

Sermon Title: Listening to God

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Scripture Reference: 1 Samuel 3:1-11

Thesis: **God spoke to the boy Samuel, but he first had to learn how to listen to the Lord;**

Purpose: **We too, need to learn to be listeners of God's voice as part of learning to properly pray.**

Key Word: "Hearing or Listening to God"

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: 1 Samuel 3:1-11

A) The Setting:

- 1) **Last week we were introduced to Samuel when his mother first prayed for God to give her a son.**
 - (a) And Samuel was the result of that Prayer.
 - (b) His mother, Hannah, promised to give him back to the Lord and thus when he was weaned from his mother, she brought Samuel to Eli the Priest and left him there to be raised as a priest.
- 2) **What we need to understand is that the people of Israel were crying out for a king like the nations around them.**
 - (a) God was about to answer that prayer through Samuel.
 - (b) So the book of First Samuel signifies a significant shift from the time of Judges to the time of kingdoms.
- 3) **Samuel would become God's spokesman, a prophet.**
 - (a) The time of speaking through a priest has come to an end;
 - (b) For God will not speak through a king; but will now speak through a prophet.
- 4) **Some time has now passed and the Hebrew Historian states that Samuel was about the age of 12.**
 - (a) We are told that hearing the Word of the Lord at this time was rare.
 - (b) But Samuel is about to hear from God.
- 5) **What would you do if you heard God calling to you?**
 - (a) Would you be frightened?
 - (b) Would you answer?
- 6) **When I was a child of 8 or 9 there was a time when I had Scarlet Fever**
 - (a) I remember one night I was awoken by a voice speaking my name to me.
 - (b) Russell, Russell; I was startled and remember looking up to see what I thought was my mother.
 - (c) I relaxed, and asked what she wanted now squinting to look at her in the dark of the night.
 - (d) However, as I peered into the darkness, she just seems to vaporize.
 - (e) **Now I was really scared and I got up and went to my parents room to see if my mother, who was sleeping in bed, was calling me.**
 - (i) She was not and said I must have been dreaming and put me back to bed.
 - (ii) Now that wasn't God; but I can tell you it is pretty terrifying to a young boy.
- 7) **So, lets pick up our story here with our scripture reading for today in**

1 Samuel 3:1-11.

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

- 1) Illustration: **AFTER ALL THESE YEARS¹**
 - (a) **An old couple was sitting by the fireside.**

¹ . Adrian Rogers, Ten Secrets for a Successful Family (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1996), 115

- (b) He looked over at her, had a romantic thought, and said, "After fifty years, I've found you tried and true."
 - (c) The wife's hearing wasn't very good, so she said, "What?"
 - (d) He repeated, "After fifty years, I've found you tried and true."
 - (e) "After fifty years, I'm tired of you too," she replied.
- 2) **Listening and hearing are closely related.**
- (a) Some have difficulty hearing . . .
 - (b) Some don't always hear what is being said either because we didn't hear correctly or we didn't listen carefully enough.
 - (c) Maybe we are surrounded by too much noise.
- 3) **The question is are you listening to God?**
- (a) We have been studying prayer;
 - (b) But prayer is not just about our communication to God;
- 4) **God wants to communicate to us as well.**
- (a) I believe that God will speak to us when we are ready to listen.
 - (b) But listening is a learned skill that we all need to work on.
 - (c) Do you know how to listen to God?
- 5) **Listening to God is vitally important if we are going to grow in our relationship with God.**
- (a) If we are going to learn how to follow His leading.
 - (b) If we want to find the center of God's will for our lives.

TS: **So, just . . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **How Does God Speak to You Today?**²

1) **The Word of God**

- (a) This the Primary way that God Speaks to us today.
- (b) We have the complete revelation of God with its Unfolding truth.
- (c) Bible is the Breath of God. **1 Timothy 3:16-17**, "**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**"
- (d) While scripture may not have been written to us; it was written for us.
- (e) **Joshua 1:7-8**, "**Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.**"
- (f) **It is our owners manual telling us how to get the most out of our lives in God.**
 - (i) It is the most practical book ever written.
 - (ii) It directs us, challenges us, warns us, comforts us, assures us.
 - (iii) If we meditate on it we will find it to be one of the most rewarding books ever written.
- (g) **It is the number one selling book all the time.**
 - (i) So much so, that they stopped counting it or
 - (ii) It would be number one on the best sellers list always.

2) **The Holy Spirit**

- (a) The second method is through the Holy Spirit.
- (b) Because of Jesus making a way for us to be restored in our relationship with God . . . He sends His Holy Spirit when we give our lives to Him as Lord.

2 How To Listen to God, Charles Stanley, Thomas Nelson Publishers, New York, 1985, P. 13-17

- (c) The Spirit is there dwelling in us and if we surrender daily to His power we have a right to expect to hear anything we need from God.
 - (d) We can claim His presence, direction and guidance.
 - (e) When we are walking with God we will feel His presence making impressions on us to act, or not to act; to speak or not to speak to someone.
- 3) **Other People**
- (a) A third way is through other people.
 - (b) That can be through a spouse or a friend, a pastor.
 - (c) It can be through a radio or TV message.
 - (d) **The people we should listen to the most are those who we live with every day.**
 - (i) The people who love us the most and pray for us are often the instruments that God will use to speak His Word to us.
 - (ii) But we need to be alert, sensitive, and available to God's Voice speaking to us.
 - (e) We have a right to believe that God will speak when we are trusting and following Him.
- 4) **Circumstances**
- (a) A fourth way is through circumstances.
 - (b) **One time I wanted to go back to a job I had left in a town fire department.**
 - (i) I was in good shape and while it required me to pass a physical agility test I was working out and preparing for the interview.
 - (ii) I was qualified, well liked by the supervisor and pretty much a shoe in for the position.
 - (iii) However, just before the test, I was injured at a fire call that put me on worker's comp for a few weeks.
 - (iv) I had dislocated my knee and had to be on crutches for a few weeks.
 - (v) Because I was unable to participate in the test, the position went to someone else.
 - (vi) I believe God did not want me to take that job and later on it became clear that would have been a bad move on my part.
 - (c) The Apostle Paul wanted to take the gospel message to Asia; but God prevented him from doing so.
 - (d) God can arrange the circumstances of our lives and I believe He does in order to keep us on the path He directs.
 - (e) Remember we are His children and like a good parent; God is watching over us.

TS: **Next . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **GOD Wants Us to Comprehend His Truth.**

- 1) **This is God's first goal, that we understand His Truth.**
 - (a) While God wants us to trust Him and doesn't always give us the big picture; that doesn't mean that God is trying to deceive or trick us.
 - (b) God wants us to know His truth; but sometimes we have to look for it.
- 2) **There are two kinds of listeners, passive and aggressive.**
 - (a) The passive listener does not come to God to hear a decision from Him.
 - (b) **While the aggressive listener comes knowing and seeking to hear diligently what God has to say.**
 - (i) If they are in church, their Bible is open with pen in hand ready to take note of what God is saying to them.
 - (ii) If they are in Bible Study, they are participating with full attention asking questions to clarify meaning and deepening understanding.
 - (iii) During personal devotions; they are writing out what God is saying to them through impressions, prayers, and the Word of God.

- 3) The aggressive listener is constantly asking the question, "**How can I apply this to my life?**"
- 4) The Apostle James said, "**But the one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.**" **James 1:25** NASB
 - (a) This only means that we are focus our full attention on the Word of God,
 - (b) Listening to hear how God wants you to apply it where you are.
- 5) **The problem is that we have become too passive as listeners waiting for the burning bush to grab our attention.**
 - (a) We have so much noise that God cannot be heard.
 - (b) We take so little time to offer up our prayers; that we don't expect or want God to speak to us. . . it might interfere with our plans.

TS: So what can we take with us this morning?

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

- A) **God spoke to Samuel in the middle of the night.**
 - 1) God often has to wait until we are quiet enough to hear His Voice.
 - 2) Have you ever been woken up by God to give you an answer to a problem you are wrestling with?
 - 3) **We read that Samuel did not yet know the Lord.**
 - (a) Oh, he knew about the Lord;
 - (b) But that is not the same thing as having a personal relationship with HIM!
 - 4) **God entrusted Samuel with an important message that was a judgment on Eli and his evil sons.**
 - (a) Samuel had to learn to listen to God and share the truth of the message he was entrusted to give.
 - (b) The man who he now lived with, who blessed his mother and took him to raise as his own was being judged by God.
 - 5) **Samuel need to learn an important lesson here that would help him as a prophet of God for the rest of his life.**
 - (a) When Eli the priest asked Samuel to tell him the message Eli warned Samuel in verse 17 that God would deal severely with him if he failed to share the truth of the message.
 - (b) Samuel was afraid to give Eli the bad news; but with Eli's encouragement to share the whole truth; Samuel told Him of God's judgment.
 - 6) **Eli's response was to accept it, saying in **verse 18**, "**He is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His eyes.**"**
 - (a) Sometimes as God's spokesmen we have to share the hard truth of God's Word even though it is not the politically correct feel good message that we want to hear.
 - (b) God will judge me for the truth I share or fail to share.
 - (c) Our first loyalty is to Christ and His Word.
 - 7) **So, I ask you; what kind of listener are you?**
 - (a) Are you aggressively seeking God's Word for you?
 - (b) Do you want to hear from God and are you willing to listen for what God might say to you?

IV) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**