

FREQUENCY



FREQUENCY WEEK 2 SMALL GROUP GUIDE

1 Samuel 3:1-21
February 21, 2016

INTRODUCE

Use the question and comments below to introduce the topic of discussion.

Are you a light or heavy sleeper? What does it take to wake you?

Many of us know what it is like to be awakened by a bump in the night, but few of us have had the experience of Samuel. As a young boy, Samuel was awakened by the voice of God calling to him. At first, Samuel did not know who it was who was calling him, but he eventually learned how to recognize the Lord's voice. While Samuel as an Old Testament prophet heard from the Lord in a way that is different than our experience today, we can still learn from Samuel's example of how we can position ourselves to hear from God and then obey his voice.

READ

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-21. Use the comments below to clarify the meaning of the text.

Samuel was one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. He was Israel's last judge, and he helped the nation transition to a monarchy (1 Sam. 7:16-17). Samuel's service to the Lord began at a young age. His mother, Hannah, dedicated him to serve in the Lord's house as soon as he was weaned (1 Sam. 1:27-28; 2:11). In our passage of study, Samuel was old enough to understand the message the Lord gave him, but young enough to be called a boy (v. 1). We can guess that he was between the ages of 10-14. The word of the Lord was rare in those days, which usually means in Scripture that Israel was not following the Lord (v. 2; compare 1 Sam. 14:37; 28:6). Indeed, this was the end of the judges era, a low point in Israel's relationship with God (see Jud. 18-21 to understand how crazy things were). Eli was the high priest at that time, and as such, was one of Israel's spiritual leaders (v. 1). As Israel's leader, he was not doing very well. He was not a bad man himself, but he had wicked son's who took advantage of their priestly office to feed their sinful appetites (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22). Eli had verbally rebuked his sons, but had done little else to put an end to their abuse (2:22-25; 3:13). Eventually, a prophet gave Eli the message that his household would be rejected by God because of his sons' refusal to repent (2:27-36). The message Samuel was to receive in chapter three confirmed the Lord's pending judgment.

In verse 3, we find Samuel sleeping in the tabernacle in front of the lampstand, which was just outside of the Holy of Holies. The Lord called audibly to Samuel, but Samuel mistook the voice as Eli's (v. 4). Eli denied it and sent him back to bed (v. 5). The Lord called two more times, and each time Samuel thought it was Eli (vv. 6-8). The reason Samuel did not recognize the Lord's voice was because this was the first time he had heard it in this way (v. 7). The third time the Lord called, Eli realized that Samuel was hearing from the Lord, and he told Samuel how to respond (vv. 8-9). Samuel returned to his bed, and when the Lord called him a fourth time, Samuel availed himself to the Lord (v. 10). The Lord gave Samuel a message to give to Eli: the judgment that he had been warned about was about to fall (vv. 11-14). Samuel was reluctant to pass along this message, but Eli demanded to know it, whether good or ill (vv. 15-17). Eli accepted the message without complaint. Samuel showed that he was willing to listen and obey God no matter what, and thus began his career as the Lord's prophet (vv. 18-21).

Choose some of the questions below to explore the meaning of the text.

How would you describe Eli's spiritual condition? a) as wicked as his sons; b) a spiritual giant; c) an ok guy, but too passive when strong leadership was required; d) other. Explain your answer.

What clues from the text indicate that Samuel was prepared to hear from the Lord?

What did Samuel still need to learn before he was able to hear from the Lord?

Is hearing from the Lord always “sunshine and rainbows”? What do we learn from this story about the challenges of knowing God’s will?

What does it mean that Samuel “let none of [God’s] words fall to the ground” (v. 19)? How does that compare with Eli?

APPLY

Choose some questions below to guide group members to personally apply the text.

What can you do to position yourself to hear from the Lord? What role does Scripture play in this endeavor?

John Piper said, “Something is incredibly wrong when the words we hear outside Scripture are more powerful and more affecting to us than the inspired Word of God.” **Do you agree with Piper? Do you think this is true of many Christians? Is it true for you? Why?**

Why do you want to hear from God? Do you want to know what he has to say no matter what? Explain.

Sometimes we hear the Lord speak to us as we read Scripture, but other times we are blind to God’s truth, and we need others to tell us. This was the case of Samuel and Eli. Samuel had to deliver the bad news to Eli. **How do you respond when others challenge you with the Word of God? Are you willing to receive a rebuke?**

Eli was flawed, but nevertheless, he helped Samuel to recognize God’s voice. **Who do you have that can guide you in understanding God’s Word and applying it to your situation? What qualities should you look for in such a person?**

Do you pray with an attitude of “Speak Lord, your servant listens,” or “Listen Lord, for your servant speaks”?