

BOY SAMUEL CALLED BY GOD

1 Samuel 3:1-21

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Samuel and Eli

Key-location: Tabernacle at Shiloh

Key-repetitions:

- The Lord's actions: it was rare for the Lord to speak (1 Sam 3:1); he called Samuel four times (1 Sam 3:4, 6, 8, 10); he spoke to Samuel (1 Sam 3:11-14); he was with Samuel (1 Sam 3:19); he continued to reveal himself to Samuel (1 Sam 3:21).
- The Lord called Samuel and Samuel ran to Eli's bed (1 Sam 3:4, 6, 8).
- The words, "Speak Lord": Eli told Samuel to say, "Speak Lord, I'm your servant, and I'm ready to listen" (1 Sam 3:9); Samuel said those words to God (1 Sam 3:10).
- The Lord's message proclaimed: to Samuel in his bed (1 Sam 3:11-14); by Samuel to Eli (1 Sam 3:17); by Samuel to the people (1 Sam 3:20).

Key-attitudes:

- Eli's powerlessness with his disobedient sons.
- Eli's weakness, even though he had good intentions.
- Samuel's respect for Eli.
- Samuel was likeable and respected.

Initial-situation:

During the time when judges ruled, Israel had no kings. Everyone did what he thought was right, and each generation became worse than the one before.

Hannah had no children. Hannah entered the tabernacle in Shiloh and uttered a silent prayer asking God for a son. She promised the Lord that if he gave her a son, she would give him back to the Lord. Hannah gave birth to Samuel. After weaning her son, Hannah presented Samuel to Priest Eli, and dedicated him to the Lord.

Samuel grew up serving the Lord at the tabernacle where Eli's sons were wicked men.

Initial-problem:

In those days it was rare for the Lord to speak to people.

Final-situation:

The people of Israel recognized that Samuel was a true prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to reveal himself to Samuel at Shiloh.

BIBLE STORY

The boy Samuel served the Lord under Priest Eli's direction. In those days it was rare for the Lord to speak to people (1 Sam 3:1).

One night Priest Eli was lying in bed. Eli's eyesight had begun to fail. He was almost blind. Samuel was in bed in the tabernacle of the Lord, where the Ark of God stayed. The Lord called, "Samuel, Samuel!"

Samuel answered, "Yes, I'm here." Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Eli said, "I didn't call; go back to bed." So Samuel went back to bed.

Again the Lord called, "Samuel, Samuel!"

Samuel got up, went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Again Eli said, "Son, I didn't call; go back and lie down."

Samuel didn't yet know the Lord personally. The Lord had not yet spoken directly to him.

The Lord called a third time, "Samuel, Samuel! The boy got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. Eli told Samuel, "Go lie down. If he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord. I'm your servant, and I'm ready to listen.'" Samuel returned to his bed.

The Lord called again, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Samuel said, "Speak Lord, I'm your servant, and I'm ready to listen."

The Lord told Samuel, "I will do to Eli's family everything that I warned him. I told Eli that I would punish his family forever because he knew that his sons were desecrating the Lord's name and the Lord's place, and he did nothing to stop them" (1 Sam 3:1-18).

The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up. Samuel's prophetic words always came true. All Israel recognized that Samuel was a true prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to reveal himself to Samuel through his word at Shiloh (1 Sam 3:19-21).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why was it rare for the Lord to speak to people in Israel?
2. What would make it rare for people to hear God today?
3. Why did Samuel not recognize that God was speaking to him?

4. When Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy, what advice did Eli give Samuel?
5. Who has helped you to realize that God is speaking to you?
6. What message did the Lord give the boy Samuel?
7. How did Samuel become the Lord's spokesperson?
8. What can you learn from Samuel that will help you identify who is a true spokesperson from God?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **There are times in history when God avoids revealing himself to people.** During the time when Eli was priest, it was rare for God to speak to people (1 Sam 3:1).
2. **When spiritual leaders deliberately live in sin, God's word becomes rare.** In Eli's time, no prophets were speaking God's message to Israel. Eli and his sons' attitude of greed and intentionally sinning got in the way of their communicating God's word. People don't pay attention when ungodly spiritual leaders speak (1 Sam 3:1).
3. **A person can be faithful to God in an environment where others disobey him.** Samuel was raised around Eli's sons who mistreated those who offered sacrifices to the Lord, who had no respect for offerings dedicated to the Lord (1 Sam 2:12-17), and who had sex with women that worked at the tabernacle's entrance (1 Sam 2:22). However, Samuel faithfully served the Lord (1 Sam 2:26).
4. **A person may need help to understand when God is speaking to him.** The boy Samuel didn't understand that it was God who was calling him until Eli advised him (1 Sam 3:5-9).
5. **God can use people of all ages to serve him.** The Lord used the old man Eli to make Samuel aware that God was speaking to him (1 Sam 3:9). God used the boy Samuel to give the Lord's message to the old man Eli (1 Sam 3:18). People knew that the boy Samuel was a real spokesman for God (1 Sam 3:20).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Chant:

- Teach listeners the chant: “Speak Lord, I’m your servant, and I’m ready to listen.”
- Give listeners a hand signal as a sign for them to repeat the chant.

Leader	Listeners
When I read my Bible,	Speak Lord, I’m your servant, and I’m ready to listen.
When I study the Bible,	Speak Lord, I’m your servant, and I’m ready to listen.
When I pray,	Speak Lord, I’m your servant, and I’m ready to listen.
When I worship,	Speak Lord, I’m your servant, and I’m ready to listen.
When I sing to you,	Speak Lord, I’m your servant, and I’m ready to listen.
When I am tempted,	Speak Lord, I’m your servant, and I’m ready to listen.
When you have a job for me,	Speak Lord, I’m your servant, and I’m ready to listen.