

Message Received: Hearing God's Call

# WORSHIP AND DRAMA 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.

## Each Worship session includes:

- **Gathering**—children enter worship by making connections between their lives and the Bible story.
- **Worshipping**—music, a call to worship, Bible memory, and a drama of the Bible story.
- **Responding**—prayer and an offering project.
- **Sending**—parting words and a sending blessing.

You are privileged to work with children. Affirm the children's gifts of creativity. Encourage them to develop healthy relationships with each other. Pray that each child will learn and grow through the daily worship experience.

# SESSION OUTLINE

Each session includes the Bible background, faith focus, and memory verse of the day. Spend time with them to understand the focus of the session. This information is also included in the other leaders' guides so that the activities will reflect the stories and themes presented during the Worship session.

# LEADERS FOR WORSHIP

Several adult leaders are needed for the worship time:

- **Worship leader**—to lead the children in worship.
- **Music leader**—to choose songs and lead singing.
- **Drama director**—to find people to play parts and coordinate the drama, including props.
- **Bible memory leader**—to introduce the Bible memory verses and guide children in learning them.

Depending on people available and their individual skills, some of these leadership roles may be combined.

# MUSIC

VBS music is available on the *Message Received* CD. Children may sing along with some of the songs. Others are offered as listening pieces or music to play during worship and other sessions. Music leaders will want to consider the VBS songs, but also choose songs that are familiar to the group and easy for the group to learn and sing together.

When leading music, consider these suggestions:

- **Sing songs from the CD.**
- **Sing other songs** familiar to the group that go along with the theme.
- **Listen quietly** to the CD.
- **Incorporate movement** along with music.
- **Have children use rhythm** or other instruments.
- **Sing classic worship songs.**
- **Chant song lyrics** rather than singing them.

# BIBLE MEMORY

Each session features a Bible memory verse that fits the Bible story and faith focus of the day. Use the Bible memory poster to help children learn the verses.

The verses are as follows:

- **Day 1**—Luke 11:28b
- **Day 2**—1 Thessalonians 5:11
- **Day 3**—Romans 8:28
- **Day 4**—Mark 1:17b
- **Day 5**—2 Corinthians 5:17a

There are many fun ways to memorize Scripture. Each session includes hand motions to the memory verse for that session. Use these suggestions, your own ideas, or recommendations from the list below to make Bible memory fun and easy.

1. **Play a game using flash cards.** Use one card for each word. Distribute the cards to the children. Have them line up with their cards in the right order.
2. **Place the flash cards on a wall.** Children will remove one word at a time and repeat the entire verse until all the cards are gone.
3. **Create hand motions** to key words.
4. **Say the verse while doing different actions** (running in place, hopping on one foot, stride jumping, marching).
5. **Stand or sit in a circle,** and assign phrases or words for each child or small group to repeat. Continue until everyone knows the verse.
6. **Have children tap a balloon in the air** each time they say a word in the verse.
7. **Invite children to throw a ball to each other** as they say the next word in the verse.
8. **Use rhythm instruments** and chant the text.
9. **Use pictures** to illustrate key words.

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The texts in the materials are from the New Revised Standard Version. You may use a preferred translation.



# OFFERING PROJECT

We have teamed up with Catholic Relief Services, the international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States, to include an offering project suggestion. You may alternately or in addition choose to promote a project serving your local community, through your parish or local Catholic Charities.

To collect a monetary offering, place a large metal bowl on a table at the door of the worship space. Encourage children to put their offering in the bowl as they enter the space, listening carefully to the sound the money makes as it is dropped in the bowl. Have an adult monitor this area.

**Good Resources on the Syrian Refugee Crisis:**  
Read and Act

**What We Are Doing:** CRS' Support of Syrian Refugees  
• [CRS.org/media-center/current-issues/syrian-refugee-crisis](https://www.crs.org/media-center/current-issues/syrian-refugee-crisis)

**Syrian Refugees:** Meet the People Everyone's Talking About • [CRS.org/media-center/syrian-refugees-meet-the-people-everyones-talking-about](https://www.crs.org/media-center/syrian-refugees-meet-the-people-everyones-talking-about)

**What Would You Do?**  
**Syrian Refugees:** Starting Up and Starting Over • [CRS.org/stories/syrian-refugees-starting-up-starting-over](https://www.crs.org/stories/syrian-refugees-starting-up-starting-over)

**Helping Syrian Refugees:**  
By the Numbers • [CRS.org/stories/helping-syrian-refugees-numbers](https://www.crs.org/stories/helping-syrian-refugees-numbers)

## A Message from Catholic Relief Services

As conflict worsens in the Middle East, millions of displaced families need our support. Together with our Caritas partners, Catholic Relief Services is supporting hundreds of thousands of families who have been displaced or forced to flee their homes because of conflicts, civil strife, and economic conditions in the Middle East and other regions.

The war in Syria has entered its sixth year. In Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt, more than 4 million Syrian refugees—mostly women and children—are struggling to get by. At the same time, the economies, social services, and basic infrastructure in these countries are strained to the breaking point. In addition to providing basic services, CRS focuses on education, care, and trauma counseling for Syrian children, many of whom have been out of school for most of their childhoods.

Please pray for the families and children affected by the violence in Syria and Iraq. And please give generously to strengthen our response to the refugee crisis and conflicts in the Middle East.

## What Can Our Vacation Bible School Do?

**1. Pray.** Pray for protection for refugees—particularly those fleeing Northern Africa for Europe—as well as for personal transformation as we face the needs of refugees everywhere. You may choose to use the Prayer for Refugees found here: [CRS.org/resource-center/moment-grace-prayer-refugees](https://www.crs.org/resource-center/moment-grace-prayer-refugees).

**2. Provide the Teachers AND Parents with information about the Syrian refugee crisis.** The more you learn about this crisis, the more you'll understand its underlying causes and can spread the word. Continued warfare in Syria, and violence in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, has contributed to the surge of refugees from those countries. Meanwhile, deteriorating economic conditions in places like Sub-Saharan Africa has led people to Europe in search of a better life. (Find links to more information in the sidebar.)

**3. Donate.** One of the best ways to help is through donating to accredited nonprofit organizations that are responding to the crisis. More than 90 percent of money donated to CRS goes directly to people in need. Consider having a “Change for Children” change drive. The change collection will support CRS’ work worldwide to end hunger and poverty. (See donation information in the sidebar.)

**4. Advocate.** For years, countries in the Middle East have been sheltering the largest number of Syrians and Iraqis. CRS is calling on the United States to continue and expand humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees in these countries, as well as those burdened by this new migration. Most importantly, the United States should lead concerted diplomatic efforts to end the fighting in Syria. But you have a part, too. Read more about how our nation’s leaders can respond to the crisis, and write a letter urging them to take up the cause (see sidebar for details). **SPEAK OUT TO CONGRESS: SUPPORT SYRIAN REFUGEES!**

**5. Use Social Media.** Follow and retweet @CatholicRelief and @CRSNews on Twitter for the latest updates on the #RefugeeCrisis that’s reached Europe.

## Offering visuals

Plan a visual way to recognize the amount of money contributed for the project. Review the amount each day so children are aware of how much they’re giving.

- **Attach letters of the word CALL to the wall**, each letter representing a specific amount of money. See how many times CALL can be spelled around the room.
- **Invite children to trace their hands** onto various colors of paper, and then cut out their handprint. Attach each hand to a poster board to represent a specific amount of money.
- **Invite children to write the name of a friend or relative** they love that they are grateful is safe on a large piece of paper as they donate.
- **Create a paper chain** with each link representing a certain amount of money.
- **Fill a glass jar** with the offering money.
- **Complete a chart or graph** as money is contributed.

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Send donations for the Catholic Relief Services project to:  
Catholic Relief Services  
P.O. Box 17090,  
Baltimore, MD 21297-0303.

Once collected, mail your check or money order with this code in the Memo section: YFYIYFLOWR.

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**Advocacy References for Syrian Refugee Crisis**

**How Can U.S. Leaders Help**  
• [ConfrontGlobalPoverty.org/issues/syrian-migrant-refugees/](http://ConfrontGlobalPoverty.org/issues/syrian-migrant-refugees/)

**Write a Letter** • [Click here](#) or find link on VBS download page

# 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

Primary children (those in early elementary school) 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. Clearly communicate 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 range 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><b>Gather</b> <b>(10 minutes)</b> Small groups meet to begin the session.</p>	<p><b>Worship</b> <b>(25 minutes)</b> Small groups converge for worship. A drama presents the Bible story.</p>	<p><b>Bible/Creative/ Active Response</b> <b>(30 minutes each)</b> Small groups rotate to participate in three stations each day. Activities focus on Bible story themes. Creative Response time includes a snack.</p>	<p><b>Send</b> <b>(10 minutes)</b> 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

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE



## 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.

### Materials

- Bible
- Bible memory poster
- *Message Received* CD
- Items to create sounds during Gathering

### Advance preparation

- Pray for the leaders and the children who will participate in Bible school today.
- Read 1 Samuel 3:1-21. Read over the worship plan, and practice songs and readings.
- Plan how to teach the memory verse (see p. 3).
- Learn about the offering project (see p. 4–5) and create visuals for keeping track of giving.
- Gather props and visuals needed for worship and the drama.
- Plan which sounds will be made during Gathering #3.

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.

# WORSHIP PLAN

## Gathering

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Play the *Message Received* CD as children enter the worship space.

1. **Welcome children as they enter.** Cup your hand behind your ear and say, "Listen, do you hear God calling?" Invite children to make the same motion and repeat the question to others.
2. **Introduce today's theme:** "God calls us to listen and respond." Share that throughout vacation Bible school, the children will hear five stories of people God called, and through whom God used to love the world and share God's plan.

We too, can listen and respond when God calls us. Sometimes listening is easy, and sometimes it is very hard!

3. **Invite children to close their eyes and listen to sounds.** Create a variety of sounds and after each one, invite children to share what they heard. Was it easy or difficult to tell what some of the sounds were?

Options include: ring a bell, hit a spoon against a kettle, whistle, march or walk in place, clap hands, start an electric drill, and tear a piece of paper.

4. **Pray an opening prayer.** Begin with the sign of the cross: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The children respond: "Amen."

Children will watch as you do the motions the first time, then join in the second time.

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God (*look up*),  
thank you (*hand over heart and then extended outward*)  
that you call us (*both hands to mouth to make megaphone*).  
You call us to listen (*cup hand behind ear*)  
and respond (*touch hand to mouth*).  
Thank you for ears to hear you (*point to ears*)  
and a mind to choose you (*point to head*).  
Amen.

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## Worshipping

1. **Lead the call to worship.** Share that one way we can hear God calling us is through worship. Invite children to say, “God calls us!” when prompted during the call to worship. Repeat the phrase several times with the children before you begin.

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Leader: God calls you and me to listen and respond.  
Response: God calls us!  
Leader: Sometimes it’s hard to listen because there are so many voices around us. But still,  
Response: God calls us!  
Leader: We sometimes don’t know how to listen to God, but God still speaks and  
Response: God calls us!  
Leader: How exciting that God’s love and plan is alive today and that  
Response: God calls us!

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2. **Sing or listen to songs** from the *Message Received* CD. Here are suggestions:
  - “All That God Wants You to Be” (theme song)
  - “Calling Us by Name” (theme song)
  - “We Are Children of God”
  - “Open My Eyes”
  - “Send Me”
3. **Introduce the memory verse.** Read it from the Bible memory poster.

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

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Invite children to repeat it and add motions.

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Blessed rather (*cross arms over chest*)  
are those (*hold palms out toward others*)  
who hear (*cup hand behind ear*)  
the word of God (*cup hands in front of body, as if an open book*)  
and obey it (*nod*)!

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4. **Open your Bible to 1 Samuel 3:1-21** and explain that today’s story is found in 1 Samuel, a book in the Old Testament. It contains stories about God’s people and how God worked through people, called prophets, to show and explain God’s way.  
Explain that today’s story is about a boy named Samuel. Because Samuel’s mother dedicated him to God when he was very young, he lived with the priest, Eli, in the temple. Together, they served God.  
Add that in the story today, Samuel listened to God calling him and then responded.
5. **Watch the drama** “Listen, God Is Calling!,” pages 30–31.

## Responding

1. **Point out to the children** that at first Samuel did not recognize that it was God talking to him. But another person, Eli, helped him to hear God's voice. After he heard God's voice, Samuel responded to God.
2. **Pray:** *Thank you, God, for everyone at Bible school today. We want to hear what you have to say to us. Help us to listen carefully. Amen.*
3. **Introduce the offering project.** Offering projects and visuals are suggested on pages 4–5. Invite children to share generously with others and bring a money gift each day of Bible school. Let the children know that a large metal bowl will be inside the entrance of the room and as they enter each day, they can listen to the sound their money makes as it hits the sides of the bowl. Explain the visual and how the offering amount will be recorded.

## Sending

1. **Go over the schedule.** Explain that the children will meet with other Bible school leaders to explore more activities related to the Bible story and drama.
2. **Give a sending blessing:** “May we have open ears and hearts as we listen for the voice of God today.”
3. **Play the *Message Received* CD** as children leave the worship space. Theme songs “All That God Wants You to Be” and “Calling Us by Name” are good sending songs.

# BIBLE DRAMAS

## Introduction

Dramas are an important part of the worship experience of *Message Received: Hearing God's Call*. The dramas portray the Bible stories and invite children to learn about how God calls people.

## Characters

Each drama includes a list of characters. Try to recruit mature individuals who can add strength to the dramas, as well as young people and children who can learn from the more experienced actors. Working with several families would be ideal for having mixed ages, scheduling rehearsal time, and encouraging memorization at home.

- **Day 1**—Samuel, Eli, God, Narrator
- **Day 2**—Queen Esther, Sarah, Mordecai, Narrator
- **Day 3**—Mary, Elizabeth, Angel
- **Day 4**—Simon, Andrew, Jesus, James, John
- **Day 5**—Paul, Silas, Lydia

## Props

Each drama includes a list of simple props. Use items from this list, or modify according to the available space and resources.

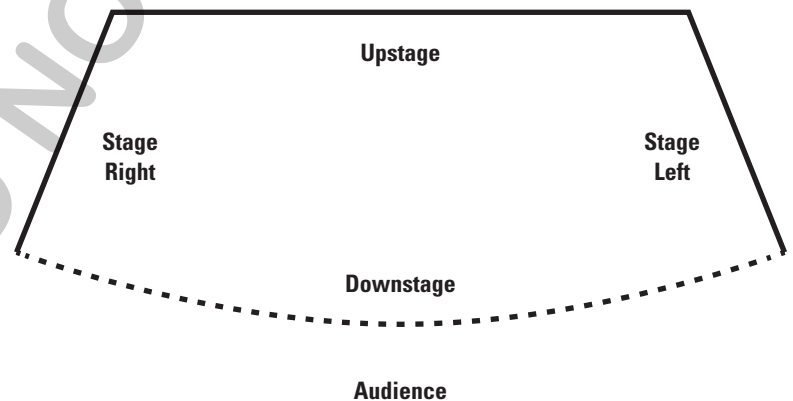
## Rehearsals

Create a rehearsal schedule and make sure that the actors can attend. Distribute scripts several weeks in advance and encourage actors to become familiar with their lines. Make it clear whether or not actors are to memorize the scripts. If so, give memorization goal dates. If memorizing seems too daunting, suggest that actors write their lines on small cue cards to carry with them.

Start by having actors read through the drama without moving around to allow them to get familiar with their lines. During the second read-through, begin to work with the actors on their movements and placements. Instruct them to move as their lines suggest. During the third read-through, give actors more concrete directions for movements. At the end of each rehearsal, take a moment or two to make helpful comments. Make sure each person writes down your comments to themselves on the script.

There may be times when you wish to go through only part of a skit. Be clear in your instructions and considerate of those with smaller parts. It may be possible to practice their scenes first and allow them to leave.

Above all, have fun! The dramas are written to be enjoyed by actors and audience alike. When the characters are well prepared and rehearsals are fun, the stories will come to life and the audience will get the message.



SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

## Day 1

# LISTEN, GOD IS CALLING!

## Today's Bible experience

1 Samuel 3:1-21

MESSAGE  
RECEIVED

HEARING GOD'S CALL

## 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.

## Characters

- Samuel
- Eli
- God (offstage)
- Narrator

## Props and costumes

- Sleeping mats, blankets, pillows
- Chairs with blankets draped over them to portray a wall
- Walking cane
- “Bible times” clothing for Samuel and Eli

## Preparation

Sleeping mats, blankets, and pillows are on the floor, one set on stage right and the other on stage left. Place chairs with blanket draped over them in the middle to symbolize a wall between the bedrooms.

# LISTEN, GOD IS CALLING!

*(Narrator stands downstage. Eli stands behind the sleeping mat stage left, and Samuel lies on the sleeping mat stage right.)*

**Narrator:** Eli was a priest who served the Lord in the temple, the house of God. *(Extend hand towards Eli.)* A few years before ago, a woman named Hannah presented her son, Samuel, to the Lord for service in the temple. *(Extend hand towards Samuel.)* Hannah had prayed and prayed for a child and God blessed her with Samuel. Hannah wanted Samuel to serve God in the temple, too.

*(Narrator pauses, steps forward, and points to Eli to signify a new story. Eli comes forward hunched over with a walking cane. He is squinting. Then he lies down on the sleeping mat. Narrator moves to the very edge of stage left, away from the action.)*

**God:** *(offstage, speaking slowly and deliberately)* Samuel! Samuel!

**Samuel:** *(sits up abruptly)* Here I am! *(He gets up and runs around the wall to Eli's room.)* Here I am. You called me?

**Eli:** No, I did not call you. Go back to bed. *(He gestures toward Samuel's bed. Samuel walks back to his room and lies down.)*

**God:** *(offstage)* Samuel! Samuel!

**Samuel:** *(gets up and quickly goes to Eli again)* Here I am. You called me again.

**Eli:** *(looks confused, shakes his head)* No, I didn't call you. Go back to bed again. *(Samuel looks confused and wanders back to his bed. He pauses, throw his hand up in the air, and shrugs. Then he lies down.)*

**God:** *(offstage)* Samuel! Samuel!

**Samuel:** *(Samuel gets up, looks around, and walks slowly back to Eli.)* I'm here. You called me again.

**Eli:** *(stands up, is confused, looks Samuel up and down slowly, then assumes an "Aha!" expression)* I know what is happening! *(smiles, throws hands up into the air, speaks excitedly)* Go back to bed. And if you hear your name again say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

*(Samuel walks thoughtfully back to bed, a curious expression on his face.)*

**God:** *(offstage)* Samuel! Samuel!

**Samuel:** *(looks up and into the distance, listens intently)* Speak, for your servant is listening.



**God:** *(offstage)* I am about to do something with Eli and his family. I have told him that I will punish them because his sons do not follow me. Eli did not stop them.

*(Samuel stands, showing emotions of fear and questioning. He paces back and forth a few times, then goes back to bed.)*

**Narrator:** Samuel thought about the voice of God. He wasn't sure what to do. But in the morning he opened the temple doors as he did other mornings.

*(Samuel stands, steps forward, and mimes opening large doors. Eli wakes up, stretches, and folds his bed linens.)*

**Eli:** *(loudly calls out)* Samuel!

*(Samuel looks up to God, then shakes head "no" to indicate that it is not God who is speaking. He goes to Eli's room.)*

**Eli:** Samuel. What did God tell you? Make sure you tell me.

*(Samuel looks afraid and uncertain, pauses a long time.)*

**Narrator:** Samuel told Eli everything God said. He did not keep anything from him.

*(Samuel acts like he is explaining things to Eli while Narrator speaks. Eli and Samuel freeze in position with heads down until end.)*

**Narrator:** The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up. And people knew that he was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.