
“Called By God”

Sunday School Lesson from John 1:43-51 about God’s Calling and Purpose in our Lives



Called by Name, Propelled with Purpose
Sunday School Suggestions for Discipleship and Calling

For most children, the focus of day to day living includes trying to follow directions, having fun, and perhaps surviving time with siblings. Kids might not contemplate an overall “life plan” or goals for the future. They might feel that they are insignificant or too young to do anything important. It is important to remind them that God cares for them deeply, and has a specific plan for them. He knows each and every individual, and they have great value in His eyes.

Lesson focus: This lesson uses both an Old Testament story and a Gospel passage to discuss the way God calls us. The focus for children is how God calls all of us to love and serve Him. No matter who we are or what we do in life, God has a purpose for us! The first portion of this lesson emphasizes listening for God (as Samuel did), and then transitions to recall the calling of the disciples and the way the Lord now us all by name.

Passage: John 1:43-51; 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade (variable for activity emphasis)

Materials Needed: Construction paper, scissors, decorations, glue, string, hole punch, small containers, cups, yarn, pipe cleaners, Bible (optional, depending on crafts and activities of choice).

More Teaching Ideas

- Watch our video demonstration of this [children’s sermon on YouTube](#)
- Don’t miss the related [craft ideas](#) and full [Sunday School Lesson on John 1:43-51](#)
- Compare the [lesson on this passage from rfour.org](#)
- Compare [“Tell Your Friends about Jesus” from sermons4kids](#)



Games and Lesson Introduction

Lesson Opening: This lesson involves listening, having a purpose, and being called and used by God. There are a variety of openers that would work with these themes.

Here are some activities to get kids thinking... (select the best ones for your audience and age group):

- Create miniature “telephones” by stringing yarn through holes in paper cups. See if kids can use the “phones” to hear their amplified voices.
- Name games: have students form a circle and play a memory game involving names. Invite them to come up with something like items they would bring on a picnic or camp-out. The item they select should start with the first letter of their first name. Other students in the circle must recite the selections of others as well as their own (this helps if students do not know each other’s names well, also).
- Name relay: Have students form lines and race back and forth across the room to spell their names. At one end of the room, large foam letters or letter cards can wait. Students maneuver to that end of the room, select the letters of their names, and come back. While the next student goes, the waiting group can spell out the name of the child who recently took a turn.
- What does it do? Display several obscure objects or pictures of items, and have students guess what they are used for. Suggestions include outdated things like a shoe horn or rotary telephone, as well as little known devices like specialized cooking utensils or tools. Discuss how all things (and all people) have a certain purpose and meaning that they can be used for.
- Little known facts...ask children if they know where their names came from and what they need. Additionally, do they know how many teeth they have? How many hairs on their heads? Remind them that God knows all of these facts and more!

Explain to students that we will be talking about two stories in the Bible that involve God calling specific people. But God didn’t just call people in the Bible. He has a plan and purpose for every one of us. He knows our names and calls us to love and follow Him!

Ask: How do your parents (or other people who want to talk to you) get your attention? Do they ever call to you from across the house? Do they have to knock on your bedroom door, or tell you to put down technology so you can listen to them?



1 John 1:43-51 Sunday School Lesson

“Called by God”

Bible Lesson: This passage focuses on God’s call to young Samuel. You might set the stage by describing for kids how Samuel was a child, and was working in the temple with a priest named Eli. These verses might be fun ones for everyone to act out, especially with a younger audience. For instance, you might have kids pretend to be asleep, and quickly “wake up” when God calls out. Choose the best story-telling and Scripture-reading methods for your crew.

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.

² At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. ³ The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. ⁴ Then the Lord called Samuel, and he said, “Here I am!” ⁵ and ran to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down. -1 Samuel 3:1-5

Talk about what it might feel like to experience this. We hear from people all the time, telling us what we should do or how we should act. But what if you heard a voice calling your name in the middle of the night? This happened to Samuel as he was going to sleep in the temple...

Ask: Would you be scared if this happened to you?

Explain that Samuel was in the temple at a time when some people were making poor choices. God wanted him to be a prophet, or someone who would tell people how they should act and what they could be doing better. God was calling him, but Samuel didn’t know that just yet. He thought that Eli was giving him instruction, so he checked in with him...

And the Lord called again, “Samuel!” and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” ⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. -1 Samuel 3:6-7

God had a special plan for Samuel’s life. Sometimes other people can notice things better than we can. In this story, the priest Eli recognized what was going on, and encouraged Samuel to respond because he realized God was calling to him.

And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹ Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰ And the Lord came and stood, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears.” -1 Samuel 3:8-10



Eli realized that it was God who called Samuel's name. So finally, Samuel responded. He invited God to speak to him and opened his ears to what the Lord would say.

Ask: How can we "listen up" for God's voice these days? Do you think He still speaks to people?

Explain that God does talk to us, through His word, the Bible. We can pray and listen, and ask for wisdom and understanding as we read and respond to His word.

"Fast forward" a bit with kids to another story in the Bible when God called people. This time, Jesus was the one who specifically knew and called people by name, as He gathered His disciples. People were often amazed at what Jesus already knew and could do. In the book of John, He called a few of His disciples. One of them was named Nathanael, and Jesus told him that He had seen something Nathanael was doing, even though He couldn't have physically witnessed it happening. It was enough to amaze Nathanael...

Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." ⁴⁹ Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰ Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." -John 1:48-50

Ask: Have you ever met someone who seemed to know you, even though they hadn't seen you or talked to you in person before?

When Nathanael met Jesus, he was impressed because Jesus seemed to already know him...Jesus assured him that it wasn't merely a magic trick, but that much greater things would happen. It was enough to inspire Nathanael to follow Jesus and see what else He might do...

We should be willing to follow, as well. God knows us better than even our parents know us, better than we know ourselves! He knows every detail about us, and He has special plans for us. It might seem like you aren't able to do much now, since there are things that you can't do as a kid. But God still uses you, each and every day! You have a plan and a purpose. God made you and loves you. We can learn to follow Him when we pray, read His word, and think about what it means to love other people and love God.

Close with a prayer thanking God for calling us, knowing us, and loving us. Ask for His help and guidance in understanding His will and purpose for our lives.

Crafts: There are several fun crafts that involve the element of a calling. Consider one of the following:

- Decorative name badge/name plate (colorful iteration of a name)
- Name acrostic poems
- Megaphone "calling device"
- Headband with oversized decorative "ears"
- "Calling on God" box for prayer requests
- Paper cup "telephone" system





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