



Here I Am, God

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

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
(MM) 2022-2023

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i-iv, 6, 6a, 19, 25

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

green cloth

candle

small table lamp

small rugs/mats

Responding

Praying

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

Offering

copies of **GN 2**,
envelopes

Extra

copies of **GN 3**

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Post **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.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **A** **B** **LD**

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, a green cloth, and a candle, as well as a small table lamp and small rugs/mats (or a quilt for making a pallet on the floor).

Ask a few children to help prepare any “Responding in Gratitude” activities you may be doing today. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Today’s Scripture passage is lengthy. Decide if you will have volunteers read it or use **SCM 6**. Ask for several volunteers to practice the reading.

Encourage conversation as children create the space.

T *Transitioning from an activity with movement to a quiet, listening one can be difficult for some children. Alert them of the change in advance.*

Singing

T **C**

Sit quietly and listen to “We Are Growing”—**MM 28**; **SCM 25**.

Invite the children to sing along as you play the song again. Pause after the first verse. Encourage the children to respond with ways they are growing closer to God. Continue playing the second verse and ask the children how they are learning to pray. Play the last verse and ask how they show love.

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 then offer several moments of quiet so children may sit silently. End the silence with this spoken prayer:

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

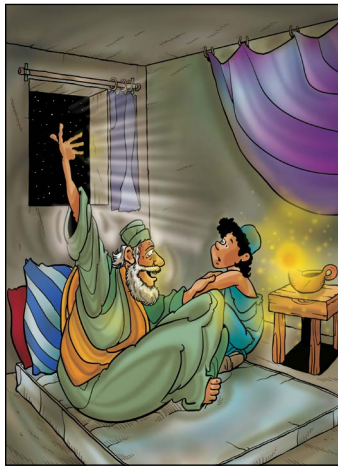


Preparing to Hear the Story C L

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 awakened 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 6a** in front of the group. Offer that, at certain points in the story, you will point to your helper who will hold up **SCM 6a** and everyone should read the words together.



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.

Hearing the Story C L

Invite a child to find 1 Samuel 3 in the Bible. Ask for several volunteers to read 1 Samuel 3:1-4:1a or **SCM 6**. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible in the worship area.

Read the story again using **SCM 6**. When the story indicates that Samuel is lying down, invite children to close their eyes, and pause for a few silent beats before reading that Samuel has heard his name. Each time you reach Samuel's words, "Here I am," prompt your helper to raise **SCM 6a**, indicating that the group should read together.

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).

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, "Here I am, God. What do you want me to do?" Invite children to ad-lib their parts.

Singing MS

Play "Every Time I Feel the Spirit"—**MM 13; SCM 19**. Sing and dance joyfully because we, too, can feel God's spirit when we hear God's call.

Turn off the 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. Talk about the ways children do things, big and small, to serve God. Imagine together ways God may be calling the children present today.

Invite children to work together by using objects in the room to make the words "Here I Am" as large as possible either on a table or on the floor. Once complete, gather around the words in a circle. Take turns saying the name of the person to the right while that child answers, "Here I am! I can serve God." As a challenge, suggest that the children use their bodies to create the letters.

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, but the children can make up their own actions as well.

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."

MS *Make sure children with mobility issues are included in all activities. Find ways to adapt activities to ensure all are able to fully participate, such as instead of giant steps or bunny hops, suggest actions such as "move in front of the person closest to 'It'" or "move forward three feet."*



Praying God's Grace D

Remind the children that Samuel heard God in the quiet moments. Wonder together how prayer is not just talking but also listening. 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 under the ear on the construction paper. As they think about their prayer, encourage them to listen to what God may be saying to them in their minds and hearts.

When the children have finished their prayers, ask them to close their eyes, spending one or two minutes (whatever your group is capable of) in silence.

Wonder how the silence felt. Ask the children how we hear God in different ways. 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 MS

Remind the children that Samuel heard God's voice in quiet moments. Tell them that they will make coupons to use at home to give family members time to spend listening to God. Brainstorm ways the children can help others by allowing them a quiet time. If children are having trouble thinking of ways, you could suggest some of the following: help my brother or sister clean up toys, play quietly in my room, feed the dog/cat, or wash the dishes. Write the children's ideas on a sheet of newsprint.

Hand out copies of **GN 2** and invite the children to write or draw a way they can offer to help a family member so that person may spend time with God. After they are done making the coupons, have them cut the coupons apart. Give the children envelopes to take the coupons home to give to their family members.

Extra Activity D M MS

Remind children that, while it was still and quiet, Samuel heard God's words. Hand out copies of **GN 3** 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.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

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

Quietly sing “We Are Growing”—**MM 28; SCM 25.**

Encourage the children to practice times of silence this week to listen to God. Invite them to repeat after you as you pray:

God called Samuel’s name. /

God calls my name too. /

Samuel listened to God. /

I listen to God. /

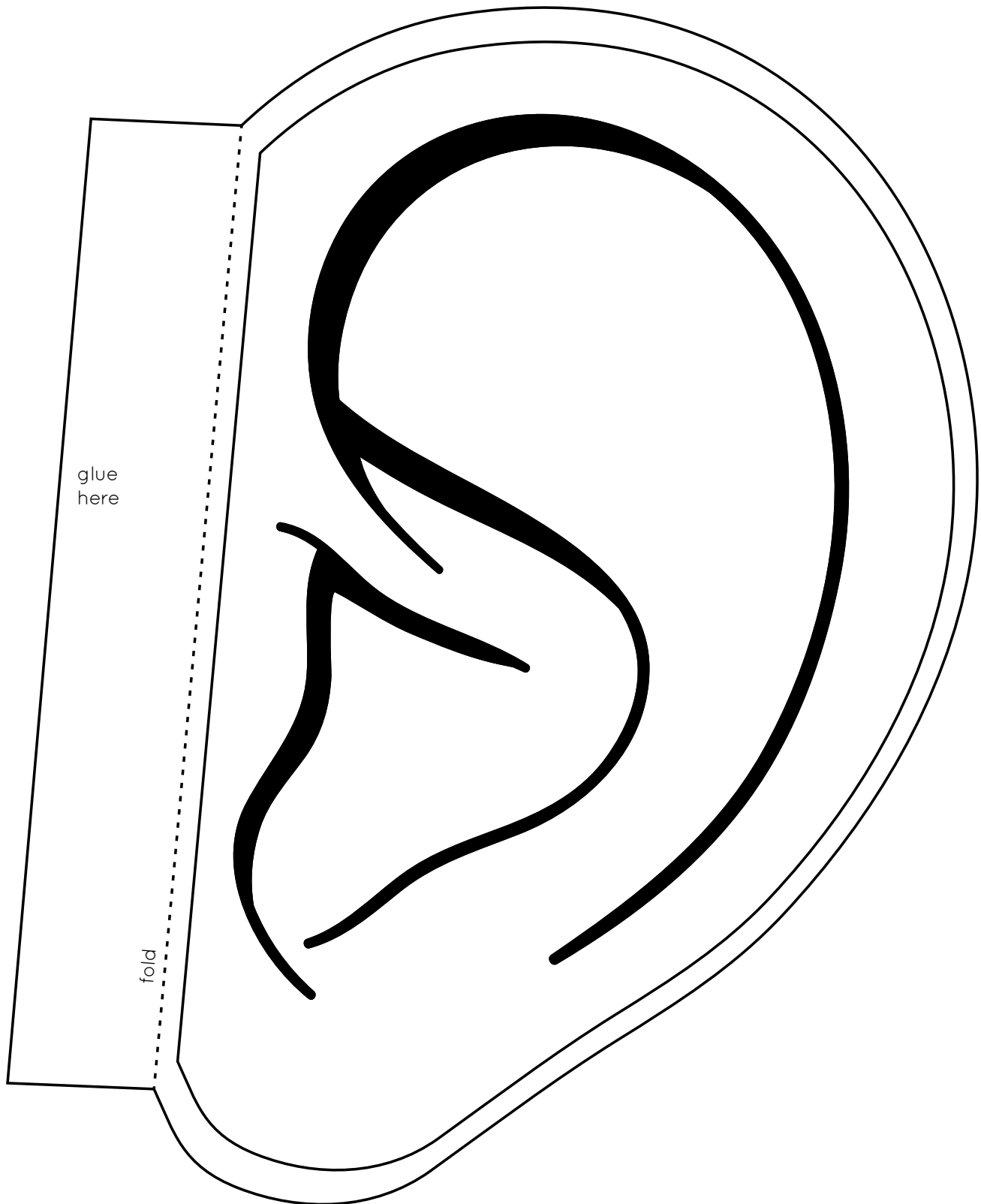
Samuel spoke for God. /

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 in the coming week.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).



! Shhh...

so that you can spend
time with God, I will ...

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