

Message Received: Hearing God's Call

WORSHIP AND DRAMA GUIDE



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To order or request information, please call 1-844-727-8672 or visit GrowingUpCatholicVBS.com.

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.
- **Worshiping**—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.

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



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)

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.

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.

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.

Advocacy References for Syrian Refugee Crisis

How Can U.S. Leaders Help
• 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>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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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!

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.

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

Invite children to repeat it and add motions.

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*)!

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.

Day 2

ESTHER

Biblical background

The book of Esther is a fascinating narrative. It includes royalty, grand banquets, a plot to kill, and a plan to save a group of people. Esther has been raised by her relative, Mordecai, who urges her to enter a contest to choose a new queen. Esther is chosen.

Haman, a leading official close to King Ahasuerus (ay-HAS-eeoo-EHR-uhs), wants people to respect him and bow before him. Mordecai, however, will not bow to Haman. This enrages the official, and he plots to have Mordecai killed, as well as all of his people, the Jews.

Queen Esther has not told anyone about her Jewish heritage, but Mordecai pleads with her to go before King Ahasuerus and ask him to save her people, the Jews. Queen Esther, however, knows that she can only appear before the king if summoned, or she may lose her life.

In today's text, Mordecai is urging Queen Esther to do something on behalf of her people—to dare to request an audience with the king. "Who knows?" he says. "Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." Queen Esther responds that she will go to the king, but requests that every Jewish person fast for three days on her behalf.

The story has a happy ending for Queen Esther. She is welcomed by King Ahasuerus, who is appalled that someone wants to kill the queen and her people. The king orders Haman to be killed instead.

This is an unusual story of call. Esther has to make difficult choices in which she sacrifices her own needs for the needs of the greater community. The story provides a picture of God working through circumstances and people to save others.

Children will be excited by this story about a queen, but they will come to understand that Queen Esther's life was not an easy one. She was called to do a difficult task and responded in a powerful way to save her people.

Materials

- Bible
- Bible memory poster
- *Message Received* CD
- Large metal bowl for the offering

Advance preparation

- Pray for the leaders and the children who will participate in Bible school today.
- Read Esther 4 and focus on verses 13-17. Read over the worship plan, and practice songs and readings.
- Plan how to teach the memory verse (see p. 3).
- Prepare for the offering by setting a large metal bowl on a table inside the entrance of the worship space.
- Ask one or two children to help with the offering dedication by taking the bowl from the back of the room to the front at the designated time.
- Gather props and visuals needed for worship and the drama.

MESSAGE
RECEIVED

HEARING GOD'S CALL

Today's Bible experience

Esther 4:13-17

Summary

Esther is called to go before the king to deliver a message that might save her people. In turn, Esther asks the community to fast and pray as she prepares for this responsibility.

Bible memory

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

—1 Thessalonians 5:11

Faith focus

God calls us to work together for what is right.

WORSHIP PLAN

Gathering

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

- 1. Welcome children as they enter**, especially those attending the first time. Invite children to put any offerings in the large metal bowl and to listen for the sound the money makes as it hits the side of the bowl.
- 2. As children gather, 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.
- 3. Introduce today’s theme:** “God calls us to work together for what is right.” Share that throughout vacation Bible school, the children will hear stories of people God called, and through whom God used to love the world and share God’s plan. Today’s story is about someone who responded to God’s call to do that right thing.
- 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.

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.

Worshipping

1. **Lead the call to worship.** Share that God calls us to work together for what is right. 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.

Leader: God calls us to work together for what is right.
Response: God calls us!
Leader: Sometimes it’s hard to do the right thing, but we still follow God.
Response: God calls us!
Leader: We are blessed when we listen to God.
Response: God calls us!
Leader: God loves us and helps us to do what is right.
Response: God calls us!

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)
 - “Wherever Love Is”
 - “Send Me”
3. **Introduce the memory verse.** Read it from the Bible memory poster.

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing. —1 Thessalonians 5:11

Invite children to repeat it and add motions.

Therefore (*open hands in front of body*)
encourage one another (*pat the person’s shoulder next to you*)
and build up each other (*place one fist over another as if building something*),
as indeed you are doing (*open hands in front of body*).

4. **Open your Bible to Esther 4:13-17** and explain that today’s story is found in the Old Testament, just like yesterday’s story. Remind the children that yesterday they heard about Samuel, a young boy who listened and responded to God.
Explain that today’s story is found in the book of Esther and is about someone who had courage and worked with others for what was right. Share that Queen Esther followed God. The king chose her to be a queen because she was beautiful, but he did not know that her family worshiped God.
5. **Watch the drama** “Working Together for What Is Right,” pages 34–35.

Responding

1. **Point out to the children** that God called Esther through another person, her relative Mordecai, to save her people. Then, Esther and Mordecai worked together with other people to fast and pray. Invite children to think about what right things God is calling them to do.
2. **Pray:** *Thank you, God, for everyone attending Bible school today, including the children, the leaders, and the helpers. Help all of us hear your call to do what is right. Amen.*
3. **Bless the offering.** Remind children that as they enter the worship space, they may put their offering into the large bowl. Listen to the sound the money makes as it is put into the bowl.

Remind the children about the offering project and the visuals that report how much has been given so far. Thank the children for sharing generously with others.

Take time each day to bless and dedicate the offering to God. Invite the designated children to bring the bowl to the front of the room and hold it up high.

Pray: Thank you, God, for this offering today. Bless all who give and all who will receive. Help all of us to hear your call. Amen.

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.

Day 3

MARY

Biblical background

“Here I am.” This is Mary’s simple response to a call that will change not only her life, but the entire world. The angel’s message tells her that she will be the mother of God’s son, Jesus. Mary’s courageous response puts her at great risk because she is not yet married. Her fiancé, Joseph, could respond to the pregnancy by writing Mary off as unmarriageable. Instead, he also takes a risk after receiving a visit from an angel in a dream. “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife,” the angel tells him, “for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:20).

Mary is an ordinary young woman who is favored by God and asked to do something extraordinary. She not only accepts the task, but thanks and praises God for it! “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant” (Luke 1:46-48). Mary acknowledges the situation with wonder and joy. She is ready to trust God’s plan.

We know that Mary is very young in this story. Though we don’t know her exact age, young women living at that time could be married when in their early teens. Children will be interested to know that a person not much older than themselves said yes to God’s call and had a huge impact on the world. God does not just use grown-ups who are smart and confident. God can use people of any age if they trust in God’s plan.

Materials

- Bible
- Bible memory poster
- *Message Received* CD
- Large metal bowl for the offering

Advance preparation

- Pray for the leaders and the children who will participate in Bible school today.
- Read Luke 1:26-56. Read over the worship plan, and practice songs and readings.
- Plan how to teach the memory verse (see p. 3).
- Prepare for the offering by setting a large metal bowl on the table inside the entrance of the worship space.
- Create and update visuals for keeping track of offering giving (see p. 5).
- Ask one or two children to help with the offering dedication by taking the bowl from the back of the room to the front at the designated time.
- Gather props and visuals needed for worship and the drama.

MESSAGE
RECEIVED

HEARING GOD'S CALL

Today’s Bible experience

Luke 1:26-56

Summary

The angel Gabriel visits Mary to tell her that she is favored of God and will have a baby, Jesus. Mary responds to this call with joy and trust in God’s plan.

Bible memory

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.
—Romans 8:28

Faith focus

We are called to trust God’s plan.

WORSHIP PLAN

Gathering

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

1. **Welcome children as they enter**, especially those attending for the first time. Invite children to put any offering in the large metal bowl and to listen for the sound the money makes as it hits the side of the bowl.
2. **As children gather, 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.
3. **Introduce today’s theme:** “We are called to trust God’s plan.” Share that throughout vacation Bible school, the children will hear stories of people God called, and through whom God used to love the world and share God’s plan. Today’s story is about someone who trusted God’s plan when she was called.
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.

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.

Worshipping

1. **Lead the call to worship.** Share that when God calls us to do something, we need to trust God's plan. 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.

Leader: We are called to trust God's plan.
Response: God calls us!
Leader: Sometimes it's hard to trust because we don't know what will happen.
Response: God calls us!
Leader: Sometimes we are afraid of trusting God or people that God has placed in our lives.
Response: God calls us!
Leader: How exciting that God has a plan for us.
Response: God calls us!

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)
 - "Woman of God"
 - "Wherever Love Is"
3. **Teach the Hail Mary.** Explain that the Hail Mary is a special prayer we say to Mary, asking her to pray for us. Say the prayer first and then introduce hand motions.

Hail Mary, (*raise both hands upward, palms facing up*)
Full of grace, (*cover heart with both hands*)
The Lord is with you. (*make a large hugging motion*)
Blessed are you among women, (*sweep arm, pointing to others*)
And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus (*fold arms in cradle position*)
Holy Mary, (*raise both hands upward, palms facing up*)
Mother of God, (*circle arms downward slowly*)
Pray for us sinners, (*fold hands near your heart*)
Now (*point to wrist*)
And at the hour of our death, (*cross arms, then hinge one arm up so the hand is up and the elbow is still resting on the other hand*)
Amen. (*fold hands near your heart*)

4. **Introduce the memory verse.** Read it from the Bible memory poster.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. —Romans 8:28

Invite children to repeat it and add motions.

We know that (*touch finger to head several times*)
all things (*extend hands outward in a circle, as if encompassing all*)
work together for good (*clasp hands right over left then left over right*)
for those who love God (*cross hands over chest, then point upward*),
who are called (*cup hand behind ear*)
according to his purpose (*start with hands touching in prayer style, take
apart like playing an accordion, then point up for his purpose*).

5. **Open your Bible to Luke 1:26-56** and explain that today's story is found in the New Testament. This book of the Bible was written by Luke, a doctor. The previous Bible school stories of Samuel and Esther are in the Old Testament.

Explain that today's story is about a young girl who loved God. Mary was called to be the mother of God's son, Jesus. She had to trust God's plan, and she responded to God's plan with a song!

6. **Watch the drama** "She Trusted God's Plan," pages 38–39.

Responding

1. **Point out to the children** that Mary was young but was called to a huge role. She really had to trust God to make sure that everything was going to be fine. Invite children to think about what it means to trust God, even when we don't know what will happen.
2. **Pray:** *Thank you, God, for everyone at Bible school. Help us to trust you, even when we don't know what will happen. Amen.*
3. **Bless the offering.** Remind children that as they enter the worship space, they may put their offering into the large bowl. Listen to the sound the money makes as it is put into the bowl.

Remind children about the offering project, and look at the visuals to see how much has been given so far. Thank the children for sharing generously with others.

Take time each day to bless and dedicate the offering to God. Invite the designated children to bring the bowl to the front of the room and hold it up high.

Pray: Thank you, God, for this offering today. Bless all who give and all who will receive. Help all of us to hear your call. Amen.

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.

Day 4

DISCIPLES

Biblical background

The men in today's story are doing their daily work of fishing, important work in first-century Palestine. In the middle of this hard and important work, they have a life-changing encounter with Jesus.

The account in Luke begins with a miraculous event. Simon Peter tries to catch fish, but the nets come up empty. Then, Jesus comes along and tells Simon to cast the nets at a different place. To Simon's amazement, the nets fill with fish! There are so many fish, in fact, that the boat begins to sink.

Matthew's account includes Jesus' words: "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Jesus calls Simon and his brother Andrew, and another pair of brothers, James and John. The men leave their boats and nets and follow Jesus.

Following Jesus requires a shift of priorities. The men go from fishing with nets in the sea to fishing for people. Surely this is a new concept, and yet the men willingly leave the life they know to pursue the unfamiliar. Little did they know how much their life would change!

We may wonder how the men could just leave everything and follow Jesus. Yet we are also called to follow Jesus. What do we need to leave behind in order to do so? What things keep us in the familiar flow of life rather than following Jesus into a life of the unknown?

The imagery of fishing will appeal to children, but it will also be puzzling to try to understand "fishing for people." Help children to think of it as sharing Jesus' love with those they meet—family, friends, classmates, and others.

Materials

- Bible
- Bible memory poster
- *Message Received* CD
- Large metal bowl for the offering

Advance preparation

- Pray for the leaders and the children who will participate in Bible school today.
- Read Matthew 4:18-22 and Luke 5:1-11. Read over the worship plan, and practice songs and readings.
- Plan how to teach the memory verse (see p. 3).
- Prepare for the offering by setting a large metal bowl on a table inside the entrance of the worship space.
- Update visuals for keeping track of the offering project (see p. 5).
- Ask one or two children to help with the offering dedication by taking the bowl from the back of the room to the front at the designated time.
- Gather props and visuals needed for worship and the drama.

MESSAGE
RECEIVED

HEARING GOD'S CALL

Today's Bible experience

Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11

Summary

Jesus calls some fishermen to follow him. Jesus says that he will teach them how to fish for people.

Bible memory

Follow me and I will make you fish for people.
—Mark 1:17b

Faith focus

Jesus calls us to follow him.

WORSHIP PLAN

Gathering

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

- 1. Welcome children as they enter**, especially those attending the first time. Invite children to put any offerings in the large metal bowl and to listen for the sound the money makes as it hits the side of the bowl.
- 2. As children gather, 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.
- 3. Introduce today’s theme:** “Jesus calls us to follow him.” Share that throughout vacation Bible school, the children will hear stories of people God called, and through whom God used to love the world and share God’s plan. Yesterday’s story was about Mary, whom God called to the mother of his son, Jesus. In today’s story, Jesus is an adult and is doing God’s work on earth. Jesus calls a group of people to follow him.
- 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.

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.

Worshipping

1. **Lead the call to worship.** Share that Jesus calls us to follow him. Invite children to say, “Jesus calls us to follow him!” when prompted during the call to worship. Repeat the phrase several times with the children before you begin.

Leader: Today we are learning about Jesus, God’s son. If we follow Jesus, we follow God.

Response: Jesus calls us to follow him!

Leader: Sometimes it’s hard to follow because it means we can’t always do things our own way.

Response: Jesus calls us to follow him!

Leader: But Jesus loves us and wants what is best for us.

Response: Jesus calls us to follow him!

Leader: When we follow Jesus, our lives are full of God’s love and we are God’s children.

Response: Jesus calls us to follow him!

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)
 - “Fish with Me”
 - “We Will Follow”
3. **Introduce the memory verse.** Read it from the Bible memory poster.

Follow me and I will make you fish for people. —Mark 1:17b

Invite children to repeat it and add motions.

Follow me (*use both pointer fingers, one following the other, drawing arms in a circle*)
and I (*point upward*)
will make (*put fists one on top of the other in a building motion*)
you fish (*pretend to cast a rod and reel in a fish*)
for people (*extend palms toward others*).

4. **Open your Bible to Matthew 4:18-22 and Luke 5:1-11** and explain that today’s story is found in two books of the Bible, Matthew and Luke, and they are both in the New Testament. Remind children that the last story, about Mary, was in the book of Luke.
Explain that today’s story is about Jesus calling fishermen to follow him. This is an important story because it is the first recording of people following Jesus. Since then, there have been hundreds, thousands, and millions of people who have followed Jesus. We can choose to follow him as well! Following Jesus means that we will make the right decisions and do the things that Jesus wants us to do.
5. **Watch the drama** “Fishing for People,” pages 42–43.

Responding

1. **Point out to the children** that God called people, through Jesus, in this Bible story. Even today, people are still called to follow Jesus and his way of love. Invite children to think about how Jesus might be calling them.
2. **Pray:** *Thank you, God, for all of the children and adults at Bible school today. May we all listen to your call to follow you. Amen.*
3. **Bless the offering.** Remind children that as they enter the worship space, they may put their offering into the large bowl. Listen to the sound the money makes as it is put into the bowl.

Remind the children about the offering project and the visuals to report how much has been given so far. Thank the children for sharing generously with others.

Take time each day to bless and dedicate the offering to God. Invite the designated children to bring the bowl to the front of the room and hold it up high.

Pray: *Thank you, God, for this offering today. Bless all who give and all who will receive. Help all of us to hear your call. Amen.*

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

Day 5

LYDIA

Biblical background

Lydia's story is just a small one in the Bible, but it deserves to be told. As the story begins, a group of women gather along a river just outside of the city gate. Paul and his traveling companions join them.

Lydia is described as a “worshiper of God,” meaning that she is a Gentile who is religious but not a convert to faith. She hears a call from God to listen to what Paul is saying, and her life changes forever. Lydia confesses her faith and is baptized. Remarkably, Lydia's entire household is baptized along with her. Afterward, she opens up her house as a place for believers to gather.

These few verses in Acts do not tell us much about Lydia; however, we can learn more about her by knowing the culture of that time. Though living in Philippi, Lydia is from the city of Thyatira (thai-uh-TAI-ruh), a place known far and wide for its textile industry. Lydia herself is a dealer in purple cloth, reserved for the wealthy and those of high status. She moves in circles of power and influence. Her house is likely a large and comfortable space for believers to gather.

Lydia is socially and financially accomplished. Yet she responds to God's call by opening her heart. This story is a good reminder that we can tell others about God, such as Paul did with Lydia, but that it is God who causes the results.

Children feel a spiritual connection to God whether or not they can put it into words. We can nurture them in their faith journey by providing love, acceptance, and examples of following Jesus.

Materials

- Bible
- Bible memory poster
- *Message Received* CD
- Large metal bowl for the offering

Advance preparation

- Pray for leaders and children who will participate in Bible school today.
- Read Acts 16 and focus on verses 11-15 and 40. Read over the worship plan, and practice songs and readings.
- Plan how to teach the memory verse (see p. 3).
- Prepare for the offering by setting a large metal bowl on a table inside the entrance of the worship space.
- Update visuals for keeping track of the offering project (see p. 5).
- Ask one or two children to help with the offering dedication by taking the bowl from the back of the room to the front at the designated time.
- Gather props and visuals needed for worship and the drama.

MESSAGE
RECEIVED

HEARING GOD'S CALL

Today's Bible experience

Acts 16:11-15, 40

Summary

Lydia already knows God but hears from Paul a call to open her heart and be baptized. She extends hospitality to others who follow Jesus.

Bible memory

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.
—2 Corinthians 5:17a

Faith focus

God calls us to open our hearts to Jesus.

WORSHIP PLAN

Gathering

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

1. **Welcome children as they enter**, especially those attending for the first time. Invite children to put any offerings into the large metal bowl and to listen for the sound the money makes as it hits the side of the bowl.
2. **As children gather, 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.
3. **Introduce today’s theme:** “God calls us to open our hearts to Jesus.” Share that throughout vacation Bible school, the children have heard stories about people whom God called. These include:
 - Samuel, who listened and responded to God’s call;
 - Esther, who worked with others to do what was right;
 - Mary, who trusted God’s plan; and
 - Fishermen, who followed Jesus when he called.Share that today’s story is about a woman named Lydia, who not only opened her heart to Jesus, but also her house to others who followed Jesus.
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.

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.

Worshipping

1. **Lead the call to worship.** Share that God calls us to open our hearts to Jesus. Invite children to say, “God calls us, too!” when prompted during the call to worship. Repeat the phrase several times with the children before you begin.

Leader: Samuel was a young boy whom God called, and Samuel responded.

Response: God calls us, too!

Leader: Esther was a queen whom God called to do what is right.

Response: God calls us, too!

Leader: Mary was a young woman whom God called to be the mother of Jesus.

Response: God calls us, too!

Leader: The fishermen were called by Jesus to follow him, and they did.

Response: God calls us, too!

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)
- “Open My Eyes”
- “We Are Children of God”

3. **Introduce the memory verse.** Read it from the Bible memory poster.

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. —2 Corinthians 5:17a

Invite children to repeat it and add motions.

So if anyone (*extend palms outward, pointing to others*) is in Christ (*American Sign Language Jesus: take the middle finger of each hand and place it on the opposite hand in the center of the palm, one at a time*), there is a new creation (*hold fists in front at shoulder height and open quickly*).

4. **Open your Bible to Acts 16:11–15 and 40** and explain that today’s story is found in the book of Acts. Share that Acts is a book written about the events of the followers of Jesus who formed the church and shared the good news of Jesus with many people.

Explain that Lydia was a follower of God. She knew God and was a very hospitable person and shared what she had with others. God called her to open her heart to Jesus, God’s son.

5. **Watch the drama** “She Opened Her Heart,” pages 46–47.

Responding

1. **Point out to the children** that God called Lydia to open her heart to Jesus and opened her house to others who followed Jesus. Invite children to think about how Lydia must have felt when she gathered together with others who loved God and followed Jesus. In what ways do we gather with those who love God and follow Jesus?
2. **Pray:** *Thank you, God, for the times we could be at Bible school. Help us to open our hearts to you and to remember to get together with others who also love you. Amen.*
3. **Bless the offering.** Remind children about the offering project and the visual to report how much money has been given during Bible school.
Take time to bless and dedicate the offering to God. Invite the designated children to bring the bowl to the front of the room and hold it high.
Pray: Thank you, God, for this offering today. Bless all who give and all who will receive. Help all of us to hear your call. Amen.

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.

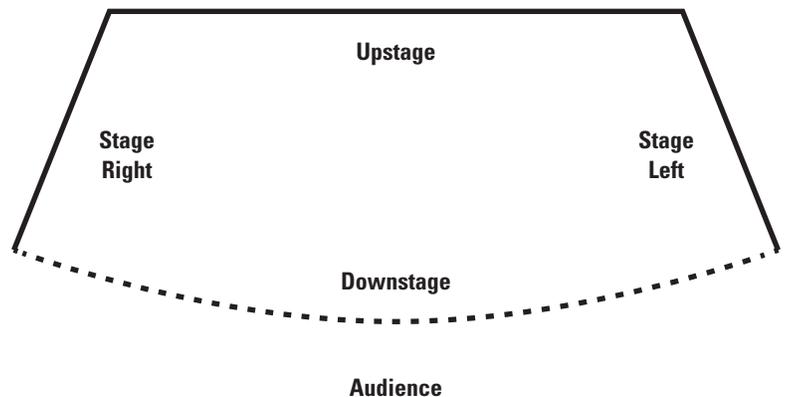
Rehearsals

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.



Day 1

LISTEN, GOD IS CALLING!

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.

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.

Day 2

WORKING TOGETHER FOR WHAT IS RIGHT

Today's Bible experience

Esther 4:13-17



Summary

Esther is called to go before the king to deliver a message that might save her people. In turn, Esther asks the community to fast and pray as she prepares for this responsibility.

Bible memory

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.
—1 Thessalonians 5:11

Faith focus

God calls us to work together for what is right.

Characters

- Queen Esther
- Sarah, attendant to Queen Esther
- Mordecai
- Narrator

Props and costumes

- Table to divide stage
- Table, seat, mirror
- Necklaces, tiara
- Scroll
- “Bible times” clothing for Mordecai and Sarah
- An elegant, long dress for Esther

Preparation

Place the table in the middle of the stage to divide the stage right and left.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR WHAT IS RIGHT

(Narrator stands downstage, in front of the dividing table. Esther and Sarah are on stage right, with Esther seated in front of a mirror and Sarah standing alongside. Mordecai is on stage left. They alternate being “frozen” throughout the drama as they alternate in telling their stories.)

Narrator: Hello. Let me explain a story to you. It’s a true story from the Bible and people still talk about it and celebrate it even today! It takes courage to work together for what is right, you know.

There once was a king who needed a new queen. King Ahasuerus (*pronounced ay-HAS-eeoo-EHR-uhs*) wanted to find the most beautiful woman in the land. He chose a young woman named Esther. Esther kept her identity as a Jew and a follower of God a secret.

Esther’s relative Mordecai, who also followed God, overheard a bully named Haman. Haman wanted all the Jews killed and he asked the king to order it done. The king was so pleased with Haman that he said, “Whatever you want to do is fine.” But the king didn’t know that both Queen Esther and Mordecai were Jews who could be killed too!

Mordecai put on sackcloth and ashes, which is what people did when they were very, very sad about something. Then Mordecai sent a message to Queen Esther and told her about Haman’s plot. Together, Mordecai and Queen Esther . . . Well, let’s see the story for ourselves, shall we? Mordecai (*extends hand toward Mordecai*) and Queen Esther (*extends hand toward Esther, leaves stage*).

Esther: Sarah, I can’t believe that King Ahasuerus actually chose me to be his queen! There are so many other beautiful women, but he chose me! God must have a great plan.

Sarah: Yes, ma’am.

Esther: (*thoughtfully*) I’m so thankful for Mordecai. He has helped me so much. You see, he serves the king and he follows the one true God as well. What an amazing time this is!

(Esther and Sarah freeze and there is a pause.)

Mordecai: (*pacing back and forth*) I don’t know what to do about Haman. He was just promoted and he is not a nice man. He wants us to bow to him but I only honor and worship God. Lord, God, maker of heaven and earth, use me as your servant!

(Mordecai freezes and there is a pause.)

Esther: (*standing*) Sarah, will you help me put on my jewelry?

Sarah: Yes, ma’am. (*She places several necklaces on Esther, and then the tiara.*)

(Esther and Sarah freeze and there is a pause.)

Mordecai: *(voice rising in distress)* Haman is taking out his hatred toward me on all of the people of Israel! He wants to destroy us because I didn't bow to him. Oh, God, please show us what to do. *(Pausing, suddenly alert with an idea.)* Maybe Esther can help! But I know that she isn't supposed to go before the king without his permission *(paces)*. Anyone who goes before the king in the inner court without being summoned can be put to death, even Queen Esther! Maybe, just maybe, the king will extend his royal, gold scepter and spare her life.

(Mordecai drops his head and freezes, and there is a pause.)

Sarah: *(brings Esther a scroll)* Here, my Queen. This is a letter from Mordecai.

Esther: *(opens the scroll, reads it, and gasps)* Oh, no! Haman wants to destroy all of my people, all the followers of God! But here's what Mordecai says *(reads from scroll)*: "Do not think that you will escape any more than all the other Jews, just because you're in the king's palace. For if you keep quiet now, Jews will be delivered in another way, but you and your family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have become queen for just such a time as this!"

(Esther jumps up and turns to Sarah.)

Esther: Take this message back to Mordecai: "Go, gather all the Jews in our area and have them fast on my behalf. They should not eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast, too. After that I will go to the king. If he does not extend his royal, gold scepter to me, I might die. But if I perish, I perish."

Sarah: Yes, ma'am, right away!

(Esther and Sarah freeze. Narrator walks onto the stage and stands downstage.)

Narrator: After three days and nights of not eating or drinking, Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace. The king was sitting on his royal throne. As soon as he saw Queen Esther, the king held out his royal, golden scepter. Queen Esther invited the king and Haman to two banquets. At the second banquet, Queen Esther revealed Haman's terrible plan. The king got mad at Haman! And Queen Esther and her people were saved!

(Narrator pauses, extends hand to Mordecai, and then to Queen Esther and Sarah.)

Narrator: Mordecai the Jew, and Esther the Queen, worked together to do what was right! King Ahasuerus promoted Mordecai to become second to the king. Mordecai was highly regarded across the land for his work for the good of his people.

Queen Esther is still remembered today. The festival of Purim is celebrated today to remember that God called and used both Queen Esther and Mordecai to save God's people. They did what was right.

And God calls us to work together and do what is right, too!

(Narrator freezes. All walk off the stage together.)

Day 3

SHE TRUSTED GOD'S PLAN

Today's Bible experience

Luke 1:26-56



Summary

The angel Gabriel visits Mary to tell her that she is favored of God and will have a baby, Jesus. Mary responds to this call with joy and trust in God's plan.

Bible memory

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. —Romans 8:28

Faith focus

We are called to trust God's plan.

Characters

- Mary (someone who can sing)
- Elizabeth
- Angel

Props and costumes

- Chair
- Knitting needles and yarn, or sewing needles and cloth
- Broom
- *Message Received* CD (optional)
- "Bible times" clothing for Mary and Elizabeth
- Halo, wings, and white cloth or robe for the angel

Preparation

Chair set downstage.

SHE TRUSTED GOD'S PLAN

(Mary sits downstage and is knitting or sewing. She hums or sings softly.)

Mary: *(sighs)* I can't believe Joseph and I are going to be married. I wonder what it will be like to be married to him. What will it be like to leave my parent's house? *(Mary continues to knit and hum.)*

(Angel enters stage right.)

Angel: *(calls out)* Mary! Mary! God is with you today. *(Angel walks over to Mary and stands beside her.)*

(Mary starts, drops her knitting needles and yarn, and stares.)

Angel: Oh, Mary, don't be afraid. God is so happy with you. God is pleased with how you love God and love people.

Mary: *(gasps, looks shocked)* What?

Angel: *(nods)* God has chosen you to be the mother of Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end.

Mary: *(confused, speaks slowly)* How can this be?

Angel: *(swings arms open, nods)* God's Spirit will make it happen. And your relative Elizabeth is pregnant in her old age.

(Mary puts her hand on her chest, breathing in and out slowly, trying to comprehend.)

Angel: *(speaking slowly, puts hand on Mary's shoulder)* Nothing is impossible with God.

Mary: *(lengthy pause, kneels, speaks with awe)* Here I am, the servant of the Lord. Let it happen just as you said. *(Speaking to herself)* I must go see Elizabeth! *(Mary runs off stage left.)*

(Elizabeth enters stage right. She is using a broom to sweep the floor.)

Mary: *(offstage, calling out)* Elizabeth! Hello? Is anyone home? *(runs onto stage left)*

Elizabeth: *(runs to greet Mary, excited)* You and your baby are blessed by God. And I am blessed because the mother of my Lord has come to visit me. At the sound of your voice, the baby inside me leaped for joy! *(Mary and Elizabeth hug.)*

Mary: Oh, Elizabeth!

Elizabeth: Oh, Mary! Blessed are you among women, and blessed is your baby.

(Mary turns to the audience and sings at least one verse of “My Soul is Filled with Joy.” Or, play song directly from Message Received CD. Elizabeth watches from the side.)

Day 4

FISHING FOR PEOPLE

Today's Bible experience

Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11

Summary

Jesus calls some fishermen to follow him. Jesus says that he will teach them how to fish for people.

Bible memory

Follow me and I will make you fish for people. —Mark 1:17b

Faith focus

Jesus calls us to follow him.

Characters

- Simon
- Andrew
- Jesus
- James
- John

Props and costumes

- Boat (can be made from cardboard, chairs, or other items)
- Large blue cloths or blankets
- Fishnets
- Fishermen clothing for Simon, Andrew, James, John
- “Bible times” clothing for Jesus

Preparation

Boat set downstage. Fishnets are draped over the side of the boat, and blue cloth or blankets are on the floor around the boat to look like a lake.



This drama does not rely solely on dialogue; there are actions that also help to tell the story. Do not rush.

FISHING FOR PEOPLE

(Simon and Andrew are in the boat. They are washing fishnets. Jesus is standing along the lake with his back to the boat, motioning as if talking to a crowd.)

Simon: *(looks up)* There is quite a crowd gathered on the side of the lake *(gestures toward the audience)*.

Andrew: *(looks up, points to Jesus)* It's because of him. Everyone wants to hear what he has to say about God.

(Jesus turns and looks at Simon and Andrew. He pauses, then slowly walks toward them. Simon and Andrew stare at him. Jesus climbs into the boat. He continues motioning, as if talking to a crowd. Simon and Peter continue to stare.)

Jesus: *(turning away from the crowd, looking toward Simon and Andrew)* Simon, put your nets down into the deep water on this side of the boat *(motions where the nets should go)*.

Simon: Master, we worked all night long. We wanted to catch lots of fish, but we didn't catch anything *(shakes head, sighs loudly)*. But if you say so, we will put the nets there. *(Simon and Andrew put the nets over the side of the boat. Jesus quietly watches.)*

(Simon and Andrew stare at the nets. Their mouths drop open and they look stunned.)

Andrew: *(curiously)* What's happening? Where did all of the fish come from? There weren't any here a little bit ago. What's going on?

Simon: *(gesturing toward the nets)* We need to start pulling in the nets. Look, there are so many fish that I'm afraid the nets will break. Hurry! *(Simon and Andrew struggle to pull in the nets.)*

Simon and Andrew: *(they pull in the nets, loudly exclaiming things such as)* Wow! I can't believe this! Where did all of the fish come from?

Andrew: *(loudly)* Wait! There are so many fish and they're putting too much weight into the boat. It's too heavy! It might sink! *(stands up straight, calls out across the lake)* We need help. Come help us with these fish! *(Andrew waves his arms in a "come here" gesture.)*

(James and John enter stage right. They go to the boat and stand alongside the lake. Andrew, James, and John freeze.)

Simon: *(kneeling before Jesus)* Oh, go away from me, Lord. I am a sinful man!

Jesus: *(looks directly at Simon, puts his hand on Simon's shoulder)* Don't be afraid. From now on you will fish for people.

(Andrew, James, and John unfreeze. Andrew and Simon climb out of the boat, then all turn and watch Jesus get out of the boat. Jesus begins walking stage left and motions for the men to follow. They look at their nets and the boat and shake their heads. They turn and follow Jesus off the stage.)

Day 5

SHE OPENED HER HEART

Today's Bible experience

Acts 16:11-15, 40



Summary

Lydia already knows God but hears from Paul a call to open her heart and be baptized. She extends hospitality to others who follow Jesus.

Bible memory

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. —2 Corinthians 5:17a

Faith focus

God calls us to open our hearts to Jesus.

Characters

- Paul
- Silas
- Lydia

Props and costumes

- Doorway to set on stage
- “Bible times” clothing for Paul, Silas, and Lydia

Preparation

Create a doorway to set on the stage. It can be wooden or cardboard, and should be large enough for people to walk through. It will be moved onto the stage part-way through the drama.

SHE OPENED HER HEART

(Paul and Silas stand stage left.)

- Paul:** *(noticing audience)* Well, hello there! We've been waiting to tell you the story of a woman we met on our missionary journey. My name is Paul. *(Turns toward Silas and extends hand.)*
- Silas:** *(nods)* And I'm Silas. I joined Paul *(pointing to Paul)* on his travels. We meet people and tell them about Jesus. It's exciting to share Jesus!
- Paul:** Yes, it is. Besides the excitement of talking about Jesus, we've had some other interesting and exciting things happen as well. We were put into prison because the authorities thought we were disturbing the peace. Not everyone likes us *(shakes head, looks down, pauses)*. And then there was an earthquake and we just got out of prison! But *(pauses)* these are stories for another time.
- Silas:** Paul, you've been through a lot for Jesus, haven't you? And you do have fascinating stories. But for today, let's talk about Lydia.
- Paul:** Lydia *(pauses, reflective)*. It was really wonderful to meet her and see her open her heart to Jesus. She already knew God, but not Jesus.
- Silas:** *(looks at Paul)* You know what we should do?
- Paul:** *(shakes his head)* What?
- Silas:** Let's go visit Lydia right now! She can tell the children her own story.
- Paul:** Great idea. Let's go! *(Paul and Silas walk off the stage and around the back of the audience. They continue talking.)* I hope she is home. It will be good to see her again.
- Silas:** Yes, we can tell her about our adventures and I'm sure that she has some, too!
- Paul:** She was so welcoming to us and the others who believe in Jesus. What a gift she has, to share her home and friendship this way.

(As Paul and Silas are walking and talking, the front door is moved downstage. Paul and Silas return to the stage and notice the door.)

Paul: Oh look! We are already at her house.

Paul and Silas: *(walking, calling out)* Hello! Lydia! Anyone home?

(Lydia walks through the doorway to meet Paul and Silas.)

Lydia: Welcome, Paul and Silas! It is so good to see you again.

Paul: Great to see you too!

Lydia: Are you tired, thirsty, hungry? Why don't you come in and I'll make some space for you to stay a few days. You look rather worn out.

Silas: Well, we were imprisoned and there was an earthquake . . .

Lydia: (*interrupting Silas*) Oh, my! Well, then you've been through a lot and you must come in and rest! There are other believers here, too. I'm sure they would love to hear from you.

Paul: Before we go inside, we were wondering if you could tell what happened when we first met. There are some children who would like to hear your story. (*Paul motions toward the audience.*)

Lydia: (*noticing the audience*) Oh, hello! Yes, I can tell you what happened to me (*pauses*). It started when I was with a group of women near the river. We go there on the Sabbath to pray. And then (*points toward Paul and Silas*), they came to our place of prayer.

Paul and Silas: (*both nod*) Yes, that's right.

Lydia: Paul and Silas sat down and began to talk with us. They spoke about Jesus and told us about his life and the things he taught. They said we can follow God through following Jesus! (*speaking passionately*) I already loved God, but in that moment I knew that I wanted to follow Jesus! And so I opened my heart to Jesus and prayed to him.

Silas: It was amazing. (*Silas turns toward Lydia.*) Lydia, you are an important woman in the community. You sell purple cloth! (*Silas turns toward the audience.*) Purple cloth is for rich, important people.

Lydia: (*nods*) Yes, I do sell purple cloth and meet many people. I'm blessed with a nice home to share with people.

Paul: What was amazing to me is that, after you told the rest of your family about how you experienced Jesus that day, everyone was baptized!

Lydia: Yes, my whole entire family believed and we were all baptized by Paul and Silas. We were baptized in the river and it was beautiful (*turns toward audience*). And that's the story (*turns toward Paul and Silas*). Now come on inside and meet the other believers!

(*Paul, Silas, and Lydia walk through the doorway and off the stage.*)

