

Calling

Session 2 • 1 Samuel 3:1-14

ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of 1 Samuel*) and **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Prophets, Priests, Kings*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: 1 Samuel Time Line*). Enlist a volunteer to create the chart described in the **Bible Skill** (p. 23) and to present it during the session.

READ: Call on a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 21. If possible, share your own recollections of being called by your parents when you were a child.

ASK: **Did one of your parents have a distinctive way of calling you that you immediately recognized? Did different tones convey different messages?** (p. 21)

RECAP: Remind adults of the vow Hannah made and how she fulfilled it. Highlight the difference between Samuel's spiritual growth and the actions of Eli's sons.

- *The writer of 1 Samuel masterfully contrasted Eli's sons with Hannah and Elkanah's with the phrase: Samuel "grew up in the presence of the Lord" (2:21b). He also "grew in stature and in favor with the Lord and with people" (v. 26). The text also says, "Samuel grew. The Lord was with him, and he fulfilled everything Samuel prophesied" (3:19). Eli's sons were also growing—but not in favor with God and the people. Describing Hophni and Phinehas's behavior, the Scripture says, "So the servants' sin was very severe in the presence of the Lord, because the men treated the Lord's offering with contempt" (2:17). . . . Hannah and Elkanah's son grew in godliness. Hophni and Phinehas grew into great sinners.* (p. 21)

TRANSITION: *In today's session, we will study how God called Samuel to be a prophet and how part of the call involved him sharing a message of judgment from the Lord about Eli and his sons.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: **Ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 3:1-7** as the other adults listen for what Samuel experienced and how he responded.

DESCRIBE: Call attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of 1 Samuel*) and note that this passage is still in the earliest part of Samuel's life. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: 1 Samuel Time Line*) and highlight that the initial events in the book came toward the end of the period of the judges.

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EXPLAIN: Point out that Eli was old and his sight was failing. Note how this could also reflect the spiritual blindness of the priest and the nation.

ASK: **Why do you think Samuel thought it was Eli he heard calling him?** (p. 23)

RECAP: Explain why Samuel mistook God's voice for Eli's voice.

- **(1:7)** Undoubtedly, Samuel had studied the law, the written word of God available at that time. He knew the story of God and His work in Israel's history. But he did not yet know the Lord personally. He had never heard God's voice before and couldn't discern the identity of the One calling him. Thus, he assumed that Eli was calling.

SHARE: Note that while Samuel didn't know God well at this point, the Lord knew him and called out to Samuel by name. Encourage adults to consider how this applies to their lives.

ASK: **How does being known by God influence your faith?** (p. 23)

READ: **Read aloud 1 Samuel 3:8-10** and guide adults to listen for how Eli's response to Samuel changed.

ASK: **How was Eli's response in these verses different from what he had told Samuel the other times?** (p. 23)

EXPLAIN: Point out that Eli discerned God was calling Samuel. Emphasize the significance Eli recognized in this moment.

- **(3:8-9)** Eli understood that Samuel's role in ministry was about to change. Earlier, a man of God had delivered a message that Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, would not succeed him as priests. Instead, God would raise up another (1 Sam. 2:35). Eli likely recognized that this promise was now being fulfilled. He saw that Samuel was chosen to serve the Lord and knew that as God spoke to the boy, Samuel's responsibility was to listen.

BIBLE SKILL: Direct attention to the **Bible Skill** on page 23 Allow the enlisted volunteer to review the chart and to lead adults through the activity

ASK: **What practices can we cultivate to help us to hear God better?** (p. 23)

SAY: *As Samuel listened, the Lord had a startling message for him about Eli's family.*

READ: **Call on a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 3:11-14** while adults listen for God's message to Samuel about Eli and his family.

DISCUSS: Review the content related to priests and prophets on **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Prophets, Priests, Kings*). Point out the distinctions between Eli's role as priest and the role God was preparing Samuel to take as priest and prophet.

ASK: **How should the people of Israel have expected Eli and his sons to behave? Why?** (p. 23)

SHARE: Explain the serious nature of God's words to Samuel regarding Eli and his sons.

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- **(3:14)** The Hebrew word translated "sworn" refers to taking an oath. By swearing this message to Eli's family, God made it final and unchangeable—He would not go back on His word. His judgment was certain, and no sacrifice or offering could prevent it. Though severe, this judgment matched the sin, since Hophni and Phinehas had profaned and taken the very sacrifices brought for worship.

ASK: **When has following God required you to do a difficult thing?** (p. 23)

RECAP: Summarize verses 15-18, noting that Samuel didn't want to share the message, but Eli made him tell the truth. Explain that over time Samuel continued to grow closer to God and developed a reputation as a solid godly leader and prophet.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Believers can be assured that God knows us personally and chooses to use His people for His plans.
- Believers should be attentive to God's call.
- God calls believers to deliver His message even when it is difficult to hear.

DISCUSS: Guide adults to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** activity on page 23. Invite volunteers to share how they are investing in the lives of others as a spiritual mentor.

ASK: **What can Christian parents do to make sure they are handling the spiritual growth of their children well?** (p. 23)

CHALLENGE: Encourage adults to reflect on the **Apply the Text** questions from page 27: **What keeps us from hearing God's voice? What changes do we need to make to prepare ourselves to hear a message from God?** Lead a brief discussion on how to eliminate spiritual distractions so we can focus on God's voice.

PRAY: Close in prayer, reminding adults to be intentional in being still and making space for God in their lives during the week. Encourage adults to use Samuel's words as a prayer prompt: "Speak, for your servant is listening."

AFTER THE SESSION

Encourage adults to participate in a worship experience today or in the week ahead. Remind them how significant worship is to the Lord. Follow up this session with an email or text sharing how you responded to a message from the Lord during your personal Bible study or in a worship service. Let adults know that you will be praying for them as they seek to hear from the Lord.

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