so in many ways. Distribute paper and pens. Play the music video "Yahweh" at [bit.ly/FOWYahwehU2](http://bit.ly/FOWYahwehU2). Invite tweens to pay attention to any images, words, or thoughts that capture their attention and note them on the paper. Discuss the video, asking: What might God be trying to say to us through this video? Encourage everyone to find a private place in your learning space. Play the song again, and ask tweens to doodle as the music plays. Gather together and invite learners who feel comfortable doing so to show their doodles and tell what they sense God is saying to them.
- 3. Meditation Garden** God spoke to Samuel in the quiet of the night. Sometimes we have to quiet our hearts to hear God's voice. Invite tweens to make a meditation garden to help them do this. Fill small plastic containers three-quarters full with sand. Add small natural items. Demonstrate how to use a fork to create straight lines or swirls in the sand. Have participants try out their meditation gardens. As they rake the sand, suggest they think about the different things going on in their lives, talk to God about these things, and try to sense what God is saying in response. Encourage tweens to take their meditation gardens home and use them.

## CLOSING

Gather the group and invite learners to tell what they have discovered today about the ways that God speaks to them.

Introduce this session's "Star of the Week": the Seven Gifts of the Spirit Star. Cut the pattern for this seven-pointed star from Color Pack 12 and have learners trace it to make their stars, as described on Resource Sheet 1 from December 31. As they work, explain that this star symbolizes the seven gifts of the Spirit (wisdom, understanding, right judgment, courage, knowledge, reverence, fear of the Lord). This star can remind us of Samuel, who was filled with God's Spirit.

Lead the closing prayer as described on Resource Sheet 1 from December 31. Extend signs and words of peace with one another as you depart. Remind the group that you will be praying for them throughout the coming week, and ask them to pray for you, as well.

## God Calls Samuel

**Narrator:** Samuel served God by helping Eli, an old priest. One night, Eli was asleep in his room and Samuel was sleeping on a mat near the sacred chest.

**Commentator 1:** What's the sacred chest?

**Commentator 2:** It was a special box that held sacred writings. It went with the people of God when they were traveling through the wilderness in the time of Moses.

**Narrator:** Can I please continue?

**Commentator 2:** Yes, sorry!

**Narrator:** They hadn't been asleep long when God called out Samuel's name.

**God:** Samuel!

**Narrator:** Samuel jumped out of bed (*rustle newspapers*) and ran to Eli (*make the sounds of quick footsteps*).

**Samuel:** Here I am. What do you want?

**Eli:** I didn't call you. Go back to bed.

**Narrator:** Samuel went back (*slow footsteps*) and got into bed (*rustle newspapers*).

**Commentator 1:** Why did Samuel run to Eli?

**Commentator 2:** Samuel had never heard God's voice before.

**Commentator 1:** Isn't God's voice really obvious? I mean wouldn't it sound really loud and majestic?

**Commentator 2:** Obviously not! Could we get back to the story now?

**God:** Samuel!

**Narrator:** Once again, Samuel jumped out of bed (*rustle newspapers*) and ran to Eli (*make the sounds of quick footsteps*).

**Samuel:** Here I am. What do you want?

**Eli:** Son, I didn't call you. Go back to bed.

**Narrator:** Once again, Samuel went back (*slow footsteps*) and got into bed (*rustle newspapers*).

**God:** Samuel!

**Narrator:** For the third time, Samuel jumped out of bed (*rustle newspapers*) and ran to Eli (*make the sounds of quick footsteps*).

**Samuel:** Here I am. What do you want?

**Narrator:** Eli finally realized that it was God who was calling Samuel.

**Commentator 1:** No kidding!

**Commentator 2:** Hey, give them a break; God hadn't spoken directly to the people for years.

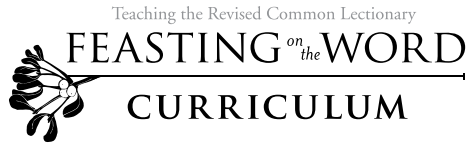
**Eli:** Samuel, go back and lie down. If you hear the voice again, answer, "I am listening, God."

**Narrator:** For the third time, Samuel went back (*slow footsteps*) and got back into bed (*rustle newspapers*).

**God:** Samuel! Samuel!

**Samuel:** I am listening, God. What do you want me to do?

January 14, 2024  
God Speaks



Tweens  
Resource Sheet 2

## God Speaks

Down through the ages, many people have felt that God was speaking to them in a special way.



### In Nature

Sometimes when you see something amazing in nature, you may feel an incredible sense of awe. Suddenly, God seems very real and very close. When that happens, God is communicating through the beauty of creation.

Tell about a time when you felt God was speaking to you through nature.



### Through Music

Have you ever been listening to some music and realized that the words were speaking to your heart in a special way? It doesn't have to be a church song. Sometimes the words of popular songs can speak to your situation, too. When that happens, God is communicating through the music.

Tell about a time when the words of a song were exactly what you needed to hear.



### Through Words

Has someone ever said something that made you feel better at a time when you were sad and discouraged? Have you ever been struggling with a decision and had someone say something that made everything clear? Have you ever discovered that you said exactly the right thing, at the right time, to someone? God can speak through the words of each one of us!

Tell about a time when someone said exactly what you needed to hear. Tell about a time when you said just the right thing to someone else.

Remember, each person is different and God speaks to each person differently. God will speak to you in the way that suits you best.