

Week 25 | Samuel Listens to God

Bible Passage: 1 Samuel 3

MEMORY VERSE

1 Samuel 3:10

"Speak, for your servant is listening."

Big Idea: God still speaks today, and I can listen like Samuel did.

Jesus Our Savior. Samuel hears God speak a word of rescue and warning. He grows up to anoint kings, and that royal line leads straight to Jesus, the One who saves us from our sin.

Jesus Our Sanctifier. God shapes Samuel from boyhood into a faithful prophet. The same God shapes every child who learns to listen and obey, growing them into who He made them to be.

Jesus Our Healer. God is not indifferent to the brokenness in Eli's house. He speaks honestly because He cares about the whole person and longs to heal what sin has damaged.

Jesus Our Coming King. Samuel will anoint Israel's first kings, pointing forward to the King who never fails. Jesus is coming again, and this story reminds us history is moving toward Him.

About God. God speaks. He is not silent, distant, or too busy. He knows His people by name and calls them personally.

About People. Even good people can grow dull to God's voice, as Eli had. We need help to recognize and respond to Him.

About Salvation. The word God gives confronts sin honestly, yet God keeps calling and working. The word that exposes also rescues, fully in Jesus.

About Scripture. Every word God gave Samuel came true. The text says none of his words fell to the ground, which shows us God's word is reliable.

About the Trinity. The Father speaks, the Son is the living Word, and the Spirit opens ears to hear. All three are present in the work of God speaking to His people.

Historical and Cultural Context

This story takes place at Shiloh, the town where the tabernacle stood before there was a temple in Jerusalem. The tabernacle was a sacred tent, the place where Israel came to worship God and where the ark of the covenant rested. It was the spiritual center of the whole nation. The events fall near the end of the period of the judges, a time the Bible describes as spiritually dark and disordered. Worship had grown corrupt. Eli was the high priest, now old and nearly blind, and his sons abused their priestly roles. Into this setting a woman named Hannah had prayed for a son and promised to give him back to God. That son was Samuel, and she brought him to live and serve at the tabernacle while he was still very young. So the boy in this chapter is a small child sleeping in God's house, serving the aging priest. The text notes that in those days the word of the Lord was rare and visions were uncommon, which makes God's call to a child all the more striking.

The Story Explained

Samuel is sleeping in the tabernacle near the ark when he hears a voice call his name. He assumes it is Eli and runs to him, but Eli says he did not call and sends him back to bed. This happens a second and a third time. The text explains why Samuel is confused. He did not yet know the Lord, meaning he had not yet personally experienced God speaking to him directly. By the third time, Eli realizes that the Lord Himself is calling the boy. Eli instructs Samuel to answer, Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening. When God calls again, Samuel responds as Eli taught him, and God delivers a sobering message. He confirms the judgment coming on Eli's household because of the sin Eli failed to restrain in his sons. In the morning Samuel is afraid to repeat the message, but Eli draws it out of him, and Samuel tells him everything. Eli receives it with humble surrender to God's will. The chapter closes by telling us Samuel grew, the Lord was with him, and He let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. All Israel came to recognize Samuel as a trustworthy prophet. The heart of the passage is not just that Samuel hears, but that he listens and then obeys, even when the message is hard.

Common Misunderstandings

What People Sometimes Think	What the Bible Actually Says
God only spoke to important grown ups in the Bible.	God called Samuel while he was a young child serving in the tabernacle. God speaks to people of every age.
Samuel was special because he had a quiet, holy personality.	Samuel did not even recognize God's voice at first. What set him apart was a willing heart to listen and obey.
Hearing from God always feels dramatic or scary.	Samuel simply heard his name in the night. The point is responsiveness, not a spectacular experience.
Listening to God is mostly about getting good feelings.	God's message to Samuel was hard and honest. Real listening includes obeying truth we would rather not hear.

Questions Children Often Ask

What a Child Might Ask	How to Answer It Simply
Does God talk to me like He talked to Samuel?	God speaks to us today mainly through the Bible and through His Spirit in our hearts. We listen by reading His Word and praying.
Why did Samuel keep running to the wrong person?	He had never heard God's voice before, so he did not know who it was yet. God was patient and kept calling him.
Why did God tell Samuel something so sad about Eli?	God is always honest. He told the truth because He loves people too much to pretend everything is fine.
Was Samuel scared to obey?	Yes. He was afraid to tell Eli the hard news. But he obeyed God anyway, and that is what made him brave.

Apologetics Preparation

A skeptical parent or older child may ask how we can know this account is historical rather than legend. A few honest points help. Samuel is a major figure across 1 and 2 Samuel, woven into the well documented rise of Israel's monarchy under Saul and David, kings whose existence is supported by archaeology such as the Tel Dan inscription referencing the house of David. The narrative also includes unflattering detail, like the failure of the priestly family, which legend builders tend to remove rather than preserve. More importantly, the text itself makes a falsifiable claim. It says none of Samuel's words fell to the ground, meaning his prophecies proved true over time. That is a claim a community could test against real events. The honest answer is not that we must prove every detail, but that this account sits inside a reliable historical record that Jesus Himself treated as true.

Christ Connection

Samuel becomes the prophet who speaks God's word faithfully and who anoints the kings of Israel. Every faithful prophet and every anointed king points forward to Jesus, who is both the perfect Prophet and the true King. Where Samuel heard the word of God, Jesus is the Word of God in person. Where Samuel delivered a message of coming judgment, Jesus came to bear that judgment for us on the cross. The God who called a child in the dark is the same God who came near to us in Christ so that anyone, even a child, can hear Him and be saved. Draw this line clearly before class. The story is not finally about being a good listener. It is about the God who speaks, who rescues, and who calls us to Himself.

Heart Preparation and Teacher Prayer

Before you teach, sit quietly for a moment and let the Lord call your name too. You are not only delivering a lesson. You are inviting children to know the voice of the God who knows them. Ask yourself where you have grown dull to His voice this week, and let Him speak fresh truth into your own heart first. Teaching children to listen is sacred work. The same God who called Samuel has called you to this room.

A Prayer Before Class

Father, You spoke to a small boy in the night and changed the course of a nation. Speak to me now. Quiet the noise in my heart so I can hear You clearly. Give me words that help these children recognize Your voice and trust You. Let none of the truth I share fall to the ground. In Jesus name, amen.