



AGAINST ALL ODDS

THE
WORD

SESSION SNAPSHOT

HOW TO RESPOND WHEN GOD CALLS

NARRATIVE PASSAGE:

1 Samuel 3:1-21

GOSPEL FOCUS:

James 1:22

TAKEAWAYS:

- When God calls, our first response should be to obey immediately
- God is not as interested in your capability as your availability

LAST WEEK'S READING:

- 1 Samuel 1-2
- 1 Samuel 3; 8
- 1 Samuel 9-10
- 1 Samuel 13-14
- 1 Samuel 15-16

KNOW THE WORD

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

With the death of Samson came a period of moral demise and ruin in the nation of Israel. Particularly in the tribes of Benjamin and Dan, the Israelites were turning to foreign gods and away from the God of Abraham. The Priesthood, too, had become wicked and corrupt. Going in to the time of Samuel, the author of Judges explains to us, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever he wanted.” Under the tutelage of Eli, Samuel now comes on the scene as the one who will again bring the Word of God to His people.

COMMENTARY AND STUDY MATERIALS

v.2 Eyesight is used here, as it has before, in both a physical and spiritual sense. Eli has not been disobedient like his sons, but he failed to put an end to their corrupt Temple practices. Samuel, in contrast, saw clearly (v. 15) and would effectively communicate God’s Word.

v.4 The Septuagint, which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament from as early as the 3rd century BC, rendered this verse, “The Lord called, ‘Samuel, Samuel,’” like we see in verse 10. The repetition of Samuel’s name indicates urgency, which we also see with men like Abraham (Gen. 22:11), Jacob (46:2), Moses (Ex. 4:13), and Saul (Ac. 9:4). We see this urgency because of the immediacy with which Samuel responded (to what he thought was Eli’s voice) in the middle of the night. He demonstrates the immediacy with which we should respond to God’s voice.

vv.17-18 The structure of Eli’s oath and Samuel’s response demonstrates both severity and complete obedience. This is done through the structure of both Eli’s oath and Samuel’s report. This structure is called “chiastic,” where two ideas echo one another. This kind of structure is used all throughout Hebrew literature in order to make a point: in this case, to highlight just how important this message that Samuel received from God was.

Eli’s oath:

A “The message He gave you”

 B “Don’t hide it from me”

 C “May god punish you” if

 B’ “You hide anything”

A’ “That He told you.”

Samuel’s response was to tell every part of the message and not hide anything.

STUDY THE WORD

What is something about you that you think is probably unique among the people in the room?

Each of us has things about us that makes us just a little bit different from those around us. Maybe you haven't seen a movie that it seems everyone else has. Maybe you've visited an exotic location that nobody else in the room has been to.

The unique things about us run even deeper than just the things that we listed, and the more someone knows about what makes us unique, the easier it will be to recognize us even from a distance. Today's passage shows us someone who didn't necessarily recognize God because he hadn't yet learned how. But he would soon. And it would affect the future of Israel for the rest of her life.

OUT LOUD, READ 1 SAMUEL 3:1-21

This is a long passage, but it reads as one account. As you read, pay attention to different things that are repeated--whether they are words, actions, or commands. One of the ways God shows us who He is is through repetition and consistency.

Why didn't Samuel know that it was the Lord calling to him at first?

How can we identify the Lord's voice today?

Notice that Samuel didn't realize it was the Lord because, as verse 7 points out, he hadn't yet experienced Him. Samuel didn't know what His voice sounded like. Now, Samuel had lived in the Temple for some time by this point, so he was familiar with who God was and what He had done.

God still speaks to us today. Fortunately for us, we do not live in a time where the Word of the Lord is rare, like in this passage! By knowing what our God sounds like, we will be able to do as John says and "test every spirit" to see if it is from Him (1 John 4:1). God speaks to us in numerous ways today, particularly through His Word (the Bible), through His sovereignty (He arranges our circumstances), and through godly examples in our lives (like Eli in the life of Samuel).

What was special about the way that Samuel responded to the Lord?

How can we adopt the same attitude today?

His response was important: "Speak, for Your servant is listening." This response was not to give God permission to speak, rather it signaled the state of Samuel's heart. Samuel was quieted, undistracted, and focused on absorbing what God would say, and then ready to act on that Word. We know that he was ready to act on what God said because the word "Listen" is just like the word "Listen" that we saw in Deuteronomy 6:4 a few weeks ago—it requires obedience to what God says.

Has there ever been a time in your life when it felt like God was speaking to you constantly?

Has there ever been a period that felt like spiritual famine (like at the beginning of 1 Samuel 3)?

What were those times like? What was going on in your life during those periods?

At the beginning of 1 Samuel 3, it says that the Word of the Lord was rare. We might understand why as we see what the heart of the nation of Israel was like at this time—the priesthood was defiling the Temple of God, the people were not actively seeking His face, and the nation was, as a whole, doing whatever it wanted (see Judges 21:25). Frequently in our lives, we find that this is true—the farther we get from God, the less clearly we can hear Him.

God made Himself known through repetition and consistency. What are some habits we can create in our lives to create environments to hear Him speak to us?

What are some things that you find get in the way of a consistent walk with God?

One of the easiest ways to develop a habit of spending time with God is to have a repeatable, effective plan to meet with Him. One of the easiest ways to engage with God's Word is to practice journaling.

With your group, read through the steps of a HEAR journal and discuss why you think it will help you have a quiet time with the Lord.

Highlight the passage you are focusing on by writing it down.

Explain what is going on in the passage by providing a summary.

Apply what the passage is saying to you, specifically.

Respond to God's message with a prayer or a specific action you can carry out.

APPLY THE WORD

Spending time with the Lord is something that won't happen unless you make a plan for it to happen, but it is also the smallest thing you can do to make the biggest difference in your spiritual life.

Once you begin hearing regularly from God, you will find that the desire for more of Him will continue growing, and will overflow and affect every area of your life.

Before you close your time in prayer, encourage those in your group to take a few minutes when you are done to answer the following and share updates next week:

Make a plan to practice journaling through God's Word at least a few days this week.

How do you hope this affects the way you hear from God?

PREPARE FOR NEXT WEEK

Next Week's Reading:

- ***1 Samuel 17-18***
- ***1 Samuel 19-20***
- ***1 Samuel 21-22***
- ***Psalm 22; 1 Samuel 24-25:1***
- ***1 Samuel 28; 31***