

Semicontinuous

Exod. 3:1–15
Ps. 105:1–6,
23–26, 45b

Complementary

Jer. 15:15–21
Ps. 26:1–8
Rom. 12:9–21
Matt. 16:21–28

God Is Calling

**Goal for
the Session**

Third- and fourth-graders will retell the story of Moses' call and practice ways of listening for God's voice.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Exodus 3:1–15

WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Gary W. Charles

God gives Moses a seemingly insurmountable task to accomplish, but God will not allow Moses to assume that he will engage the powers of Egypt alone. Moses assumes he needs more authoritative information, but the voice from the burning bush reminds Moses that he knows more than enough: “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name forever, and this is my title for all generations” (v. 15).

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective” by Rebecca Blair Young

God uses the name, YHWH Elohim, the Hebrew expression for Lord God, in reference to God's relationship with Israel's ancestors. In the context of human relationship, God graciously identifies Godself in familiar and familial terms. This three-step progression—from God's identification of Godself as Supreme Being, then as Supreme Being who acts in human history by sending shepherds, and finally as the God in relationship with Israel—is God's way of acknowledging and responding to Moses and to Israel, joining in the common refrain, “Here I am.”

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective” by H. James Hopkins

Moses learned that it was time to let go of his life as a shepherd and embrace a new role as the deliverer of the Hebrew people. What old ways of being have we been asked to let go of? What current ways of being are we being asked to let go of? What new ways of being are we being asked to claim? Absent the appearance of a burning bush, how do we know when it is time to let go of the old and take hold of the new?

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

—From “Homiletical Perspective” by Geoffrey M. St. J. Hoare

The import of this name is that YHWH cannot be reduced to a characteristic any more than captured in a definition. However comfortable we may be with ambiguity as an intellectual matter, most of us, at the level of practical theology, want everything sorted out, logical, definitive, and clear. YHWH will fill out the content of the character implied in the divine name as the promised constancy and fidelity unfolds in history. In Exodus 20:2 YHWH will offer content to the name: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Exodus 3:1–15

YOU WILL NEED

- green cloth
- battery-powered candle
- Color Pack 1, 2, 27, 32
- Bibles
- name tags (optional)
- markers
- drawing paper
- Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- foam ball

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, Bibles, drawing paper, fine-tipped markers or colored pencils
- option 2: index cards; pens; *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- option 3: paper plates; scissors; yarn; *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast

Bim Bom

Bim bom bim bom bim bom
 Bim bim bim bim bim bom.
 Bim bom bim bim bim bom
 Bim bim bim bim bim bom.

Shabbat shalom!
 Shabbat shalom!
 Shabbat, shabbat, shabbat,
 Shabbat shalom!

Focus on Your Teaching

Most third- and fourth-graders are just beginning to be able to think about abstract ideas and concepts. They can probably grasp the idea that God continues to speak today, but may need help to recognize God’s voice in their own lives. The options in Responding this session are designed to help them practice a number of different listening activities. As you prepare, think about the mysterious ways you hear God’s voice and be ready to share examples from your own life. As the children express their thoughts and insights, you can point out how God is already communicating with them.

Holy God, open my heart to embrace the surprising ways you speak to me and help me to listen for your voice. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, if you do not know the children, make name tags for everyone. Write each of the following references at the top of separate pieces of drawing paper: 1) Exodus 1:22 and Exodus 2:2–6; 2) Exodus 2:11–12, 15; 3) Exodus 2:23–25. If you are using option 3 in Responding, prepare a paper plate for each child by cutting 12 slits into the rim (see activity sidebar).

Welcome children by name. Option: If you and the children do not know each other, distribute name tags to wear.

Ask learners to arrange the green cloth in the center of your learning space and place the candle and Bible on it.

Light the candle and play “Bim Bom” (Color Pack 27, *Singing the Feast*). This song is a song for Sabbath, a day when God’s people gather to worship. The words *bim bom* do not have meaning. The words *Shabbat shalom* mean “peaceful Sabbath” in Hebrew. Sing the song together, and then pray aloud:

God of life, be our guide as we learn more about you and how to follow in your ways. Amen.

Invite learners to look at Color Pack 1. Ask:

- ✎ What do you think this girl has just heard?
- ✎ How do you think she feels about it?
- ✎ When have you heard someone say something surprising or amazing?

Comment that in the Bible story today, the children will meet someone who heard God say something surprising.

Young readers appreciate an easier-to-read Bible version, such as Contemporary English Version or Common English Bible. If these are not available, you may want to download passages for them to use from a Web site like www.biblegateway.com.

EXPLORING

Invite learners to recall what they know about Moses. Say that the story today is about Moses when he was an adult, but it's important to know what happened to Moses when he was younger. Form three groups. Give each group one of the pieces of drawing paper with a Bible reference on it and markers. Review how to find Bible references in their Bibles. (Use the table of contents to find the name of the book, look for the chapter first, and then the verses.) Instruct groups to read their assigned verses, and then work together to draw a picture that tells what happens in those verses. Be prepared to help if groups need help understanding what they read.

Ask each group to show its picture and tell what happened in that part of the story.

Show Color Pack 2 and invite learners to look at it as you read aloud Exodus 3:1–15 from your Bible. Let your voice grow in intensity as you describe Moses' encounter with God.

Discuss:

- ✎ How well do you think this artist tells the story of God speaking to Moses?
- ✎ What kinds of questions do you think Moses had after speaking with God?

Distribute Bibles and have the children help one another turn to Exodus 3:1–15. Discuss:

- ✎ What was Moses' job before God called him to lead the slaves to freedom? (v. 1)
- ✎ Why do you think God chose to speak from a burning bush?
- ✎ What reasons did Moses give for not wanting to do what God told him to do? (vv. 11, 13)
- ✎ What did God promise Moses? (v. 12)

Stand in a circle. Repeat God's words from Exodus 3:14 (CEV): "I am the eternal God. So tell them that the LORD, whose name is 'I AM,' has sent you." Have learners repeat the words after you several times. Next, have learners pass a soft ball around the circle, with each person saying one word of the verse as he or she holds the ball. Repeat several times, increasing the speed each time. Extinguish the candle. Discuss:

- ✎ What do you learn about God from this verse?

Observe that sometimes God talks to people through amazing events like burning bushes however, most of the time it seems like God speaks through everyday things. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Is That God Speaking?). Invite volunteers to read aloud each section. Encourage children to tell about their experiences. Ask:

- ✎ What are some other ways that God might talk to you?
- ✎ What kinds of things will help you to listen for God's voice?

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use.

1. **Cartoons** As they create cartoon stories, children will practice listening to God speak through the Bible. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (What Will You Do?) and read together the directions. Form pairs and assign each pair one of the stories. Provide paper

**EASY
PREP**

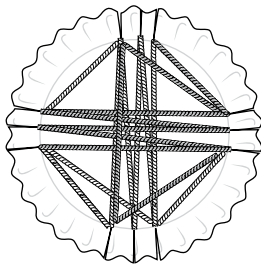
and fine-tipped markers or colored pencils for the children to create their cartoons. After pairs finish, have them show their cartoons to the entire group and explain why they chose the solution they did.

- 2. Meditation** Children will tap into their imaginations as they listen for God’s voice in a guided meditation. Set “Music for Meditation” (*Singing the Feast*) to repeat play. Invite children to close their eyes and focus on their breathing. Lead them through the following meditation:

You are walking to school. (*pause*) Suddenly you see a bush that is on fire, but is not burning up. (*pause*) A voice speaks from the bush. It is God. (*pause*) Listen to what God says.

Let the music play for a while, and then direct the children to open their eyes. Distribute index cards and pens. Have the children write down what they heard God say. Allow time for children to read their messages to the group if they wish.

- 3. Yarn Cross** Children will engage in a reflective prayer activity as they listen for God’s voice. Giving them something to do with their hands will help them to focus as they engage in this listening exercise. Say that one way God has spoken to us is through God’s Son, Jesus Christ. A cross reminds us of Jesus. Distribute prepared plates and have children cut lengths of yarn. Demonstrate how to weave the yarn between the slits to create a cross design. Play “Music for Meditation” (*Singing the Feast*), and invite children to weave their crosses as they listen for God’s voice. Encourage them to display their crosses at home as a reminder to listen for God’s word.



We Are Dancing in the Love of God

We are dancing in the love of God,
 We are dancing in the love of God.
 We are dancing in the love of God,
 We are dancing in the love of God.
 We are dancing, we are dancing, ooh,
 We are dancing in the love of God.
 We are dancing, we are dancing, ooh,
 We are dancing in the love of God.

Siyahamba ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',
 Siyahamba ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.
 Siyahamba ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',
 Siyahamba ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.
 Siyahamba, siyahamba, ooh,
 Siyahamba ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.
 Siyahamba, siyahamba, ooh,
 Siyahamba ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.

CLOSING

Gather around the candle and light it, if necessary. Place Color Pack 2 by the candle, and ask everyone to pray silently for the Spirit to help them listen for God’s voice. After a few quiet moments, pray aloud:

Loving God, thank you for hearing all of our prayers. Help us as we go out to share your love in the world. Amen.

Teach the following closing charge:

Leader: Let us go and live as God’s people. We are not alone!
All: God is with us!

Sing “We Are Dancing in the Love of God” (Color Pack 32, *Singing the Feast*). Encourage children to move or clap to the music. Extinguish the candle.

Try to have a quick word with every child as the group departs. Thank them for coming, and affirm any positive contribution they have made. Tell them that you will pray for them this week.

Is That God Speaking?

In Nature

Sometimes I see something beautiful in nature, and I realize that God made it. Suddenly God seems very close. God speaks through the beauty of creation.

Tell about a time when you saw something beautiful in nature. How did you feel?

Through Song

Sometimes when I listen to music I realize that the words are helping me. God speaks through the song.

Tell about a time when the words of a song seemed to help you. What did the words say?

Through Other People

One day I was feeling sad. My teacher came up and told me that she appreciated how helpful I was. Her words really cheered me up! God speaks through encouraging words.

Tell about a time when someone encouraged you. What did this person do or say?

Through My Conscience

Some of my friends found a way to cheat on the test. They wanted me to cheat, too. I really wanted to get a good mark on the test, but deep down inside I knew it was wrong. God speaks through my conscience.

Tell about a time when you were tempted to do something wrong, but deep down inside you knew you shouldn't.

What Will You Do?

Directions:

1. Read your assigned story.
2. Talk about the different things you could do or say in that situation.
3. Read the Bible passage. What is God saying to you in these words?
4. Decide what to do.
5. Draw a cartoon of the story that includes your ending.



There's a new student in your class. She comes from another country and doesn't speak English very well. Some of your friends are making fun of her at lunchtime. She looks miserable. What will you do?

Check
Out

**Leviticus
19:33–34**



Mrs. Brown, your neighbor, is recovering from the flu. Your father wants you to go with him on Saturday morning to pick up her groceries, make her lunch, and do a few chores around her house. Unfortunately, you promised to play hockey with your friends on Saturday morning. What will you do?

Check
Out

**Matthew
25:31–40**



Sarah is very popular at school, but sometimes she is really mean. One day Sarah starts saying nasty things about Amy's clothes (a girl in your class). The girls standing with her start laughing and saying mean things, too. You want to be part of their group, but that would mean making fun of Amy, too. What will you do?

Check
Out

1 Peter 2:1