

Message Received: Hearing God's Call

BIBLE RESPONSE GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

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

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

The Bible Response session helps children process the Bible story. The main session plan is written to connect with various age groups. Additional activity options are suggested if you wish to extend a lesson depending on allotted time. Consider the age and abilities of your group as you choose appropriate activities. Some activities require more adult supervision than others, particularly with younger age groups. All will extend the *Message Received* themes in unique and thoughtful ways.

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

SESSION OUTLINE

Each session includes the Bible background, faith focus, and memory verse of the day. Read them to understand how the Bible Response ideas connect with the theme. Allow them to guide you as you consider the needs and abilities of your groups when planning each session.

- **About the session:** gives an overview of your time with the children
- **Session materials:** lists supplies for the session
- **Advance preparation:** notes what needs to be done ahead of time
- **Bible Response session plan:** offers activities that go along with the Bible story

BIBLE STORY

Create a space in which children can gather to hear the Bible story. There are display items noted with each session that go along with the story.

- **Day 1**—blanket or mat, pillow
- **Day 2**—chair to represent a throne, crown or tiara
- **Day 3**—angel wings or halo, baby items
- **Day 4**—fishing nets and poles, oars
- **Day 5**—purple cloth, place setting

STUDENT BOOKLET

Message Decoder, the student booklet, features a variety of activities that connect to the day's theme. Each child will need a booklet. Plan to have a few extra booklets on hand in case you have visitors.

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 and Bible memory DVD 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 suggestions 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.

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. Make everyone feel welcomed at VBS!

THE MIDDLE CHILD

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

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

Middler children are full of energy and enthusiasm. Their bodies are growing and need physical activity. Whenever possible, provide opportunities to move around. Make everyone feel welcomed at VBS!

DAILY SCHEDULE

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

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

If you have 2 hours:

Gather—5 or 10 minutes

Worship—20 minutes

Respond—75 minutes

Active—25 minutes

Bible—25 minutes

Creative—25 minutes

Send—5 or 10 minutes

If you have 90 minutes:

Gather—5 minutes

Worship—20 minutes

Respond—60 minutes

Active—20 minutes

Bible—20 minutes

Creative—20 minutes

Send—5 minutes

If you have 1 hour:

Worship—15 minutes

Respond—45 minutes

Active—15 minutes

Bible—15 minutes

Creative—15 minutes

Day 1

SAMUEL

Biblical background

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

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

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

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

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

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

About the session

Children will discover that God speaks to people of all ages, even young people! They can learn to hear God’s voice, too.

Session materials

- Bibles
- Bible memory poster or DVD
- *Message Received* CD
- *Message Decoder* student book for each child
- Radio
- Large sheet of paper or white board, and marker
- Display: blanket or mat, pillow

Advance preparation

- Review activities and become familiar with the session plan.
- Decide on any additional activities and gather supplies as needed.
- Display the Bible memory poster or show the video.
- Arrange the mat and pillow in the story area to represent Samuel’s bed.
- Hang white board or paper close to the story area.
- Set up the radio slightly tuned to a music station.

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.

Bible Response session plan

Introduction

1. **Greet the children.** Introduce yourself and ask the children their names. Find out which session the children have just experienced and ask about it: What activities did you do? What did you learn? What did you like best?
2. **Invite children to gather** in the story area and explain that you will listen to music. Turn on a radio, slightly out of tune. Notice children's expressions and listen to their responses. After about a minute, tune the radio clearly.
Discuss the difference in listening when the radio is out of tune and when it is tuned clearly. Which is easier to hear? Ask the children if they tune in, or pay attention, when someone speaks to them. What difference does it make if they pay attention or not? Is it hard to hear when not tuned in properly?
3. **Share that today's story is about a young boy named Samuel.** We do not know how old Samuel is in the story, but he could be the age of some of the children at Bible school. In today's story, Samuel learns to tune into to God's voice. He learns that he needs to pay attention when God calls.

Children may be curious what it sounds like when God calls us. Share that God may speak to people through an audible voice, such as with Samuel, but that is rare. However, God also speaks to us through the Bible, through words of other people, by giving a sense of peace, by prompting our hearts, through prayer, and in other ways. You may want to share a personal example of how God has spoken to you.

Pope Francis called Samuel's simple words in this bible passage ("Speak Lord, I am listening") as a beautiful way to pray. He said they are especially good words to use when we have doubts, are confused, or have some resistance to the Holy Spirit. He said we shouldn't be afraid when the Holy Spirit surprises us or changes our plans: joy is part of the package! (4/14/2016)

The Bible text

1. **Find 1 Samuel 3 in the Bible.** Explain that today's story is found in the book of Samuel in the Old Testament of the Bible. Not only is the story found in the book of Samuel, but the story is about Samuel when he was a boy. Read the story from 1 Samuel 3:1-21.
2. **Connect to the story** by discussing some of the following questions. Invite children to share their own questions or comments.
 - How did God call Samuel?
 - How did Samuel tune in to God's voice?
 - How do you think Samuel felt when he realized God was calling him?
 - How can we tune in to God's voice?
3. **Invite children to spend some time with their eyes closed**, listening carefully. This can be done indoors, but if you have time you may want to go outside. After a minute or two, have them call out the sounds they heard. Write these down on a white board or large sheet of paper. Listen again. What other sounds can be added to the list?
Samuel heard God calling, but did not recognize God's voice. Add that sometimes it can be hard to hear and recognize God calling us, too. The noise of our televisions, video games, music, sports, family, friends, and so on can drown out the call. We need to take time to listen carefully to hear God.
4. **Turn to page 4 in *Message Decoder*.** (Answer: Samuel listened to God's message.)

Bible memory

1. **Open the Bible to Luke 11.** Point out that the story of Samuel is found in the Old Testament, but that Luke is in the New Testament. Luke includes stories about Jesus and things Jesus said. One thing Jesus said is the day's memory verse.
2. **Refer to the Bible memory poster or the video.** Read Luke 11:28b together with older children, or read it to younger children and ask them to repeat it.

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

Review the verse several times and use motions if you wish.

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*)!

3. **Show the memory verse in Message Decoder page 15.** At the end of Bible school, children will take their books home to help them remember the verses. Challenge children to learn today's verse until they can say it by memory.

Closing

1. **Pray:** *Dear God, we love you and want to hear your voice. Give us the courage to say, "Speak, for your servant is listening," like Samuel did. Amen.*
2. **Lead a closing reading.** Point to ears, hearts, hands as you read. Read it several times and have children join in the motions, and words if they are able to do so.

May you have listening ears to hear God's call (*point to ears*),
courageous hearts to answer, "Here I am!" (*point to heart*),
and willing hands to go and serve (*hold out hands*).

3. **Play and sing a song from the Message Received CD.** "We Are Children of God," "Open My Eyes," and "Send Me" are good ones for this session.

Encourage children to bring their Bibles to Bible school. Help them to find the memory verse.

Additional activities may be used to extend a session, depending on the amount of time available. Consider the age and abilities of your VBS children so that you choose appropriate activities.

Additional activities

- 1. Show artwork by various artists depicting Samuel's call** (check with your library or the Internet to find sources). Talk about how each artist pictured the scene. What are the expressions on the people's faces? What do you think they are thinking? Some art examples are *Samuel Reading to Eli the Judgments of God upon Eli's House*, by John Singleton Copley, 1780; *The Infant Samuel*, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1776; *Samuel and Eli*, by Harold Copping, 1912.
- 2. Play the telephone game.** Ask children to form a line or circle. Whisper a phrase or sentence into the first child's ear. This child will whisper it to the next child, and on down the line. How does the message change by the time it reaches the last person? Ask children what it was like to listen carefully. Note: You may need to instruct children on an appropriate whisper volume—not too loud, but not too soft, either.
- 3. Just as God and Samuel had a conversation,** God wants to talk with us as well! Though we may not be able to audibly hear the voice of God, we know that God is with us. Ask the children: What would you like to say to God? What would you like to ask God about?
Children do not need to respond out loud. However, allow time for them to silently talk with God.
- 4. God spoke to Samuel and gave him a message.** God spoke to other people, too. Invite children to read the following stories and learn more:
 - Exodus 3:1-6 (Moses and the burning bush)
 - Numbers 22:22-35 (Balaam and the donkey)
 - Ezekiel 37:1-10 (Ezekiel and the dry bones)
 - Luke 2:8-14 (shepherds and angels)
 - Mark 1:9-11 (Jesus' baptism)
- 5. Retell Samuel's story. Turn to page 5 in *Message Decoder*.** Read the story together and do the motions.

You may want to read to children or have them look at books, depending on how much time is available. This list offers suggestions that fit the session's themes, or feature characters who have acted upon ideas or a call. You are welcome to find other applicable books as well.

Book list

- Blackaby, Tom, and Rick Osborne. *Sammy Experiences God*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013.
- Fryar, Jane L. *The Lord Calls Samuel*. Arch Books. St Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1995.
- Kidd, Ronald. *Raising the Roof*. Americus, GA: Habitat for Humanity International, 2005.
- Lester, Helen. *Listen, Buddy: A Story about Learning to Listen*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.
- Winter, Jeanette. *Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia*. New York: Beach Lane Books, 2010.
- Zolotow, Charlotte. *If You Listen*. Philadelphia, PA: Running Press, 2002.

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.

About the session

Children will notice that God can speak to us through other people. We can work together for what is right.

Session materials

- Bible
- Bible memory poster or DVD
- *Message Received* CD
- *Message Decoder* student book for each child
- Display: chair to represent a throne, crown or tiara
- Small candies, stickers, or other small prizes

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.

Advance preparation

- Review activities and become familiar with the session plan.
- Decide on any additional activities and gather supplies as needed.
- Display the Bible memory poster or show the video.
- Arrange the chair as a throne, along with the crown or tiara, in the story area.
- Select a space for the arm wrestling game and set up tables and chairs for the players.

Bible Response session plan

Introduction

1. **Greet the children.** Find out which session the children have just experienced and ask about it: What activities did you do? What did you learn? What did you like best?
2. **Explain that the children will play an arm wrestling game.** Each time they pin their opponent's arm they will win a point. Each point is worth one prize such as a candy or sticker. No talking is allowed after the game begins. Players have 30 seconds to win as many points as possible.

Pair players and have them sit at tables or desks. After playing 30 seconds, ask each player how many points they won. Distribute prizes. Ask the winners to share their strategy.

Most people assume the game is competitive. In reality, there is no rule preventing them from cooperating to win more prizes. If partners have not figured this out, discuss how they might work together. Then play another round so everyone can experience cooperating to win.

3. **Invite children to gather in the story area to discuss the game.** When arm wrestling this way, we learned that working together is the best way to win lots of prizes. Today's story is about people who worked together for a much more important purpose: saving lives.

Pope Francis argues that being Christian and following Jesus "entails giving up evil and selfishness and choosing good, truth and justice, even when this demands sacrifice and the renunciation of our own interests." Faith should not be something ornamental in our lives, he says, like decoration on a cake, but the driving force behind everything we do. (8/18/2013)

Some groups may want to hear more of this story. Read Esther 4 for more background. As a follow-up to the story, read Esther 5:1-6 and Esther 7:1-4. Queen Esther's request is granted and the Jews are saved.

The Bible text

1. **Find Esther 4 in the Bible.** Explain that today's story is found in the book of Esther in the Old Testament of the Bible. Not only is the story found in the book of Esther, but it is about a woman named Esther.

As background, tell the children that Esther was a queen. She had a relative, Mordecai, who refused to bow down to a leader named Haman because Mordecai did not believe he should bow to anyone but God. This made Haman very angry. Haman talked the king into giving orders to kill all the Jewish people because Mordecai was a Jew. Everyone was sad, but Mordecai came up with a plan. He wanted Queen Esther to go before the king and ask him to save the Jews. Queen Esther was fearful because if the king does not ask someone to go before him, he could have that person killed. But in our story today, Mordecai convinces Queen Esther that she should go to the king. Read Esther 4:13-17.

2. **Connect to the story** by discussing some of the following questions. Invite children to share their own questions or comments.
 - What surprised you about this story?
 - How did God use other people to call Esther?

- How do you think Esther felt when she realized God was calling her to save her people?
 - How did the people help Esther?
 - Do you think Esther was a hero? What makes someone a true hero?
- 3. Create a paper chain.** Give each child several construction paper strips on which they are to write or draw something that they need to work with other people to accomplish. Examples include doing a skit, playing in a band, playing a game, etc. Read out loud the responses, then staple or glue them together to make a chain.
 - 4. Explain that we receive many messages** all day long. Sometimes messages are helpful, but not always. Turn to page 6 in *Message Decoder*. Look at each picture and talk about the messages they give. Do the messages encourage people to work together?

Bible memory

- 1. Open the Bible to 1 Thessalonians.** Tell the children that this book is in the New Testament. The book of 1 Thessalonians is a letter from the apostle Paul to the church at Thessalonica.
- 2. Refer to the Bible memory poster or the video.** Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11 together with older children, or read it to younger children and ask them to repeat it.

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

Review the verse several times, using motions if you wish.

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*).

- 3. Show the memory verse in Message Decoder, page 15.** At the end of Bible school, children will take their books home to help them remember the verses. Challenge them to learn the verse by memory by tomorrow.

Closing

- 1. Pray:** *Dear God, help us work together for what is right, like Esther and her people. Help us to be your hands and feet in the world. Amen.*
- 2. Lead a closing reading.** Read it several times and have children join in the motions, and words if they are able to do so.

May you have listening ears to hear God's call (*point to ears*),
 courageous hearts to answer, "Here I am!" (*point to heart*),
 and willing hands to go and serve (*hold out hands*).

- 3. Play and sing a song from the Message Received CD.** "We Will Follow" and "Wherever Love Is" are good ones for this session.

Encourage children to bring their Bibles to Bible school. Help them to find the memory verse.

Additional activities may be used to extend a session, depending on the amount of time available. Consider the age and abilities of your VBS children so that you choose appropriate activities.

Additional activities

1. **Read *The Enormous Potato* by Aubrey Davis.** Talk about how the family worked together to harvest the potato. How did it benefit them all in the end? How did the story remind you of Esther and her people working together?
2. **Make necklaces.** Remind children that Queen Esther's actions saved many people and that she is considered a hero in the Bible. Invite children to make a colorful necklace worthy of a hero, by stringing cereal such as Cheerios or Fruit Loops onto colorful yarn. Tie the children's necklaces around their necks and let them wear them for the rest of today's Bible school.
3. **God used other people to call Esther to important work.** People are important in our lives. Hand out a strip of paper and a pencil to each child. Allow time for them to think about someone who is important to them. They may silently write the person's name on their paper. Collect the papers and lead in a simple prayer for the people who are important in the children's lives. It is not necessary to look at the papers. Instead, put them in a jar or basket and let the children know that the name they wrote is between themselves and God.
4. **Make a human pretzel.** Just as Esther, Mordecai, and others had to work together to save the Jewish people, there are times that we need to work together, too. Divide children into groups of six to eight people. Each group should stand in a circle, facing inward. Each child needs to join one hand with one person, and the other hand with another, but not with someone who is standing next to them. The children will be tangled in their circle. Help them figure out how to work together to untangle the circle without letting go of each other's hands.
5. **Talk about the Jewish festival of Purim.** This joyous holiday celebrates Esther saving her people. During Purim, the Jewish people read the story of Esther, give gifts of food to friends, prepare a festive meal, and make a special point of giving to the poor. All of these kind acts help them remember Esther.

We can also be kind to others. Random Acts of Kindness (RAOK) is a challenge to do kind things for others. Turn to page 7 of *Message Decoder* and discover simple RAOKs to do. (Answer: smile.)

You may want to read to children or have them look at books, depending on how much time is available. This list offers suggestions that fit the session's themes, or feature characters who have acted upon ideas or a call. You are welcome to find other applicable books as well.

Book list

- Davis, Aubrey. *The Enormous Potato*. Buffalo, NY: Kids Can Press, 1999.
- Disalvo, DyAnne. *A Castle on Viola Street*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.
- Gerstein, Mordicai. *Queen Esther the Morning Star*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.
- Kimmel, Eric. *The Story of Esther: A Purim Tale*. New York: Holiday House, 2011.
- Koralek, Jenny. *The Story of Queen Esther*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2009.
- Kropf, Latifa Berry. *It's Purim Time!* Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben Publishing, 2005.
- Waber, Bernard. *Courage*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

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.

About the session

Children will learn that God may call us to do amazing things. We can trust God’s plan, even if we don’t always understand it.

Session materials

- Bible
- Bible memory poster or DVD
- *Message Received* CD
- *Message Decoder* student book for each child
- Trust box or bag
- A hat for each character: Mary, Elizabeth, angel
- Treasure chest with wrapped items
- Display: angel wings or halo, baby items

Advance preparation

- Review activities and become familiar with the session plan.
- Decide on any additional activities and gather supplies as needed.
- Display the Bible memory poster or show the video.
- Arrange the angel wings or halo and baby items in the story area.
- Create a trust box or bag. Put an object inside such as a stuffed toy, book, pen, mug, or other item. Allow an opening only large enough for a hand to fit, but not large enough to see inside.
- Find a treasure chest, or make one using a box. Wrap items in gift wrap and place them in the treasure chest: angel figurine, photo of a young teen girl, letter in an envelope, walking shoes or sandals, doll or picture of a baby.

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.

Bible Response session plan

Introduction

1. **Greet the children.** Find out which session the children have just experienced and ask about it: What activities did you do? What did you learn? What did you like best?
2. **Invite children to gather** in the story area. Pass around the trust box and allow time for children to put their hands inside. Make this a quiet activity so that no one says what they think is inside the box. After everyone has had a turn, ask what they guess might be inside. After several ideas, show the object.
3. **Observe that when the students** put their hands inside the trust box, they had to trust that there wasn't anything harmful inside. They had to trust you in a small way. Share that today's story is about someone who was asked to trust in a big way. Mary was called to trust God's plan.

Pope Francis sees Mary as the model of faith for all of us, beginning with the "yes" she makes in this passage. She lived out her faith in simple, normal, everyday ways: as a mother. He urges us to remember that Mary is not a distant person who is distant from us, but someone who did normal things, always staying connected to Jesus. We can learn from her and live like her. (10/23/2013)

Angel—Gabriel, photo of young teen girl—Mary, letter—message, walking shoes—Mary traveled to see Elizabeth, doll—Mary is to have a baby

Treasure chest: My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

The Bible text

1. **Find Luke 1 in the Bible.** Explain that today's story is found in the New Testament of the Bible. Ask children to listen carefully for Mary's response as they hear the story. Read or retell Luke 1:26-56, switching hats as you read the dialogue of Mary, Elizabeth, and the angel.
2. **Connect to the story** by discussing some of the following questions. Invite children to share their own questions or comments.
 - How did Mary respond to God's call?
 - How do you think Mary felt when the angel appeared to her? How would you feel if an angel appeared to you?
 - God talked to Mary through an angel. How did Mary respond to God's call?
 - Mary had to trust God. Is it hard to trust someone you love? Why or why not?
3. **Explain that Mary was young** when this story took place. Her exact age is unknown but during the time when she lived, young women got married in their early teens. Mary was engaged at the time of this story, so she was most likely in her early teens.

God uses young people, too! God spoke to a boy, Samuel, and gave him a message. God used an angel to speak to a young woman named Mary, and gave her a message. Young people and children are important to God!
4. **Show children the treasure chest.** Ask for a volunteer to unwrap one of the treasures. After unwrapping, the child will explain how the item connects with the story. Continue with other volunteers until all items are unwrapped.
5. **Turn to page 8 in *Message Decoder*.** Find Mary's response to God's message in the treasure chest. Color the boxes of each word that has the letter *B* in it.

Bible memory

1. **Open the Bible to Romans.** Tell the children that this book is in the New Testament. The book of Romans is a letter from the apostle Paul to the church at Rome.
2. **Refer to the Bible memory poster or the video.** Read Romans 8:28 together with older children, or read it to younger children and ask them to repeat it.

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

Review the verse several times and use motions if you wish.

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*).

3. **Show the memory verse in Message Decoder page 15.** At the end of Bible school, children will take their books home to help them remember the verses. Challenge them to learn the verse by memory by tomorrow.

Closing

1. **Pray:** *Dear God, sometimes it's scary to trust, but you know what is best for us. Please help us to listen to your voice and trust your plan, just like Mary did. Amen.*
2. **Lead a closing reading.** Read it several times and have children join in the motions, and words if they are able to do so.

May you have listening ears to hear God's call (*point to ears*),
courageous hearts to answer, "Here I am!" (*point to heart*),
and willing hands to go and serve (*hold out hands*).

3. **Play and sing a song from the Message Received CD.** "Woman of God" and "Calling Us by Name" are good ones for this session.

Encourage children to bring their Bibles to Bible school. Help them to find the memory verse.

Additional activities may be used to extend a session, depending on the amount of time available. Consider the age and abilities of your VBS children so that you choose appropriate activities.

Additional activities

1. **Mary was told to name her son Jesus.** Invite children to research and find out what the name *Jesus* means. Then, give children baby name books so they can research and find out what their own names mean.
2. **Make trust handprints.** Invite each child to dip a hand into a pan of paint, then to press the hand onto large mural paper. Be sure children wear paint smocks! Write “We trust God’s plan” across the paper, and have children write their names below their handprints. Talk about how important it is to trust God, even when we do not always understand. Hang the paper after the paint is dry. Variation: Children can draw around their hands instead of using paint to make a print.
3. **Ask children to find a space where they can sit** by themselves. As they sit quietly, invite them to think about their day: Who will they meet? What will they do? Will they do anything new?

As the children think, ask them to consider about a situation in which they need to trust God. Give each child a slip of paper and pencil and allow time for them to write or draw the situation. Collect the papers in a container and say a prayer such as: *God, thank you for being with us today. Please be with us and help us to trust you in everything we do. Amen.*

It is not necessary to look at the papers. Let the children know that God knows what they wrote and that the papers are a form of talking to God in prayer.

4. **Remind children that Mary had to listen** carefully to God. For this activity, the children will need to listen carefully to you. Invite children to quietly and randomly walk around the room. As they do so, clap your hands three times in quick succession. When you do so, the children will need to form groups of three and sit down. Do this again, using a different number of claps.
5. **How can we learn to trust each other? Turn to page 9 in *Message Decoder*.** Divide children into groups, each one considering one of the scenarios. Invite children to act out the situations, along with endings that show that the characters trust each other.

Book list

- Dalton, Pamela. *The Story of Christmas*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2011.
- Dungy, Tony. *You Can Do It!* New York: Little Simon Inspirations, 2008
- Fine, Aariah. *Clean Water for Elirose*. Minneapolis, MN: Aariah Fine, 2010.
- Joslin, Mary. *Mary Mother of Jesus*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999.
- McBrier, Page. *Beatrice’s Goat*. New York: Atheneum, 2001.
- Smith, Todd Aaron. *Cow on the Tracks*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2001.

You may want to read to children or have them look at books, depending on how much time is available. This list offers suggestions that fit the session’s themes, or feature characters who have acted upon ideas or a call. You are welcome to find other applicable books as well.

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.

About the session

Children will discover that people are called to follow Jesus. We can follow Jesus, too!

Session materials

- Bibles
- Bible memory poster or DVD
- *Message Received* CD
- *Message Decoder* student book for each child
- Construction paper, one per child, pencils, scissors
- Display: fishing nets and poles, oars

Advance preparation

- Review activities and become familiar with the session plan.
- Decide on any additional activities and gather supplies as needed.
- Display the Bible memory poster or show the video.
- Arrange the netting, fishing poles, and oars in the story area.

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.

Bible Response session plan

Introduction

Pope Francis reminds us that when he started his ministry, he did not call the most important people of the time (priests and scribes), but he went to humble and simple fishermen. They immediately follow him on an exciting adventure. "The Lord is calling today, too!" says Pope Francis. "May each one of you think: the Lord is passing by today, the Lord is watching me, he is looking at me! What is the Lord saying to me? And if one of you feels that the Lord says to you 'follow me' be brave, go with the Lord. The Lord never disappoints. Feel in your heart if the Lord is calling you to follow him." (1/26/2014)

Children may be curious what it means to *fish for people*. Explain that if we follow Jesus, we will share his love with others. That is one way to fish for people.

1. **Greet the children.** Find out which session the children have just experienced and ask about it: What activities did you do? What did you learn? What did you like best?
2. **Have the children line up single file.** Play Follow the Leader around the room, making exaggerated movements and gestures for the students to imitate. If space is limited, you may want to simply stand in place and make motions with your arms and head.
3. **Invite children to gather in the story area.** Ask if it was hard or easy for them to follow when playing Follow the Leader. Allow time for responses, then add that today's story is about people who were called to follow Jesus.

The Bible text

1. **Find Matthew 4 and Luke 5 in the Bible.** Explain that today's story is found in the New Testament, and is from two different books—Matthew and Luke. Read the story from Matthew 4:18-22 and Luke 5:1-11.
2. **Connect to the story** by discussing some of the following questions. Invite children to share their own questions or comments.
 - What were Simon Peter, James, and John doing when Jesus called to them?
 - What did Jesus tell them to do?
 - What happened when they obeyed?
 - What did Jesus mean when he said "from now on you will fish for people"?
3. **Talk about ways children can follow Jesus**, such as: helping a friend with a project, taking care of a brother or sister, sharing a book or toy, etc. Invite children to trace their footprints onto sheets of construction paper, and then cut them out. On each footprint, children will write one thing they can do today to follow Jesus. Arrange the footprints as if someone is walking, and invite children to follow the path. Talk about the ideas that were written on the footprints.
4. **The *ichthys* (ik-thoos), or fish symbol**, comes from the ancient Greek word for fish. Early Christians used it to identify each other. Learn more about it on page 10 of *Message Decoder*.

Bible memory

1. **Open the Bible to Mark 1.** Tell the children that Mark is the second book in the New Testament and that it is one of the four Gospels. It tells us about the life of Jesus and the things Jesus said.
2. **Refer to the Bible memory poster or the video.** Read Mark 1:17b together with the older children, or read it to younger children and ask them to repeat it.

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

Review the verse several times and use motions if you wish.

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*).

3. **Show children the memory verse in Message Decoder page 15.** At the end of Bible school, children will take their books home to help them remember the verses. Challenge children to learn today's verse until they can say it by memory.

Closing

1. **Pray:** *Dear Jesus, you called fishermen to leave their nets behind and follow you. Show us how we can follow you today. Amen.*
2. **Lead a closing reading.** Read it several times and have children join in the motions, and words if they are able to do so.

May you have listening ears to hear God's call (*point to ears*),
courageous hearts to answer, "Here I am!" (*point to heart*),
and willing hands to go and serve (*hold out hands*).

3. **Play or sing a song from the Message Received CD.** "Fish with Me" and "We Will Follow" are good ones for this session.

Encourage children to bring their Bibles to Bible school. Help them to find the memory verse.

Additional activities may be used to extend a session, depending on the amount of time available. Consider the age and abilities of your VBS children so that you choose appropriate activities.

Additional activities

- 1. Tell the children that one way to follow Jesus** is to ask yourself “What would Jesus do?” in a situation. Divide into small groups and give each a scenario, asking themselves what Jesus would do in this situation. Have the small groups take turns acting out their scenario for the larger group.
 - You see someone bullying another student at recess.
 - Your sister took your favorite toy without asking, again.
 - An elderly next door neighbor is mowing her lawn. She gets tired easily.
 - When you sit down with your friends at lunch, you notice a classmate sitting all by herself at the next table.
 - A classmate does not understand the math homework. You ride home on the same bus, and he asks you for help.
 - Your uncle’s dog needs exercise, but your uncle is sick and cannot go outside for a few days.
- 2. Jesus had a message for the fishermen.** They were to follow Jesus and fish for people. We can do kind things for others and give them messages, too! As a group, brainstorm things to tell others such as “Smile!” or “Have a happy day!” or “God loves you!” Give sidewalk chalk to the children and allow them to write their messages on the sidewalk or paved parking lot in colorful fashion.
- 3. Prior to the activity, create a line on the floor** using masking tape. Make the line move in different directions and add some twists and turns. Invite children to walk single file on the taped line, making sure to step on the tape. Ask the children if it was difficult or easy to follow the tape. How is following the tape like trying to follow Jesus through the twists and turns in our lives?
- 4. Remind children that Jesus called the fishermen** by name. Our names are important to us. Invite children to squat on the floor. As you call their name, or a category that describes them, they should jump up. They should squat again, getting ready for the next category. Call out each child’s name individually, giving time for the child to jump up. Intersperse the names with categories such as: I like to read, I have curly hair, I am wearing blue, etc. Make sure that each child jumps up at least twice.
- 5. Fold a fish!** Turn to page 11 of *Message Decoder* and learn how to turn a square piece of paper into a fish.

You may want to read to children or have them look at books, depending on how much time is available. This list offers suggestions that fit the session’s themes, or feature characters who have acted upon ideas or a call. You are welcome to find other applicable books as well.

Book list

- Brumbeau, Jeff. *The Quiltmaker’s Journey*. New York: Orchard Press, 2005.
- Martin, Jacqueline Briggs. *The Green Truck Garden Giveaway*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997.
- Roman Lord, Jill. *If Jesus Came to Visit Me*. Nashville, TN: Ideals Publications, 2010.
- Schrock, Jan West. *Give a Goat*. Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House, 2008.
- Seiling, Rebecca. *Plant a Seed of Peace*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2007.
- Skipworth, Kelly. *The Twelve Ordinary Men*. St Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2009.

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.

About the session

Children will consider what it means to open their hearts to Jesus, as Lydia did.

Session materials

- Bibles
- Bible memory poster or DVD
- *Message Received* CD
- *Message Decoder* student book for each child
- Display: purple cloth, place setting
- Large sheet of butcher or other paper, crayons

Advance preparation

- Review activities and become familiar with the session plan.
- Decide on any additional activities and gather supplies as needed.
- Display the Bible memory poster or show the video.
- Arrange the purple cloth and place setting in the story area.

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.

Bible Response session plan

Introduction

1. **Greet the children.** Find out which session the children have just experienced and ask about it: What activities did you do? What did you learn? What did you like best?
2. **Invite children to gather** in the story area and sit around the purple cloth and place setting. Share about an experience you have had hosting someone in your house. Ask children if they have hosted people in their houses. What did they do? Did they eat a meal or a snack? How did they make the guest feel welcomed?
3. **Share that today's story** is about a woman named Lydia. Lydia was a woman who loved God and, in today's story, learns to open her heart to Jesus as well. Explain that Lydia was a businesswoman who worked with purple cloth, a color that was used to signify wealth and royalty. She lived in a house large enough to accommodate guests and hosted other Christians in her home.

Explain that we open our hearts to Jesus when we decide to follow him. When we make decisions based upon what Jesus taught us to do, we are opening our hearts to him.

The Bible text

1. **Find Acts 16 in the Bible.** Explain that today's story is found in the New Testament of the Bible, in the book of Acts. Acts is filled with stories of people who wanted to follow Jesus. Read the story from Acts 16:11-15, 40.
2. **Connect to the story** by discussing some of the following questions. Invite children to share their own questions or comments.
 - What surprised you about this story?
 - The Lord called Lydia to open her heart to what Paul was saying. How did Lydia's life change because of listening to Paul?
 - Why do you think Lydia wanted Paul and Silas to come to her house?
 - If you could invite anyone to your house, who would you invite, and why?
3. **Spread out a large sheet of butcher paper** on a table or a smooth floor. Invite children to gather around it. Each child should use crayons to draw a picture of a place setting including a plate, cup, and flatware. You may need to demonstrate this for younger children.

Invite children to brainstorm out loud ways to open our hearts to Jesus and to others, like Lydia did. Have children write or draw one idea on their plate. If time allows, let the children color and decorate the paper.
4. **Children can retell Lydia's story. Turn to page 12 in *Message Decoder*.** Divide children into groups of two or three and give each group a coin or button. Put the books on the floor and invite children to take turns standing above the book and dropping a coin onto the page. They will respond to what is written in the box where the coin lands.

Pope Francis explains that it is the Holy Spirit that opened Lydia's heart in this reading. "Each time we feel something in our heart that draws us to Jesus, it is the Spirit working within," he said. That same Spirit pushes us to make Jesus known to other people, he continued, not only with words but with the way we live our lives. (5/2/2016)

Bible memory

1. **Open the Bible to 2 Corinthians 5.** Tell them that this book is found in the New Testament. It was written by the apostle Paul to the church at Corinth, to instruct them in their faith.
2. **Refer to the Bible memory poster or the video.** Read 2 Corinthians 5:17a together with older children, or read it to younger children and ask them to repeat it.

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

Review the verse several times if you wish.

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 (*push one fist through the other hand that is in the shape of a hole, as though making a new flower grow up from a space in the ground, and open fist into a flower*).

3. **Show the memory verse in Message Decoder page 15.** At the end of Bible school, children will take their books home to help them remember the verses. Challenge children to learn today's verse until they can say it by memory.

Closing

1. **Pray:** *Dear God, thank you for showing us how to follow you. Help us to be open to you and the things that you taught us.*
2. **Lead a closing reading.** Read it several times and have children join in the motions, and words if they are able to do so.

May you have listening ears to hear God's call (*point to ears*), courageous hearts to answer, "Here I am!" (*point to heart*), and willing hands to go and serve (*hold out hands*).

3. **Play or sing a song from the Message Received CD.** "Open My Eyes" and "We Are Children of God" are good ones for this session.

Encourage children to bring their Bibles to Bible school. Help them to find the memory verse.

Additional activities may be used to extend a session, depending on the amount of time available. Consider the age and abilities of your VBS children so that you choose appropriate activities.

Additional activities

- 1. Just as Lydia and Paul and others who believed** in Jesus gathered at Lydia's house, those who believe in Jesus today still gather together! Walk from room to room in the church and talk about what happens in each space when believers are gathered there. Talk about ways believers gather together outside of church, too.
- 2. Go on a Lydia treasure hunt.** Prior to the activity, place items semi-hidden around the room that help to tell today's Bible story. Examples include purple fabric, model or picture of a house, picture of a river, picture of a gathering of friends, etc. Allow children to walk around the room silently looking for the items, but to not tell others what they find. After a few minutes, ask children to name items. Invite children to share how they relate to the Bible story.
- 3. Tell the children that one thing** those who believe in Jesus do when they gather is to praise God! Hand out a variety of instruments and noisemakers such as drums, tambourines, kettles with lids, whistles, shakers, spoons and plastic plates, etc. Or, you can help the children make their own noisemakers by putting dried beans or other objects inside a paper cup and taping a piece of paper over the open end to create a lid. Shake and play the noisemakers and praise God!
- 4. Create cards or notes of encouragement.** Not only do Christians gather together to praise God, but also to encourage each other. Have on hand a variety of papers and note cards, as well as markers and crayons, and allow time for children to write words of encouragement to others. You may want to offer suggestions such as parents, siblings, friends, pastor, teacher, and other persons.
- 5. Lydia followed Jesus. Turn to page 13 in *Message Decoder*** and follow the letters to spell out the memory verse. Answer:

B	N	P	V	L	N →	C	Q	P	F	I	C
W	M	O	E	M	↑	↓					
					I	H →	R →	I	C	S	E
N	A	H	U	I →	↑			↓			
					S	B	R	S	T	O	R
I	Y	F	N →	E	↑			↓			
					H	G	Y	T	E →	R →	E
S	M	P	O	Z	↑			↓			
↓					S	A	R	T →	H	S ←	I
O →	I	N →	Y	L	T	E	C	R	N	A	D
	↓	↑									
N	F →	A	I	R	O	I ←	T ←	A	V	N →	E
						↓		↑			
Y	S	P	T	E	D	O	U	E ←	R ←	C ←	W
						↓					
N	G	O	I	C	U	N	A	P	O	L	D

Book list

- Leodhas, Sorche Nic. *Always Room for One More*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1965.
- Pearson, Emily. *Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed*. Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2002.
- Schuette, Sarah L. *Purple: Seeing Purple All around Us*. Mankato, MN: Capstone, 2003.
- Stein, David Ezra. *Because Amelia Smiled*. Sommerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2012.
- Vischer, Phil. *47 Beavers on the Big, Blue Sea*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012.

You may want to read to children or have them look at books, depending on how much time is available. This list offers suggestions that fit the session's themes, or feature characters who have acted upon ideas or a call. You are welcome to find other applicable books as well.

