

## Opening

- I want to share a quick word that will prepare us for our time of prayer tonight, and for our time in this new series "Shema."
  - Shema = To hear/ To obey
  - Before we can "hear" God in obedience, we must learn to literally "hear" God, to discern his voice.
- 1 Samuel 3:1-10//

*Meanwhile, the boy Samuel served the Lord by assisting Eli. Now in those days messages from the Lord were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon.*

*2 One night Eli, who was almost blind by now, had gone to bed. 3 The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle[a] near the Ark of God.*

*4 Suddenly the Lord called out, "Samuel!"*

*"Yes?" Samuel replied. "What is it?" 5 He got up and ran to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"*

*"I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go back to bed." So he did.*

*6 Then the Lord called out again, "Samuel!"*

*Again Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"*

*"I didn't call you, my son," Eli said. "Go back to bed."*

*7 Samuel did not yet know the Lord because he had never had a message from the Lord before. 8 So the Lord called a third time, and once more Samuel got up and went to Eli.*

*"Here I am. Did you call me?"*

*Then Eli realized it was the Lord who was calling the boy. 9 So he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed.*

*10 And the Lord came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!"*

*And Samuel replied, "Speak, your servant is listening."*
- Three points that will help us *Learn to Listen* in prayer.

## Context

v. 1 - *"Now in those days messages from the Lord were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon."*

- This exposition communicates to us the impact our context has on our ability to listen to God.
- The picture of Samuel in the Temple:
  - **The reason Samuel couldn't comprehend the voice of God wasn't that he didn't have the desire, it was that his context made it difficult.**

If the story was rewritten in 2020 - *"Now in those days, God was always speaking, but no one was listening."*

- Someone might argue that the scarcity of God's voice is just the same today... But I would argue that it isn't because God's not talking, it's because we're too distracted to hear his voice.
- The picture of Samuel in Today's Context:
  - We face the same difficulty today, although the scarcity of God's voice is not because He isn't speaking, it's because we're distracted.
  - Social media, notifications, news updates, advertisements, entertainment... every second of every day is filled with distractions & disruptions of God's voice.
- Like Samuel, you may have the desire to hear God, but because your time is so filled with distractions, you haven't even considered that the stray thought in your mind, or that feeling in your gut may be God trying to speak to you.
  - Ask yourself the question... **Have I been allowing my cultural context to distract my attention from God's voice and disrupt my desire to know Him better?**
- **Context often dictates our desires...** Anyone who's ever walked into Target has experienced this.
  - Meme: "No one goes to Target because you need something. You go to Target to let Target tell you what you need."
- **Tonight**, through our worship, we are creating a context of expectation, shutting out distractions and learning how to listen.
  - \* Worship creates the context.

## Conversation

- Prayer most simply defined is Conversation with God. And just like Shema, conversation has two sides... To have a conversation with a person is not just to speak, but also to listen.
  - The women at Panera...
- We picked up the story of Samuel at the point at which he learned how to let God respond, but **before this point of the story, his whole life had been characterized by only one side of the conversation.**
  - Samuel's mother, Hannah, was barren. She had been criticized and mocked because she had not children. And she was known to cry out so desperately for a child that people thought she was drunk. But finally the Lord heard her prayers...
 

1 Samuel 1:19-20// *"The Lord remembered her plea, 20 and in due time she gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I asked the Lord for him."*
  - Samuel literally means "asked of God" or "heard by God." His existence is evidence, a celebration, that God is listening to us!

- Although Samuel had experienced by his very existence, the power of talking to God (making requests of Him), he had only just begun to realize the power of hearing God (hearing what God's requests might be of him).
- **Tonight**, we are making space for the neglected side of the prayer conversation.
  - \*Prayer teams...
    - For those, like Samuel, who are learning how to hear the voice of God... Our prayer team, like Eli, is here to help you discern what God wants to say about your situation.
    - For those, like Hannah, who have prayed so long and hard, that you've given up on the response... Our prayer team is here to pray with you.

## Calling

- Finally, by the fourth time God calls out to Samuel, he learns to listen. And what he discovers is there was a reason why God was calling him... He had a message for Samuel to share.
  - The message was a scathing criticism of Eli, his boss, his spiritual mentor, the man who was, effectively, his foster father... Can you imagine?
- But Samuel was obedient to the call...

*v. 15-17// 15 Samuel stayed in bed until morning, then got up and opened the doors of the Tabernacle as usual. He was afraid to tell Eli what the Lord had said to him. 16 But Eli called out to him, "Samuel, my son."... "What did the Lord say to you? Tell me everything... 18 So Samuel told Eli everything; **he didn't hold anything back.***

- This is where the second side of the "Shema" coin comes in... To listen is to obey. After we've learned how to listen, it comes with a demand that we obey.
- There are many of you in the room who are attuned to the voice of God. You hear him speak regularly, but where you get caught up is in your response... Like Samuel, you are fearful to carry the message forward.
- God often speaks to us with a word for ourselves, but we also believe that he often gives us a word for someone else.
- Remember, we are in a different historical context... How prophesy to the church is defined in the NT...
  - *1 Cor. 14:3// But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them.*
- **Tonight**, as we devote a time of intentionally listening for the voice of God, don't be surprised if he gives you a message for someone else... a word to encourage, strengthen, comfort.

## Closing

1 Sam. 3:19// "As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him..."

- The greatest gift of Listening and learning God's voice is that you will begin to develop a deep and intimate relationship with Him.