

Coming through the Night

The challenge of Ordinary Time is to hold it as dear as we hold to the high feasts and holy days. The readings for this week urge us to stay awake and responsive to our true calling and identity as children of God. We are given Ordinary Time to explore with urgency so we may grow in this great, green season of the Christian year.



Focus scripture
1 Samuel 3:1–10
(11–20)

Additional scriptures
Psalms 139:1–6, 13–18
1 Corinthians 6:12–20
John 1:43–51

Focus scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1–10, (11–10)

In this story of God's call to Samuel. The writer discloses very personal and private information about the nature of Eli's family dysfunctions, Samuel's relationship to Eli, and God's concern for the whole community under Eli's care. When God calls Samuel, it is clear to Eli that God had remained silent but will not be patient any longer. We see what happens when a family forgets who they are and what they represent in their community. We come to understand that God will awaken the prophets to hold the priests accountable. There is a sense of urgency in the story: "Wake up!" It seems to say, "know your worth and privilege!" Samuel is asked to guide the people toward self-reflection, repentance, and honesty, because all too often religious leaders and laity alike fall asleep, or we need help to recognize God's voice.

Psalm 139 focusses on personal growth and identity development through self-reflection. The writer describes what it is like to develop an identity based on knowledge of God's role in our lives. This psalm is about what it means to know who I am based on my understanding of who God is.

1 Corinthians 6:12–20 explains how countercultural it is to see each person's intrinsic value and individual worth. According to Paul, we can grow closer to God and each other when we know and respect our bodies and the bodies of others. Paul explains why our spiritual practices help us to understand our appetites for food or sex. This

letter would have been useful to the believers in Corinth who were surrounded by religious traditions that condoned or encouraged gluttonous behaviours as a way to experience or explore the human relationship to gods other than the God of Abraham. It would have been countercultural for followers of Christ to resist overindulging, and they would have been mocked for basing their spiritual identities in justice, equity, respect, and trust in the unconditional benevolence of God. Most people were well aware of how rare it was to seek truth about self and others.

John 1:43–51 is another glimpse into what it means to be honest with each other about God's purpose in an individual. John the baptizer called attention to Christ's identity. Nathanael makes it clear that John can proclaim whatever he believes is true about Jesus, but there would have been a bias against Jesus because of his hometown. Christ applauds Nathanael's truth-telling impulse and reflects that this desire to know and be known is a vital part of who he is created to be.

• • • • •

Stories about awakening to God's call foreshadow the ways that God brings us through the unknown. God's ways are mysterious, yes, but these stories hinge on seeking truth and wisdom about ourselves and each other. The unknown does not thwart us; we pursue understanding about God and our call as God's people.

**Calling God,
your servants are
listening. Help us
recognize your
voice. Help us
respond to your
instructions with
courage and
honesty so that
we may show love
for you and your
people. Amen.**

Lection Connection
links current events with
this week's scriptures. Go
to www.seasonsonline.ca
and click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 5–12

Children in this age group are aware of many different ways of listening. There are announcements broadcasted at school. Parents and teachers ask children to listen to instructions. Children living in rural areas may be taught to listen to the sound that wind makes announcing an approaching storm. If children have felt the vibration when a large vehicle drives by, they will know that listening can involve more than hearing with their ears. They may know someone who is hearing-impaired and can “listen” by reading lips as others speak.

This week’s session introduces the idea that God can speak to us in different ways. This may be a puzzling concept for young

children. Some may find the prospect frightening, while others may be quite taken with the possibility of God speaking to a child. Others may accept the story as they do any story of incredible events. Just as Eli helped Samuel to listen for God’s message, leaders can help the children in their group identify some ways they might also “hear” God speaking to them. Pray that you and the children will be open to listening to the many ways God speaks to our world.

Note: The engagement with the scripture passage for this group this week does not include the longer passage for this day (verses 11–20), but will focus instead on the call of Samuel as told in the first ten verses.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, 1 Samuel 3:1–20, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 59).
- ❑ Bring Bibles, matches, [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2).
- ❑ Bring, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), and *CD player*; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Set a worship space with a green cloth, Christ candle, Bible (with bookmark placed in focus passage), bowl, and a jug of water.
- ❑ Bring, if possible, the “Circle Song” (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).
- ❑ Bring several objects that make quiet sounds (such as small bell, bottle with water).

Engage

- ❑ Bring this week’s resource sheet “[Samuel Listens](#),” a small oil lamp, (if possible).
- ❑ **Bible research group:** bring copies of bottom section of this week’s resource sheet “[Samuel Listens](#).”

- ❑ **Drama group:** bring biblical costumes, if desired.

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ❑ **Art zone:** copies of this week’s resource sheet “[Oil Lamps](#),” modelling clay or play dough, cocktail toothpicks
- ❑ **Response zone:** sheets of poster board (cut into quarters), variety of art and craft materials
- ❑ **Puzzle zone:** copies of this week’s resource sheet “[Listening for God’s Call](#)”
- ❑ **Quiet zone:** round-shaped balloons, flour, spoons; check for latex allergies
- ❑ **Outreach zone:** copies of denominational magazines and mission magazines

Bless

- ❑ Bring small pieces of card stock (one for each child).
- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song “May You Find Peace” (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).



January 17, 2021

Coming through the Night

Scripture

1 Samuel 3:1–10
(11–20)

FOCUS To recognize God's call in the story of Samuel and Eli

Gather

Welcome the children as they arrive, introducing guests and newcomers. Remind children that we are in the Season after the Epiphany, a time when we hear stories about Jesus and the disciples.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship space. Point out the colour green which marks this season of growing and learning about Jesus.

Prayer ritual Come, let us remember God's love poured out over all creation and us. (*Pour water into bowl.*)

Let us remember the light of God's love that Jesus brought to our world. (*Light the candle.*)

God's love shines out for you and me. (*Invite the children to repeat this line after you.*)

Sing or listen to, if possible, the "Circle Song" (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Receive the offering and extinguish the candle to signify the end of the gathering worship.

Connecting with the focus

Invite the children to close their eyes and sit quietly to listen to the sounds that they can hear around them. Use each of the items to make some quiet sounds and invite children to listen carefully and identify the sounds.

■ What sounds do you like to listen to? Why?

Explain that today's Bible story is about a boy who listened carefully for an important message.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship area and use the bookmark to open it to the focus passage in the first book of Samuel. Explain that today's story, which comes from the first part of the Bible called the Hebrew scriptures, is about an old priest named Eli and a young boy named Samuel. Eli had been a judge in Israel for 40 years. He was also the high priest at a place called Shiloh, where the Ark of the Covenant (a very holy object for the people of Israel) was kept. Samuel's parents had dedicated Samuel to God when he was very young. Samuel lived in the shrine at Shiloh and helped Eli.

The Bible story

If possible, light a small oil lamp and darken the room. Use the resource sheet "[Samuel Listens](#)" to tell the story based on **Samuel 1:1–10**. After

the story, invite responses to the following questions:

- **What might Eli have been feeling when Samuel woke him up?**
- **What might Samuel have been feeling when Eli told him that it might be God who was calling?**

Exploring the story further

(*To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to their interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.*)

Bible research group The children in this group will have an opportunity to learn more about Samuel and Eli. Distribute copies of the bottom section of the resource sheet "[Samuel Listens](#)" and Bibles. Ask children to look up the scripture references and answer the questions.

Drama group The children in this group will have an opportunity to act out the Bible story. Assign the parts of Eli and Samuel and provide costumes, if desired. Read **Samuel 1:1–10** as “Eli” and “Samuel” act out their parts; invite the rest of the group to repeat after you the words spoken by God each time.

Reporting Invite the research group to report on their discussion and the drama group to offer a re-enactment of the story.

The Bible story and us

Lead the group in a review of the story, inviting the children to repeat each line after you:

Deep inside and all around. Listen. Listen. Listen.

Deep inside and all around, we listen for God’s call.

Samuel heard God’s call and said, “I’m listening.”

Then Samuel helped others to listen to God too.

- **What messages do you think might God have for people today?**
- **Who are those who, like Eli, can help us listen for God’s word?**

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- ❑ **Art zone: Clay lamp** One of Samuel’s jobs was to keep the lamp in the temple burning all night. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Oil Lamps](#)” and review the information. Invite children to use clay or play dough to make small lamps, using toothpicks to etch patterns, and write “I am listening” on their lamps as reminders of today’s story.
- ❑ **Response zone: Collage** God speaks to people in a variety of ways and places. Invite children to use the materials provided to create collaged images of places where they might listen for God’s voice.
- ❑ **Puzzle zone: Activity sheet** God’s presence can be “heard” in the world around us and we can respond by our actions. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Listening for God’s Call](#)” and invite children to complete the activity. Discuss the two questions together. (Hidden word: LOVE)



- ❑ **Quiet zone: Squeeze balls** Samuel was able to hear a message from God when he listened carefully. Many children concentrate better when they can do something with their hands. Invite children to work in pairs to make “squeeze balls” to hold during quiet times: have one person hold open the neck of a balloon while the other spoons flour into it. Tie a knot in the neck of the balloons. Provide quiet time for children to massage their filled balloons.
- ❑ **Outreach zone: Research** Samuel heard God’s call as a voice in the night. Invite children to find out more about experiences of listening for and responding to God’s call by reviewing stories of church workers in denominational and mission magazines. Invite them also to create a list of questions with which to interview members of the congregation about their experiences of call. Make copies of questions and plan how to do the interviews and collect the information.



Bless

Gather in the worship space and relight the candle. Remind children that God calls people in many different ways. Distribute pieces of card stock and invite children to print the word "Listen" on their cards and keep them as reminders to listen for God's call.

Pray O God,
you called Samuel to share your message of love.
Thank you for calling us to be your helpers too.
Help us to listen for your call. Amen.

Sing, if possible, the song "May You Find Peace" (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Blessing Send each child out saying, "(Name), during this week listen for God's call to you."

Reflect

In what ways have you experienced God's call? How did the children relate to the story of the boy Samuel and his call?
In what ways were children able to identify ways God might call them?



Samuel Listens

(based on 1 Samuel 3:1–20)

Encourage the children to say
the repeated speeches in
the story with
you.

Samuel slipped under the warm covers. *I checked that the lamp is burning and that the old priest Eli is asleep,* he thought as his eyes closed. Samuel had been helping Eli in the sanctuary since he was a little boy. His mother had prayed for a baby for so long that when he was born she dedicated him to God. Samuel knew she prayed for him every day, although she only saw him once a year.

Samuel was sound asleep when the voice spoke. "Samuel, Samuel."

Samuel peeked from under the covers. He slowly opened his eyes. No one around. It must have been Eli. Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am, Eli. You called me."

Eli grumbled a bit and then opened his eyes. "I did not call you, my child. Go lie down again."

Samuel went back to his bed. He pulled up the covers and quickly went back to sleep. Again, the voice woke him. "Samuel, Samuel."

Samuel peeked from under the covers. He slowly looked around. No one there, so he got up and went to Eli. "Here I am, Eli. You called me."

Eli said, "I did not call you, my son. Go lie down again."

Off to his bed Samuel went. Back to sleep, and sure enough, "Samuel, Samuel."

Slowly Samuel got up and went to Eli one more time. "Here I am, Eli. You called me."

This time Eli sat up. "No, I didn't call you, Samuel. I think God is calling you. Go lie down and if you hear the voice again, say, 'Speak, God, for your servant is listening.'"

Samuel did as Eli said. But Samuel could not go back to sleep. His ears were wide awake. Then the voice said, "Samuel, Samuel."

"Speak, God, for your servant is listening."

God gave Samuel a message to give to Eli. God also had special work for Samuel. Samuel would be a prophet and give messages from God to the people. Samuel would help the people follow God's way again.

Bible research group

Look up the verses to answer the following questions:

- What was Samuel's father's name? (1 Samuel 1:1)
- What was Eli's job? (1 Samuel 1:9–10)
- Why was Hannah, Samuel's mother, so sad? (1 Samuel 1:11)
- Where did Samuel sleep at night? (1 Samuel 3:3)

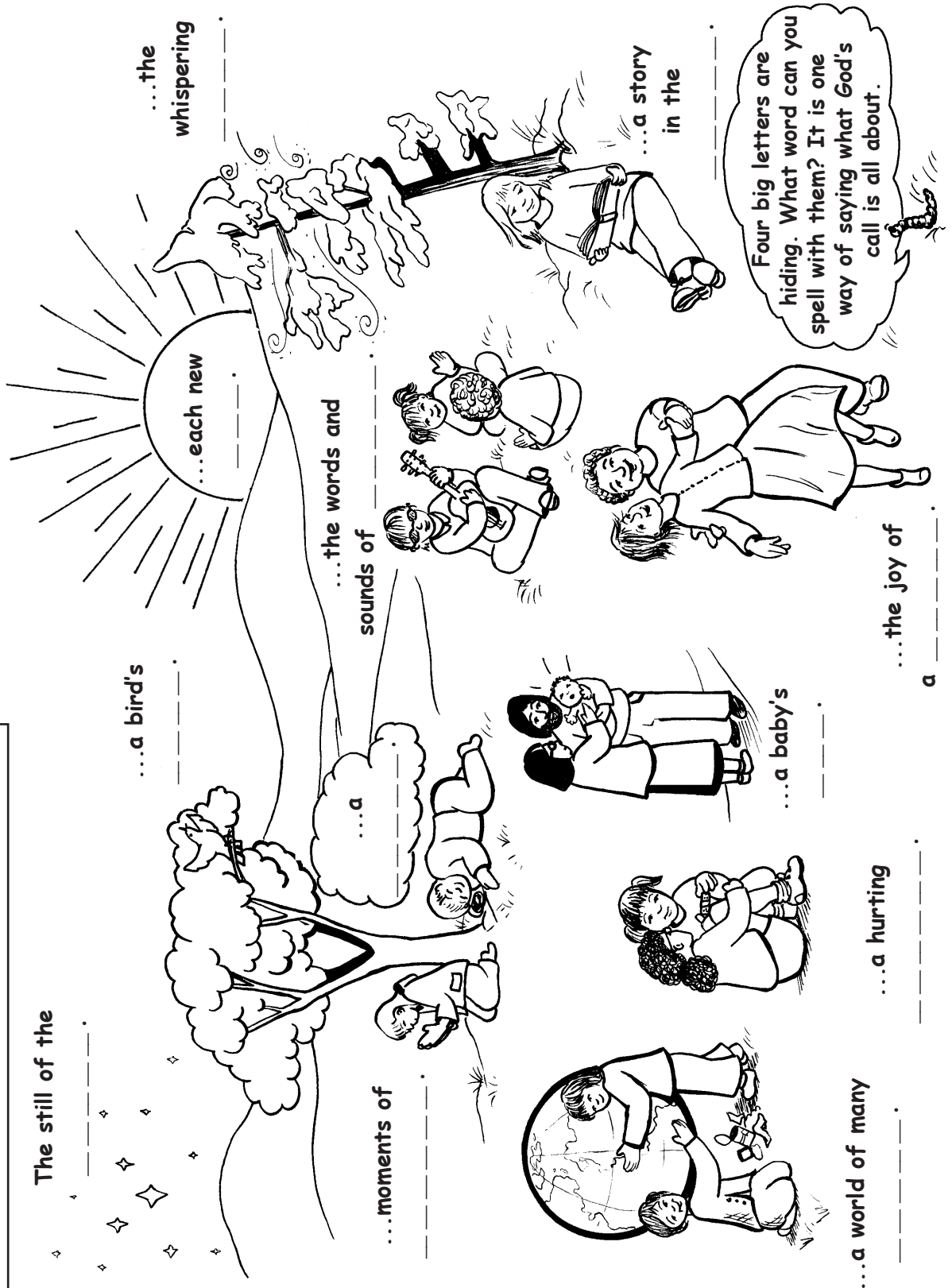


Listening for God's Call

Directions:

- Fill in the blanks using the words listed in the box.
- What might God's call be in each situation?
- Where else can you listen for God's call?

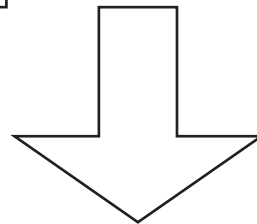
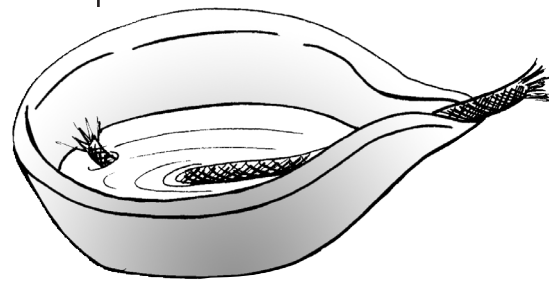
PRAYER	NIGHT	DANCE	NEEDS
BIBLE	CRY	FRIEND	DREAM
MUSIC	SONG	WIND	DAY



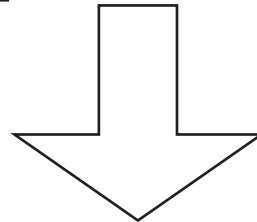
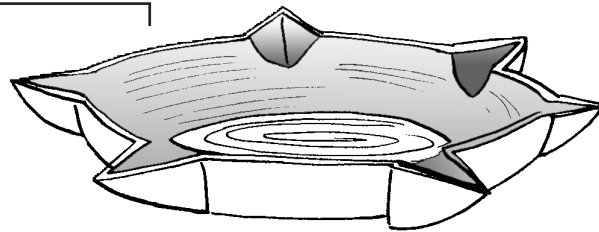


Oil Lamps

The earliest lamps looked like dishes, with a lip to hold the wick of flax or rush. They burned for about two or three hours. The oil was probably animal fat or olive oil, which was more expensive.



Some lamps had several lips to hold wicks. These lamps gave more light, but they burned the oil faster.



By New Testament times, lamps were made with tops. The top kept the oil from spilling, making the lamp safer.

