



Session 10

Fall 2015

Early Childhood

# The boy Samuel

1 SAMUEL 1-3

## prepare

### PRAYER

*God, you speak in unexpected ways. Quiet my heart and mind so that I can recognize your voice. Amen.*

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

To hear about people who listened to God

### STORY SUMMARY

Samuel was given to the service of God by his mother, and raised in the temple by the priest, Eli. One night young Samuel thought Eli was calling him, but it was God. God gave him a message for Eli. Samuel became a great prophet in Israel.



### teaching tips for early childhood

Samuel responded to God's calling in the night by saying, "Here I am." In this session the children will learn the Hebrew word *hineni*, which means "Here I am." They will repeat the word as part of the Bible story and also during Spiritual practice.

Today's session includes activities about hearing and listening. This may cause difficulties if you have children with hearing impairments in your group. Emphasize that *hearing* and *listening* also mean paying attention. People who can't hear with their ears pay attention in other ways. In activities such as the Peace notes listening game, use touch and gestures to give directions to a child with hearing impairment.

Decide which Explore activities you will do, and check Supplies and To do throughout the session to see what needs to be prepared. Go to [www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras](http://www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras) to find tips for working with younger children.

## Judgment and hope

The themes of judgment and hope are intertwined in this story about the birth and rearing of the prophet Samuel. Hannah is childless in a culture that judges a woman to be inadequate if she cannot produce offspring; she is treated with contempt by a rival wife. Still, Hannah persists in hope. She goes to the Shiloh sanctuary and prays that God will grant her a son, vowing to dedicate him to God. Initially the priest Eli judges Hannah to be a drunken woman when he finds her in fervent prayer. But after hearing her story, Eli speaks a word of hope that God will grant Hannah's petition. After Hannah returns home, God remembers her and Samuel is born. In fulfillment of her vow, Hannah takes Samuel to the temple in Shiloh and leaves him with Eli. At the beginning of chapter 2, Hannah praises God in joyful song as the one who judges and brings hope, who weighs all actions, who "makes poor and makes rich," who exalts and brings low.

Chapter 2 of 1 Samuel continues to alternate between judgment and hope by interspersing three reports of Eli's worthless sons with two descriptions of Samuel's obedient service at the Shiloh temple. The account of the sons, Hophni and Phinehas, treating the offering of the Lord with contempt (2:12-17) is juxtaposed with a description of Samuel's faithful service and how he "grew up in the presence of the Lord" (2:21). The story of Eli confronting his sons for their sexual immorality and warning them of God's judgment (2:22-25) is followed by the hope-filled summation that "the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with the people" (2:26).

Chapter 2 ends with the harsh prophecy that Eli's two sons will both die on the same day because of their wickedness. This sets the stage for God's first revelation to Samuel, recounted in chapter 3.

## God calls Samuel

One night in the Shiloh temple, just before dawn, Samuel hears a voice calling him. He does not understand that it is God until the elderly priest Eli gently instructs him



how to respond. This story is full of poignant connections and contrasts: Eli's failing eyesight mirrors the lack of vision in the society as a whole (3:2-3); the boy Samuel sleeps within the inner sanctum, but doesn't yet "know the Lord" (3:7); Eli is blind, yet he perceives that it is God talking to the child. When Samuel finally is able to acknowledge hearing the Lord, God confirms the harsh word of judgment on Eli's sons.

Although this chapter begins with the bleak report that "the word of the Lord was rare in those days" (3:1), the story ends with the declaration that Samuel has been established as a prophet of the Lord and that everyone knows it. The phrase "from Dan to Beer-sheba" (3:30) describes the northernmost and southernmost boundaries of ancient Israel. Today we might say "from New York to L.A." or "from Vancouver to Nova Scotia."

The specific message Samuel hears is one of devastating judgment for Eli and his family, but the larger message for the nation of Israel is one of hope, for God's word has been revealed to a prophet, and the Lord is with him.

## A song of praise

Hannah's song praises a God who "will guard the feet of his faithful ones" but "cut off [the wicked] in darkness" (2:9). So these three chapters describe the rise of Samuel and the diminishment of Eli and his sons. In the midst of social and religious crisis, God calls forth new leadership in Samuel. Samuel will play a number of roles in this transitional time. He begins as an apprentice-priest to Eli, but also acts as a prophet and judge. He is the last of the judges, faithfully judging Israel "all the days of his life" (1 Samuel 7:15). But Samuel is also a "king-maker" who, at the Lord's bidding, will anoint the first two kings of ancient Israel.

# gather

## supplies

- *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*
- CD player

## resource pack

- Bible memory poster (Psalm 25)

## BUILD COMMUNITY

Welcome the children warmly. Sing “Called You by Name” from the *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*, track 7. Lyrics are at the back of this guide. As you sing, clap and fill in the children’s names as indicated in the lyrics.

## WORSHIP TOGETHER

Sing “Be Still and Know” from the *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*, track 4. Lyrics are at the back of this guide.

## SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

One way to develop a relationship with God is to “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). Using a whispering voice, ask children to be very still and quiet so they can listen to God. Close your eyes. Pray:

**God, you are with us. We are listening to you.** (*Pause for ten to fifteen seconds of silence.*) Amen.

### teaching tip

Don’t be concerned if children are moving around or making noise during spiritual practice. This is normal, especially if they’ve never experienced an activity like this. Continue in a prayerful way, perhaps with your eyes closed, despite giggles or comments from the children. This is a model for how to be still and focus on God.

## media connections

- *The Listening Walk* by Paul Showers
- *God’s Quiet Things* by Nancy Sweetland
- *The Story of the Call of Samuel: From 1 Samuel 3:1–10* by Bryn J. Brock
- Internet search for children’s song “Samuel” by Diana Dow

### Bible memory

Say the memory verse several times with motions. Refer to the Bible memory poster as needed.

**Make me to know your ways**  
(*touch finger to head*),  
**O Lord** (*hold hands upward*);  
**teach me** (*pretend to open a book*)  
**your paths** (*walk in place*).  
—Psalm 25:4

# experience

## SHARE THE STORY

Gather the group in a circle for the Bible story. Open the Bible to 1 Samuel 1 and show the words to the children. Show the *Hineni* sign from page 90 in this guide. Explain that it is a Hebrew word. Let children trace the letters from right to left. The boy Samuel spoke this language. (The word is *hineni*, pronounced “hih-nen’-ee,” means “Here I am.”) Have the group say the word with you several times.

The children will help tell the story by saying, “*Hineni*, here I am,” every time you hold up the *Hineni* sign. Practice doing this once or twice. Then tell the story, which is found on the back of the story picture in the resource pack.

## WONDER AND REFLECT

Think about the following wondering questions. Children may choose to share their thoughts aloud.

- I wonder how Samuel felt when he woke up and heard the voice calling his name.
- I wonder how Eli knew it was God talking to Samuel.
- Imagine God calling your name.
- Eli helped Samuel learn about God. I wonder who helps you learn about God.

## PEACE NOTES

In the Bible story, both Samuel and Eli listened to each other and helped each other learn about God. Listening to and learning from others helps develop peaceful relationships.

Play a listening friendship game. The leader whispers a movement, such as “stand on one foot” or “touch your nose.” The rest of the group does the movement. Encourage children to listen carefully so they can hear their friend’s instructions. Make sure each child has an opportunity to whisper a movement, if desired. End the game by saying, “Hold hands in a circle.”

### teaching tip

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew. Hebrew is read from right to left. While young children do not need a formal Hebrew lesson, incorporating the word *hineni* is a subtle way to introduce young children to the language of the Bible. Preschoolers often enjoy trying new words and sounds. Do it in a fun way to let them enjoy a new word.



## The boy Samuel

### 1 Samuel 1–3

### supplies

- Bible

### storytelling props

- *Hineni* sign (from Additional resources)

### resource pack

- Story picture

### to do

- Copy the *Hineni* sign from page 90 in this guide.

## CREATE

Give each child a handful of stick pretzels or long, thin carrot slices. The child can lay them on a paper towel in shapes of their choosing to create two “rooms,” one for Samuel and one for Eli. Make a path of raisins between the two “rooms” to show Samuel’s walk. Then enjoy eating the snack together. (Substitute other snack foods if the suggested items don’t work for your group.)

### supplies

- Pretzel sticks or carrot slices
- Paper towels
- Raisins

### other ideas

- Trace your hand on pieces of paper, one per child. Trace the child’s hand inside your handprint to represent adults and children learning together. Color the handprints.
- Sit on the floor in a circle. Give a ball to one child. Whisper someone’s name in that child’s ear. The child holding the ball rolls it to the named child.

## MOVE

Play an echo story game. Position half the children on one side of the room; the other children are on the opposite side. Have everyone crouch down. Group one (including adult) stands, says the first sentence using a soft voice, and then crouches down again. Group two should then stand and say the same words, trying to match the volume used by group one. Continue in this fashion, varying the volume of each spoken line.

*(Soft) Are you listening? Are you listening?*

*(Loud) Do you hear? Do you hear?*

*(Soft) God’s voice is calling. God’s voice is calling.*

*(Loud) Here am I. Here am I.*

*Option: Sing the words to the tune of “Are You Sleeping?”*



## RETELL

Give each child an Early Childhood leaflet, open to page 3. How many times did Samuel get up and go to Eli? Help the children count the paths. Then they can trace the paths with a pencil or finger, and color the footprints. If there is additional time, provide simple costumes and towels (sleeping mats) so children can act out the story.

### supplies

- Early Childhood leaflets
- Pencils
- Crayons or markers
- Towels or fabric for Bible-times costumes (optional)
- Towels or blankets for sleeping mats (optional)

## DISCOVER

Give each child an Early Childhood leaflet, open to page 2. Look at the pictures of things that make sounds. Can the children make any of those sounds? Get out a selection of items that make noise, such as paper bags to crumple, a container with beans to shake, a tambourine, metal spoons to tap together or on the table. Let the children experiment with the sounds. Sing the Song of sounds from page 90.

### supplies

- Early Childhood leaflets
- Items that make sounds (paper bags, container with rice or beans, rhythm instruments, metal spoons)
- Song of sounds (from Additional resources)

# bless

## PRAY

Gather the group. Pray:

**God, you are with us. Help us listen to you each day. Amen.**

### looking ahead

Save the *Hineni* sign for use in session 11.

## SEND

Send the children with these words from Isaiah 43:1b:

**God says, "I have called you by name, you are mine."**

Make sure to send leaflets home with the children.

Let families know that there is a free download of the song "Called You by Name" on the Shine website ([www.ShineCurriculum.com/Music](http://www.ShineCurriculum.com/Music)). Instructions for downloading the free song are on the back of the Early Childhood leaflet.

### leader's closing prayer

It can be difficult to hear God's voice in the midst of many responsibilities and tasks. Sometimes we need others to gently remind us of God's involvement in our lives. *(Spend several moments in silence.)*

*God, sometimes I am caught off guard when I hear a new call, a new invitation from you. Give me attentive ears and a responsive heart. Amen.*

## supplies

- Early Childhood leaflets

*Children today don't encounter silence much on their own. My Early Childhood group makes time for silence each time we are together. They welcome this time so much that if it happens a bit later than usual, a child will ask, "Aren't we going to make silence today?"*

—Carol Vagnini  
Wooster, Ohio

