

The Art of Listening to God
Kowloon International Baptist Church
Harry Lucenay, Pastor

1 Samuel 3:1-14
Kowloon Tong
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Job once cried, “*Oh, how I wish that God would speak...*” (*Job 11:5*) Young Samuel heard the voice of God while he was working with Eli in the temple at Shiloh. Late one night while Eli was sleeping, God aroused Samuel three times. The first two times Samuel raced to respond to Eli’s requests. Each time he was sent back to bed. The third time Eli realized God was speaking and told Samuel to say *Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening*. God spoke to Samuel, and the next morning Samuel carried God’s message of judgment to Eli. May this Old Testament encounter teach us something about hearing the voice of God.

1. Position Yourself.

³ *The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was.* The first three verses reveal spiritual darkness in the land and poor vision in the house of God. Sin had plugged the ears of the people.

Young Samuel placed himself in a position to learn from God. We find it hard to hear God when we seek to force Him into small cubicles in our lives. The setting for hearing the voice of God is in the context of a relationship that makes time to be quiet before God.

My soul, look in stillness to God, for my expectation is from Him.

Psalm 62:5 (Barclay)

2. Probe the Voices.

The idea of God speaking to Samuel remained dormant in his heart.

⁷ *Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not been revealed to him.*

The boy knew some of God’s written Word but he was unaware of the way God could speak to a person. Eli realized God was speaking.

How can we know we are hearing God’s voice?

Jesus said *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*

John 10:27

Sometimes all we want to hear is God’s Will for our lives.

Dallas Willard: My extreme preoccupation with knowing God’s will for me may only indicate, contrary to what is often thought, that I am over concerned with myself, not with a Christ-like interest in the well-being of others or in the glory of God.

God speaks that we may follow Him, not that He may follow us.

What kind of things does God say?

The voice of God will never contradict the commands and principles of Scripture, will always be consistent with God’s Word and will often challenge our faith.

3. Pay Attention.

¹⁰ *The Lord came and stood there calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”*

God gets our attention and waits for us to get still and listen.

Paying attention in prayer should involve our eyes, ears and hearts!

Speak, for your servant is listening. (v. 10)

We need to move the center of our prayers from our will, our way, our time to “Lord, I want your will, your way, your time.”

Jesus often encouraged followers with *whoever has ears, let them hear.*

I will listen to what God the Lord will say...

Psalm 85:8

4. Practice Obedience.

Good listeners practice probing, searching and comparing what God has said. ¹¹ *The Lord said to Samuel: “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle.* God then pronounced judgment. God had revealed His will earlier. Eli and his family did not pay attention. We may think we hear God perfectly but we may choose to add, subtract, misapply, ignore or replace what God said with our own version of what God “should have said.” Obedience does not allow replacing Scripture or proof-texting.

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart... (*Psalm 37:4*) means you are seeking God, not ordering from God.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

James 1:22

God speaks to encourage us to follow His way.

Our Prayer: “Keep talking God, I’m listening and ready to obey.”

Samuel’s first step after God spoke was hard. His obedience enabled him to hear other words from God and face even greater challenges.