

Samuel

The child who heard God

1 Samuel 1-3

Samuel was a special child
from the time of his mother's pregnancy.

His mother's name was Hannah.
Chapter 1 is her story.

She was a sad woman, because she had no children.
She was also sad, because she had to share her husband with
another woman who had several children, and the other woman
often teased Hannah about that.

Every year Hannah and her husband visited the temple tent
the TABERNACLE
for giving God their sacrifice.

One time Hannah stayed to pray... and cry.

She prayed,
*"Lord All-Powerful, I am really sad!
Remember me and don't forget me.
If you will give me a son,
I will give him back to you all his life."*

The High Priest, name ELI, was watching Hannah pray.
Her mouth made the words, but her voice was silent.
She was praying from her heart.

The priest thought she was drunk.
He warned her: "Stop your drinking! Throw away your wine!"

Hannah answered, "No, sir, I didn't drink any wine, any alcohol.

Don't think that I am a bad woman.
I am really sad, and I am telling the Lord about all my problems."

The priest understood his mistake.
So he blessed Hannah, and told her:
*"Go in peace.
I pray that the God will give you what you asked from Him."*

Pah!

A short time later Hannah became pregnant.
When her son was born, she named him SAMUEL.
That name means, "God has heard."
Because, she said, "I asked the Lord for this baby."

Hannah did not forget her promise.

Later, when Samuel was old enough to live without Momma,
Hannah took her boy to the priest.
She told the priest her story,
*"I am the same woman who stood here praying to the Lord.
I prayed for this child.
The Lord answered my prayer and gave him to me.
Now I give him back to the Lord.
He will belong to the Lord all his life."*

Samuel never visited his parents' home again.
But every year his mother visited Samuel.
Every year she gave him a gift -- a new coat.

And every year Eli the priest gave her a blessing.

Hannah had five more children. 3 boys and 2 girls.

But Samuel stayed with the priest.

While all that has happening about Samuel and his family,
another story was happening about the priest ELI and his family

Eli was a good man. He loved God.
But he was a lousy father.
He did not take up his responsibility and teach his sons.

When his two sons became priest,
they ignored God's rules.
When people brought their sacrifices to God,
they stole for themselves.
They had sex with women who worked in the temple tent.

And everyone knew what they were doing.

Their father Eli loved God.
But Eli also loved personal pleasure.
He loved eating TOO MUCH!

Which of the father's way did his sons follow?
Loving God? or pleasing themselves?

One prophet came and told Eli that he must stop that dirty
business.

But Eli only told his son,
"You must stop doing wrong. You are sinning against God."
They already knew that. And they didn't care.

Eli had authority for firing his sons,
kick them out,
no more serving in the temple.

But he did nothing.
And God was fed-up.

Now those two stories -- Samuel and Eli's sons -- merge together.
Because God will tell Eli one last warning
through that boy Samuel.

Now this story in chapter three has two strange and interesting sentences.

(1) <i>"In those days the Lord almost never spoke to people."</i> [verse 1] (2) <i>"Now Samuel did-not-yet know the Lord,"</i> [verse7]
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First sentence -- *"In those days the Lord almost never spoke."*
I always thought that back in Bible times, God was always talking
to people.

visions
angels appear
God's voice from heaven

We see those so many times in the Bible,
we assume that was normal.

No, God talking directly to people was not normal.
The Bible says that was RARE. "Almost never!"

So... that means that
Bible times <----- and -----> Today
are not different.

That's interesting!

The 2nd strange sentence:

"Now Samuel did-not-yet know the Lord,"

Huh!??

Samuel lived in the temple!
Samuel did work for God every day.
Samuel was faithful, going to worship.

That doesn't matter.

Samuel knew ABOUT the Lord.
But he didn't KNOW the Lord.

Comparison:

I know about our U.S. President.
But I never MET the President.
I can't say that I really KNOW him.

Samuel already learned much about God,
but Samuel did-not-yet have
a personal relationship [*connect*] with God.

The lesson for us is what?

You can grow up in a Christian family.
You can go to church faithfully.
You can become church leader, and church officer.
You can become a pastor or teacher.

But if you don't have a relationship with Christ
you don't-yet-know Him.
You only know ABOUT Him.

...the same as Samuel.
...the same as Eli's two sons.

How can you KNOW Christ?
How can you have a relationship with Him?

First ask yourself:

Have you sinned against God?
And will you need to answer to Him for your actions?

Second:

When Jesus died on the cross,
did Jesus suffer God's punishment for YOUR sins?

Third:

Do you want to continue holding on to your sins,
as Eli's sons did?
Or do you want to let Jesus have your guilt,
give it to Him,
and let Him pay your debt,
forgive your sins,
and give you His new life
reigning in you?

You see, that WE cannot connect up TO God.
But HE connects down to us.

He does all the work for our salvation.
Our part is trust Him.

You know that Samuel's relationship with God began,
not when Samuel went to seminary
not when Samuel said all the right prayers
Samuel's communication with God began
when God poked* Samuel. [**ASL shoulder touch for getting attention.*]

Samuel felt that poke -- heard God's voice.
But he didn't know that was God poking him.

So God poked... and poked... and poked...
until finally (Pah!) Samuel answered,
"Yes, Lord. Your servant is listening."

When God pokes you, don't ignore that like Eli and his sons did.
Answer "Yes, Lord."

God pokes you, how?
God pokes you, when?

First, God pokes your conscience -- guilt.
That's His LAW, showing you your sin.

Second, God pokes your grief,
telling you that He loves you, and He forgives you.
That's his GOSPEL,
the Good News showing you your Savior, Jesus.

Third, God pokes your daily decisions,
your actions,
your attitudes,
when His Word, the Bible, teaches you,
guides you,
and gives you power for holy living,
for serving Him,
for serving other people.

Today, in our story,
we see 3 ways that people answer God's poke.

When God poked Eli,
his answer: "Yes, I know, I know..."
and then Eli did nothing.

When God poked his (Eli's) sons,
their answer: Ignore and rebel.

When God poked Samuel,
his answer:
"Yes, Lord. Speak to me. Your servant is listening."

The Bible says that all during Samuel's life,
from a young boy to an old man,
God continued poking him,
because Samuel continued listening,
and he continued answering, "Yes, Lord..."

Today we still have God's poke.

[Show the Bible]

Through that book God tells us
what He has already done,
what He is doing now,
and what He will do in the future.

Through that book God tells us
what He wants us to do,
and like Samuel He tells us the message
that He wants us to give to other people.



So in our relationship with God, what-do-we-do?

We read and study the Bible
He pokes us.

And we pray:

*Yes, Lord. Speak to us.
Help us listen.
Help us trust.
Help us obey. Amen.*

Old Testament Lesson: 1st SAMUEL 3:1-10

1. Now the boy SAMUEL was serving the Lord by helping ELI. In those days the Lord almost never spoke to people.

2. ELI was almost blind with age, and one night after ELI went to bed and SAMUEL slept in the temple near the ARK,

3. The Lord spoke, "SAMUEL, SAMUEL!" And the boy said, "Here I am," and he ran to ELI.

4. The boy said, "Here I am, I heard you call me."

5. ELI said, "I didn't call you, go to bed again." Now the boy went and lay-down.

6. Then the Lord spoke again, "SAMUEL!" And the boy awoke and went to ELI and said, "Here I am, I heard you call me." ELI said, "No, I didn't call you, go to bed again."

7. Now SAMUEL did-not-yet know the Lord, and he never heard a special word from God before.

8. Now the Lord spoke again the third time. Again SAMUEL awoke and ran to ELI. "Here I am, I heard you call me." Then ELI understood that the Lord spoke to the boy.

9. Now ELI said, "Go and lay-down again, and if God speaks again, then say, "Lord, speak to me. YOUR servant is listening.'" Now SAMUEL went to bed again.

10. And the Lord came and stood near-by and spoke as before, "SAMUEL, SAMUEL!" and the boy answered, "Lord, speak to me. YOUR servant is listening."

The message that God gave to Samuel was about Eli and his family... bad news for the future, because Eli did not obey the Lord.

Epistle Lesson: JAMES 1:17-27

17. Everything good comes from God. And every perfect gift comes from God. These good gifts come-down from the Father, the Maker of all lights. God doesn't change. HE is always the same.

18. God decided to give us life through the word of truth. HE wanted us to be the most important of all the things HE made.

19. My dear friends, always be more eager to listen than to speak. Don't become angry easily.

20. A person's anger doesn't help him live correctly same-as God wants.

21. Now remove from your life every bad thing and every wrong thing you do. Be-humble and accept God's teaching that is put in your heart. That teaching can save your soul.

22. Obey God's teaching; don't only listen and do nothing. Why? Because if you only sit and listen, you are fooling yourselves.

23. People who hear God's teaching but they do nothing, they are like people who look at themselves in a mirror.

24. They see their faces and they then go away and quickly forget what they looked like.

25. But the truly happy people carefully study God's perfect teaching that makes people free, and they continue to study God's Word. They don't forget what they heard, but they obey what God's teaching says. People who do that will be happy.

26. Some person maybe think he is good. But if that person speaks things that he should not say, then he is fooling himself. His religion is worth nothing.

27. This is the worship that God accepts: taking-care of children without parents, women without husbands needing help, and keeping yourself free from the world's evil influence. This is the worship that God accepts same-as pure and good.

Gospel Lesson: MATTHEW 7:21-27

21. Not everyone praying, "Lord, Lord!" will enter the holy nation of heaven. Only the person doing things MY Father in heaven wants will enter heaven.

22. Many people will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, YOU remember we preached in YOUR name? YOU remember we sent-out devils in YOUR name? YOU remember we did wonderful powerful things in YOUR name?"

23. Then I will say to them in clear words, "I never knew you. Leave ME, you evil doers."

24. Anyone hearing these words of MINE and obeys MY words will be the same-as a wise man building a house on a rock.

25. The rains-poured. The wind-blew against the house. But the house didn't collapse, because the house was-built on a rock.

26. Everyone hearing MY words and refusing to obey will be the same-as a foolish man building a house on sand.

27. The rains-poured. The water flooded-over. The wind-blew against the house. And the house collapsed and broke-apart.