

Called
June 12, 2016
Allen Power

1 Samuel 3:1–10, 17–21

Isn't hard to remember life before caller ID? **How has caller ID changed your life? Do you answer when it's an unknown number? Do you sometimes ignore when you DO know who is calling?**

This morning's text is about recognizing when God calls you and responding with obedience. The big idea: God's love, and God's word are delivered by God's people. We need to learn to recognize His voice and be ready to say: 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'

- Last week we learned that after struggling with infertility, a mother named Hannah was blessed with a son named Samuel who she gave back to God as a servant in the tabernacle -- an apprentice to Eli the priest.
- Hannah gave Samuel to God. God blessed Hannah and her husband with five more children (1 Sam. 2:21). She gave up one and got five in return.
- Samuel was born at a time when the nation of Israel had grown distant from the one true God, and was dabbling in idol worship and other sins.
- God is always long-suffering when His people slide into a pattern of sin; but eventually He WILL correct the situation. He was about to do just that.
- The sinful slide was even occurring in the church, specifically in Eli's family.
- Eli's two sons had been put in place as assistant priests. They were anything but priestly! They abused their positions engaging in sinful behavior, even sleeping with female volunteers in the tabernacle.
- Eli was told about his sons' sins. He called them out. It did no good.
- Instead of removing them, Eli just let the situation continue.

- An anonymous “man of God” came to declare that God was about to judge Eli and his family for this situation. Still Eli didn’t take action.
- Wiersbe: *“God’s servants can’t live any way they please and expect the Lord to honor them, for “them who honor me I will honor” (1 Sam. 2:30). The privilege of the priesthood would remain with the tribe of Levi...but God would take it away from Eli’s branch of the family.”*¹
- God was about to call a new priest to His service: young Samuel.
- By now, we believe Samuel was about twelve years old. He was serving faithfully in the tabernacle as Eli’s young “intern.”
- 1 Samuel 2:26 (NLT) says, “Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew taller and grew in favor with the Lord and with the people.” (Luke 2:52: Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.)
- Let’s begin reading in verse one to learn from this text:

1 Samuel 3:1–10 (NLT)

The Lord Speaks to Samuel

Meanwhile, the boy Samuel served the Lord by assisting Eli. Now in those days messages from the Lord were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon.

² One night Eli, who was almost blind by now, had gone to bed. ³ The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle* near the Ark of God. ⁴ Suddenly the Lord called out, “Samuel!”

“Yes?” Samuel replied. “What is it?” ⁵ He got up and ran to Eli. “Here I am. Did you call me?”

“I didn’t call you,” Eli replied. “Go back to bed.” So he did.

⁶ Then the Lord called out again, “Samuel!”

Again Samuel got up and went to Eli. “Here I am. Did you call me?”

“I didn’t call you, my son,” Eli said. “Go back to bed.”

⁷ Samuel did not yet know the Lord because he had never had a message from the Lord before. ⁸ So the Lord called a third time, and once more Samuel got up and went to Eli. “Here I am. Did you call me?”

Then Eli realized it was the Lord who was calling the boy. ⁹ So he said to Samuel, “Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say,

‘Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went back to bed.

¹⁰ And the Lord came and called as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel replied, “Speak, your servant is listening.”

- Verse one says, “...in those days messages from the Lord were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon.” **Based on the condition of the nation, why do you think God stopped speaking to them?**
- **If God were finally going to speak in this audible/visible way, who (in this situation) would you expect Him to speak to? What can we learn from the fact that God chose to speak to Samuel?**
- **Why do you think Samuel didn’t recognize God’s voice? Is there a lesson for us in the fact that Eli discerned what was going on and instructed Samuel?**
- **What can we learn from the fact that God called him multiple times before Samuel finally recognized and responded?**
- God revealed a troubling message to this twelve-year-old boy. The next morning Samuel got up and went about his chores without saying anything about it.
- It’s hard to imagine a boy that age keeping this to himself. He was either very mature, very frightened, or both! Still, Eli needed to hear this very sobering message. He calls Samuel in for the cold, hard, truth.

1 Samuel 3:17–21 (NLT)

¹⁷ “What did the Lord say to you? Tell me everything. And may God strike you and even kill you if you hide anything from me!” ¹⁸ So Samuel told Eli everything; he didn’t hold anything back. “It is the Lord’s will,” Eli replied. “Let him do what he thinks best.”

- Eli had his faults as a priest and as a father, but you can’t help but admire his response. It was probably given in a sense of hopeless resignation. An old man who knew he had failed, and accepted God’s right to take him and his family to “the Divine woodshed.”
- But this wasn’t a completely sad ending. This was in fact, a promising fresh start for the nation of Israel. God would use this

young boy to lead the nation to a spiritual revival and to help usher in the era of Kings.

¹⁹ As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him, and everything Samuel said proved to be reliable. ²⁰ And all Israel, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south, knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord. ²¹ The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh and gave messages to Samuel there at the Tabernacle.

- Let's explore what you and I can learn from this text.
- The first lesson is the failure of Eli. **What can we learn from this?**
- The main application for us in this text is our big idea: God's love, and God's word are delivered by God's people. We need to learn to recognize His voice and be ready to say: 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'
- How does it make you feel to know that God can use YOU to grow His Kingdom? We can only experience that if we are listening for His call.
- So how can we be available and paying attention when God calls?
- Question: **What are some things you would do if you didn't want to miss an important call?**
 - o Keep your battery charged. - Time alone with God and His word to recharges our spiritual battery. Don't let a dead spiritual battery rob you of hearing God's call! Slow down; plug in; and recharge.
 - o Position yourself for a good signal. - Pray asking God to reveal how you can serve Him and His Kingdom. Be ready to respond.
 - o Keep the line clear. – Confessing sins keeps the line clear between God and us so we can receive his call.
 - o Recognize the number in caller ID – How do we know when God is calling? In this case it's not His number but His voice we need to know. Jesus said in John 10:27 (NLT) *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."* We learn to discern His voice by knowing what scripture says through regular time in Bible study; teaching and preaching.

- o The way to hear when God calls you is through a charged battery; good signal; a clear line; and knowing His voice.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Wouldn't it be tragic if God called you to a specific task and you weren't paying attention?
- Wouldn't it be tragic if God called you to a specific task and you misunderstood because you don't know His word and aren't listening to the way His Spirit speaks to your heart?
- Won't it be MOST tragic to get to Heaven and have God show us all the things we could have done for Him if only we had listened; answered; and responded? Everyone will experience some of that regret one day. We need to do the things we just mentioned so we can minimize that.
- This week, here's a trick to help us remember what we've learned.
- Starting today and for all this week, when we get incoming call on our cell and see that caller ID, let's imagine it's God calling to reveal to us the unique task He has for us. Let that common, everyday occurrence that happens multiple times a day cause us to remember: God's love, and God's word are delivered by God's people. We need to learn to recognize His voice and be ready to say: 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'

¹ THE WIERSBE BIBLE COMMENTARY: OLD TESTAMENT © 2007 Warren W. Wiersbe