

Message Received: Hearing God's Call

CREATIVE RESPONSE GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

God has a message for you! Can you hear it?

Samuel heard it during the middle of the night. Mary heard it through an angel. The disciples were hard at work when they heard it. They all heard God's special message just for them! *Message Received: Hearing God's Call* lets children know that God continues to call all kinds of people—including them! People are called to love God and follow Jesus every day. Those who hear God's message and respond are forever changed.

Several craft and activity ideas are offered for each session, but you are not expected to do all of them. Focus on the ones most appropriate for your groups. They are intended to be user-friendly for age 6 through grade 5, but can be adapted for other ages. Some of the crafts and activities require more adult supervision than others, depending on the age group involved, but all will extend the *Message Received* theme in fun and creative ways.

Snack time is part of the Creative Response time and food suggestions are offered in each session. Some food may be prepared ahead of time, while other food preparation can happen with the children during the session.

You are privileged to work with the children. Affirm their gifts of creativity. Encourage them to develop healthy relationships with each other. Pray that each child will learn and grow through having fun in these sessions.

SESSION OUTLINE AND PREPARATION

Each session includes the Bible background, faith focus, and memory verse of the day. Read them to understand how the Creative Response ideas connect with the theme, and to guide you as you interact with the children. The variety of crafts and activities allows you to be flexible and consider the needs and abilities of your groups when planning each session.

- **About the session:** gives an overview of your time with the children
- **Session materials:** lists supplies for the session
- **Advance preparation:** notes what needs to be done ahead of time
- **Creative Response session plan:** offers craft and snack options

Give attention to room setup. It is ideal to have at least two areas or tables—one for snacks and another for crafts—if space is available. Choose one craft for everyone to do, or set up craft stations around the room and allow children to choose what they would like to do. Take time before the sessions to make the crafts and be sure directions are understood. This will also allow children to see a sample of the final results.

THE PRIMARY CHILD

Primary children (those in early elementary school) are both endearing and challenging, and often open and affectionate. They may enjoy doing things on their own one minute but want the leader's attention and guidance the next. Projects completed independently, though imperfect, are more satisfying than those completed by the leader.

Primary children think mainly about themselves and need encouragement to consider others and their needs. Sharing is hard for them, but repeated intervention is effective. Always acknowledge the children's feelings, even while correcting inappropriate actions. If you treat children with respect you will have encouraged positive behavior because primary children look up to their leaders and try to emulate them.

Primary children have lots of ideas and want to share them. They need space to express themselves and feel they are contributing to the group.

THE MIDDLE CHILD

At this age (late elementary/middle school), children are becoming less self-centered and are able to understand another's point of view. They are big on fairness and rules, and will quickly tell you when something is unfair. Communicate clearly your expectations about group behavior. Follow through on your expectations. When working on a new skill or project, middler children show amazing focus and determination. They take criticism seriously, so try to frame comments in a positive way. Middlers tend to have best friends and can exclude others. Peers are important to them. While some still want to please their leaders, others are beginning to challenge authority. Model respect in your words and actions.

Children at this age show great developmental differences (physical, intellectual, psychological, social, and spiritual). Be aware of these differences and provide opportunities for everyone to contribute as they are comfortable. For example, reading abilities can vary greatly. Be sensitive to any child's reluctance to read aloud. Many children are eager to read and comfortable doing it, while others find it difficult or embarrassing.

Middler children are full of energy and enthusiasm. Their bodies are growing and need physical activity. Whenever possible, provide opportunities to move around.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Schedule is for a 2-hour-and-15-minute Bible school session. For other session times, see below.

<p>Gather (10 minutes) Small groups meet to begin the session.</p>	<p>Worship (25 minutes) Small groups converge for worship. A drama presents the Bible story.</p>	<p>Bible/Creative/ Active Response (30 minutes each) Small groups rotate to participate in three stations each day. Activities focus on Bible story themes. Creative Response time includes a snack.</p>	<p>Send (10 minutes) Blessing and dismissal in small groups or in total group assembly.</p>
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Modified schedule

If you have 2 hours:

Gather—5 or 10 minutes

Worship—20 minutes

Respond—75 minutes

Active—25 minutes

Bible—25 minutes

Creative—25 minutes

Send—5 or 10 minutes

If you have 90 minutes:

Gather—5 minutes

Worship—20 minutes

Respond—60 minutes

Active—20 minutes

Bible—20 minutes

Creative—20 minutes

Send—5 minutes

If you have 1 hour:

Worship—15 minutes

Respond—45 minutes

Active—15 minutes

Bible—15 minutes

Creative—15 minutes

Day 1

SAMUEL

Biblical background

Samuel is a familiar and popular figure in the Old Testament. As a child he serves God in the temple with his mentor, Eli, the priest. As an adult, he serves as a prophet of God to the people of Israel.

Samuel begins his ministry at a young age after experiencing something highly unusual—he actually hears God’s voice calling him. Not surprisingly, Samuel thinks it is Eli who is calling, and goes to see what he wants. Eli, however, realizes that it is God who is calling Samuel’s name.

According to 1 Samuel 3:1, the beginning of this story, “the word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.” Yet God calls and Samuel responds, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” He is willing to take on whatever God has for him, even though it means that he has to tell Eli some difficult news.

God has warned Samuel about the coming downfall of the house of Eli. Samuel is afraid to share the message, but Eli invites him to do so anyway. Eli hears the news with resignation, saying that the Lord should “do what seems good to him.”

Listening and responding to God’s call transforms Samuel’s life. He grows from a young boy who does not fully know God, to a man who becomes known as a trustworthy prophet of the Lord at Shiloh.

Children will be fascinated that someone their own age was given such an important task from God. This can encourage them to think about God’s call in their own lives and to listen for the voice of God as they make decisions.

About the session

Children will use listening skills by participating in activities that remind them of the importance of listening, just as Samuel needed to listen for a message from God.

Session materials

- Snack
- Napkins or small plates
- Juice or water, cups
- Hand sanitizer or wet wipes
- Materials for chosen activities (pp. 7–9)

Advance preparation

- Prepare snack.
- Choose activities that are appropriate for your VBS groups and prepare materials.

MESSAGE
RECEIVED

HEARING GOD'S CALL

Today’s Bible experience

1 Samuel 3:1-21

Summary

Samuel, a young person, is called by God and gives a message to Eli. Samuel listens to God and Eli accepts the message.

Bible memory

Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!
—Luke 11:28b

Faith focus

God calls us to listen and respond.

Snack idea: Serve foods that start with the first letter of Samuel’s name to emphasize the importance of names. Suggestions include: strawberries, salsa (with chips), string cheese, star fruit, and sherbet.

Creative Response session plan

1. **Greet the children.** Find out which session the children have just experienced and ask about it: What activities did you do? What did you learn? What did you like best? Invite everyone to sit at the snack table. Give each child a squirt of hand sanitizer or a wet wipe.
2. **Snack time.** Before inviting children to eat, briefly remember today's Bible story. Samuel was a young boy who heard God calling him during the nighttime. After Eli told Samuel it was God who was calling, Samuel listened to the special message God had for him.

God called Samuel's name. Enjoy eating foods that begin with the letter s.

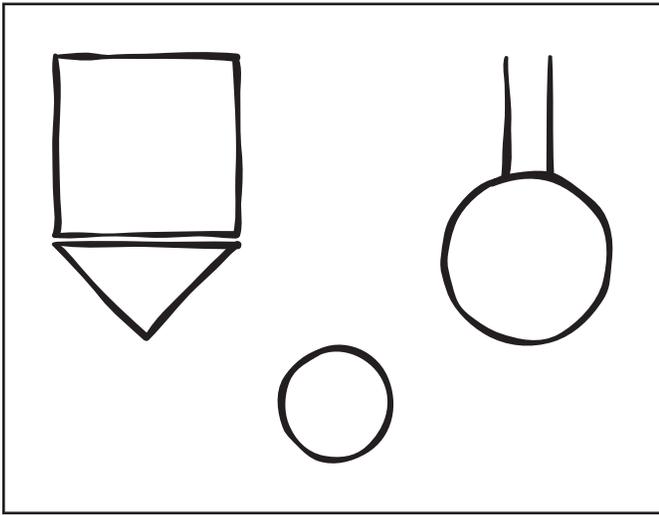
3. **Activity time.** Explain that today's activities focus on listening, just as Samuel needed to listen. Give directions for the things that have been prepared.
4. **Clean up.** Encourage children to clean up the area and put materials away. Decide if the projects will be taken home, displayed, or collected for other purposes. Make sure all projects have names on them.
5. **Closing prayer:** *Dear God, thank you that we can listen to you. Thank you for loving me and wanting to talk with me. Help me to listen. Amen.*

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

Listen and Draw

Materials

- White paper, one sheet per child
- Crayons or markers



1. Give each child a paper and access to crayons or markers.
2. Children will follow directions and draw what the leader says. The leader will follow directions and draw as well, but not allow children to see it until the end of the activity.
3. Suggested leader directions:
 - Draw a yellow circle in the bottom middle part of the paper, about the size of a large coin. Color it yellow.
 - Draw an outline of a big blue square almost at the top of the page, on the left side. Do not color in.
 - Draw a green triangle under the blue square—touching the blue square and triangle along one edge. Make green zigzags inside the triangle.
 - Draw a green circle in the middle of the page on the right side. Color it green.
 - Draw two brown lines from that green circle to the top of the page.
 - Compare drawings with the leader's drawing. Are they similar?
4. Leader can make up any directions, but make sure they are specific so the outcomes closely match the leaders.

Debrief

This activity required listening to many directions. Why was it necessary to listen carefully? Samuel chose to listen, even though he did not understand at the beginning. Children needed to listen for this activity, even though they did not know all of the directions at the beginning.

Memory Magnet

Materials

- Wooden pinch clothespins, one per child
- Magnets (long, thin to fit on clothespin), one per child
- Animals (foam or wood pieces) that fit at the end of the clothespin, one per child
- Washable paint
- Paintbrushes
- Newspapers or plastic tablecloth
- Paint shirts
- Glue (white school glue or hot glue, if adult does gluing)
- Pencils

Advance preparation

- Put newspapers or plastic tablecloth on table.
- Put small amounts of paint on foam or paper plates just before session begins—more can be added later, if needed.
- Set paintbrush and clothespin at each place.
- Set plates with animal shapes in several places around the table.

1. As children gather around the table, invite them to choose one animal shape for their project. Set the animals aside.
2. Have each child write their name on a small piece of paper and pinch it in the clothespin. That will help identify who it belongs to and it will also keep children from painting the clothespin shut.
3. Tell children to think about the animal they chose and where that animal lives. What would be around them? What colors would they see? Have several children share a few specific examples.
4. Invite them to paint their clothespins to look like their animal's home. Young children may paint it one color. Older children may paint details. Set aside to dry.
5. When dry, glue the magnets on the back of the clothespin and glue the animal on the front.
6. Have children make sure their paper is not stuck to the clothespin. Keep papers in place so clothespins can be identified.

Debrief

As the paint dries, let children know that they can use their clothespin magnets to help them respond to what others have told them. They can use it to hold notes of things to do, put it by the door to remember lunch for school, insert a note to thank parents for things they do for them, etc.

Whooo Listens

Materials

- Paper towel tubes, toilet paper tubes, gift wrap tubes—cut approximately 4 in / 10 cm long, one per child
- Construction paper (brown, white, orange, black)
- Scissors
- White school glue
- Crayons
- Tape

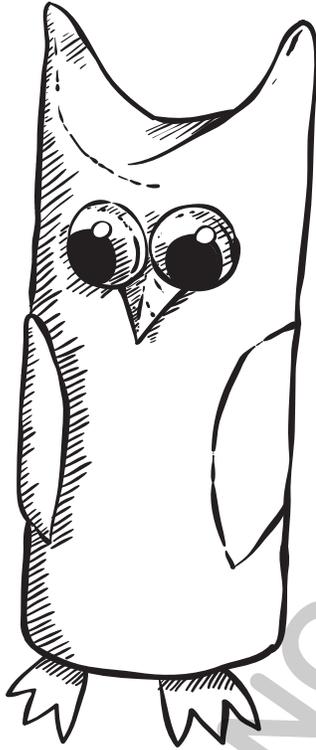
Advance preparation

- Cut brown and white paper approximately 4 x 6 in / 10 x 15 cm, or a size to fit around the tubes.

1. Each child chooses to make a white or brown owl. Give one tube and one brown or white cut construction paper to each child.
2. Demonstrate how to glue paper around outside of tube. A piece of tape may be needed to hold paper together until glue dries.
3. Demonstrate how to fold in the top of the tube on two sides, to form the top of the head and two ears.
4. Invite children to cut eyes, feet, wings, and a beak out of construction paper scraps, and glue on to the owl. Or, they may draw the features instead of cutting and gluing.

Debrief

Explain that owls are known for their sharp and alert hearing. We need to be sharp and alert to hear messages, too.



Name Mosaics

Materials

- Construction paper of different colors
- Background construction paper, one per child
- Pencil
- Glue

Advance preparation

- Cut colored construction paper into small shapes such as triangles or squares
1. Give each child one piece of construction paper for the background. Have them write their name in large letters on the paper.
 2. Demonstrate how to glue shapes into patterns and designs on the paper, being sure to highlight the name.

Variation

Use non-toxic, premixed or powder grout and tiles in various colors and shapes. Put the grout into a jar lid and put colorful tiles or stones into the grout. Wipe off tiles and allow to dry.

Debrief

Our names are important. God called Samuel by name, and God knows our names, too!