Preschool–Grade 6

God Calls Samuel

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Listen to God and obey Him. God speaks through His Word, and kids can serve God now, not only when they grow up.
Bible passage: 1 Samuel 3. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth." *1 Samuel 3:10 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Point to the Caller (5–10 minutes)

One child stands in the middle of the room with eyes closed. The other kids stand around in a big circle. Point to one child in the circle, who calls the middle child's name one time. The middle child points to where the call came from, then opens their eyes to see if they were right. Play several rounds. Make it harder: let the whole class hum softly while the caller calls. Ask: *What made it harder to hear? What makes it hard to listen to God?* Say: "Today we'll meet a boy who heard his name called four times in one night."

2. Bible story: Speak, LORD (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to 1 Samuel 3. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

A boy who served God. Hannah had prayed for a son. When the LORD gave her Samuel, she brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh and **lent** him to the LORD (gave him to serve God, 1 Samuel 1:24–28). **Look up 1 Samuel 3:1.** Samuel **ministered** unto the LORD before Eli: he served God by helping Eli the priest. The word of the LORD was **precious** (rare) in those days, and there was **no open vision**: God was not often showing Himself to people.

The night God called. Eli was old, and his eyes began to **wax dim** (grow weak), so that he could not see (3:2). **Look up 1 Samuel 3:3. Ere the lamp of God went out** means "before the lamp went out." The lamp in God's house was kept burning from evening to morning (Exodus 27:21), so it was still night. Samuel was lying down to sleep in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was.

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Three times to Eli. The LORD called Samuel, and he answered, "Here am I." He ran to Eli: "Here am I; for thou calledst me." Eli said, "I called not; lie down again" (3:4–5). It happened again, and Eli said, "I called not, my son; lie down again" (3:6). **Look up 1 Samuel 3:7.** Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD was not yet **revealed** (shown) to him. God had never spoken to him before. The LORD called the third time, and Samuel went to Eli again. Then Eli **perceived** (understood) that the LORD had called the child (3:8).

"Speak; for thy servant heareth." Look up 1 Samuel 3:9. Eli told Samuel exactly what to say. **Look up 1 Samuel 3:10.** The LORD came, and stood, and called as before, "Samuel, Samuel," and Samuel answered, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." **Heareth** means "is listening."

A hard message. God told Samuel He would do a thing in Israel that would make the ears of everyone who heard it **tingle** (3:11). God said He would judge Eli's house (his family), because Eli's sons made themselves **vile** (did very wicked things), and Eli **restrained them not** (did not stop them) (3:12–14). In the morning Samuel opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and he was afraid to tell Eli (3:15). **Look up 1 Samuel 3:18.** Samuel told him **every whit** (every bit) and hid nothing. Eli said, "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good."

Samuel grows up. Look up 1 Samuel 3:19. The LORD was with Samuel and let none of his words **fall to the ground**: everything God gave Samuel to say came true. All Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba (from the north end of the land to the south end), knew Samuel was a prophet of the LORD (3:20). And the LORD kept showing Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by His word (3:21).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Samuel got up and went to Eli three times in one night (3:4–8). What does that show about the kind of helper he was?
2. Samuel did not know it was God at first (3:7). Who helped him? Who helps you learn to listen to God?
3. Samuel said, "Speak; for thy servant heareth" (3:10). Why is listening the first step to obeying?
4. Samuel was afraid to tell Eli, but he told him every whit (3:15–18). Why is it right to tell the truth even when it's hard?
5. God spoke to Samuel while he was still a child (3:1, 3:10). What can kids do to serve God right now?

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Recall questions

1. Where was Samuel lying down to sleep? *(In the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, 1 Samuel 3:3)*
2. How many times did the LORD call before Samuel answered Him? *(Three times; Samuel answered the fourth time, 3:4–10)*
3. What did Eli say when Samuel told him everything? *("It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good," 3:18)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **as at other times** means "like before," **thy servant** means "me, Your servant," and **heareth** means "is listening." Read the verse on the board together. Erase one word and read it again. Keep erasing one word at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "God called Samuel by name, and Samuel answered, 'Speak; for thy servant heareth.' God speaks to us in His Word, and He calls each of us to come to Him. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: before you read your Bible or hear it at church, pray, "Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth." Then do one thing it says.

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6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. 1 Samuel 1:20: Who named Samuel? *(Hannah, his mother)*
2. 1 Samuel 3:2: What was happening to Eli's eyes? *(They began to wax dim, so that he could not see)*
3. 1 Samuel 3:3: Where was the ark of God? *(In the temple of the LORD, where Samuel lay down to sleep)*
4. 1 Samuel 3:4: What did Samuel answer the first time? *("Here am I")*
5. 1 Samuel 3:8: What did Eli perceive? *(That the LORD had called the child)*
6. 1 Samuel 3:15: What did Samuel open in the morning? *(The doors of the house of the LORD)*
7. 1 Samuel 3:19: Who was with Samuel as he grew? *(The LORD)*
8. 1 Samuel 3:20: What did all Israel know about Samuel? *(That he was established to be a prophet of the LORD)*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for calling us and speaking to us in Your Word. Help us listen like Samuel, obey what You say, and tell the truth even when it's hard. Thank You that we can serve You right now. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks why God called more than once: the Bible doesn't say why. Samuel did not yet know the LORD (3:7), and God kept calling until Samuel answered Him (3:10).
Background for the teacher: 1 Samuel 2:12–17 and 2:22–25 tell what Eli's sons did. They were priests, but they took the people's offerings for themselves and did other wicked things, and when Eli spoke to them, they would not listen. The lesson does not tell these verses. If a child asks, answer simply and gently: they did very wrong things in God's house, and Eli did not stop them (3:13). God is holy, and He is also kind: He kept speaking to His people through Samuel (3:21).

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