

1 Samuel – Week 4 – A Prophet Called – Bible Study Helps

Title: A Prophet Called

Sermon Summary: Drawing from 1 Samuel 3, this sermon examines the calling of Samuel against the backdrop of a spiritually declining era in Israel's history. The message draws a direct parallel between the spiritual darkness of Samuel's day and the rapidly declining spiritual environment of the present age. The central warning is that God's people must not allow the flame of their spiritual lives to grow dim, just as the lamp in the holy place was never to go out. God's faithfulness in raising up servants even in dark times is contrasted with the failure of Eli's house. Samuel's immediate obedience, his willingness to hear and speak God's word without compromise, and his subsequent growth as a prophet serve as the model for every believer. The sermon calls all Christians to examine the state of their own spiritual flame, to respond to God's voice with readiness, and to speak His truth without fear or softening.

Key Points:

- The spiritual environment of Samuel's day was in rapid decline, mirroring the great falling away prophesied for the present age, yet God continued to raise up faithful servants
- The lamp of God in the holy place was commanded to burn continually, serving as a picture of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual flame every believer is responsible to maintain
- The word of God was described as precious and scarce in Samuel's day, God was not actively speaking. That made what God had already said, very valuable. It was not because it was unavailable, but because people had stopped listening and obeying, which reflects the modern spiritual famine
- Samuel's readiness to respond, running to answer every call with "here am I," was not accidental but the fruit of consistent training in obedience to authority
- God's calling of Samuel was deeply personal, illustrated by the Lord coming and standing beside him and calling his name twice
- Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the sermon connects growing in the knowledge of God directly to time spent in the word of God
- Samuel was afraid to deliver God's hard message to Eli, illustrating the temptation every believer and preacher faces to soften or withhold truth
- Samuel ultimately told Eli everything God said, hiding nothing, modeling the faithfulness required of all who speak God's words
- The spiritual flame in a believer's life does not go out suddenly but dims gradually through neglect of prayer, Bible reading, church attendance, witnessing, giving, serving, and conviction
- Verse 19 of 1 Samuel 3 is presented as a life standard: Samuel let none of God's words fall to the ground, meaning he heard, believed, and obeyed everything God said

1 Samuel – Week 4 – A Prophet Called – Bible Study Helps

- God's call is not limited to adults; parents are responsible to create an environment in which their children can hear and respond to God's voice
- Samuel's growth and faithfulness became evident to all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, illustrating that a genuinely growing believer's testimony will be visible to those around them

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Samuel 3:1-21, which narrates God's calling of Samuel, the decline of Eli's house, Samuel's faithful response, and his establishment as a prophet throughout Israel
- Amos 8:11, in which God warns of a coming famine not of bread or water but of hearing the words of the Lord
- Exodus 27:20 and Leviticus 24:2, which contain God's commandment that the lamp in the holy place be filled with pure olive oil and kept burning continually
- Acts 20:27, in which the apostle Paul declares he has not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God

Stories:

- The repeated nighttime calling of Samuel by God, with Samuel running three times to Eli before Eli perceived it was the Lord speaking and instructed Samuel to respond with "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"
- The vision God gave Samuel concerning the judgment coming upon Eli's house, and Samuel's fear to deliver that hard message to Eli in the morning, followed by Eli's insistence that Samuel tell him everything God said
- The pastor's personal recollection of his early days as a new believer in a small apartment with only a Strong's Concordance and a legal pad, spending hours tracing and writing out scripture references out of genuine spiritual hunger
- The biblical account of Nathan confronting David with the words "Thou art the man" following David's sin with Bathsheba, used to illustrate the call to speak truth without compromise
- The calling of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus in Acts 9, referenced as an example of God calling a person by name twice in a deeply personal moment of divine encounter
- The tabernacle's golden candlestick shining upon the table of showbread, used as an extended illustration connecting the continually burning lamp to the Holy Spirit illuminating the word of God for believers each day

1 Samuel – Week 4 – A Prophet Called – Bible Study Helps

Discipleship Questions

The sermon describes how Samuel continued to serve faithfully even in a spiritually declining environment — in what ways might God be calling you to remain steadfast in your own service despite the spiritual darkness around you?

The sermon warns that a spiritual flame does not go out all at once but dims gradually through shorter prayer times, optional Bible reading, and weakening convictions — which of these warning signs, if any, do you recognize in your own life right now?

Eli perceived that God was calling Samuel only after the third time Samuel came to him, suggesting that spiritual discernment can be dulled by personal failure — how does unconfessed sin or spiritual neglect affect our ability to recognize and respond to God's voice?

Samuel was conditioned to respond immediately with 'Here am I' because of the environment in which he was raised — what does this reveal about the responsibility parents and spiritual leaders have in shaping a child's readiness to hear and obey God?

The sermon draws a parallel between the priests' responsibility to keep the lamp in the holy place burning continually and the believer's responsibility to keep their spiritual life burning through daily time in God's Word — what practical habits help you keep that flame from growing dim?

God's first message through Samuel was a hard word of judgment that Samuel was afraid to deliver — how do you personally navigate the tension between speaking the full truth of God's Word and the fear of how others might receive it?

The sermon points out that God told Samuel to deliver a message to Eli about things Eli already knew — what does it say about human nature that we often need to be reminded of what we already know is true, and how does this apply to your own walk with God?

Verse 19 says the Lord did not let any of Samuel's words fall to the ground, which the sermon connects to Samuel's obedience and faithfulness — in what areas of your life might you be allowing God's words to fall to the ground through disobedience or neglect?

The sermon emphasizes that Samuel knowing the Lord was directly connected to the word of the Lord being revealed to him — how does your current engagement with Scripture reflect the depth of your personal relationship with God?

The chapter begins with no open vision and ends with God appearing again in Shiloh and speaking through Samuel to a new generation — what does this pattern of God raising up faithful servants in dark times tell you about where God may be calling you to step up in your own generation?

Small Group Guide

"A Prophet Called" | 1 Samuel 3

How to Use This Guide

Read 1 Samuel 3 together as a group before beginning discussion. Encourage every member to share openly. There are no right or wrong answers in discussion -- the goal is honest reflection and growth together.

Key Takeaways

- God does not stop working even when the spiritual environment around us is in rapid decline. The problem is not God's silence but our failure to listen.
 - Spiritual flames do not go out all at once. They dim gradually through neglect of prayer, Bible reading, church attendance, and obedience.
 - Samuel's readiness to respond -- "Here am I" -- was not accidental. It was the result of faithful training, consistent service, and a heart conditioned to obey.
 - Before asking what God wants you to do, you must first settle whether you are willing to do whatever He says.
 - Faithful servants of God do not soften or change the message. They speak what God has already said, in love, without hiding anything.
 - The word of God is to be received fresh every day, just as the showbread in the tabernacle was baked fresh every morning.
-

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. When you first read or heard 1 Samuel 3, what stood out to you most? Was there a verse or moment in the passage that hit you differently than you expected?
 2. The sermon opened with this observation: the problem in Samuel's day was not just that God had stopped speaking, but that His people had stopped listening. Do you think that same problem exists today? What does it look like in your own life?
-

The Darkness of the Day

1 Samuel – Week 4 – A Prophet Called – Bible Study Helps

3. The sermon described the lamp of God in the tabernacle as a picture of the spiritual light in a believer's life. The priests were commanded to keep it burning continually and were responsible when it went out. What does that responsibility look like for a Christian today?
 4. The sermon listed several signs that a believer's spiritual flame may be growing dim -- shorter prayer times, optional Bible reading, negotiable church attendance, weakening convictions, fading burden for souls, and growing worldliness. Which of these is most convicting to you personally? Which do you think is most commonly overlooked?
 5. Amos 8:11 describes a famine not of bread or water but of hearing the words of the Lord. Bibles are widely available, yet the famine Amos described seems very real today. What do you think causes people -- including Christians -- to go spiritually hungry even when God's Word is within reach?
-

The Personal Calling of Samuel

6. The sermon noted that Samuel did not yet know the Lord when God called him, and that his knowledge of God was directly connected to the word of the Lord being revealed to him. What does that tell us about the relationship between knowing God personally and spending time in His Word?
 7. Samuel ran to Eli three times before finally recognizing that it was the Lord calling. Eli then gave him a simple but profound instruction: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." What does it mean practically to come before God as a servant -- someone who has already decided to do whatever He says -- before you even know what He is going to say?
 8. The sermon pointed out that God called Samuel personally, by name, twice. It referenced other moments in Scripture where God called people by name twice -- Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Martha, Simon, and Paul. What does that pattern tell you about how God relates to the people He calls?
-

Faithfulness to Speak

9. Samuel was afraid to tell Eli what God had said. The sermon connected this to our own fear of sharing the gospel with lost people or speaking truth to someone living in sin. Have you experienced that fear? What helped you overcome it, or what is still holding you back?
10. The sermon emphasized that God's message to Samuel was hard, and that Eli already knew what God was going to say. The sermon made the point that the people in the room likely already know what God is speaking to them about. Do you agree? Is there something God has already been telling you that you have been slow to act on?
11. The sermon referenced several examples of biblical figures who were faithful to speak hard truth -- Nathan to David, John the Baptist to Herod, and Paul to the Ephesian elders.

1 Samuel – Week 4 – A Prophet Called – Bible Study Helps

What made their faithfulness possible? What would it take for you to have that same kind of courage?

The Light for Another Generation

12. Verse 19 says the Lord was with Samuel and did not let any of his words fall to the ground. The sermon described "letting God's words fall to the ground" as failing to listen, failing to obey, and failing to keep what God has said. On an honest scale, how well are you holding onto what God has already spoken to you through His Word?
 13. The sermon closed with a challenge about raising up the next generation. Samuel's readiness to respond to God was shaped by his upbringing and training. Whether you are a parent, a grandparent, a teacher, or simply a member of this church, what are you doing to help the next generation hear and respond to God?
-

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

Fan the Flame Identify one specific area from the list the pastor gave -- prayer, Bible reading, church attendance, convictions, witnessing, giving, serving -- where your spiritual flame has grown dim. Write it down. Commit to one concrete step this week to rekindle it.

Write It Out The sermon encouraged the congregation to go home and write out 1 Samuel 3 word by word, line by line. Before you begin, pray the prayer Samuel was taught: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Then write and reflect on what God shows you.

Settle the Question Before your next quiet time, ask yourself honestly: Am I willing to do whatever God tells me to do? Write out your answer. If the answer is not yet a full yes, bring that honestly before God and ask Him to change your heart.

Speak the Truth Think of one person in your life -- lost or saved -- who needs to hear something from the word of God. Pray for the courage to say it. Then say it, in love, without softening it.

Memorize the Verse Commit 1 Samuel 3:19 to memory this week: "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground."

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together over these specific areas:

1 Samuel – Week 4 – A Prophet Called – Bible Study Helps

- That God would help each member keep their spiritual flame burning and not grow cold or dim
- That your group would be faithful to hear and obey the Word of God, not letting His words fall to the ground
- That God would raise up servants, preachers, missionaries, and faithful Christians from your church and your families for the next generation
- That each person would have the courage to speak the truth in love to someone who needs to hear it

"And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground."
1 Samuel 3:19

5-Day Bible Reading and Devotional Guide

Based on 1 Samuel 3 and the Theme of "A Prophet Called"

Day 1: When the Light Grows Dim

Reading: 1 Samuel 3:1-3 — The word of the Lord was scarce, there was no open vision, and the lamp in the temple either went out completely or was nearly extinguished.

Devotional: There are seasons when the spiritual fire within us begins to flicker. Not because God has abandoned us, but because we have slowly drifted — shorter prayers, optional Bible reading, negotiable church attendance. The lamp in the temple was commanded to burn continually. That was not a suggestion. It was a sacred responsibility entrusted to the priests. In the New Testament, that responsibility belongs to you. The Holy Spirit dwells within every believer, and He is the oil that keeps your flame alive. The question is not whether God is still speaking. The question is whether you are still tending the flame. Examine your heart today. Where has the light grown dim?

Personal Reflection: In what specific areas of your spiritual life has the flame begun to diminish? What one step can you take today to begin restoring it?

Practical Application: Set aside fifteen minutes today to sit quietly with your Bible open and ask God to show you where neglect has crept into your spiritual life.

Day 2: Speak, Lord, for Thy Servant Heareth

Reading: 1 Samuel 3:4-10 — God calls Samuel three times before Eli instructs him to respond with a posture of full surrender and readiness to hear.

Devotional: Before Samuel could receive a word from God, he had to settle something far more important than curiosity. He had to settle the question of surrender. Eli's instruction was simple but profound: tell God you are listening and that you are His servant. A servant does not negotiate the assignment. A servant does not hear the command and then evaluate whether it is convenient. Before you ask what God wants you to do, you must first answer whether you are willing to do whatever He says. Samuel answered that question before God ever gave him the message. That posture of surrender is what opened the door to a lifetime of divine usefulness.

Personal Reflection: Have you truly settled the question of surrender in your own life? Are there areas where you are willing to hear God only if His answer aligns with your preferences?

1 Samuel – Week 4 – A Prophet Called – Bible Study Helps

Practical Application: Write out the phrase "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" and place it somewhere you will see it throughout the day as a reminder of your posture before God.

Day 3: A Famine of Hearing

Reading: Amos 8:11 — God warns of a coming famine, not of bread or water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.

Devotional: The prophet Amos described a famine unlike any the world had ever seen. Not a shortage of food, but a shortage of willingness to hear what God has already said. Bibles today are not scarce. They are in homes, on phones, in bags, and on shelves. And yet the famine is real. The hunger for God's words has dried up in the hearts of many who once could not get enough of it. The word of God is described as precious — rare and valuable — not because it is unavailable, but because so few are truly receiving it. Jesus said that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. Are you feeding on His Word daily, or are you surviving on spiritual leftovers?

Personal Reflection: When did you last read your Bible with genuine hunger? What has replaced that hunger in your daily routine?

Practical Application: Commit to reading one chapter of Scripture today slowly and deliberately, pausing to ask God what He is saying to you through each passage.

Day 4: The Hard Message and the Faithful Messenger

Reading: 1 Samuel 3:11-18 — God gives Samuel a difficult message of judgment against Eli's house, and Samuel, though afraid, delivers every word without hiding anything.

Devotional: Samuel's first assignment as a prophet was not a comfortable one. God did not call him to tell people what they wanted to hear. He called him to say what God had already said, regardless of how it would be received. Samuel was afraid. That is honest and human. But fear did not silence him. When Eli pressed him to speak the full truth, Samuel told him every word and hid nothing. The faithful servant of God does not soften the message to protect feelings or preserve relationships. He speaks the truth in love because he understands that what God has said is more important than what people want to hear. Faithfulness to God's Word is an act of love, not cruelty.

Personal Reflection: Is there a truth from God's Word that you have been afraid to share with someone in your life? What is holding you back?

Practical Application: Pray today for one person in your life who needs to hear the gospel or a word of biblical truth. Ask God for the courage to speak it faithfully and lovingly.

Day 5: None of His Words Fell to the Ground

Reading: 1 Samuel 3:19-21 — Samuel grew, the Lord was with him, and not one of God's words given through him went unfulfilled or unheeded.

Devotional: The defining mark of Samuel's life was not his talent or his personality. It was his faithfulness to hold every word God gave him and to let none of it fall to the ground. When you fail to read what God has said, you let His words fall. When you hear a sermon and walk away unchanged, you let His words fall. When you know what He has commanded and choose a different path, you let His words fall. But when you receive His words, believe them, obey them, and build your life upon them, something remarkable happens. God is with you. And when God is with you, the work He does through your life reaches further than you can imagine — from the north to the south, from one generation to the next. Be a person who holds the word of God tightly and lets none of it fall.

Personal Reflection: Looking at your life honestly, are you holding God's words or letting them fall? What does faithfulness to His Word look like practically in your daily decisions?

Practical Application: Choose one specific command from Scripture that you have been aware of but not fully obeying. Write it down, confess it to God, and take one concrete step of obedience today.