



Samuel's Preparation – Part 2 (1 Sam 3)

Notes: Week Three

1 Samuel 3 (HCSB)

3 The boy Samuel served the LORD in Eli's presence. In those days the word of the LORD was rare and prophetic visions were not widespread.

2 One day Eli, whose eyesight was failing, was lying in his room. **3** Before the lamp of God had gone out, Samuel was lying down in the tabernacle of the LORD, where the ark of God was located.

4 Then the LORD called Samuel, ^[a] and he answered, "Here I am." **5** He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"I didn't call," Eli replied. "Go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

6 Once again the LORD called, "Samuel!"

Samuel got up, went to Eli, and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"I didn't call, my son," he replied. "Go back and lie down."

7 Now Samuel had not yet experienced the LORD, because the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. **8** Once again, for the third time, the LORD called Samuel. He got up, went to Eli, and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli understood that the LORD was calling the boy. **9** He told Samuel, "Go and lie down. If He calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 The LORD came, stood there, and called as before, "Samuel, Samuel!"

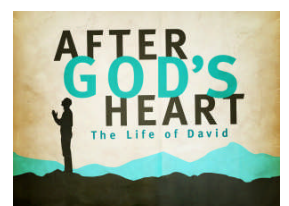
Samuel responded, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."

11 The LORD said to Samuel, "I am about to do something in Israel that everyone who hears about it will shudder. **12** On that day I will carry out against Eli everything I said about his family, from beginning to end. **13** I told him that I am going to judge his family forever because of the iniquity he knows about: his sons are defiling the sanctuary, ^[b] and he has not stopped them. **14** Therefore, I have sworn to Eli's family: The iniquity of Eli's family will never be wiped out by either sacrifice or offering."

15 Samuel lay down until the morning; then he opened the doors of the LORD's house. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, **16** but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son."

"Here I am," answered Samuel.

17 "What was the message He gave you?" Eli asked. "Don't hide it from me. May God punish you and do so severely if you hide anything from me that He told you." **18** So Samuel told him everything and did not hide anything from him. Eli responded, "He is the LORD. He will do what He thinks is good."^[c]



¹⁹ Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and He fulfilled everything Samuel prophesied.^[d] ²⁰ All Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a confirmed prophet of the LORD. ²¹ The LORD continued to appear in Shiloh, because there He revealed Himself to Samuel by His word.

Footnotes:

- a. [1 Samuel 3:4](#) DSS, LXX read *called, "Samuel! Samuel!"*
- b. [1 Samuel 3:13](#) Ancient Jewish tradition, LXX, Old Lat read *are cursing God*
- c. [1 Samuel 3:18](#) Lit *what is good in His eyes*
- d. [1 Samuel 3:19](#) Lit *He let no words fall to the ground*

Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*¹

1 Samuel 3

3:1 On served, see note at [2:11](#). Prophetic visions were not widespread because of the general corruption of the time. God might withhold His word from people who showed by their conduct they did not want to receive it.

3:3 The lamp of God was to burn from evening until morning ([Ex 27:21](#)), so the wording suggests a time just before dawn.

3:4-6 When the LORD called Samuel, the youth confused the voice with that of Eli.

3:7 The text now gives a reason why Samuel did not recognize God's call—no prior vision or voice had come to him.

3:8 After the third time, Eli surmised that Samuel might be hearing God's voice. Perhaps no one else was present in the tabernacle complex.

3:9 Eli's suggested words to Samuel, Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening, provide a model prayer for those who seek to follow God's will.

3:10 The twofold Samuel, Samuel may indicate urgency, as it did with Abraham on Mount Moriah ([Gen 22:11](#)), with Moses at the burning bush ([Ex 3:4](#)), or with Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus ([Ac 9:4](#)).

3:11 The phrase everyone who hears about it will shudder means literally "the two ears of everyone who hears about it will tingle (or ring or quiver)," indicating a response to a horrific report ([2Ki 21:12](#); [Jer 19:3](#)).

3:13 Eli did try to stop his sons ([2:23-25](#)), but apparently his words came after he had let their abuses continue too long.

3:14 The phrase wiped out might be translated "atoned for."

3:15 Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision, probably because Eli had served as Samuel's guardian and mentor and Samuel did not want to bring him bad news.

3:16-17 Eli's words sound harsh, but they were probably intended to encourage Samuel to share the full details of his revelation. This was the standard form of an oath (cp. [2 Sam 3:35](#)).

3:18 The Lord's word to Samuel confirmed the earlier word that Eli had received from the man of God ([2:27-36](#)).

3:20 The cities of Dan and Beer-sheba essentially marked the northern and southern borders of Israel, respectively, spanning a distance of about 110 miles ([2 Sam 3:10](#); [24:2](#)).

3:21 Samuel had demonstrated a willingness to receive and follow God's word, so the LORD continued to appear in Shiloh, whereas He had not done so during the unfaithfulness of Eli's day ([v. 1](#)).

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "1 Samuel 3".

English Standard Version - *Study Bible*²

1 Samuel 3

3:1-4:1a *Call of Samuel as a Prophet.* This passage tells how the Lord called Samuel to be a prophet—the prophet who will anoint the first two legitimate kings of Israel. As a true prophet, he must speak the words of God and never hide them; Israel is to respond by believing these words and obeying them. God repeats his judgment on the house of Eli ([2:27-36](#)), foreshadowing his rejection of the house of Saul. The passage begins with a situation (“the word of the LORD was rare,” [3:1](#)), which God then relieves ([3:19-4:1a](#)). The Lord calls Samuel three times, each call increasing in intensity; but Samuel thinks it is only his foster father Eli who is calling. Finally the elderly Eli perceives who is calling, and Samuel receives his first communication from the Lord. The events of [4:1b-7:1](#) probably take place while Samuel is growing up, before he is established as a prophet. He reappears in [7:3](#).

3:1 Samuel, like the natural sons of Eli ([2:17](#)), is a **young man**. **The word of the LORD was rare in those days**, but that is about to change.

3:3 The **lamp of God** was placed in the tent of meeting, outside the veil before the Most Holy Place, where the ark was, and burned every day from evening to morning ([Ex. 27:20-21](#); [Lev. 24:1-3](#)). It **had not yet gone out**, so the time was probably just before dawn. The **ark of God** had probably been placed in Shiloh when the tent of meeting was set up there in [Josh. 18:1](#). In [Judg. 20:26-27](#) the ark is said to have been in Bethel, but it was apparently moved back to Shiloh.

3:7 **Samuel did not yet know the LORD** in a personal relationship, though of course he knew *about* him.

3:10 **Samuel! Samuel!** The Lord called other people twice by name at a crucial point in their lives; e.g., Abraham ([Gen. 22:11](#)), Jacob ([Gen. 46:2](#)), and Moses ([Ex. 3:4](#)).

3:11 This is the Lord’s first word to Samuel as a prophet. It is often difficult for the recipient to receive the Lord’s initial revelation; cf. Moses ([Ex. 4:13](#)) and Isaiah ([Isa. 6:9](#)).

3:12 **all that I have spoken.** Cf. [2:27-36](#).

3:13 The MT reads “blaspheming for themselves” (see ESV footnote). In Hebrew the phrases **blaspheming God** and “blaspheming for themselves” differ by just one consonant. That consonant was left out by pious scribes so that in copying they would not even need to write the offensive phrase “blaspheming God.” Cf. [Ex. 22:28](#); [Lev. 24:15](#).

3:14 Eli’s house has despised God’s sacrifices and offerings ([2:29](#)), and hence these things will have no efficacy on their behalf. Though normal or inadvertent sins of priests could be **atoned for** by **offering** ([Lev. 4:3-12](#)), Eli’s sons sinned defiantly, and their guilt could not be removed ([Num. 15:30](#); see also [Heb. 10:26](#)), as Eli himself recognizes ([1 Sam. 2:25](#)).

3:17 **May God do so to you and more also if** is a form of solemn appeal to the Lord, a kind of oath. Cf. [Ruth 1:17](#); [1 Sam. 14:44](#); [25:22](#); [2 Sam. 3:9](#); [19:13](#); [1 Kings 19:2](#).

3:18 **It is the LORD.** Eli accepts the judgment humbly.

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "1 Samuel 3".

3:19 the LORD... let none of his words fall to the ground. I.e., all that Samuel spoke was fulfilled, and thus he could be known as a prophet ([Deut. 18:21-22](#)). On the relationship between the prophet and the word of the Lord, see [Jer. 20:8-9](#); [Amos 3:8](#).

3:20 From Dan to Beersheba is the traditional limits of Israel to the north and south ([Judg. 20:1](#); [2 Sam. 17:11](#)).

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

1 Samuel 3

3:1-5 Although God had spoken directly and audibly with Moses and Joshua, his word became rare during the three centuries of rule by judges. By Eli's time, no prophets were speaking God's messages to Israel. Why? Look at the attitude of Eli's sons. They either refused to listen to God or allowed greed to get in the way of any communication with him.

Listening and responding is vital in a relationship with God. Although God does not always use the sound of a human voice, he always speaks clearly through his Word. To receive his messages, we must be ready to listen and to act upon what he tells us. Like Samuel, be ready to say "Here I am" when God calls you to action.

3:2, 3 The Ark of God was kept in the Most Holy Place, the innermost room of the Tabernacle where only the high priest could enter once a year. In front of the Most Holy Place was the Holy Place, a small room where the other sacred furniture of the Tabernacle was kept (the incense altar, the Bread of the Presence, the lampstand). Just outside the Holy Place was a court with small rooms where the priests were to stay. Samuel probably slept here with the other priests, only a few yards away from the Ark.

3:8, 9 One would naturally expect an audible message from God to be given to the priest Eli and not to the child Samuel. Eli was older and more experienced, and he held the proper position. But God's chain of command is based on faith, not on age or position. In finding faithful followers, God may use unexpected channels. Be prepared for the Lord to work at any place, at any time, and through anyone he chooses.

3:13 Eli had spent his entire life in service to God. His responsibility was to oversee all the worship in Israel. But in pursuing this great mission he neglected the responsibilities in his own home. Don't let your desire to do God's work cause you to neglect your family. If you do, your mission may degenerate into a quest for personal importance, and your family will suffer the consequences of your neglect.

Life Essentials Study Bible⁴

Human Responsibility

from 1 Samuel 3:1-18

**We are to take full responsibility for our failures,
never blaming God or anyone else.**

When Eli realized that God was speaking to Samuel, he accepted the bad news, since the Lord had already prophesied that judgment was coming ([2:27-31](#)). God's judgment on Eli's sin impacted his family negatively to the third and fourth generation ([Ex 34:6-7](#)). Eli's descendants would be eliminated from the priesthood in Israel. This judgment could not be reversed by sacrifices and offerings, and it was accomplished during King Solomon's reign ([1Kg 2:27](#)).

Under the new covenant, however, all sins are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ—except the sin of unbelief and rejecting God's ultimate sacrifice. Though the blood of bulls and goats were not sufficient to cover the sins of Eli and his sons, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all unrighteousness, regardless of how much we fall short of the mark ([1Jn 1:9](#)). And although our children may experience the natural consequences of parental sins, they need not experience God's judgment.

Our human responsibility means acknowledging our sins, truly repenting, and accepting the forgiveness available in Christ's shed blood. The important lesson for all of us in this Old Testament story is that Eli took full responsibility for his actions. He made no excuses. He knew he had failed.

Reflection and Response

*Why is it so easy to make ourselves victims when we are the ones who are responsible
for our sinful actions as well as the results of those actions?*

4. Gene Getz, *Life Essentials Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 351.

A Principle to Live By
Discerning the Truth
from 1 Samuel 3:19—4:2

**We should consult the Holy Scriptures as well as mature Christians
to help us discern truth from error.**

Samuel's initial nocturnal experiences with the Lord were just the beginning of more direct revelations. In turn, Samuel faithfully communicated God's message to the people of Israel. Unfortunately, what Samuel said regarding the Philistines appears to be his word, not God's direct revelation. This is why we read very specifically, "And Samuel's words came to all Israel" ([4:1](#)); this is in contrast to the Lord's word ([3:21](#)). Being a true prophet in Israel did not mean they always spoke God's words. So Samuel's advice to Israel to engage the Philistines in battle was his own judgment, resulting in tragedy.

Today, there are some spiritual leaders—sincere and insincere—who are giving wrong advice and even claiming to have direct messages from God. This is why we must rely on the Holy Scriptures and on other mature Christians to help us evaluate what we're being taught. This does not mean we should develop a persistent attitude of skepticism and distrust, but we should be cautious and discerning, especially concerning people who claim to have prophetic gifts. This is probably what Paul was referring to, even while Scripture was still being revealed by the Spirit:

Don't stifle the Spirit. Don't despise prophecies, but test all things.
Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil.

Reflection and Response

*How can we become cautious and discerning in evaluating what our spiritual leaders
are teaching us without becoming skeptical and distrustful?*