

MESSAGE  
RECEIVED

# PARENT NOTES

Day 1: **SAMUEL**

HEARING GOD'S CALL

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Thank you for entrusting your child to us for this special experience. We appreciate the chance to be with your child and share the message of God's call with him or her. However, we also know that *you* are the key person who will pass on faith to this child, so we will be sharing with you what we are discussing each day and give you ideas for how to follow up with your child.

On Day 1, we focused on the story of the boy Samuel in the Old Testament. Samuel begins his ministry as a child after experiencing something highly unusual—he actually hears God's voice calling him in the night. Though understandably perplexed and perhaps a bit afraid, young Samuel is willing to take on whatever God has for him.

Children are fascinated that someone their own age was given such an important task from God. We hope the story encourages them to listen for the voice of God as they make decisions. It probably won't be an audible voice that they hear, but God will speak to them in other ways. For example, God speaks to us through other people who challenge us to choose loving actions, or help us to recognize our own goodness and worth. God speaks to us through others who offer us comfort or strength or hope. God speaks through people who challenge us to amend our ways when we are acting hurtfully. God speaks to us through Bible stories and a nurturing parish community.

Here are conversation starters and next steps for following up with your child today:

1. **"Tell me about the Bible story you heard today."** Ask follow-up questions or help them fill in the details if they can't remember them all. You can look it up (see right).
2. **"How do you think God speaks to you?"** Share examples like those above—if possible from your own life—of how God communicated a message.
3. **"What is God's message for you?"** This is where a lot of us need help discerning what is from God, and what is not from God. A good rule of thumb to keep in mind is something that St. Ignatius taught and has been helpful to people for hundreds of years. If something helps you to feel more courageous, loving, loved, comforted, joyful, forgiving, strengthened, etc., the message is probably of God. If it causes you discouragement, shame, despair, anxiety, depression, etc., the message is probably not of God.
4. **Pray with your child**, perhaps at dinner or bedtime. You can use the prayer starter to the right to begin. This is also a good time for them to recite their bible memory verse from the day (right).

Thank you for all you do as a parent. We're looking forward to spending more time with your child tomorrow!

—The Message Received team

## FAITH FOCUS

God calls us to listen and respond.

## BIBLE STORY

1 Samuel 3:1-21

## BIBLE MEMORY

Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!

– Luke 11:28b

## PRAYER STARTER

God, help us to be like Samuel and to have open ears, eyes, and hearts to hear you, see you, and experience your love today.



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# PARENT NOTES

Day 2: **ESTHER**

HEARING GOD'S CALL

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Today we focused with the children on the story of Esther and how she was called to save her people. (Esther 4:13-17). 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. It is an unusual story of call. Esther has to make difficult choices in which she sacrifices her own needs and takes a great personal risk for the needs of the greater community. The story provides a picture of God working through circumstances and people to save others.

Here are conversation starters and next steps for following up with your child today:

1. **“Tell me about the Bible story of Esther.”** Ask follow-up questions or help them fill in the details if they can't remember them all. The entire story comprises several pages in the Bible, but the children were told the larger context of the short excerpt they heard.
2. **“Esther didn't hear God talking to her like Samuel did so how do you think she knew what was the right thing to do?”** In this particular story, it was Esther's relative Mordecai who urged and encouraged her to do the right thing, even though it was scary.
3. **“Who are some of the people who help you know what the right thing is to do?”** Wonder together how to recognize and pay attention to the many ways God speaks. Remember St. Ignatius' rule of thumb from yesterday: if someone helps you to feel more courageous, loving, loved, comforted, joyful, forgiving, strengthened, etc, they are probably speaking God's message.
4. **Remember Esther with kindness.** The Jewish festival of Purim celebrates how Esther saved 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. Today challenge everyone in your household to do a Random Act of Kindness for someone else.
5. **Pray with your child**, perhaps at dinner or bedtime. Use the prayer starter to the right to begin, and have your child recite their bible memory verse from today (right).

Thank you for your help reinforcing what we learned today. Tomorrow we'll be learning more about how God is calling each of us!

—The Message Received team

## FAITH FOCUS

God calls us to work together for what is right.

## BIBLE STORY

Esther 4:13-17

## BIBLE MEMORY

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

– 1 Thessalonians 5:11

## PRAYER STARTER

God, help us to be courageous like Esther, and to do what is right, even if it is scary.



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A blue speech bubble with the words "MESSAGE RECEIVED" in white, bold, sans-serif font. To the right of the bubble are several horizontal lines of varying lengths, suggesting motion or a signal.

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A green speech bubble with the words "HEARING GOD'S CALL" in white, bold, sans-serif font. To the left of the bubble are several horizontal lines of varying lengths, suggesting motion or a signal.

HEARING GOD'S CALL

# PARENT NOTES

Day 3: **MARY**

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Mary received a message from God in a surprising and dramatic way—through an angel! “Here I am” was Mary’s simple response to a call that would change not only her life, but the entire world. She was an ordinary young woman who was asked to do something extraordinary. She responded with puzzlement and wonder, but she chose 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.

Here are conversation starters and next steps for following up with your child today:

1. **“Tell me about the story of Mary from today.”** Ask follow-up questions or help them fill in the details if they can’t remember them all (see reference to the right).
2. **“How do you think you would feel and what might you say if an angel came to you and asked you to do something great but hard? Even if an angel has never come to you, what is something you’ve done before that you knew was right, but it took some courage?”** Let your child know what your answers are to these questions too!
3. **“What is something scary for you that perhaps God is telling you that you don’t have to be afraid of?”** Explain that there are many, many places in the Bible where an angel or Jesus tells someone, “Do not be afraid.” The angel says this to both Mary and Joseph.
4. **Pray with your child**, perhaps at dinner or bedtime. You can use the prayer starter to the right to begin, and have your child recite their bible memory verse from today (see right).

We’re halfway through, but have a lot of fun still to come!

—The Message Received team

## FAITH FOCUS

We are called to trust God’s plan.

## BIBLE STORY

Luke 1:26-56

## 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

## PRAYER STARTER

Jesus, help us to trust in God’s plan for us even when we don’t understand it or we feel fearful.



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HEARING GOD'S CALL

# PARENT NOTES

Day 4: **DISCIPLES**

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The disciples were called in the middle of their daily tasks. 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 work, they have a life-changing encounter with Jesus. Jesus said, "Follow me," and the men dropped their fishing nets and followed Jesus.

Matthew's account includes Jesus' words: "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." It could be puzzling for your child to try to understand "fishing for people." Think of it as sharing Jesus' love with everyone you meet—family, friends, classmates, and others.

Here are conversation starters and next steps for following up with your child today:

1. **"Tell me about the Bible story you heard today."** Ask follow-up questions or help them fill in the details from the two Gospel stories listed to the right.
2. **"What do you think it means to 'fish for people'?"** Muse with them about this, perhaps suggesting that it's a matter of looking for friends that want to do the right thing in the world and setting a good example for others of doing the right thing. It could also mean inviting friends to come as guests to your parish.
3. **"It's pretty amazing that the people could just leave everything and follow Jesus. Is there anything we need to leave behind in order to do so?"** Talk with your child about what things keep us from following Jesus into a new place full of surprises.
4. **Pray with your child**, perhaps at dinner or bedtime. You can use the prayer starter to the right to begin, and have your child recite their bible memory verse from today (see right).

We have one day left ahead of us, and one more story about God's special messages.

—The Message Received team

## FAITH FOCUS

Jesus calls us to follow him.

## BIBLE STORY

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

## BIBLE MEMORY

Follow me and I will make you fish for people.

— Mark 1:17b

## PRAYER STARTER

Jesus, help us to follow you by knowing and doing what the right thing is, even if it seems hard.



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# PARENT NOTES

Day 5: **LYDIA**

HEARING GOD'S CALL

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As the story of Lydia 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 religious but not Christian. She is a dealer in purple cloth, reserved for the wealthy and those of high status. Most likely, she is socially and financially accomplished and moves in circles of power and influence.

As the story unfolds, Lydia hears a call from God to listen to what Paul is saying, and her life changes forever. Soon she and her entire household are baptized. Afterward, she opens up her house (likely a large and comfortable space) as a place for believers to gather. Remember that in the early days of Christianity people met in houses for prayer and worship, not churches, so it was important to have generous hosts such as Lydia.

Here are conversation starters and next steps for following up with your child today:

1. **“Tell me about the story of Lydia.”** Ask follow-up questions or help them fill in the details if they can’t remember them all. You can look it up in a Bible (see right).
2. **“Are there any of your friends you would like to invite to come to church with us sometime so they can hear about God and Jesus?”** This story is a good reminder that we can tell others about God, such as Paul did with Lydia.
3. **“What Bible story did you like the best this week? How come?”** See if your child can remember back to each of the stories we shared.
4. **Pray with your child**, perhaps at dinner or bedtime. You can use the prayer starter to the right to begin, and have your child recite their bible memory verse from today (see right).

We have really appreciated having your child be a part of our *Message Received* experience this year to share in the fun. If you don’t already worship with us regularly, we invite you to join us for Sunday Mass. Thanks again for all you do parenting your child and sharing your faith.

—The Message Received team

## FAITH FOCUS

God calls us to open our hearts to Jesus.

## BIBLE STORY

Acts 16:11-15, 40

## BIBLE MEMORY

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.

– 2 Corinthians 5:17a

## PRAYER STARTER

Jesus, help us to tell other people about you so that they will know you too.



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