

MESSAGE TITLE: Parental Guidance Advised

SCRIPTURE: I Samuel 3

KEY TRUTH

God has designed relationships to be the primary means of discipleship, and parents play the key role in the discipleship of their children. Eli, by raising a boy who isn't even his own son, demonstrates a valuable lesson for parents.

GETTING STARTED

One of the most impactful ways parents can disciple their children is by tuning into the voice of God to obey Him first and fast. Parents who regularly listen to and obey God model for their children what it means to follow Christ. And let's face it: We live in a noisy culture. Whether it's the TV, our cell phones, music in the background, or even billboards on the side of the road, we are constantly bombarded with voices. Most everyone of those voices is telling us to do something. If we want to listen to God and do what He says, we must first carve out time to hear from Him. Only then can we as disciple makers have a life worth imitating.

OBSERVATION

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-9.

Why do you think the Lord called to Samuel the boy instead of Eli the priest?

*What did Eli tell Samuel to do, once Eli understood that the Lord was calling the boy?
How did Eli serve as Samuel's mentor and disciple-maker in this way?*

How did Samuel portray God to Eli in his instructions in verse 9?

If you decided to absolutely commit yourself to hearing from God daily, what distractions would you need to limit or eliminate?

The main reason we don't hear the voice of God is not because He's not speaking; it's because we're not listening. But putting ourselves in the right surroundings to listen isn't just about time and place; it's about our relationships. One of the reasons we do life together, investing in each other, is so that we can help each hear and recognize the voice of God. Once we hear the voice of God, that voice requires a response of surrender.

Who has been an Eli to you in your life—someone who has helped you hear the voice of God more clearly?

Are you investing your life right now to be an Eli for someone else? If not, why not?

What does this passage say about a parent's role in training their children to hear from God?

Read 1 Samuel 3:10-11.

How does Samuel's response to the voice of God indicate his surrender to the will of God?

Is that how you typically respond to God's voice? Based on your actions, how does your typical response to God's voice sound?

What are some ways parents can teach their children that Jesus is our King and Lord? How can we impress on them the desire to hear and obey Him?

Read 1 Samuel 3:12-21.

Did God give Samuel an easy message to deliver? What was the message?

What, in your own words, did God tell Samuel to do? How difficult was God's first assignment for Samuel?

How did Eli, upon hearing Samuel's prophecy, model spiritual maturity for Samuel?

What kind of reputation did Samuel earn in Israel? What connection can be made between hearing and obeying God's voice and having an established reputation?

Samuel delivered a tough message to his mentor, Eli. It probably didn't feel good at the time, but Samuel demonstrated maturity because he listened to God and did what He said. When we put ourselves in the right surroundings, choose to surrender to what God says, then there's no doubt we will hear from the Lord and the Lord will empower us to obey Him.

APPLICATION

What does this passage say about a parent's role in training their children to hear from God? How can we help our kids discern the voice of God?

When did you first learn to hear God speak to you? Think about a time you heard God speak and you obeyed His voice. Share that story with your children or grandchildren. Imagine how your story will encourage them.

Who in your life serves as an Eli, someone who encourages you to listen for God's voice? Ask God to bring into your life mature believers who would be willing to disciple you. God will honor your prayers as you wait patiently for Him to provide!

If you are a student, consider the people God has placed in your life with whom He may want you to share the Gospel. Consider also how He might use you to help other young believers to hear and obey God's voice. Who might God have crossing your path on a regular basis who may not know Him or who need help following Him? Try to picture their names and faces.

PRAYER

Before you speak in prayer, spend at least a minute in silence just listening to the Lord. Pray that your group would put themselves in a position to continue to hear God's voice and then do what He says, first and fast. Ask that God would make you a disciple maker to your children, your neighbors, your co-workers, your fellow students, your friends.

COMMENTARY NOTES

I Samuel 3:1-21

3:1-3. Samuel, as a youthful Levite, was providing service to the Lord under Eli's tutelage. In the days of Eli, prophetic revelations in the form of visions and divine words had been "rare" (v. 1; lit., "precious"), a circumstance that can be linked to divine displeasure (see 14:37; 28:6) and helps explain why society was so degenerate at that time (see Prov. 29:18; Amos 8:11). Background details provided here are laden with symbolism relevant to the events that follow; Eli's eyes—and by extension his spiritual insight—were "so weak that he could barely see" (v. 2). The mention of "the lamp of God" (v. 3) still burning amid Shiloh's darkness provided not only a temporal setting—the predawn hours (see Ex. 27:21)—but also a symbol of Samuel's presence in that spiritually benighted worship center. Samuel lying down in the Lord's temple, "where the ark of God was," positions the youth not only spatially but also spiritually; he was of all Israelites closest to the Lord's throne (see 4:4; Num. 7:89).

3:4-14. While Samuel was fulfilling the Torah obligations to tend the lamp of God (see Lev. 24:3; Num. 18:23), the Lord called the youth and delivered a message of judgment to him. In a form paralleling Abraham, Jacob, and Moses' obedient responses to divine calls (Gen. 22:1, 11; 31:11; Ex. 3:4), Samuel responded, "Here I am" (v. 4). Because he did not initially know the Lord, however, Samuel at first went to Eli for further instructions (vv. 5-6, 8). Eli twice turned Samuel away (vv. 5-6), perhaps because Eli essentially was blind to the possibility of the Lord's revealing Himself in a personal manner. Eventually, however, the elderly priest came to understand that the Lord was calling the youth and advised him to respond submissively.

On the climactic fourth approach to Samuel, the Lord called the boy's name twice and "stood." The repetition of the personal name is reminiscent of the divine call to Abraham at Mount Moriah (see Gen. 22:1,11) and the one to Moses at the burning bush (see Ex. 3:4). The similarity suggests that this moment was as important in Samuel's life and for all Israel as the parallel moments were in the lives of the earlier heroes of the faith. Samuel obediently identified himself as the Lord's "servant" (v. 10; 1:11) and urged the Lord to speak.

The Lord's terrifying revelation was in fact a confirmatory repetition of the judgment against the house of Eli given by the unnamed prophet (2:30-36). Though prophetic messages could be conditional—warnings of possible consequences resulting from continued disobedience (see Jonah 3:4)—in the case of the words spoken against the house of Eli they were certain. Every promised outcome—"from beginning to end" (v.

12)—would become reality. And Eli, as the family patriarch, would bear the brunt of the blame because “he knew about” (v. 13) his sons’ “contemptible” sins but “failed to restrain them” (Deut. 21:18-21). Eli’s conscious failure to enforce divine law in his own family amounted to a high-handed (i.e., deliberate) sin; as such it could “never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering” (v. 14; see Num. 15:30-31). Furthermore, the magnitude and form of God’s judgment would be so shocking that it would cause “the ears of everyone who hears it to tingle”—that is, to give rise to great fear and dismay (see 2 Kings 21:12; Jer. 19:3).

3:15-18. With the coming of morning, Samuel “opened the doors of the house of the Lord.” The description of a dawn marked by the prophet’s reopening the way into the Lord’s presence is an obvious double entendre: on the one hand, Samuel was merely performing his daily duty as a temple servant; on the other hand, he was ushering in a new era of spiritual consciousness in Israel.

But Samuel did not enter into his role as the Lord’s spokesman without hesitation (v. 15). Eli’s fatherly reassurances and stern admonition provided the encouragement the lad needed to perform his duty. The interaction between Eli and Samuel in verses 17-18 conveys an idealized model of prophetic activity in society: the addressee encourages the prophet to speak the full revelation, the prophet does so, and the addressee accepts it willingly. In these verses both the seriousness of the prophetic responsibility and a model of its proper discharge are presented. Samuel’s alert, expectant reception of the divine message (v. 10b) and his full disclosure of the Lord’s revelation (vv. 17-18a) despite personal misgivings (v. 15) are the proper responses of a prophet to a revelatory divine visitation.

3:19 All that Samuel spoke was fulfilled, and thus he could be known as a prophet.

3:20 To the traditional limits of Israel to the north and south.

3:21 Samuel had demonstrated a willingness to receive and follow God’s word, so the Lord continued to appear in Shiloh, whereas He had not done so during the unfaithfulness of Eli’s day.

SOURCES CONSULTED

ESV Study Bible

www.smallgroups.com

HCSB Study Bible