

“When God Speaks . . .” (1 Samuel 3:1–4:1a)

In the 70s and 80s, the brokerage firm of E. F. Hutton developed a series of successful television ads. The circumstances were always different, but the message was the same. In a crowded room, restaurant, or other location, a small group of people were busy talking about some financial investment. Generally, one individual was not saying much, but in the course of the conversation that person was finally asked what he or she thought. The person always responded in every ad by saying the same thing, “Well, my broker is E. F. Hutton, and E. F. Hutton says . . .” Immediately, the person stopped speaking as he realized that all the busy activity around him had stopped, everything had become silent, and ears were stretched to catch the next words out of his mouth. Everyone surrounding the speaker was straining to hear the latest financial tip or advice. At this point, an announcer broke in and said, “When E. F. Hutton speaks, people listen.” Of course, the implication was clear. E. F. Hutton was so successful in the investment business that people would stop everything they were doing just to listen to what the broker had to say.¹

When you think about it, it seems sad that God doesn’t get the same respect as E. F. Hutton. It ought to be that when God speaks, people listen. Unfortunately, this is generally not the case. People are just too busy, too lazy, or too disobedient to stop and listen to God. But when we refuse to listen to God, we are the ones who lose out. God yearns to speak to us and to reveal Himself to us, but He insists that we have ears to hear and feet to respond with faith and obedience. The overarching theme of 1 Sam 3:1–4:1a² is: *When God speaks, we should listen.*

1. God’s Word comes to those who listen (3:1–14). Our story begins in 3:1 with an important background verse: “**Now the boy Samuel³ was ministering to the LORD before Eli. And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions⁴ were infrequent.**”⁵ This opening verse may not seem very significant but that is because many Christians read Scripture too quickly. Samuel, an older boy of twelve or even a teenager,⁶ is ministering to the Lord in a seemingly God-forsaken temple. Remember, Eli is the lazy and indifferent chief priest and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are sinful and scandalous priests who are under God’s divine discipline (2:27–36). Nevertheless, in the midst of this mess, Samuel ministered to the Lord. This verse demonstrates that a godly life can develop in spite of ungodly influences surrounding it.⁷ So it was with Moses in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, and Jesus in Nazareth. Your child, whatever his or her surroundings, can live a godly life and minister effectively. Another significant point in this verse is that in the days of Samuel, God didn’t speak very often.⁸ The absence of God’s Word was a sign of God’s judgment,⁹ particularly directed toward the failings of the priesthood.¹⁰

Today, our problem is not an absence of God’s Word; it is a listening problem.¹¹ Several years ago I couldn’t get rid of water in my ears. The fluid in my ear canals just stayed there, sloshed around a little, and reduced my hearing capacity. Try as I might, I couldn’t clear my ears. Eventually, with the help of some eardrops, my ears returned to normal. We may have the Scriptures but suffer from spiritual deafness, and so the Word is rare. This must change! *When God speaks, we should listen.*

The setting of our story continues to develop in 3:2–3: “**It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim and he could not see well), and the lamp of God had not yet gone out,¹² and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was.**” Eli was “lying down in his place” while Samuel was “lying down in the temple¹³ of the Lord where the ark¹⁴ of God was.”¹⁵ The mention of the lamp of God and the ark of the covenant¹⁶ points out two things: (1) The fact that the lamp had not yet gone out indicates that God spoke to Samuel in the predawn hours (Exod 27:21).¹⁷ Perhaps this is also symbolic of God’s presence still remaining in the Shiloh complex, even though it was run by Hophni and Phinehas, the corrupted sons of Eli. (2) The reference to Samuel lying down in the temple near the ark shows that Samuel was, of all the Israelites, the closest to the Lord’s throne.¹⁸ This was at least true physically, if not spiritually.

We now enter the plot of our story in 3:4–5: “. . . **the LORD called Samuel; and he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then he ran to Eli and said, ‘Here I am, for you called me.’ But he said, ‘I did not call, lie down again.’ So he went and lay down.**” When the Lord calls Samuel,¹⁹ he responds with, “Here I am” (3:4). This eager reply was also given by Abraham (Gen 22:1, 11), Moses (Exod 3:4), and Isaiah (Isa 6:8).²⁰ After answering, “Here I am,” Samuel runs to Eli to see if he called him (1 Sam 3:5). I love Samuel’s energetic response. It was immediate and fast. (Wouldn’t it be great if our kids always responded in this fashion? The world would be a better place!) Of course, Eli denies calling Samuel and tells him to go back to bed.²¹ Reconstructing the text, I am rather confident that Eli responded in a rather grumpy manner. Think about it: Eli is deliberately called “fat” (2:29; 4:18) because he greedily ate of the sacrificial portions that his sons would steal from the unsuspecting Israelites. He was also a lazy man, who refused to discipline his sons. Do you think he slept rather soundly? I guarantee it! Do you think he appreciated being woken up in the middle of the night from his sleep? You can be sure that he didn’t!

The plot thickens in 3:6: **“The LORD called yet again, ‘Samuel!’ So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am, for you called me.’ But he answered, ‘I did not call, my son, lie down again.’”** Twice now Samuel hears a voice, and twice he scampers to Eli. The two of them are perplexed. Samuel has been so stable and trustworthy; can he be hearing things? Or is Eli becoming senile, calling in his sleep without knowing it? Could Hophni and Phinehas be pulling a prank? Samuel retraces his steps to bed, confused and a little frightened.²² Fortunately, our author provides a helpful editorial note: **“Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him”** (3:7). This verse doesn’t mean that Samuel was not a believer.²³ He just didn’t yet “know” (*yada*) the Lord in an intimate and personal way.²⁴ Remember, Samuel has been growing up in God’s presence (2:21) and preparing for ministry (2:18–19). He is likely already a believer in the Lord. But 3:7b clarifies that God hasn’t yet spoken to him in the audible way that happens now.²⁵ The HCSB provides a helpful translation: “Now Samuel had not yet *experienced* the LORD, *because* the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him” (my emphasis). Thus, Samuel didn’t “know” or “recognize” the Lord’s voice.²⁶

The narrative really gets exciting in 3:8: **“So the LORD called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am, for you called me.’ Then Eli discerned that the LORD was calling the boy.”** This verse should lead you to exclaim, “Duh!” It took Eli, the chief priest, three times to figure out what God was doing. If he was a baseball player, he would have struck out! This was certainly not a good reflection on Eli’s spiritual insight. Eli should have realized that God was calling Samuel.²⁷

Fortunately, Eli corrected his error in 3:9–10: **“And Eli said to Samuel, ‘Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.’ So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ And Samuel said, ‘Speak, for Your servant is listening.’”**²⁸ Eli provided Samuel biblical counsel and Sam responded. The fourth time was the charm! Interestingly, this time the Lord “came and stood” (3:10), suggesting that Samuel could see Him as well as hear Him (cf. Gen 18:22). Whether or not this was a vision or an actual theophany is uncertain. What *is* significant is that God revealed Himself in a time when both word and visions were rare (1 Sam 3:1).²⁹ In doing so, the Lord also called out Samuel’s name twice, imparting a sense of urgency and finality. He did this with Abraham (Gen 22:11), Jacob (Gen 46:2), and Moses (Exod 3:4) when He was preparing these men for great tasks. Once again, the point seems to be *when God speaks, we should listen*.

At this point it must be asked: Why do we fail to discern God’s voice? Often, we simply fail to listen. Good listening is like tuning in to a radio station. For good results, you can listen to only one station at a time. So, who are you listening to? Are you half dialed to the Lord’s voice and half to the world? If so, the result will be static.³⁰ God wants you to surrender both people and pursuits to Him and learn to be still and know your God (Ps 46:10). *When God speaks, you should listen*.

In 3:11–14 the words God gives Samuel are like the pounding of a mighty gavel: **“The LORD said to Samuel, ‘Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.’³¹ In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.”** In the Old Testament, ears “tingle” when people receive news of approaching punishment.³² This unusual expression conveys the idea that the news is so dreadful the people can’t believe it. We might say, “It will take their breath away.”³³ In this case, God declares a death sentence on Eli and his house.³⁴ The curse that the sons brought on themselves was blaspheming God’s name (see ESV), which was always a capital sin (Lev 24:11–16, 23).³⁵ Death was also the penalty for showing contempt for the priesthood (Deut 17:12) as well as for disobeying one’s parents (21:18–21), and Eli was implicated because he didn’t restrain Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam 3:13).³⁶ The verb translated “rebuke” (*kahah*) by the NASB is misleading and contradicts 2:22–25.³⁷ A better translation is “restrain” (e.g., ESV, NIV) or “he hasn’t disciplined them” (NLT). The Hebrew verb has the sense of “weaken, humble, reduce to powerlessness.” Thus, the condemnation here is that Eli should have stripped his sons of their office.³⁸ The house of Eli had committed blatant sins against God and showed no signs of remorse. They were guilty of “a sin of the high hand” (cf. Num 15:30–31). For such defiant sin there was no atonement, and the death penalty would be immediately applied (2:33; 3:14).³⁹

2. God’s Word comes in power and wins the day (3:15–4:1a). After receiving God’s prophetic word, **“Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. Then Eli called Samuel and said, ‘Samuel, my son.’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘What is the word that He spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. May God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the words that He spoke to you.’ So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him”** (3:15–17). Verse 15 implies that Samuel didn’t sleep a wink. He undoubtedly tossed and turned the rest of the night. However, when Samuel got out of bed, hearing God’s voice didn’t keep him from doing his daily chores. Today Samuel would write books and be invited on the speaking circuit in the biggest churches and on Christian television being billed as, “The man who heard from God!” But Samuel went right back to his work.⁴⁰ Naturally, though, he didn’t want to tell Eli what the Lord had said. I’m sure he did everything he could to avoid Eli that day. But Eli eventually tracked him down and insisted that Samuel tell him the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help him God. He even pronounced a curse over poor Samuel!⁴¹ What was the young Samuel to do? He did what any faithful prophet, preacher, teacher, or Christian should do—he imparted God’s Word with no holds barred.

Eli responds to Samuel’s prophetic words with a fatalistic resignation: **“It is the LORD; let Him do what seems good to Him”** (3:18). Most commentators understand Eli’s response to be a positive expression of trust in God’s sovereignty.⁴² However, I don’t believe this to be the case. Eli’s response is simply a pious sounding version of “what will be, will be.” Israel’s chief priest resigns himself to accept God’s will, but he still refuses to take action and discipline his sons. They are left to do as they please, unrestrained. At least twice God speaks to Eli through a prophet to warn him of the judgment coming upon him and his house because he does not deal with the sins of his sons. Eli does nothing beyond verbally rebuking his sons. Even now, when the death of his sons is around the corner, Eli does absolutely nothing. He refuses to repent. Deffinbaugh aptly writes, “What we read is not an expression of faith in God’s sovereignty, but an expression of fatalism couched in religious terms.”⁴³ Contrast this with when David is rebuked for his sin with Bathsheba and he is informed that the child will die (2 Sam 12:14). This does not keep David from doing something about it. David beseeches the Lord, prostrating himself on the ground all night, praying that God might spare the child (2 Sam 12:16–17). This is how the narrator of Samuel expects a person to respond to God’s Word. *When God speaks, you should listen.*

Our story closes in dramatic fashion in 1 Sam 3:19–4:1a: “**Thus Samuel grew and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fail. All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD. And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, because the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD. Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel.**” Samuel continued to grow and the Lord was with him (3:19).⁴⁴ Samuel did not use his call for fame or personal gain (cf. 12:3–4). He did not try to twist God’s commands to suit himself or his friends. He listened and spoke as God spoke to him. He had the courage to be faithful to the message of God, no matter what.⁴⁵ And because he did, God blessed his ministry and confirmed his prophecies. Samuel’s words were trustworthy because they were the Lord’s words.⁴⁶ *When God spoke, Samuel listened.*

All Israel knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet from Dan to Beersheba—the boundaries of the Promised Land (3:20).⁴⁷ The Hebrew word translated “confirmed” (*aman*) also means “faithful.”⁴⁸ The suggestion seems to be that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord because he was faithful. In response to Israel’s crisis of leadership, what did God do? Did He raise up a man with what we would call leadership gifts? Did He set up a new organizational structure for the nation? No! He sent His Word and provided for His Word to come to all Israel.⁴⁹ God used one unsuspecting, young boy to make an historical life-changing difference.

It is important to recognize that God speaks to young people just as He did to Samuel. As adults we must make it easy for them to hear God’s voice and respond in faith. So how do we teach children and teens to hear God’s voice and know His will?

First, we must assure young people that God wants to reveal His will to them. We must remind our children and teens again and again that God loves them and wants to reveal Himself to them. We must express confidence in God’s heart to be intimate with our children. May we ensure that Colossians 1:9 is our prayer: “For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

Secondly, we must encourage young people to obey God’s general will. Like adults, many young people want specific, individual answers to God’s will. Examples include: Where should I go to school? Who should I marry? What should I do for a living? Should I buy or rent a house? What kind of car should I drive? How should I invest my money? However, God is typically not willing to reveal his specific will until we obey His general, revealed will. God has provided a number of clear and specific statements describing His general will for everyone (e.g., Eph 6:1–6; 1 Thess 4:3; 5:17–18; 1 Pet 2:15; 4:19). As we obey God’s revealed will, He will frequently reveal His specific will for our lives.

Thirdly, we must urge young people to study God’s written Word and seek the Lord through prayer. God communicates to us through the Bible, and we communicate with Him through prayer. Both are necessary to hear clearly from the Lord. As parents and grandparents, we must set an example for our children of those who are committed to Bible study and prayer. We must reiterate the principle: God speaks to those who take time to listen.

Do you remember how this chapter started? It started with the stated fact that “word from the Lord was rare in those days, visions were infrequent” (3:1). The phrase “the word of the Lord” forms an *inclusio* (3:1, 21). The God who had cared about childless Hannah cared about Israel in her time of leadership crisis. The word of the Lord would now come to Israel by the prophet He had called. God was no longer silent.⁵⁰ This passage ends with the recognition by all the people of Israel that the Lord had revealed Himself to Samuel. God had spoken. The good news of the gospel is that God has broken the silence of history. He has spoken in many ways and at many times. And ultimately, He spoke in the most personal way possible. He spoke through His own Son (Heb 1:1–2). Please hear God’s call through His Son today. Jesus frequently says, “He who has ears to hear let him hear.” Will you believe in Christ today?

Scripture References

1 Samuel 3:1–4:1a
1 Samuel 28:6, 15
Judges 6:7–10
Amos 8:11–12
Deuteronomy 18:15–19
Mark 4:9–12
Hebrews 1:1–4; 2:1–4

Study Questions

1. Has God ever spoken to me? What was I doing, and what did God say? How do I respond when God speaks to me through His Word? Do I have “ears to hear”? Is my typical response, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening”? If not, what do I say when God talks to me? Am I taking the time to listen? How do I carve out time in my busy schedule to hear from the Lord?
2. What lessons can I learn from this passage about the necessity of a father taking the initiative to follow through with consistent discipline for his children? What can I do better in my role as a parent? What “hot issues” am I facing in my family? How can I discuss these topics with my children? Have I refused to discipline my defiant children? How can I spare my whole family God’s severe discipline? Read Deuteronomy 21:18–21. Is it possible that I don’t restrain my kids because I might have to *first* restrain myself?
3. How can I keep a fresh and growing relationship with the Lord? What are the barriers that hinder me in my walk with the Lord, and what are the factors that endear me to God? Is there someone in my life who has a walk with God that I respect? Will I commit to ask that person this week for some spiritual pointers?
4. Do I have the same sense of privilege in serving God in my everyday responsibilities as Samuel did? Do I have the same type of servant’s heart that Samuel exhibited? If not, how can I grow in my servanthood? Do I have any sense of the Lord’s call upon my life? How has God gifted me? What mission does He have for me to accomplish? Is it difficult to trust God with my life completely? Do I remember a time when I did this? What did God do? Is God calling me to Christian service? What does it mean to be “called” by God?
5. Am I a good listener? What kinds of skills are necessary for spiritual listening? How can I hear God’s voice and know His will? Commit to praying Colossians 1:9. Read the following texts to understand God’s will: Ephesians 6:5–6; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:17–18; 1 Peter 2:15; 4:19. Do I read the Bible daily, asking the Holy Spirit to speak to me through His Word?

Notes

¹ Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*. Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), Electronic ed.

² Youngblood notes that the entire unit (1 Sam 3:1–4:1a) is arranged in chiasmic fashion:

- A. Absence of divine oracles (3:1)
- B. Eli's fading powers (3:2)
- C. Three divine calls to Samuel (3:3–9)
- D. A divine oracle to Samuel (3:10–15)
- C'. Eli's request for Samuel's report (3:16–18)
- B'. Samuel's growing stature (3:19a)
- A'. Return of divine oracles (3:19b–4:1a)

Ronald F. Youngblood, "1, 2 Samuel" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), Electronic ed.

Waltke offers another chiasmic structure:

- A Lack of vision: Eli and the boy Samuel are in their sleeping quarters (3:1–3)
- B Lord called Samuel three times in vain (3:4–9)
- C Lord reveals himself to Samuel: anti-Eli oracle (3:10–14)
- B' Eli calls Samuel, is provided with information (3:15–18)
- A' Samuel is recognized as a prophet; *I AM's* word goes out from Shiloh (3:19b–4:1a)

Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 629.

³ The name Samuel appears twenty-four times in this chapter.

⁴ Youngblood, "1, 2 Samuel," Electronic ed. comments: "The word 'vision(s)' is a technical term for 'divine revelation mediated through a seer' (*hozeh* one of the two Heb. words for 'seer,' has the same root as that for 'vision,' *hazon*; *mar'ah* the other word for 'vision' in this chapter (v. 15), also is used in the sense of 'vision as a means of divine revelation' and has the same root as *ro'eh* the other word for 'seer'). *Hazon* appears in the title verse of three OT prophetic books (Isaiah, Obadiah, Nahum)."

⁵ Amos 8:11–12 tells of similar days of spiritual famine that were soon to come.

⁶ Josephus wrote that Samuel was twelve years old (see Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 5:10:4). The Hebrew word used to describe Samuel in 1 Sam 3:1 (*naar*) elsewhere refers to a young teenager (cf. 17:33). Consequently, we should probably think of Samuel as a boy in his early teens as we read this section.

⁷ Woodhouse notes the fivefold progression of Samuel: (1) Samuel progressed from being the lad to serve the Lord under the direct supervision of Eli the priest (2:11), to taking on the priestly garments himself (2:18), to personal growth with the Lord (2:21), to a youth in good standing with God and the people (2:26), to the one who serves the Lord at Shiloh (3:1). John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*. Preaching the Word series (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 74.

⁸ The phrase "in those days, visions were infrequent" may echo Judg 21:25: "In those days there was no king in Israel."

⁹ Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel. Focus on the Bible* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2000 [1988]), 34. See 1 Sam 28; Ps 74:9; Isa 29:9–14; Mic 3:6–7; cf. Prov 29:18.

¹⁰ Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 74.

¹¹ No wonder we find the repeated expression in the NT, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (see Matt 11:15; 13:9, 43; Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

¹² See Exod 27:20–21; Lev 24:2. This is the last time that this lamp is mentioned in Scripture. James E. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*. College Press, NIV Commentary (Joplin: College Press, 2000), 75.

¹³ Andrews and Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Electronic ed. remark: "Although the Hebrew text uses the term for 'temple' (*hecal*), the portable tabernacle is meant (Exod. 26). In 1 Samuel it is also called 'the house of the Lord' (3:15), 'the Tent of Meeting' (2:22), and 'my dwelling' (2:32). Since the tabernacle may have been located at Shiloh for 40 years (the length of Eli's judgeship; see 4:18), a larger, more permanent building complex may have grown up around it. This would justify the use of the term *temple*."

¹⁴ This is the first mention of the ark in 1 Samuel; however, it will play a significant role in the next three chapters.

¹⁵ Arnold comments: "The reference to Samuel's sleeping in the Temple near the ark of the covenant does not mean he is actually sleeping in the Most Holy Place, only that he has a room with the priests, presumably adjacent to or near Eli's quarters." Bill T. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*. New International Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 81.

¹⁶ Andrews and Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Electronic ed. write: "The ark of God, a chest of acacia wood overlaid with

gold inside and out, symbolized the presence of God with Israel (Exod. 25:10–22). Two cherubim sat on top of the mercy seat on the ark, and the Lord Almighty was said to be enthroned between them (1 Sam. 4:4). The ark led the people of Israel through their wilderness journeys and into the promised land. It was kept in the most holy place of the tabernacle behind a curtain (Exod 26:33).”

¹⁷ Andrews and Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Electronic ed. write: “The lamp mentioned in this verse is the golden lamp stand found among the tabernacle’s furnishings. This lamp stand stood opposite the bread of the presence in the holy place (Exod 25:31–40). It was a violation of the priestly regulations to allow this flame to go out before morning (Exod 27:21).”

¹⁸ Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*. New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 86.

¹⁹ The verb “call” (*qara*) occurs ten times in these seven verses.

²⁰ Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” Electronic ed.

²¹ The irony in this section is that the supervisor sleeps while the worker works.

²² Charles R. Swindoll, *Memorable Scenes from Old Testament Homes* (Anaheim: Insight for Living, 1992), 41.

²³ See esp. Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Samuel,” 2010 ed.:

www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1samuel.pdf; accessed 19 October 2011.

²⁴ David Toshio Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*. New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 177. The use of the word “know” is not used in the same way as in 1 Sam 2:12 were Eli’s sons did not *know* the Lord. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 76 writes: “Samuel certainly *knew* and *worshiped* the God of Israel prior to this night. In Samuel’s case the text is asserting either (1) that he did not yet know it was Yahweh who was speaking, or (2) that he did not yet have a special relationship with the Lord which he would subsequently experience, or (3) that he did not have the immediate knowledge of God which is received in direct revelation.”

²⁵ John Goldingay, *1 and 2 Samuel For Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2010), 32.

²⁶ Packer and Williams remark: “Samuel’s experience suggests that it may not be appropriate to demand too much in terms of faith or experience before giving people certain tasks in the church. It is often through executing them that people come to ‘know the Lord’ in fresh ways.” J. I. Packer and Derek Williams, *The Bible Application Handbook* (Guildford: Eagle, 1999), 382.

²⁷ Andrews and Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Electronic ed.

²⁸ Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” Electronic ed. observes: “Samuel responded as Eli had instructed, repeating Eli’s words verbatim—with one notable exception: he left out the word ‘LORD’ (whether through caution, ignorance, or accident, it is impossible to say; cf. again v. 7).”

²⁹ Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 82.

³⁰ Brian Bell, “Listening Slowly!” (1 Sam 3): www.archives.calvarymurrieta.com/brian/studies-books/old-testament/09-1Samuel/09-1Samuel-003-001-10.pdf; accessed 19 October 2011.

³¹ This expression is used elsewhere only in 2 Kgs 21:12 and Jer 19:3.

³² Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 82. The verb translated “tingle” (*ragaz*) is used of lips “quivering” (*tsalal*) in Hab 3:16.

³³ Swindoll, *Memorable Scenes from Old Testament Homes*, 41.

³⁴ The cutting off of Eli’s line happened about one hundred and thirty years later (cf. 1 Kgs 2:27, 35).

³⁵ See the NET, NRSV, and NLT which follows the LXX.

³⁶ The verb translated “restrained” (*kahah*) is based upon the same Hebrew letters as “dim” (*keheh*) in 1 Sam 3:2. See Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: Norton, 1999), 18.

³⁷ See also Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 180. This is the only time this word is used in the OT.

³⁸ Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 77 n. 10.

³⁹ Centuries later the same fate, and for much the same reasons, would overtake Jerusalem (Isa 22:14).

⁴⁰ Revised and adapted from Bell, “Listening Slowly!”

⁴¹ Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 78 n. 12 observes that this type of curse is found eleven times in the books of Samuel and Kings. Elsewhere it is found only in Ruth 1:17.

⁴² E.g., Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 82 who sees Eli’s response as “submission to the Lord.” Woodhouse goes even further and suggests that this may have been Eli’s “finest moment.”

⁴³ Bob Deffinbaugh, “The Rise of Samuel and the Fall of Eli and Sons” (1 Sam 3:1–4:22):

www.bible.org/seriespage/rise-samuel-and-fall-eli-and-sons-1-samuel-31-422; accessed 19 October 2011.

⁴⁴ This phrase is used of Joseph (Gen 39:3, 23), David (1 Sam 18:12), Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:7), and Phinehas (1 Chron 9:20).

⁴⁵ The way a true prophet is accredited is spelled out in Deut 13:1–5 and 18:14–22.

⁴⁶ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 88; Andrews and Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Electronic ed.

⁴⁷ These two towns marked the traditional limits of the Promised Land. The expression “from Dan to Beersheba” is first found in Judg 20:1 and is found five times thereafter in the books of Samuel.

⁴⁸ The word translated “confirmed” (*aman*) also means “faithful.” It is used of Moses in Num 12:7 and of the faithful priest and his house in 1 Sam 2:35. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 88 notes a connection between Moses and Samuel since Moses is the only person in the Torah to be labeled “faithful.”

⁴⁹ Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 83.

⁵⁰ Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 83.