

When God Calls

Introduction. In the biblical narrative, the calling of Samuel by God is a significant and revered event found in 1 Samuel 3:1-10. According to the first-century Jewish historian Josephus, Samuel was 12 years old. If that's true, this 12-year old is going to teach us a lot.

There's a lot of interest in hearing God. Andrew Wommack describes hearing God by saying, "This is saying that communication with God is Spirit to spirit, not brain to brain or mouth to ear, the way we communicate in the physical realm. The Lord speaks to our spirits, not in words, but in thoughts and impressions."

The problem with "thoughts and impressions" is that it's easy to believe something that's not there, much like the pastor who claimed he "misheard" God when he started a fraudulent cryptocurrency scheme.

This is not to deny that the Lord did speak to people directly. Hebrews 1:1-2 says, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." Because He speaks now through His Son, His words are not in "thoughts and impressions," but are contained in the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

We need to be convicted of the source of divine guidance, but we also need to make sure that we're hearing the divine guidance. It's possible that we only "hear" what we want to hear. If we have a predisposition against God or any part of His will, it'll affect our "hearing" (cp. John 8:47).

It's much better if we have the attitude expressed in the words of young Samuel: "Speak, for Your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:10). When Samuel responded in this way, God then revealed a message to him, foretelling events that would unfold in Israel. This event marked the beginning of Samuel's 40-year prophetic ministry and played a crucial role in the history of Israel.

What's involved in this kind of attitude toward God's word? What happens when God calls? This account carefully illustrates three traits that every Christian should have to the Word of God which we'll explore now.

I. Reverence Toward God

- A. How humble and respectful are we before God? Having a receptive attitude toward what God says is a reverent disposition toward God Himself (Ecclesiastes 12:13; Luke 6:46).
- B. We will be eager to hear God when we have decided, like the Macedonian brethren, to give ourselves to God in genuine respect (2 Corinthians 8:5). God calls us to live through His revelation (Isaiah 55:1-3). Why wouldn't we listen?
- C. Samuel's sentiment was: "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears."
 1. What we need is the respect that's due our Master. That will produce the submissiveness that comes from respect.
 2. It takes people who are consecrated in heart to really listen to God (cp. Genesis 19:15-17; Jonah 1:1-3). Sanctifying Christ in your heart will solve many problems related to hearing the voice of God (1 Peter 3:15).

II. Responsiveness to Divine Truth

- A. Could it be that we are so withdrawn into our subjective selves that we're unresponsive to outside communication, even from God?
- B. How "willing to yield" are we (James 3:17)?
 - 1. "Yield" means "easily persuaded" (Alford); "ready to be convinced" (Knox).
 - 2. With respect to divine truth, do words like these describe us: tender, accessible, open, teachable, receptive, responsive, etc.?
 - 3. The unresponsive heart is illustrated by Pharaoh (Exodus 5:2; 10:3). The responsive heart is illustrated by Josiah and Cornelius (2 Kings 22:19; Acts 10:33).
- C. When God speaks, is there a "sympathetic vibration" within our hearts?
 - 1. Does God's word "strike a responsive chord" within us? Is our mind "attuned" to God's mind?
 - 2. Going along with responsiveness to divine truth, of course, is unresponsiveness to the temptations of the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9).
- D. In practical terms, what does our "readiness to hear" come down to?
 - 1. Are we eager to study the Bible for ourselves (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 19:14)?
 - 2. Do we honestly look forward to hearing preaching and teaching from the Bible (Nehemiah 8:1-3; Mark 12:35-37)?
 - 3. How do we respond to those who come to us in the Lord's name with something we need to hear (Hebrews 13:17; Galatians 4:16)?
- E. Jesus warned in Luke 8:18 that if we use what God gives it'll increase. And the next words underline the opposite truth: if we do not, we'll lose even what we think we have. This is total loss.

III. Readiness to Obey God

- A. How eager and ready are we to really obey God?
 - 1. Are we at God's "beck and call?" Are we ready and willing to "do His bidding"?
 - 2. A parent may issue this warning to a child: "I don't want to have to ask you a second time."
 - 3. How many times does the Lord have to ask us to do His will?
 - a) Reluctance to obey God is illustrated by Moses (Exodus 4:13-14).
 - b) Readiness to obey God is illustrated by Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8).
- B. We should have a purpose for listening to God: We should be striving to live more obediently before Him.
 - 1. If our Bible study is for mere curiosity, etc., we may not even see the answers to our questions when we find them.
 - 2. Whether we "recognize" the Lord's "voice" when we hear it depends greatly on our attitude. This is why attitude's important (John 7:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).
- C. Don't base your relationship with God on what you have to do. That won't be successful. Base it on what you want to do, which is hopefully following the voice of God in the New Testament. The real danger is to be lukewarm!
- D. Genuine eagerness to do God's will includes a willingness:
 - 1. To do what He commands (Deuteronomy 5:1, 32; 6:3, 25).

2. To do it without delay (Psalm 119:60; Matthew 8:21-22).
3. Several of us in the audience have seen young people walk away from their faith because of girlfriends or boyfriends. And it's so sad that they were raised with righteousness in the home, but they left it.

Conclusion. The calling of Samuel was a demonstration of God's personal and direct communication with individuals. It doesn't establish that we can expect the same treatment, but it does emphasize the importance of attentiveness and responsiveness to the divine call through the Scriptures.

We should act on the thought, "I will hasten to Him, hasten so glad and free." We should be motivated by the kind of attitude that Paul had (Acts 9:6; Romans 1:15). We can and always should be, those who have "noble and good" hearts (Luke 8:15).

Isn't it wonderful that young Samuel could be taught how to appropriately respond to God? And as he goes on through his life, he never lost that desire and ability. Samuel went on to become a key figure in Israel, serving as a judge, prophet, and advisor to the Israelites. The account is not only a pivotal moment in Samuel's life, but also is a tremendous example of the attitude all of us should have toward God's message in Scripture.

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