

Building Faith in the Family January 17

THE CALL OF SAMUEL • 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Samuel was one of God's most important prophets. Wonderful stories of his birth and childhood have been told and loved by God's people throughout the ages. His birth was an answer to his mother's prayers, and she was so thankful to God that, when he was a young boy, she took Samuel to God's special place of worship to work with an old priest named Eli.

Years passed. As Eli grew older and weaker, Samuel proved to be a huge blessing. Late one night when Samuel was about 11, he woke up to the sound of his name. "Samuel!"

He jumped up and hurried to Eli's room. "Yes, Eli," he said. "What can I get for you?"

"I did not call you, my son," Eli replied. "Go back to bed."

Samuel tiptoed back, but before he had time to snuggle down, he heard the voice again. "Samuel!"

He was out of bed in a flash and into Eli's room again. But Eli knew nothing of it and ordered him back to bed.

"Samuel!"

A third time the call came. Samuel knew he wasn't dreaming. Once more he went to Eli. This time Eli did not send him away. He had guessed, at last, what must be happening. "Samuel," he said, "I believe it is God calling you. Go back to bed. If the voice calls again, say, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'"

Saying the words over to himself, Samuel went back to bed, every muscle strained to listen. Again the voice came clearly: "Samuel!"

"I'm listening, Lord," Samuel answered, "please speak to me."

When Samuel heard what God had to say, he was sad and shocked. Eli's two sons were not good like their father. They disobeyed God's laws and grabbed for themselves the presents that people brought for God. God told Samuel that he was not going to let Eli's family be his priests any longer.

Early next day Eli came to find Samuel. "What did God say to you?" he asked.

Samuel went very red and looked down at the ground. He did not want to have to tell Eli the sad news.

"Tell me everything," Eli insisted.

When Samuel had told him what God had to say about his family, Eli bent his head and nodded quietly. "God knows what is right and best," he whispered.

Taken from *The Children's Bible in 365 Stories* by Mary Batchelor, a great resource for family reading and devotions.



This Sunday's readings are about God speaking to people. The Old Testament story tells how God spoke to a boy named Samuel and gave him an assignment.

Read the story together. If you'd like, take parts: a narrator, Samuel, Eli the priest, and God's voice. Then talk about it:

- What did God want to tell Samuel? Why?
- Why do you think Samuel didn't recognize God's voice right away?
- How did he find out who was calling him?
- How does God speak to us—to parents and children—today? (*He does!*) Talk about times when you feel God spoke to you.
- Silent listening and watching for God's voice always need to be part of our prayers. How can we be better listeners to God?
- If any of you are facing decisions—big or small—pray for God's guidance, then listen for His answer. Maybe better: pray *together*, then wait and watch together for ways God may be answering and guiding you.

Here are prayers to give everyone practice listening and watching for God's answers.

- *What should I say "I'm sorry" for? Please forgive me.*
- *What should I say "Thank You" for?*
- *God, who needs Your help today? What should I say or do?*