

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 19TH-20TH, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

PROXIMITY (1 SAMUEL 3:1-3) "RARE AND...NOT WIDESPREAD"

In the days before Samuel's calling by God to be a prophet, messages from God to people and "prophetic visions" about God's will and what was to happen were rare.

- **God was quiet, not because He didn't want to be close to His people, but because the people were living in rebellion against Him.**

THE PROGRESSION OF SELFISHNESS

The Israelites lived for themselves instead of God. So, He gave them over to their lusts and eventually their enemies (same thing?).

- **Personal sin eventually leads to societal degradation. Sin keeps us from listening to God, and a lack of listening to God affects everyone.**

POSITIONING OURSELVES TO HEAR (V2-3)

The reference to Eli's eyes alludes to his failing spiritual sight. Samuel sleeping in the temple where the "ark of God was located" shows us his growing proximity to God and how he positioned himself to encounter Him.

- **Whatever stage of searching we are in, when we diligently search, we find.**

LISTENING (1 SAMUEL 3:4-10) "THEN THE LORD CALLED SAMUEL"

Samuel's parents placed him in an environment to hear God, but ultimately Sam had to answer the call for Himself.

- We learn that **growing toward God starts at home**. Also, the **church is to be a supplement in directing young Christians in their spiritual journey**.

A PERSISTENT GOD

The verb *call* is used 11 times in these verses. Samuel is confused about Who was calling him at first because it hadn't happened before, and the "word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him."

- The greater point is that **he had a desire and was positioned to listen to God.**

HOW DO WE POSITION OURSELVES TO HEAR GOD?

Samuel was in a temple (**church**), he was **surrounded by mature believers**, and his distractions were limited.

- We must also **make the pursuit of truth a priority**, have an **open mind and heart**, and **set aside time to listen** (this comes through the Word as well).

THIRD TIME IS A CHARM

After the third wake-up, Eli "understood that the Lord was calling the boy." He tells Sam to answer God in this way: **"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."**

- Sam considered God as *Lord* (master) and himself as *servant*. **To answer the call of God, we must submit to His authority and will.**

SEEING GOD?

The Bible isn't clear if God was literally standing in the room with Samuel. If He was, we can assume it wasn't in His fullness because no one can look at God and live (Exodus 33:20).

- The lesson is that **God is personal, not distant with those who desire to answer His call.**

RESPONDING (1 SAMUEL 3:11-18) THE CONFIRMATION OF JUDGMENT

In chapter two, an unnamed prophet delivered a chilling message to Eli about his family. God now comes to Sam to confirm that He will carry out His word.

- The problem wasn't that people made mistakes, but that **they turned a blind eye to sin and had no desire to repent.**

NO SACRIFICE OR OFFERING COULD CHANGE IT (V14)

1 Samuel 15:22 says **God takes more pleasure in our obedience than our sacrifices** and offerings. Sacrifices and offerings are occasional, but obedience is consistent and ongoing.

- **God wants a relationship all the time, not just when we feel benevolent or need to be bailed out.**

"HE WAS AFRAID TO TELL ELI..."

Eli wasn't an altogether bad guy, and certainly Sam loved him. Though Eli figured the news was grim, Eli also knew that God is just, and He both builds up and tears down (Jeremiah 1).

- This is a reminder that **we must honestly and lovingly share truth because, ultimately, it is for the collective good.**

ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY

Eli responds to the prophecy with an affirmation of God's sovereignty. Even though Eli has made mistakes, he teaches Sam a valuable lesson by **accepting the consequences of his actions and trusting in God's wisdom.**

- In an era of blame-shifting, **we must own our choices and humble ourselves before God.**

EMPOWERED (1 SAMUEL 3:19-21) "THE LORD WAS WITH HIM"

Samuel answered his call, and God didn't leave him alone in fulfilling it. Sam didn't need to lean on good looks, charisma, or bait-and-switch tactics. **As long as he honored God, God was with him!**

- **We cannot expect the provision of God if we live in opposition to Him.**

TRUSTING IN THE CREATOR GOD

Sam also didn't use his calling for personal gain or popularity. **He had courage and didn't twist the Scripture to affirm his ideas or how he wanted to live.** He listened to God and spoke the Word he received.

- **We have to truly believe that His ways and will are superior to ours!**

IF WE WILL TRUST, HE WILL BLESS AND USE US!

Samuel became a respected leader and prophet because he humbled himself and followed the Lord's lead.

- **If we will submit to God, He will not only bless us and our family, He will use us to do amazing things in the lives of others! We can be instruments of God!**

POSITIONING OURSELVES TO LISTEN

- Individuals and societies will feel less and less of the blessings of God if they distance themselves from a relationship with Him.
- We must be honest and ask ourselves: **Am I being self-centered and only pursuing my wants? Whose standard do I judge my life by? Am I distracted? Am I apathetic?**
- We must also assess if we are positioning ourselves to hear from God. Are we looking for truth, and what/who are we inviting to influence us?
- **Are our lives intentional? Are we praying, reading the Word, and involved in church? Are we minimizing distractions?**

TRULY RESPONDING TO THE CALL

- God pursues all people, and if we are positioned to hear Him, we are then able to be saved from evil and answer whatever call He may have for us.
- Though salvation and calling is a sacrifice, **God desires our consistent obedience more than our occasional sacrifices.**

LIVING AN EMPOWERED LIFE

- When we listen to and obey God, He **saves** us from sin, our destructive nature, and selfishness. He **provides** for us how He sees fit, and He **empowers** us through His Spirit to live righteous lifestyles that honor Him, bless others, and also bless us.

JUST TO BE REDUNDANT...

- Be positioned to **listen**.
- Respond with a life of **obedience**.
- Live a life **empowered by the Spirit** so we can live out whatever role God has for us. This honors Him, blesses others, and gives us peace and contentment regardless of life's circumstances.