

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 Speaks

Goal for the Session Children will enjoy the story of Moses' call and imagine how God might speak to them.

■ 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
- Bible
- index cards
- self-adhesive name tags (optional)
- marker
- Color Pack 1, 29, 34
- Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024, CD player
- copies of Resource Sheet 1

For Responding

- option 1: newsprint or markerboard, marker, poster board, copies of Resource Sheet 2 on card stock, scissors, tape, stapler, pencils, crayons
- option 2: Color Pack 2; *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024, CD player
- option 3: children’s Bible or Bible storybook

Calling Game

. . . , I think I hear my name,
. . . , I think I hear it again.
God is calling for you to
come.
I feel kind of glad (*sad*), but
I will come.

Focus on Your Teaching

Younger children understand that when someone calls their name it requires a response from them. They know what it feels like to be called by name and to respond accordingly. Children in this age group tend to have rich imaginations, and it is not uncommon for them to enjoy the company of a pretend friend. Consequently, they are open to the idea of talking with someone they can’t see or hear. The session today offers opportunities for children to experience different ways of hearing God’s voice. Be ready to talk about the ways you hear God’s voice in your life.

God of Abraham and Moses, speak to me this week. Help me to recognize your voice in my life. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, print each of these words from Exodus 3:12—God said, “I will be with you.”—on a separate index card. Hide them around your learning area. Option: If you do not know the learners, make a name tag for each child and one for yourself. If you are using option 1 in Responding, cut poster board into 2" x 24" strips, one per child.

Welcome each child by name. If you do not know the learners, introduce yourself and give each one a name tag to wear. Try to call each child by name several times during the session.

Ask the children to help you arrange the green cloth in the center of your learning area and place the Bible and candle on it. Ask a volunteer to light the candle as a reminder that God is with you today.

Teach the following response:

Leader: *We gather together in God’s love.*

All: *We are the church.*

Pray aloud:

Dear God, as we gather together today, help us to learn more about following in your ways and showing your love. Amen.

Introduce the session theme by singing “Calling Game” (Color Pack 29; track 4 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024). Insert the children’s names and have children jump up when they hear their names called. Ask:

- ✪ Who calls out your name most often?
- ✪ What do you usually do when you hear someone call out your name?

Comment that the Bible story today is about someone who heard God call out his name.

EXPLORING

Before telling the Bible story from the resource sheet, open your Bible and show the children where the story is found. This reinforces that the story you will tell is from the Bible.

Hold up the Bible, saying that the Bible is our special book that tells about God and God's love for us. Open to Exodus 3 and show it to the group. Explain that long ago, God's people were slaves in a land called Egypt. God made a plan to rescue them and lead them to a new home. This exciting story is in the book of Exodus. Tell the story as presented on Resource Sheet 1 (God Calls Moses).

Display Color Pack 1 on a board or wall. Invite the children to take off their shoes as Moses did and walk over to take a closer look at the burning bush. Encourage them to imagine being there with Moses:

Feel the heat of the fire and hear the flames crackle. Suddenly you hear a voice speaking from the bush! It is God. You cover your eyes with your hands and turn away while you listen to God's words.

Discuss:

- ✧ What do you think Moses thought when he saw the burning bush?
- ✧ What did God ask Moses to do? How did Moses feel about the job God gave him?
- ✧ What questions did Moses ask God?

Explain that seven cards are hidden in the learning area. Invite the children to look for them. When a child finds a card, he or she should call out, "Found one!" Once all the cards have been found, have the group work together to put them in the correct order. Read the verse in unison. Turn over two cards, and challenge the group to say the verse again, filling in the missing words from memory. Continue in this way until all the cards are turned over and the learners know the verse. Ask:

- ✧ What does this verse tell us about God?
- ✧ How do you think this promise helped Moses?

Explain that you are going to read some questions. Instruct the children to jump up and down if their answer is yes and to sit down if their answer is no. Pause after reading each of the following questions so the children can show their responses.

- ✧ Have you ever seen something beautiful in nature?
- ✧ Do you know a song that makes you feel better when you're feeling sad?
- ✧ Has anyone ever said something kind to you when you were upset?
- ✧ Have you ever known deep down inside that something you were doing was wrong?
- ✧ Have you ever learned something new about God from a Bible story?
- ✧ Have you ever learned about following in God's ways at church?

Affirm that if they answered yes to any of these questions, then God has been speaking to them. Discuss:

- ✧ Where might you hear God's voice today?
- ✧ How else might God speak to you?

EASY
PREP

Expect reading skills to vary among your learners. Lead the children through the project step-by-step, reading the instructions aloud as you go. When children need help with spelling, print the words on scrap paper for them to copy onto their papers.

Listening Chant

Listen carefully. Let's open our ears!
God is speaking. What can we hear?
God is speaking to me and to you.
What does God want us to do?

I'm Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing

I'm gonna sing when the Spirit says sing,
I'm gonna sing when the Spirit says sing,
I'm gonna sing when the Spirit says sing,
and obey the Spirit of the Lord.

I'm gonna walk when the Spirit says walk . . .

I'm gonna leap when the Spirit says leap . . .

I'm gonna praise when the Spirit says praise . . .

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use.

- 1. Listening Ears Headbands** Children will make giant listening ears as they imagine how God might speak to them. Begin by discussing: How might God speak to us today? Print the children's ideas on newsprint or markerboard. Distribute cardstock copies of Resource Sheet 2 (God Is Speaking) and materials. Lead the group in following the instructions to create the headbands. Encourage them to wear the headbands home and tell their families about listening to God, as Moses did.
- 2. Music** Children will enjoy a listening exercise and wonder how God might speak to them through music. Show Color Pack 2 and invite learners to tell what this child is doing. When do they need to listen carefully? Ask the children to be very quiet for a moment. Ask softly: What can you hear? What else can you hear? Invite learners to pose their bodies to look like the child on Color Pack 2, listen to the music, and imagine that God is singing a song to them. Play "You Are My Beloved Child" (track 26 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024). Afterward, ask: What did the song say to you? How did it feel to imagine God saying those words to you?
- 3. Bible Stories** Children will practice listening to God's voice as they enjoy some Bible stories. Invite learners to name some of their favorite Bible stories. Turn to one of them in the children's Bible or Bible storybook. Teach the listening chant in the sidebar, having learners repeat each line after you while clapping their hands to keep the rhythm. Show any illustrations of the story and read it or a part of it. Discuss: What might God be saying to us through the words of this story? Repeat until all children who wish to have named a favorite story.

CLOSING

Gather in a circle around the candle and light it again, if necessary. Place Color Pack 1 next to the candle, and invite learners to tell what they remember about Moses at the burning bush. Pray aloud:

Loving God, thank you for the story of Moses. Help us to listen for your voice each day. Amen.

Play "I'm Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing" (Color Pack 34; track 13 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024). Encourage children to sing along and move to the music.

Close with a circle blessing. In turn, each learner will turn to the person on her or his right and say, "(Name), God is with you every day." Begin this blessing with the person on your right. Extinguish the candle.

Thank the children for coming. Tell them that you will be praying for them during the week.

God Calls Moses

A long, long time ago, the Hebrew people were forced to work as slaves in Egypt. They were God’s people, and it was a terrible time for them. The Egyptian slave masters were cruel and forced them to work very hard. The Hebrew people called out to God, “Rescue us!” God heard them and made a plan to help. Moses was part of that plan.

Moses was a Hebrew, but he had grown up in the royal palace in Egypt after the pharaoh’s daughter found him in a basket. (The Egyptians called their kings “pharaohs.”) When he was a young man, Moses ran away from the pharaoh and the palace. For many years, he lived in the wilderness and worked as a shepherd, caring for other people’s sheep.



One day, Moses saw something amazing. It was a bush on fire. Moses saw the flickering flames and heard them crackling, but the bush wasn’t burning up! It just kept burning. Moses moved closer to have a better look.

Suddenly, a voice called from the middle of the bush.

“Don’t come any closer, Moses,” commanded the voice. “Take off your shoes. You are standing on holy ground.”

Moses took off his shoes right away and waited to hear what the voice had to say.

“I am the God of your parents and grandparents,” said the voice. “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Moses was terrified, and he covered his face with his hands. But he kept on listening.

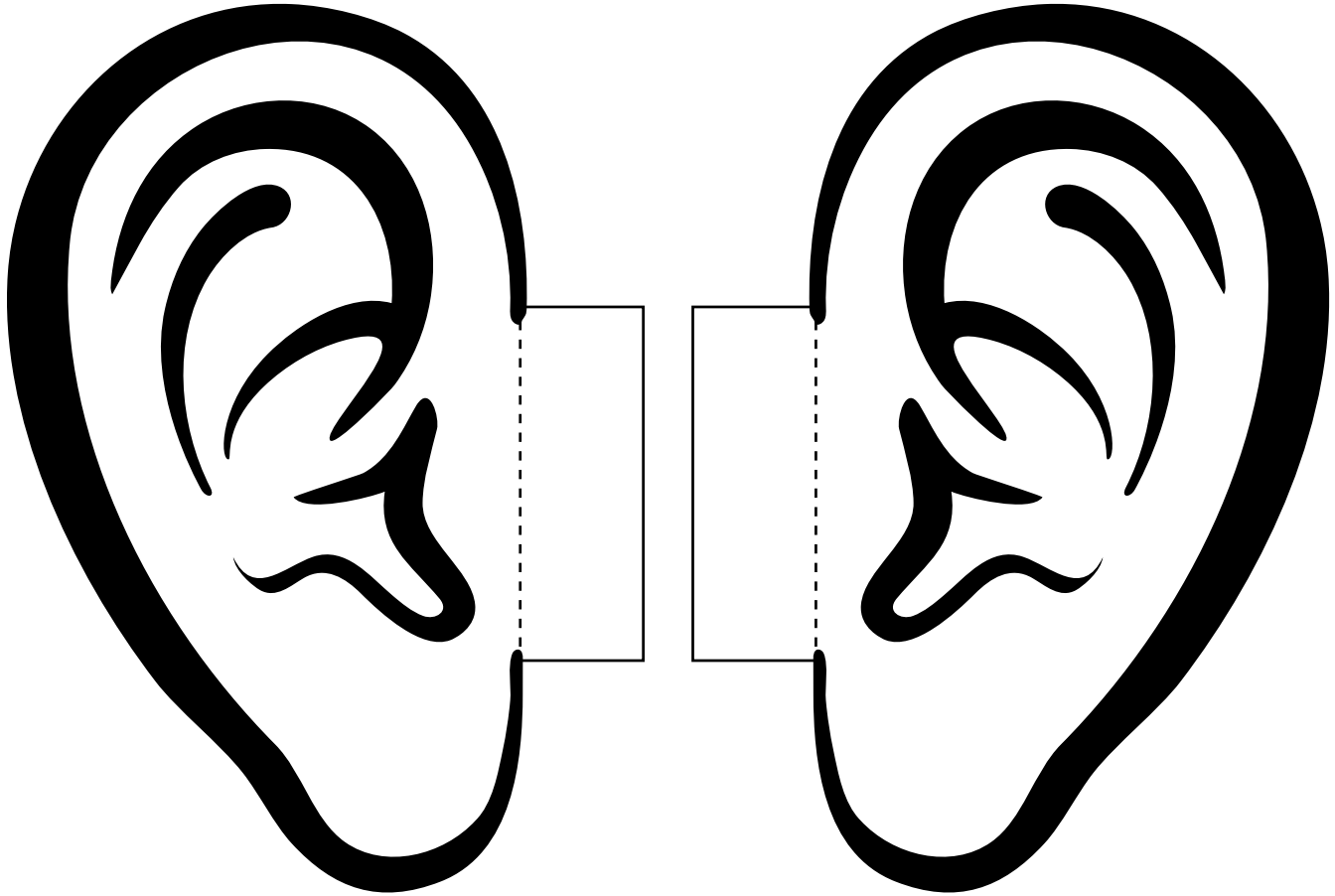
“I’ve heard the cries of my people in Egypt,” said God. “I can see how badly they are treated. I want to take them back to a new home. I’m sending you to lead them out of Egypt.”

Moses was astonished! He didn’t think he could do what God was asking him to do. “How can I go to Pharaoh and tell him to let the slaves go free? How can I lead them out of Egypt?”

“I will be with you, Moses. I will help you,” God answered.

Moses obeyed God and went to find Pharaoh. It was the beginning of a whole new adventure.

God Is Speaking



Instructions

1. Complete the sentence in the box.
2. Cut out the box and tape or staple it to the center of your headband.
3. Cut out the listening ears and decorate them if you wish.
4. Form the headband into a circle to fit your head. Fasten with staples.
5. Fold along the dotted line on the tab on each ear.
6. Tape the tabs to the headband, so that you have one ear on each side of your head.

I hear God's voice when

_____.