

LearningCycles

SAMUEL

The Boy Who Listened to God

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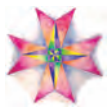
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About LearningCycles

What is LearningCycles?

LearningCycles is an innovative approach to faith formation. It takes seriously the spiritual development of children while providing creative and exciting activities that engage children in a whole new level of learning and retention. The rotation-style model means that children work on the same story or concept for several weeks, using different learning approaches in each workshop room they visit.

Ideas for possible workshops:

Art
Storytelling
Music
Group Activities
Cooking

Science Experiments
Games
Drama or Puppets
Movies
Geography or Map Excursions

Easy to Adapt

You can use the activities in this resource for shorter learning center events, normal classroom use, intergenerational gatherings, and more. Adapt what you find here to best suit your faith formation situation.



Recruiting LearningCycles Leaders

LearningCycles make it VERY easy to increase your number of volunteers, by dividing jobs into manageable parts. Here are some ways that parishioners of ALL ages can be involved:

CYCLE LEADERS sign up as part of a team of 2 or 3 adults who will teach one 4-6 week cycle. Teachers remain in the same workshop room each week of the cycle and teach the same lesson plan to different classes each week. Workshop rooms may use skills in areas as music, dance, cooking, quilting, gardening or painting, but you don't have to have a special skill in order to help. Teachers can sign up to help read stories, turn on computers, make popcorn, hand out art supplies, etc.

SHEPHERDS commit for the entire school year, but they never have to prepare or teach a lesson! Shepherds work in teams and travel with their class through each of the different workshops. Shepherds are the essential relationship part of this program, learning the children's names, providing continuity of leadership and being a friendly, safe presence in the classroom each week.

CYCLE COORDINATORS are needed for each different cycle. These people manage the details of a cycle, contacting all the volunteer teachers for that cycle, distributing the lesson plans, making sure supplies are purchased, etc.

Some churches have also used:

DECORATING TEAM A resourceful group of people is needed to create and plan new and evolving learning spaces. These folks might be interior designers, or they may be people who are just addicted to home improvement shows or have a knack for decorating inexpensively! Churches who share space or don't have the budget for large-scale renovations will need a group of creative thinkers to come up with props or posters that can be used on Sunday, but safely stored away during the week.

RESOURCE TEAM This "big picture" group can be comprised of all your cycle coordinators, as well as interested parents. Together the group handles trouble-shooting, long-range plans and communication to the entire church. For churches that already have a catechist or formation team, that committee can provide the functions of a Resource Team.



General Class Structure

- 1. OPENING ACTIVITY** (10-15 minutes, as children arrive)
Welcome students and make sure everyone has a nametag. Opening activities give early arrivers something to start on immediately and provide a warm, busy room for children to enter. The activity could be simply drawing or decorating your nametag. It could also be coloring sheets or simple games. Check the “Filler Activities” of your lesson plan for ideas or ask your Cycle Coordinator.
- 2. INTRODUCTIONS** (approximately 10 minutes)
 - a. Introduce yourself:** Tell students about you – your family, how long you have been at this church, what kind of work you do, what your hobbies are, why you signed up to help teach, etc.
 - b. Introduce the cycle story or theme:** Ask children what they’ve been studying or have done in other rooms on other weeks. Talk about the basic theme or season (see the Overview p. 6 for some ideas). Read the story to children.
 - c. Introduce your activity:** Tell the children which part of the story your room is focusing on, and perhaps ask them to re-tell you that part of the story in their own words.
- 3. WORKSHOP ACTIVITY AND REFLECTION** (approximately 25-30 minutes)
See attached lesson plans for specific instructions about the main activity. Supplies should be in your classroom, but if you need help, ask your cycle coordinator. If you run low on supplies, please tell your coordinator so they can plan accordingly.

If children finish early, you can use any of the “Filler Activities” provided in each lesson plan. In addition, you may use activity sheets (see “Suggested Resources for this Cycle”) as “quiet work” for the early finishers while they wait for everyone to complete the task.

Try to plan your time so that children finish the activity and still have a few minutes to process the class by journaling or drawing. Encourage them to take their work seriously, and try to foster a semi-quiet atmosphere that allows children to think about what they have heard, seen and experienced. Ask questions like “What did you learn today?” or “How did you feel while doing this activity?” Connect your activity back to the story. Studies show us that quiet reflection time is what helps move items from short-term memory into long-term memory so this piece is VERY important!

- 4. CLEAN UP** (approximately 5 minutes)
Have children help clean up and make sure everyone has their papers, jackets, etc. If parents come to the classroom to pick up their children, this is a good time to praise children in front of their parents. This is also a good time to discuss any concerns or questions quietly with parents. Tell the children goodbye. Thank them for coming.



Theological Overview of this Cycle

The life story of Samuel is full of rich images, themes and lessons for people of all ages. It is the story of a woman who was tormented by a rival because she had no child and about the sacrificial bargain she struck with God in order to have the child she so longed for. It is also the story of an old priest with two unscrupulous sons who unexpectedly inherits a child to train in the things of God. But most of all, it is the story of a simple child who was quiet enough (and attentive enough!) to hear the voice of God in a time when “the word of the Lord was rare and visions were not widespread.” (I Samuel 3:1)

For older children (and teachers, if you do a teacher Bible study) take some time to look at how the concept of words becomes an important theme in this story. Not only do we have the above verse about “the word of the Lord” being rare, but we also have this lovely description in I Samuel 3:19 – “As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.” There is a lot of fodder for discussion in just those two phrases! Talk about what they mean and why words are important. You can also connect this idea of important words of the Lord to the teaching we do in faith formation.

Another interesting point in this cycle is the drama room, where we talk with the children about what it means to grow out of something or to grow into something. If you would like to incorporate a mission activity, the lesson in this room gives you a perfect introduction for collecting clothes, toys, books, etc. to share with other children.

During this cycle, we use many various ways to teach children about listening for God’s voice. By using different learning styles over several weeks, it better reinforces the story in children’s minds and helps with long-term retention. We encourage you to actively help children memorize the short summary verse: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” (I Samuel 3:10) Even the youngest children can commit this to memory without much trouble.

Teaching our children to listen for the voice of God – to recognize the presence of God in their daily lives – is one of the most important things we can do to help them in their spiritual development. It is a lifelong process, but this story is a great way to help children learn to take time to be quiet and listen. Sometimes when we teach our children to pray, we forget to also teach them to find times to just be still and see what happens.

We live in a world where quiet is a precious and rare commodity and the voice of God is sometimes hard to hear. Although many of our colleagues in Eastern traditions know a lot about connecting spiritual health to silence and meditation, most of us in the West don’t spend much time cultivating silence. We hope you will be able to use this story as a way not just to teach the children about listening for God’s voice, but also as a way to remind ourselves to “be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10)

In God’s Peace –
Tracey E. Herzer



Letter to the Parents for this Cycle

(We suggest you mail this letter to all parents with a copy of the cycle story – you may also want to send copies of the Theological Overview)

Dear Parents –

For the next several weeks, your children will be learning about the story of Samuel who learned at a very young age to listen for God's voice. This unit provides a great opportunity for you to talk with your child about the places and times when you yourself find it easiest to be still and listen for God's presence in your life. Where do you find quiet in your life? Early morning? Yoga? Evening walks? This is also a good time to look at your family rituals – bedtime, mealtime, anytime – where you may have some quiet time to talk with your child about God.

There are many children's bibles available, but one great option is ***The Family Story Bible***. It has wonderful illustrations and a particularly engaging approach to storytelling that delves into the emotions of the characters and adds details that particularly speak to children. If you are looking for a family bible to read with your young children, this might be a good place to start. You can find it and other options at <http://pastoral.center/childrens-bibles>. Older children can read more adult versions of the bible, but will still benefit from discussing with you what they hear or read in the stories. Find good options for youth bibles at <http://pastoral.center/bibles-youth>.

During this cycle we will be talking about what it meant for Samuel to grow up in the temple and what it meant for Hannah to honor her promise to God. Children will learn about Eli's role in the temple and will be able to create a priest's breastplate of their own while we talk about the roles priests or ministers play in our lives and what it means to be part of the "priesthood of believers". We will also look at clips from Disney's Lion King and relate Simba's decision to accept his role and responsibility to our own choices about how we live as children of God. We will also be playing with quiet foods and noisy foods in the kitchen while we learn that we need both noisy conversation and quiet reflection time in our prayer lives and we will spend some time talking about what our names mean. All of this adds up to a very exciting unit, so we hope you will plan to have your child join us for this cycle!

Most of us live busy, overscheduled lives and times of quiet seem so rare – but I really encourage you to look for an opportunity in the next couple of weeks to spend some quiet time with your child if possible. Having your children in faith formation is a wonderful part of Christian life, but even more important are the times your family spends thinking and talking about the things of God. You don't have to be a Bible scholar to share these things with your child... so please come join us on this adventure!

God's Peace (and quiet) to you –
Tracey E. Herzer



Story for Cycle: Samuel Who Listened

The Boy who Listened to God

To be read each week of the cycle

Once there was a woman named Hannah who wanted a baby. Each year, she and her husband and their whole family would go to the city of Shiloh to pray and offer thanks to God. One night in Shiloh, Hannah went to the temple to pray. She promised if God gave her a son, she would take him to live in the temple where he could spend his life serving God. Eli, the temple priest heard Hannah's prayer and said "May God grant your prayer." Then Hannah and her family returned home.

After a while, Hannah gave birth to a son and named him Samuel. She loved and nursed Samuel and when he was old enough, Hannah remembered her promise to God and she took Samuel to live in the temple. Eli took good care of Samuel and taught him many things about God. Eli was so happy to have Samuel with him, because Eli's own sons were dishonest and didn't care about the things of God.

Samuel grew up in the temple and every year, when Hannah and her family came to Shiloh to pray, she would visit Samuel and Eli in the temple. Each year, Hannah would bring a new coat for her beloved son and each year, Eli would offer special blessings upon Hannah and her husband for bringing Samuel to live in the temple.

One night, Samuel was lying in bed and he heard a voice call. Samuel jumped out of bed and ran to Eli's room saying, "Here I am!" But Eli said, "I did not call you. Go back to bed."

In a short while, the boy heard the voice again: "Samuel, Samuel," and again he went to Eli, but the priest assured him that he had not spoken.

The third time Samuel heard the voice, Eli told him that it must be the voice of God and he told Samuel what to say. So Samuel lay down in the dark and waited. After a while he heard, "Samuel, Samuel."

This time Samuel was ready and he said, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

Samuel listened to God many times during the rest of his life. Samuel served God in the temple and when he grew old, the people asked him to appoint a king to rule over them. Samuel asked God who he should choose and God told Samuel to anoint Saul as the first king. Later, Samuel also anointed King David.

Samuel was well respected and well-loved. Because he listened to everything God told him to do, he had a long life full of blessings.

Story re-told by Tracey Herzer
(I Samuel – chapters 1-3; 9-10; 16; 25)



Suggested Resources for Cycle

VIDEOS or DVDs

For this cycle, we decided to use 33 minutes from Walt Disney's film **The Lion King**, a hugely popular movie that most of your children will have seen. There is such richness in this story and it begins to teach children a higher level of thinking – being able to make associations from one kind of story (like the biblical story of Samuel) to another (like the fictional story of Simba). Plus, we think there are lots of great opportunities to teach God's truths from this story. Check out the Movie Workshop plans for ways we connected the story back to the Bible. The DVD is available for purchase at <https://pastoral.center/the-lion-king>.

Nest Family Videos is often a favorite resource because the videos come with an activity book. And they do offer a set on **The Story of Samuel**. However, it probably won't work for young children (K-2) because the write-up seems a little violent with emphasis on Eli's wicked sons and God's judgment. The sons are killed, the Philistines take the Ark of the Covenant and Eli falls to his death... which are not the parts of the story we chose to focus on in this cycle.

If you do not wish to purchase videos, check out this short clip of God speaking to Samuel from Saddleback Kids YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P13uIsFW7OA>.



Activities Overview for This Cycle

WORKSHOP	SUMMARY OF PLANS	FOCUS
ART	Creating a priest's breastplate like Eli and Samuel would have worn in the temple	Investigating the roles of priests and pastors
PUBLISHING	Talking about the importance of our names and what it means for God to call us by name	Finding out what our names mean
DRAMA	Trying on different jackets; possible service project opportunity	Looking at what we grow out of and what we grow into
MOVIE	Watching clips from Disney's "The Lion King"	Comparing Simba's call to Samuel's call and to our call
STORY	Reading the story of Samuel using different readers; playing listening games	Understanding how important it is to listen to God
KITCHEN	Experimenting with Noisy foods & Quiet foods	Learning how both talking and listening are forms of prayer
MUSIC	Illustrating the words of "Here I am, Lord"; singing other songs	Discovering how we can be available for what God asks of us



Samuel Who Listened: Story Workshop

Bible Reference for the Cycle:

I Samuel, chapters 1-3

Main Verse for the Cycle:

“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (I Samuel 3:10)

Key Concepts and Life Application:

- Samuel was willing to listen to what God was saying and do as God asked
- God speaks to us in various ways and we can listen for God’s voice
- Listening for God’s voice is sometimes hard to do

Summary of Class Plans:

In this workshop, the children will read the story of Samuel dramatically and talk about listening for God. They will also play some listening games.

Materials Needed:

For Class plans:

- Copies of the story of Samuel (p. 29-31) to pass out to students
- Scarf or other kind of blindfold

For optional filler activities:

- Recording of different church members reading the memory verse
- Portable tape player
- Blank paper for drawing
- Crayons

Workshop Lesson Plans:

- You can refer to “A General Schedule for Class Structure” (included in the Introductory Materials) for ideas on how to introduce yourself and the story, as well as how to plan your class time appropriately.
- Gather your class together and invite them to get ready for story listening and story telling. Ask students what they know or remember about the story of Samuel.
- FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS: With pre-readers and early readers (K-1st), you will probably just want to read them the story of Samuel. You can use the story given on p. 29-31, the shorter cycle story given at the beginning of this unit, or a full-color picture book. Here are a couple of suggestions we found:
 - **Samuel and the Wake Up Call** by Jane Fryar– a paperback Arch Book
 - **The Call of Samuel** by Bryn J. Brock – a beautiful full-color picture book published in 2003 by Fountain Publishing



- **The Beginner's Bible** by Zondervan – This is my favorite children's bible and a great resource for all churches! Samuel's stories are on pages 160-168
- The story of Samuel from **The Family Story Bible** (see the Suggested Resources page)
- **FOR OLDER STUDENTS:** Your 2nd-5th Graders will need more activity than just listening to the story. One suggestion is to print out several copies of the story on the following pages and assign readers for each part. Students can sit in different corners of the room for effect and do a few motions, but don't worry about props or costumes – this doesn't need to be a complete dramatic play. The Narrator does a lot of the talking, but you could have two or three students read the Narrator part.
- After you have told the group the story, talk for just a moment about how hard it is to listen for God's voice sometimes. Tell the class that one way to learn to be a better listener is by practicing. Here are some games you can play to help students learn to listen carefully:
 - Telephone – Have students form a circle – the other children don't need to be completely quiet. The adult whispers a short 3-sentence story to the first child. You might use the cycle story, such as *"Hannah brought Samuel to live in the temple. Samuel grew up and learned to listen to God. We can listen to God too!"* Then that child turns and whispers the same phrase to the next child. Each person can only whisper their phrase once and the listener has to just repeat it as best they can. When the message comes back to the adult, they say it out loud and see if it has changed. Ask some questions like:
 - How did the story change? How did it stay the same?
 - Was the story hard to hear with all the other voices?
 - Do you think it was hard for Samuel to know who was calling him?
 - Does God ever speak to us through other people? Who?
 - (for older kids) Do you think God's message can be changed?

Because Samuel was listening, God gave him an important job to do and he became the leader of Israel. But Samuel didn't understand what God was doing at first. He had to turn to Eli for guidance. You may need to do that too. Sometimes it helps to ask for help with what God tells us.

- Who's calling me? - Have someone volunteer to be Samuel and wear a blindfold. Have another student call "Samuel, Samuel" and see if "Samuel" can tell who is calling him. If "Samuel" guesses incorrectly, the student that "Samuel" guessed can respond by saying, "I didn't call you. Go back to bed." When "Samuel" guesses correctly, someone else can have a turn being "Samuel". Here are some questions to ask after the game:
 - Was it easy or difficult for you to guess who was calling you?
 - Is it easy or difficult to know when God is calling us?
 - When you guessed correctly, how did you know who to guess?
 - How do we learn what God's voice sounds like?



- After the games are finished, have the class sit down together on the rug or at their table and talk a little more about the games they played. (We want them to see that these games were to help teach them, not just entertain them.)
- Here are some questions to get you started in your discussion:
 - Who are some people who could help you understand when God is talking to you or help you figure out how to respond?
 - Do you think God talks to kids?
 - Do you think kids talk to God?
 - When do you like to talk to God?
- Give students a few minutes to write in their journals or quietly reflect on their activity and what they have learned today. Have them focus on how they might listen for God's voice or where are some places they find it easiest to talk or listen to God.

Filler Activities:

- **Who Said It?** – Make a recording of different people in your church saying the memory verse, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Play the tape of different voices and see if children can guess who is speaking.
- **What's that sound?** – Have students cover their eyes or put their heads down on the table. Choose one volunteer to make a sound (snap their fingers, clap their hands, stomp their feet, move a chair, crumpling a piece of paper, etc.) and see if the other students can guess what the sound is and what area of the room it is coming from.
- **Describe a Picture** – Have children work in pairs. One person describes a scene (a tree, a house, a church, etc.) or object (red hat, soccer ball, favorite scarf, etc.) in great detail and the other person tries to draw it by listening carefully and following the instructions being given. After the picture is drawn, have the drawer show his or her partner and see how close it comes to what the partner was trying to describe. Then switch roles and try again.



The Boy who Listened to God

Narrator: In ancient Bible times, many men had more than one wife. Once there was a man named Elkanah who had two wives.

Elkanah: This is my wife, Penninah

Penninah: I have many children.

Elkanah: This is my wife, Hannah

Hannah: I have no children which makes me very sad.

Narrator: Every year, the whole family went to the city of Shiloh (where the Ark of the Covenant was kept) to pray and offer thanks to God. Every year, Penninah would mock Hannah (*Penninah pretends to tease*) because she had no children and Hannah would weep (*Hannah pretends to cry*) because she wanted so much to have a child.

Elkanah: Don't cry, Hannah. You are my wife and I still love you very much.

Hannah: (*keeps crying, shakes her head and holds her hand out to Elkanah so he will go away and leave her alone*)

Narrator: One night when the family was on their yearly trip to Shiloh, Hannah went to the temple to pray and to cry. She promised that if God would give her a son, she would take that son to live in the temple where he could spend his life serving God. While she was praying, the priest of the temple heard Hannah's prayer. (You could tell he was the high priest because he wore special clothes: an apron called an ephod and a special breastplate with 12 stones that represented the 12 tribes of Israel.) The high priest's name was Eli and as Hannah left the temple, Eli talked to her.

Eli: I can see how sad you are, but I will pray that God will grant your wish and give you the child you want so much.

Narrator: Then Hannah and her family returned home from the city. After a while, Hannah gave birth to a son she named Samuel. She loved and nursed the child, but when he was old enough, Hannah remembered her promise to God and she took Samuel to live in the temple where Eli would watch over him as he grew up. Eli took good care of Samuel and taught him many things about God and God's temple. Eli was so happy to have Samuel with him, especially because Eli's own sons were dishonest and didn't care about the things of God.



Narrator: So Samuel grew up in the temple with Eli and every year, when Hannah and her family came to Shiloh to pray, she would come visit Samuel and Eli in the temple. Each year, Hannah would bring a new coat for her beloved son and each year, Eli would offer special blessings upon Hannah and Elkanah for bringing Samuel to live in the temple.

One night, Samuel was lying in bed and he heard a voice calling his name.

Voice: Samuel... Samuel...

Narrator: Samuel jumped up and ran into Eli's room to see what he wanted, saying,

Samuel: "Here I am!"

Eli: "I did not call you. Go back to bed."

Narrator: Samuel went back to his room and laid down again in his bed. In a short while, the boy heard the voice again

Voice: Samuel... Samuel...

Narrator: Again, Samuel went to Eli's room but Eli said,

Samuel: "Here I am!"

Eli: "I did not call you. Go back to bed."

Narrator: And so for a third time, Samuel heard the voice:

Voice: Samuel... Samuel...

Narrator: This time when he went to Eli, Eli told him that it must be the voice of God.

Eli: Samuel, you must listen very carefully and the next time you hear the voice, you should say, "Speak, Lord for your servant is listening."

Narrator: And so, Samuel went back to his room again. He lay down in the dark and waited. After a short while, he heard...

Voice: Samuel... Samuel...

Narrator: This time Samuel was ready.

Samuel: Speak, Lord. I am your servant, and I'm ready to listen.



Voice: "I am going to do something so amazing that when anyone hears it, their ears will tingle! Even though Eli's family has been a family of priests, Eli's sons are wicked and they cannot be priests in my temple. They steal the best meats that people bring as sacrifices and they do not honor my name. You must tell their father that they cannot serve as priests."

Narrator: The next morning Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the bad news he had heard, but Eli asked him to tell the truth and not hide anything from him. So Samuel obeyed and told Eli everything he had heard. Then Eli said...

Eli: So be it. It is the word of the Lord.

Narrator: And so Samuel grew up in the temple, and Eli trained him to be a priest, instead of training his sons in the traditional priestly duties.

When Samuel grew old, the people asked him to appoint a king to rule over them. Samuel asked the Lord what he should do, and the Lord said, "There is a man called Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, and he is the one you must choose." Samuel anointed Saul with oil contained in an animal horn. It was a sign that Saul was chosen by God and belonged to the Lord in a special way.

Later, Samuel would also anoint the next king. God told Samuel to go to Bethlehem, where he would find a man called Jesse. "I have chosen one of the sons of Jesse to be the next king," he said. The youngest of Jesse's sons, David, was chosen by Samuel. "The Lord sees not as people see; for people look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7) Once again, Samuel took oil and anointed David with the holy oil. And from that day on the spirit of the Lord was with King David.

Samuel was the last great religious leader of the Israelites, for the people of Israel asked God for a King to lead them so that they could be like all the other nations. Samuel was well respected and well-loved. Because he listened to everything God told him to do, he had a long life full of blessings.



Samuel Who Listened: Music Workshop

Bible Reference for the Cycle:

I Samuel, chapters 1-3

Main Verse for the Cycle:

“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (I Samuel 3:10)

Key Concepts and Life Application:

- Samuel was willing to listen to what God was saying and do as God asked
- We can be available to God too – “Here I am, Lord!”

Summary of Class Plans:

Students will learn the chorus to “Here I am, Lord” and illustrate the words to the hymn while talking about how we can be available to God.

Materials Needed:

For Class plans:

- Church hymnals or other songbooks if needed
- Guitar or piano
- Words to the hymn “Here I am, Lord” (Also called by the first line of the first verse: “I, the Lord, of sea and sky”) This hymn is available in many hymnals or songbooks.
- Music player
- CD or recording of music:
 - Soft classical music for background while students are working
 - Recording of “Here I am, Lord”
- Long roll of butcher paper
- Scissors
- Tape
- Crayons or Markers

For optional filler activities:

- Soft music
- Index cards or blank paper
- Crayons or markers

Workshop Lesson Plans

- If possible, have some soft music playing as children come into the room and gather. You can refer to “A General Schedule for Class Structure” (included in the Introductory Materials) for ideas on how to introduce yourself and the story, as well as how to plan your class time appropriately.



- Some basic tips for teaching music to children:
 - **Be Enthusiastic!** Your mood really sets the tone of the class – if you are bored or intimidated or cautious, chances are the kids will be too!
 - **Be Confident!** Children really don't care how well (or how badly) you sing – they just want to have fun!
 - **Be Creative!** Use simple instruments, teach them some sign language (available online or in books) or help them make up motions for some words
 - **Be Repetitive!** Children – especially pre-readers – will need to sing something several times before it “sticks”. When teaching a new song, you might try singing one line to them and have them sing it back to you
 - **Be Active!** It is hard for children to sit still for long so if you want them to really get into the music, encourage them to clap, sway, add motions, etc.
- Begin by reading the story of Samuel. You may want to have children lay down and close their eyes while you read. After you have finished the story, play a recording of the hymn “Here I am, Lord.” (If you cannot find a recording, but have someone who is willing to sing and play it, that will work too.) After the children have heard the story and the song, ask them to sit up and then discuss what things seem similar and what things seem different between the story and the song.
- Teach the children the chorus of the hymn. Write the words up on a blackboard or poster so the children can read them:

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
 I have heard you calling in the night.
 I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
 I will hold your people in my heart.

Sing it through several times so that the kids have a chance to really learn it. Older children can try to sing the verses too. Younger children can listen to the verses and join in on the chorus again.

- There are other hymns or songs that have to do with listening to God:
 - *Word of God Speak*, MercyMe
 - *Your Words are Spirit and Life*, Bernadette Farrell
 - *You Are Mine*, David Haas
- After you are done singing, roll out a length of butcher paper and have the class illustrate one verse of “Here I am, Lord” (or another song, if you choose). Encourage students to really think about what they are doing. This art-like project is really a way to “color our prayers to God” in a way that is sometimes hard to do in words.



- Students can color scenes from the Samuel story, scenes from their own life, or just about anything else they can imagine. Play some soft music in the background and try to foster a quiet atmosphere of “holy ground.” I understand that children won’t be completely silent, nor should they have to be, but I think it is important to understand that this is a prayer method and not just a way to fill time before class is over.
- You may wish to assign different verses (or parts of verses) to different classes and then post the verses in sequential order so everyone can see the progress.
- You might also want to talk to your musicians or whoever is in charge of music ministry to see if there is a time when the hymns you have used in this workshop can be included in the main worship service. It is important for children to connect what happens in faith formation classes to what happens during Mass or community worship.
- Give students a few minutes to write in their journals or quietly reflect on their activity and what they have learned today. Ask them to write at the top of their page “Here I am, Lord” and focus their writing on what that means for them.

Optional Filler Activities:

- Yoga or Tai Chi – Samuel was able to say “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening” because he was quiet. How do we find quiet in our lives? This music and movement workshop provides a great opportunity to introduce some gentle yoga or tai chi to the children. There are many books on these subjects, but if you aren’t comfortable with this, ask around and find someone in your congregation who practices yoga or Tai Chi to give you some suggestions (or better yet, to come in and lead the class in one of those practices!). Just a few minutes of quiet relaxation and gentle stretching can really help children focus their attention.
- Word Scramble – Write the words to the “Here I am Lord” chorus or to the memory verse on index cards – one word per card. See if children can put the words into their correct order. Practice reading all the words in their correct order and then give someone else a turn at the game.
- More Music – In the music workshop, you can always fill up any extra time with more singing or more listening to music! 😊

