

Listening to God

1 Samuel 3:1-4:1

¹ The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

² One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. ³ The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴ Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." ⁵ And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

⁶ Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

⁸ A third time the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹ So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰ The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

¹¹ And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. ¹² At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. ¹³ For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them. ¹⁴ Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'"

¹⁵ Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, ¹⁶ but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son." Samuel answered, "Here I am."

¹⁷ "What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you." ¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, "He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes."

¹⁹ The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD. ²¹ The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

¹ And Samuel's word came to all Israel.

God Speaks

1. God speaks to us. Many of us may presume that the Lord speaks to only a selected few who merit His attention. This is not true. God loves us and He speaks to us. He speaks through His word, through others and directly to us using different forms of communication (dreams, vision, audible voice, inner voice etc.). What we must focus on, is to learn how to listen. The only way to train ourselves to listen is by meditating on the word of God regularly. There is much to say about this but for now we will focus on what the above text says about listening to God.

2. In the previous chapters, the writer tells us about the corrupt sons of Eli. God appointed Eli and His sons to be priests, but they have turned away from God. Their corrupt practices have desecrated the worship life of Israel. God is going to put an end to the priestly line of Eli because of the wicked deeds of Eli's sons and Eli's own lack of action. God has raised a priest for Himself, Samuel the son of Hannah.

The Word of God Was Rare

In those days, the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

1. The word of God was rare because the people appointed to speak the word of God were corrupt and godless. There is no one who seeks the Lord and would represent His interest.
 - What happens to us when the revelation of God's word is rare?
 - What does it tell us about our spiritual climate?
2. God called out to Samuel. The writer tells us that Samuel did not know what was happening because he has yet to encounter God in such a way (vs. 7). As for Eli, he only discerned what was happening after Samuel went to him twice.
 - Does God speak to you?
 - Would you recognize the voice of the Lord?
 - What would help you discern God's voice?

God Speaks

1. In the text there are three occasions where Eli was told about his son's wicked deeds.
 - a. The people complained to Eli.
 - b. A prophet was sent to warn Eli. (2:27-36)
 - c. Samuel receives a word from God concerning the coming judgment.
2. Did Eli listen to God? What was his response? Even after a prophet called out Eli's apparent lack of response and pointed out his complicity in their sin, Eli did not repent or confront his sons.
3. Compare Eli's response to Hannah's response. Both were in a difficult situation. Hannah turned to God and acted accordingly while Eli let things be.
4. Hannah encountered God. The Bible does not tell us if Hannah heard an audible voice or saw a vision, yet she encountered God and He took away her shame and brought joy into her heart. Her song tells us that the character of God; His love, justice, and mercy was revealed to her. God speaks to us in different ways; are we willing to listen?

A Difficult Word

¹⁵ *Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision,*

1. God speaks to Samuel about the coming judgment upon Eli's family. God has spoken to Eli, but he has failed to restrain his sons. Now God must speak to someone else. They were both in the presence of God. Eli was the priest and mentor, but he was not listening to God and now God speaks to Samuel. Eli knew the significance of this, God had to wake up young Samuel to get to Eli. Sadly, nothing changed with Eli. He remained resigned to whatever God may do, he was unwilling to take any action.
2. God's word to us demands a response from us. Hannah's life overflowed with joy, hope, and victory. She was moved to dedicate her son to God, where else Eli did nothing and continued to participate in the sins of his sons. In the parable of the sower and the seed (Matt 13:1-23), Jesus tells us about four different responses to His word. Jesus was asking His audience in which way do they respond to His word. The same question applies to us. God speaks and His word brings life to us when we respond with faith.

Then Eli said, "He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes."

1. Eli's response can be perceived as one of meekness and submission. This kind of meekness and submission is unwholesome. God has appointed Eli to be His priest. Eli was given the responsibility and authority to act on God's behalf. Eli would bear much but refused to act, he was submissive but lacked the courage or resoluteness to fight for what is right.
2. God's word is alive and active; it is not dead and passive. Unwholesome passiveness does nothing to restrain evil, instead it restrains the word and work of God.

Hebrews 4:12-13

¹² For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

A Priest and Prophet

¹⁹ *The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD. ²¹ The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word. ¹ And Samuel's word came to all Israel.*

1. "The Lord was with Samuel." The presence of God makes the difference in our lives. It is God who call us and shapes us for His purpose.
2. When Samuel listened and acted on God's word, God in turn did not let any of Samuel's words fall to the ground. All that Samuel spoke was fulfilled by God.

3. Samuel the faithful prophet/priest is compared and contrasted with Eli's sons. All of Israel knew the wicked action of Hopni and Phinehas (2:22); now all of Israel knew Samuel was a true prophet of the Lord.
4. God's word returned to the people. As long as Samuel remained the main prophet/priest, God continued to make Himself known there.

Prayer

1. Listening to God

- We allow God to speak to us
- We train ourselves to discern the voice of God by meditating and obeying Scriptures
- As a church, we will learn to discern God's voice so that we may be faithful and true to our calling
- We will remain in the presence of God

2. Come before Him in gratefulness & thanksgiving

3. Life Church

- A church dedicated to Prayer, Word and Worship
- Leadership
- Families – salvation
- Personal encounters
- Open doors – the surrounding community.
- Deepen our love for one another and make us eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit
- Courage to speak the Gospel, stand for truth in our schools, marketplace and in our neighbourhoods

4. Ministries:

- Life Explorers
- Redeeming Roses
- Destiny Kids & Teens
- Sunday School
- Lifeline
- Worship

5. Healing

- Si Yun (colon cancer) & Ee Khai, Jayden
- Francis (neck, arthritis)
- Shoban (slip disc)

6. Covid-19 Pandemic

- Protection
- Vaccine
- Those affected: sick, foreigners, poor & those who have lost their jobs

7. Malaysia

- Churches
- Salvation
- Leaders
- Unity