



Listening In Prayer

1 Samuel 3:1-11a

Meanwhile, the boy Samuel served the Lord by assisting Eli. Now in those days messages from the Lord were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon. One night Eli, who was almost blind by now, had gone to bed. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle near the Ark of God. Suddenly the Lord called out, "Samuel!"

"Yes?" Samuel replied. "What is it?" He got up and ran to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"

"I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go back to bed." So he did.

Then the Lord called out again, "Samuel!"

Again Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"

"I didn't call you, my son," Eli said. "Go back to bed."

Samuel did not yet know the Lord because he had never had a message from the Lord before. So the Lord called a third time, and once more Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"

Then Eli realized it was the Lord who was calling the boy. So he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed.

And the Lord came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!"

And Samuel replied, "Speak, your servant is listening." And the LORD said to Samuel...

When we think about prayer, listening is not typically the first thing that comes to our minds. But prayer is conversation with God. Conversation requires listening. A dialogue, not a monologue. Hearing what's on God's heart not just telling Him what is on ours.

God wants to communicate with us. He invites us to come to Him empty-handed and wait attentively to hear Him tell us whatever He wants to say. **"Be still and know that I am God"**, He says (Psalm 46:10). **"Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known"**, He says (Jeremiah 33:3).

Why do we struggle so with listening? Perhaps because we live in a frenzied, fast-paced world that seeks immediate gratification, promotes self-help, and exalts production and "busy-ness". Slowing down to take time to listen doesn't fit anywhere in our agendas.

Maybe, we find it hard to listen to God because we're not sure what to listen for. If only we could hear Him speak in an audible voice. But, that's not His usual mode of communication. He speaks through the comfort, conviction, and counsel of the Holy Spirit, through His Word, through nature, through His Word – so our listening must be intentional. Focused attention and active listening with our ears tuned to God's heart is required.

Sometimes we might not listen because we are afraid of what we will hear. Will God ask me to do something that I really don't want to do, forgive someone that I'm really not ready to forgive, or let go of something that I feel I just can't give up? Will He point out to me some sin that I need to confess or a relationship that I need to mend? Listening can be risky because we know that it requires a response. Otherwise, we're just hearers and not doers. **"But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling**



yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it." (James 1:22-25)

One of my favorite stories in Scripture about listening to God is the above passage found in **1 Samuel 3:1-11a**. Read it again. Eli instructed Samuel to respond to the Lord's calling with, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." He did. And God spoke to Him!

What do you think might happen if we, like Samuel, said to the Lord, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening"? Do you think we might just hear from Him? I think...YES! God wants to communicate with us. He is still the same God today that He was then. He still speaks.

Many passages in Scripture instruct us to listen to God and tell us of the incredible blessings that this listening brings. Here are a few:

My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart. Proverbs 4:20-21

My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands. Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures. Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord, and you will gain knowledge of God. Proverbs 2:1-5

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:9

I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Psalm 34:4

An increased knowledge and understanding of God. God's peace. Deliverance from fear. Please and thank you, I'll take all of that! And that doesn't begin to scratch the surface of what we gain when we listen to God!

I've got my ears to God's heart. Speak, Lord, your servant is listening!

