



Raise the Question: Children's Moments

Sharing God's Call with Children

These Children's Moments could be used as stand-alone messages or in conjunction with the messages included in the special sermon series provided by the Great Plains Board of Ordained Ministry and the Office of Clergy Excellence. The five sermon outlines that accompany these children's moments can be found here:

www.greatplainsumc.org/raisethequestion

Week 1: Raise the Question, Answer the Call

God's call meets us where we are and is rooted in God knowing and loving us

- *Scripture:* The accompanying sermon outline gives freedom for the preacher to use their text of choice, but these scriptures would be a good focus for this message:
 - Exodus 3:1-14 (Moses and the Burning Bush)
 - 1 Kings 19:1-18 (Elijah under the Broom Tree)
 - Luke 24:13-25 (Disciples on Emmaus Road)
- *Message:*

All three stories are of people who were trying to figure out "what comes next" in their lives/stories and God met them right in the middle of the mess to help them find their calling. Ask around and borrow as many different kinds of phones as you can find, noting that kids will be touching them. Toy phones. Old cell phones. Old landline phones from home or work. Corded. Cordless.

Ask kids about whether they've ever gotten or made phone calls. Perhaps they've used a phone to talk to family, to make an appointment, to order pizza. (Some may never have done this; play up this being something from an older time.) Talk about how sometimes we are waiting for a phone call, like when we know someone will need to be picked up from a sports or music practice or the airport, or when we are waiting to hear from a doctor about what will help us feel better. And sometimes a phone call can be a surprise, like when someone just wanted to talk to us, or when we get a surprise invitation.

Now that we have cell phones, we can get a call anywhere! God is like that, too. God can call us anytime and anywhere. But we can tell it's God calling because when God calls, God already knows us. God knows our name and loves us SO much.

When God calls, God doesn't ask us all to do the same thing. We aren't all called to be Preachers like *Pastor's name* or to play piano/organ/guitar like *Musician*, or to teach Sunday School like *Teacher* or take care of the building like *Custodian/Trustee* or to be a Nurse/Dr/EMT like *Member in the medical field*. But God does call us all to serve in ways that are just right for us. We will spend the next few weeks (if the sermon is a part of the series) talking about how God calls all of us, and giving thanks for that God calls each of us right where we are to do things that are just right for us!

- *Prayer: (A "repeat after me" prayer.)*

Dear God,

Thank you for calling us.

Thank you for knowing us and loving us.

Thank you for showing us how we can serve you

Just like you did for *Moses/Elijah/the first disciples*

Amen.

Week 2: I'm getting a Call... But Who's on the Other End?"

- *Scripture:* 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (Samuel Hears God in the night)
- *Message:*

The adult leading children's time will need a helper. The leader will put on a blindfold and ask the kids to get behind them. The helper will then pick kids at random to say the adult leader's name. The leader will try to guess which kid said their name. Make sure every kid gets a chance. It's ok if there are guests whose name the leader doesn't know, that just adds to the challenge and the likelihood the kids get to see the leader be "stumped."

After everyone gets to try to stump the leader, they take the blindfold off to chat. Talk about how you knew some voices but maybe weren't sure about others. Offer a summary of Samuel's call story (or read it from an age-appropriate Bible such as the [Children of God Storybook](#) bible)

Talk about how *awesome* it is that Samuel heard God's call while he was a kid. It may have taken Samuel a few tries and the help of someone else to understand that it was God calling him, but it is GREAT NEWS that God can call us at any age and that God will keep calling and calling until we know that it's God's voice we are hearing. Sometimes we even get help from one another.

Since we've been talking about voices, ask the kids to use theirs to pray for the congregation. Show them how to stretch out their arms in blessing and remind them

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that you'll whisper a phrase to them, but you want them to say it BIG AND PROUD AND LOUD so the congregation can hear God through them. The helper from earlier can repeat it with them but should try not to drown out their voices.

- *Prayer: (A blessing for the congregation)*

Leader: Remember,

Kids: REMEMBER

Leader: you are loved by God.

Kids: YOU ARE LOVED BY GOD

Leader: God can call us at any age

Kids: GOD CAN CALL US AT ANY AGE

Leader: and if you don't recognize

Kids: AND IF YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE

Leader: the voice of God,

Kids: THE VOICE OF GOD

Leader: God will not give up.

Kids: GOD WILL NOT GIVE UP.

Leader: Because *you* are loved by God

Kids: BECAUSE YOU ARE LOVED BY GOD

Leader: and when you recognize God's voice

Kids: AND WHEN YOU RECOGNIZE GOD'S VOICE

Leader: All you have to say is

Kids: ALL YOU HAVE TO SAY IS

Leader: Here I am

Kids: HERE I AM

Leader: I am listening

Kids: I AM LISTENING

Leader: Amen

Kids: AMEN

Week 3: "I'm getting a Call... But What If I Don't Want to Answer?"

- *Scripture:* Genesis 12:1-9 (God calls Abram and Sarai)
- *Message:*

This activity requires some adults/youth who are willing to be good sports for the kids and do something silly in front of everyone. Know your context. If the congregation will be willing and you have a few children, you could let the kids draw Activity Cards and go out to the congregation to find willing participants. If you think the kids will struggle to find people, recruit some "volunteers" ahead of time. You

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can make a big show of “drawing” the surprise activity from the cards. These should be silly but not degrading.

- Choose an activity from the following (or make up your own):
 - Sing Jesus Loves Me, but replace all the words with MEOW.
 - Offer an interpretive dance while the musician plays one verse of “Lord of the Dance”
 - Walk the aisle of the church like an elephant/bear/squirrel/donkey/chimpanzee
- After you choose your activity, share the story of Abram’s call. Talk about how Abram and Sarai might have felt uncomfortable or scared about what God called them to do. Then introduce an opportunity for some people to **practice being brave** and doing things outside their comfort zones. Invite your helpers/grown-ups to join you up front and ask them to hold out their hands while you all (pretend) throw “bravery” at them. Tell the adults to “pick up” the bravery and put it in their pockets or cover their faces, or hold it to their hearts. Then, invite all the kids (and church) to enjoy the drama of them taking on some silly challenges for God. Be sure to encourage the kids and congregation to cheer for them.
- *Prayer: (A repeat after me prayer)*
Dear God,
Thank you for your call. Thank you for putting extra “bravery” in our pockets, to help us do new things. Thank you for the way that following you often brings us joy and laughter.
Amen.

Week 4: “I’m getting a Call...Can I Answer it at Work?”

- *Scripture:* Luke 5:1-11 (Jesus calls the first disciples)
- *Message:*
For this Children’s time, it’s helpful if you can do a little digging into the skills of your congregation. You want to create a BROAD list of skills, some that the kids will be able to do, some that adults in the congregation know how to do, and especially some that are already being used to serve the community. Some examples might include:
 - Sewing
 - Knitting/crocheting
 - drawing pictures and making cards
 - emptying the trash
 - washing dishes
 - making casseroles

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- baking bread
- pouring juice
- shoveling snow
- raking leaves
- mowing grass
- folding bulletins
- playing a musical instrument or singing
- reading out loud
- playing card games
- carrying heavy stuff
- listening to a friend
- doing math
- wiping off tables after meals
- setting up tables and chairs

(If your church used Sermon 3 last week) Say, "Last week we talked about how sometimes God's call challenges us to go new places or do new things that might feel scary or unfamiliar. This week, we get to talk about how God can sometimes call us to stay right where we are and keep doing things we're already doing, but to do them FOR GOD." Brainstorm some ways they can do some of the skills they identified FOR GOD, or some of the ways the adults who raised their hands might do those skills FOR GOD.

- *Prayer: (A blessing of the congregation prayer)*

Ask the children to repeat LOUD AND PROUD what you whisper to them as they bless the congregation:

Leader: Blessed are you

Kids: BLESSED ARE YOU

Leader: When God calls you

Kids: WHEN GOD CALLS YOU

Leader: to bake a casserole or mow the grass,

Kids: TO BAKE A CASSEROLE OR MOW THE GRASS

Leader: To sing a song, or do some math

Kids: TO SING A SONG OR DO SOME MATH

Leader: Blessed are you

Kids: BLESSED ARE YOU

Leader: When God calls you

Kids: WHEN GOD CALLS YOU

Leader: To wipe off tables or take out trash

Kids: TO WIPE OFF TABLES OR TAKE OUT TRASH

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Leader: to make a blanket, or carry heavy stuff

Kids: TO MAKE A BLANKET OR CARRY HEAVY STUFF

Leader: Blessed are you

Kids: BLESSED ARE YOU

Leader: When God calls you...

Kids: WHEN GOD CALLS YOU...

Leader: ...to do ordinary things

Kids: ...TO DO ORDINARY THINGS

Leader: ...with extraordinary love

Kids: ...WITH EXTRAORDINARY LOVE

Week 5: "I'm getting a Call...What's the Next Step?"

Sometimes we know God is calling us, but we're not sure what to do next! Good News: we don't have to figure it out alone.

- *Scripture:* Esther 4:1-17 ("For such a time as this")
- *Message:*

Say, "Esther was a Queen a VERY long time ago. She became a Queen when her friends and family helped her to be chosen by a powerful King to become his wife. This King had a friend with some bad plans that put Esther's whole family and her people in DANGER. Her Uncle Mordecai learned about these plans and became SO SAD. He sat at the gate in mourning clothes that showed everyone how sad he was, and he refused to eat or drink. Seeing her Uncle Mordecai so upset helped Esther know that something had to be done. Uncle Mordecai wanted Esther to talk to the King, but she was scared. The King had a rule that NOBODY—not even the queen—could come into his room unless he invited her. If she broke the rule, she would be in danger. But if she didn't break the rule, all of her people were in danger.

Esther didn't know what to do. This was a BIG, hard thing God was asking her to do. She decided that even though she was the only one who had access to talk to the King, that didn't mean she had to be brave all by herself. She asked her Uncle Mordecai to have her entire community to do a special kind of prayer for her. They didn't eat or drink and they spent all their time praying for her. That's called a "fast." She asked all her friends inside the palace to do the same thing. They prayed for her safety and the safety of her people. They prayed that she would know what to do, and they prayed that she would have all the courage she needed to do the right thing. All those prayers from all those people helped Esther be very wise and very brave, and she was able to make a very smart plan. She got invited in to talk to the King, she exposed his friend's bad plans and she saved her people. "

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Go on to say, "We celebrate how brave and wise Queen Esther was, and we should also celebrate how she used her whole community to pray for her and give her advice she needed to succeed in saving her people. Now, you will probably never have to marry a powerful King, expose his best friend's evil plan and save a whole group of people. BUT, there will be lots of times when you will need to make hard choices or stand up for what is right. Who are some of the people who can help you figure out what is the next right thing and pray for you to be brave and strong like Esther?"

Give time and space for kids to name some people: maybe grownups like their parents, grandparents, a neighbor, or aunt or uncle, etc. (Be sure to use inclusive language and remember that not all kids live with a mom or dad.) Maybe they will name teachers or members of the congregation. Maybe they will name coaches, pastors, or neighbors. Maybe they will even name each other! These are all great answers. Celebrate what a big community of people they have that will pray for and support them. Ask the grownup congregation to pray for them now. Invite the adults to repeat after you in a similar way to how you have been having the kids bless the adults.

- *Prayer: (A blessing of the children BY the congregation)*

Ask the Congregation to repeat LOUD AND PROUD what you say to them as they bless the children.

Leader: Dear God,

Grown-up Congregation: DEAR GOD

Leader: Bless these young disciples,

Grown-up Congregation: BLESS THESE YOUNG DISCIPLES

Leader: Help them to know your voice

Grown-up Congregation: HELP THEM TO KNOW YOUR VOICE

Leader: and recognize your call.

Grown-up Congregation: AND RECOGNIZE YOUR CALL

Leader: When following your call feels scary

Grown-up Congregation: WHEN FOLLOWING YOUR CALL FEELS SCARY

Leader: help them to be brave,

Grown-up Congregation: HELP THEM TO BE BRAVE

Leader: And help them know they are not alone.

Grown-up Congregation: HELP THEM KNOW THEY ARE NOT ALONE

Leader: In Jesus's name

Grown-up Congregation: IN JESUS'S NAME

Leader: Amen

Grown-up Congregation: AMEN!