



The Lord Speaks to Samuel



Scripture Reference:

[1 Samuel 3](#)

Suggested Emphasis: Listen to the Lord when He speaks (through the Bible).

Memory Verse: “Your word is like a lamp for my feet and a light for my way.” [Psalm 119:105, ICB](#)



Story Overview:

While the young Samuel was sleeping, the Lord called his name. Not recognizing the voice, Samuel ran to the elderly Eli, thinking it was him. When the voice continued to call Samuel, Eli told him to listen because it must be the Lord speaking. The Lord did speak to Samuel and told him that Eli’s sons would not be the new priests of Israel. Samuel would be. Samuel served the Lord as long as he lived as a Priest, Judge, and Prophet.

Background Study:

Samuel came on the scene at the end of the time of the judges. Samuel was the last judge.

[Click here for The Book of Judges: The Big Picture](#)

The Bible does not tell us how old Samuel was when he received the call recorded in our lesson, but the Jewish historian Josephus says he was twelve. [1 Samuel 2:26](#) describes Samuel’s growth physically, spiritually, and socially. He “grew in favour both with the Lord and men.” This statement is used one thousand years later about Jesus ([Luke 2:52](#)).

God had not spoken directly to anyone for many years. At other times in history, God often gave messages to His prophets in visions. But in the time when Samuel was growing up, He did not give any such messages.

Eli now was old, and his eyesight was failing, so he needed Samuel to be near to help him. Eli and Samuel had gone to bed, but the lamp in the temple, trimmed and filled with oil in the evening ([Exodus 30: 7-8](#)) had not yet burned out.

Samuel had never received any direct contact from the Lord. This is what is meant in verse 7, “Samuel did not yet know the Lord.” Samuel had learned about the Lord from Eli and his parents, but he had not actually heard the voice of God. When God called Samuel, he thought it was Eli calling. At first, Eli did not realize what was happening. After three times, Eli realized that God was calling Samuel. He told Samuel to answer God the next time he heard the call.

Samuel saw nothing, but the Lord was there, as He had been each time He had called. He told Samuel that the men of Eli’s family would not be priests much longer because Eli’s sons were contemptible ([1 Samuel 3:11-14](#)). Read more about that in [1 Samuel 2:12-17, 27-33](#).

What a huge burden for a young boy to carry. He must have dreaded Eli asking about the encounter. But Eli told Samuel to tell him absolutely everything that the Lord had said.

Eli could not have been completely shocked at what the Lord told Samuel. Earlier, a “man of God” had come to Eli and told him that the Lord had revealed that Eli’s sons would not be the next priests after Eli. Because of their disobedience, the house of Eli would fall ([1 Samuel 2:27-36](#)). Read [1 Samuel chapter 4](#) to find out how Eli’s sons and Eli all died in one day.

As Samuel grew up, he became more and more recognized throughout all of Israel. Samuel was the last Judge of Israel. Through Samuel, the country became more unified. “From Dan to Beersheba” ([1 Samuel 3:20](#)) refers to two cities located at the northern and southern ends of Israel. Dan was located at the base of Mount Hermon in the most extreme northern portion of Israel. Beersheba was in the Judean-Negev area at the southern end of Israel. This phrase became an idiom meaning “all of Israel.”

Samuel’s ministry was a long productive one. He was a circuit judge travelling from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah to Ramah to judge. He anointed two kings (Saul and David) though he did not live to see David crowned. All his life was devoted to doing the Lord’s work. Samuel served at a transitional time for Israel. He was the last Judge in the time of the Judges. He was High Priest. And he was a Prophet in the time of the Kings. He was the only man to ever be all three (Judge, High Priest, and Prophet).

For more about Samuel see [God Answers Hannah’s Prayer](#) and [Samuel Become a Helper in the Tabernacle](#).



Way to Introduce the Story:

Collect a number of items that can be used to make a noise (alarm clock, mixer, hammer and nails, razor, crinkled paper, whistle, etc.) Sit behind a partition or somehow conceal the items while you make the sound. You could also yawn or clap. Let the children guess what the sound is. Discuss what it would be like if you heard one of these sounds in your sleep. Would it wake you up? Would you be frightened? “In today’s story, we are going to learn about a time when Samuel heard something during the night. It was a voice.”

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The Story:

Samuel loved God and loved to help Eli, the High Priest, in the Tabernacle of the Lord. Eli was old and almost blind so Samuel often stayed near Eli in case he needed something. Samuel was growing into a nice young man. The people of Israel noticed how Samuel always tried to do and say the right things. Eli was very proud of Samuel.

Hophni and Phinehas were Eli's sons. Usually, when a High Priest died, his son would be the next High Priest. That would mean that Hophni or Phinehas would be the next High Priest after Eli.

There was one very big problem. The people of Israel did not like Hophni and Phinehas. They were mean. Sometimes they stole things. They did not love the Lord and they did not obey Him. They would not be good High Priests.

One night Samuel was lying down in the tabernacle. All of a sudden Samuel heard a voice calling his name. Samuel quickly got up and ran to Eli's room.

Samuel woke Eli up and said, "Here I am, Eli, you called me."

"I didn't call you, Samuel, go back and lie down," answered Eli. Samuel went back and lay down again.

A little while later he heard the voice again. "Samuel!" the voice said.

Samuel got up and ran to Eli again. "Here I am, Eli, you called me." Again, Eli sent him back.

Samuel heard the voice one more time. "What was going on here?" Samuel thought to himself. Once again he ran to Eli's bedside.

This time Eli began to understand that something special was happening. This was not just any voice. This must be the voice of the Lord.

"Samuel," Eli said, "goes back and lay down. When you hear the voice again, say: 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'"

Samuel went back and lay down. Again the voice called his name, "Samuel, Samuel!"

This time Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Now the Lord began to speak to Samuel. He told him that Eli's sons would not be the next High Priests. They were too wicked and they did not love the Lord.

Samuel lay back down until morning when it was time to open the tabernacle. Samuel did not want to tell Eli what the Lord had said. He knew that Eli would feel bad. But Eli told Samuel to tell him everything the Lord said. He told him not to leave one thing out.

Eli was very sad but he knew that Samuel was telling the truth.

After that first night, the Lord came and spoke to Samuel often. Samuel always listened carefully when the Lord spoke to him. As Samuel grew up, he learned more and more about what the Lord wanted him to do. Samuel told many people how to love and obey God. The people of Israel always listened to Samuel because his words were wise and they were from the Lord.

After Eli died, Samuel became the High Priest. Samuel was also a Judge and a Prophet. He is the only man to ever be all three things. Samuel served the Lord all of his life and grew to be a very old man. He never stopped loving the Lord.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download this and other illustrations directly from Free Bible Images.](#)

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. Who did Samuel think was calling him in the middle of the night? Eli
2. Who really called Samuel? The Lord
3. Who was the next High Priest after Eli? Samuel
4. What were the three jobs that Samuel did for the Lord? Judge, High Priest, and Prophet

Song Suggestions:

- [Samuel Song](#)
- [God is Listening When We Pray \(Song\) English/Cebuano](#)
- [B-I-B-L-E](#)
- [Books of the Old Testament](#)
- [Books of the New Testament](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:



- Use this simple Judges Review Wheel to explain the cycle of the Judges. [Printable instructions for Judges Review Wheel.](#)
- A fun way to present this story is to have the children come to class in their pyjamas. Everyone can pretend to “go to sleep” as Samuel did and then be woken by God’s voice.
- To emphasise the idea of listening (Samuel listened to God) make various sounds and let the children guess what they are. The teacher could make the sounds behind a curtain. Examples: drum, rattle, coins rattling, turning pages of a book, cards shuffling, or candy wrapper crinkling.
You could also play various pre-recorded sounds if you have a smartphone or computer. Search for a free app or “everyday sound effects” online or download other sound effects to your laptop.
- Review basic bible facts (66 Books; Two Testaments- Old with 39 books and New with 27 books; etc.)
- Review the books of the Old Testament.
- Have “sword drills” where you call out a Scripture reference and the first child to find and read it wins the round.
- Object Lesson: Bring a food item or candy bar to class and place it in front of the children. Lay your bible beside it. Talk about how simply looking at the candy bar is not enough. It is not until we take it and eat it that we can enjoy it. The Bible is the same. Just carrying it around or looking at it is not enough. It is not until we read it that

we can receive the benefits. Read a few Scriptures you have chosen beforehand. After you have discussed this with the children then let them enjoy the candy bar.

- Other scriptures for discussion: [Psalm 119:105](#); [John 17:17](#); [Colossians 3:16](#); [2 Timothy 2:15](#); [Hebrews 4:12](#); [James 1:22](#).

Crafts:

- Make a miniature-size model of the story. If you teach over a number of weeks, you could add to the model to form a collection that reviews the stories. You can place the models in boxes. One box could display one judge. Samuel Box- (Covering 3 lessons on Samuel) Picture of mum and baby, baby items, sewing items, little coat, tabernacle pictures or model, picture of sleeping boy, pillow and blanket . . .



- Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).
- Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page call of Samuel \(Sermon 4 kids\)](#)
- [Games: Interactive group activities \(Sermon 4 kids\)](#)
- [Printable Books of the Bible Bookmarks \(DLTK\)](#)
- [Other: Nice Collection of worksheets, puzzles, colouring sheets \(Free Sunday school curriculum\)](#)

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