

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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Sermon Title: The Call of Samuel, I Samuel 3:1-10

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**SCRIPTURE:** I Samuel 3:1-10 <sup>1</sup>*The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.*

<sup>2</sup>*One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. <sup>3</sup>The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD called Samuel.*

*Samuel answered, “Here I am.” <sup>5</sup>And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”*

*But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down.*

<sup>6</sup>*Again the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”*

*“My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”*

<sup>7</sup>*Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.*

<sup>8</sup>*A third time the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”*

*Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup>So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*

<sup>10</sup>*The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”*

*Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”*

**EXPLANATION:** In this chapter, we find the last of the stories about Samuel as a young boy. Tradition holds Samuel was about twelve-years-old when the call came from God. Up until this time, he has remained in the background, serving quietly in the temple. He was being groomed for priestly activities—carrying out rituals, tending to the Ark of the Covenant, offering sacrifices—but God called him to be a prophet. A prophet’s primary responsibility was to deliver the Word of God, and that came to him through various ways: visions, dreams and supernatural experiences. Priests became priests through being born into a lineage of priests. But, a prophet had to experience a personal call. The call of Samuel is unmistakable. Messages from the Lord were not common in this day. Samuel was sleeping near the Ark, and the oil in the lampstand was about to go out.

Here are the points to today’s message:

1. Eli taught Samuel about God before Samuel knew God.
2. Eli helped Samuel understand God’s voice.
3. Eli told Samuel to submit to God’s voice

**First, ELI TAUGHT SAMUEL ABOUT GOD BEFORE SAMUEL KNEW GOD.**

Samuel did not know the Lord even though he was doing priestly duties.

**SCRIPTURE:** I Samuel 3:7 *Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.*

**EXPLANATION:** It’s interesting to note, Samuel was learning priestly duties, but he did not know the Lord. Now, some people then would have thought it terrible for someone who did not know the Lord to be behaving like a priest, but Samuel was just a child.

**APPLICATION:** If there is a child in your life—either your own child, a grandchild, or another child over whom you have some influence—you must teach them about the Lord, his Church, the Bible, and all things related to it. It’s been a long time since I heard someone say this, but every now and then, I’ll hear someone

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2 | The Call of Samuel, I Samuel 3:1-10 – October 18, 2015

say, “Well children need to make up their own mind when it comes to God and other spiritual matters.” That’s an interesting statement because a loving parent will certainly teach their children about eating right, hygiene, and matching clothes. Parents will spend many years teaching their children many, many things.

The studies show the prime time to reach people who were church drop-outs when they went to college is when they have children. And, we need to be ready to reach out. We need to understand every person who visits this church visits for a reason.

Who would deny a child knowledge about the ways of the Lord? If we think children will just pick it up on their own, we are wrong. That is completely misguided thinking.

Now Samuel was in the temple, working in the temple, yet he did not know the Lord. Have you ever taught a child how to pray? Have you ever challenged a child to learn a Bible verse? Hey, I knew how to tithe before I became a Christian. I remember how my Sunday School teachers made Sunday School a fun place. Before my dad went into the ministry, I remember how I thought the world of the older pastor of the church because of his kindness to me.

I was a lot like Samuel— singing, praying, and learning Bible verses. (I was not sleeping next to the Ark of the Covenant, though.) I did not know I was spiritually lost without Christ. And, then one day, it hit me. All these verses, songs, all the reasons we had a church family...it hit me: **I was a sinner and I needed to be saved.** You see – those around me taught me to be sensitive to the Lord. And, this is exactly what happened to Samuel. He was trained by a priest about the ways of the Lord. Let’s look at it again:

**SCRIPTURE:** I Samuel 3:7 <sup>7</sup>*Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.*

**EXPLANATION:** As I read this verse, I saw the word “yet” twice. That may be the most important word in the verse. As I’ve told you, the Biblical Hebrew language started sentences with the most important words first. I had a hunch about something, and I looked it up. The first section of the verse introduces Samuel and then tells about Samuel: “He did not yet know.” The second section of the verse reads like this in a literal translation: “and yet revealed unto neither was the word of

the Lord.” *Yet* is at the first of the second part of the verse. So, even the sentence structure reveals the importance of the word “yet”.

Here’s why this is important. **CIRCLE THE WORD “YET” IN YOUR BIBLE.** “Yet” means something is going to happen, it just hasn’t happened...yet. In other words, it was just a matter of time before the Lord’s call came.

**APPLICATION:** So, we must teach children the ways of the Lord, so when the Lord touches them, they’ll be ready. Folks, when I first came here, I walked in empty children’s Sunday School classes. I saw teachers with scissors and crayons on the table but no children. My heart was heavy. I told some of my friends in ministry it was the saddest thing I’d ever seen. And, now we have children in almost every age group.

Folks, we’ve got a lot of work to do. We have a very high concentration of children here...Soon we are going to have a party for children. Folks, we need some help with outreach after the party. I’ve made appeals about this before. I don’t really want to see another stack of children’s registration cards which resulted in nothing. So, we must teach children the ways of the Lord before they know the Lord.

- Eli taught Samuel about God before Samuel knew God.

## **Second, ELI HELPED SAMUEL UNDERSTAND GOD’S VOICE.**

**EXPLANATION:** In verse 1, we have the intriguing information that “the word of the Lord was rare. There were not many visions.” Prophetic words had ceased to come to Israel during these days. Samuel was especially blessed to have received a Word from the Lord. Samuel had quietly and faithfully been going about his duties and had bedded down for the night next to the Ark. Eli was probably sleeping somewhere in the vestibule. Most commentators believe this must have occurred just before dawn because of the mention of the lamp growing dim.

Samuel heard a voice he thought was Eli’s. Three times he went to Eli after hearing the voice...The voice must have sounded like Eli’s. Isn’t this interesting? Another interesting point here might be that Samuel mistook the voice of God for Eli’s voice. I think many times what we hear from the Lord sounds an awful lot like

a human voice, and we miss it—kind of like Elijah expecting the voice of God in the fire, and the whirlwind, and the earthquake. Instead, God spoke in a still small voice. I've found through the years, one has to be obedient to what we believe is the voice of God speaking to us, and with practice, we learn to discern his voice.

Eli could have dismissed it and told Samuel to quit bothering him... He could have thought, *Ah, he's just a kid having a dream. He's just sleepwalking...* But, he took Eli seriously and helped him in three ways.

- (1) He told Samuel to go lie down and be ready.
- (2) He acknowledged it was the Lord speaking.
- (3) He told him what to say. "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

**APPLICATION:** The best possible thing we can do for children is teach them to be sensitive to the Lord's direction in their lives.

Samuel needed help, didn't he? He heard a voice, but he did not know the source of the voice. So, Eli helped him. People, we've got to help children along the way.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I remember Hutch's testimony when his daughter China was baptized. He said, "I am going to help her." I loved the way he put it. Wow, what a great night that was!

**EXPLANATION:** I thought about Eli, this man who has lost his own sons to the ways of the world. Perhaps he saw Samuel as a second chance. Perhaps he was so busy being God's priest that he missed a time when his sons were young and impressionable. We do not know exactly, but what we do know is—he didn't miss it with Samuel.

Review:

- Eli taught Samuel about God before Samuel knew God.
- Eli helped Samuel understand God's voice.

**Third, ELI TOLD SAMUEL TO SUBMIT TO GOD'S VOICE.**

God's voice is a voice of authority. Eli told Samuel to say, "*Speak for your servant is listening.*"

Eli's encouragement to Samuel was really about submitting to authority. Samuel had already submitted himself by learning the ways of the temple. Let me say, when you've got a child who has a problem with authority, you've got a real problem on your hands. A teenager with authority problems is even worse. And, an adult with authority problems is even worse!

Eli's sons had a problem with authority. For those who haven't been following the study on Sunday nights, Eli's two sons committed an abomination by their irreverence and disregard for sacrifices, and Eli wasn't stern enough with them.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Bucking against authority really does nothing but direct a person toward a life of pain. I know of a high school football player who had received a football scholarship when he was still in high school. He got into an argument with his coach and quit the team. When the college football coach heard about it, he called the high school student and told him to apologize to his coach. He refused to do it and lost his scholarship.

I've found people who are angry with God tend to be people who have a problem with authority. I've found people who say they are atheists tend to be people who have a problem with authority. You see, it sounds great to be your own man with no authority over you, but everyone has to learn how to deal with authority.

**APPLICATION:** As pastor, I think about God's authority all the time. The reason we must submit to God's authority is that as a church, we know how to do his will. A friend of mine sees the mission of the church as quite simple: Find out what the Lord wants you to do, and then go do it. But, I must say most pastors are sidetracked, spending most of their time putting out fires.

When my children were little and talked about what they wanted to be when they grew up, I encouraged them to pray and ask God what He wanted them to be. And now, with two in college and another in high school, I tell them the same thing. Submitting to God's voice, also known as submitting to God's authority, also known as, submitting to God's will, is so much better than resisting.

In America, we have grown up with the Word of God readily available. We are very prideful of our churches and our faith. Thousands of sermons are preached every Sunday throughout our land. Most every home in our nation has several Bibles available. Yet, where is the power? Why is our nation crumbling before our eyes? Seems to me we have a huge pride issue concerning God's blessing upon us and our land. And, the lamp of God is flickering. I have no doubt God will raise up a prophet in these last days, although the consequences of sin will surely fall, as it did on Eli's sons. The purposes of God will prevail.

**CALL TO ACTION:** Here are some things for you to consider during our decision time today:

- It's interesting that Samuel had been dedicated from the womb, but didn't know the Lord;
- Samuel served the Lord in the temple, but didn't yet know the Lord;
- Samuel heard the Lord calling him, but didn't yet know the Lord.
- It wasn't until he responded with obedience in offering himself that he came to know the Lord.

Maybe you are here today and your mother dedicated you to the Lord before you were born. Maybe you've felt the tug of the Lord, but you've never responded in obedience.

\*Now, here's a point about obeying the Lord: God never reveals the whole picture to his servants. The deal is never, "Lord, show me what you want me to do, and then I'll decide whether I'm going to follow you."

\*We must respond in faith like Samuel did: "Speak for your servant is listening." We must live in a constant attitude of "Yes!" toward the Lord.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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