



June 1, 2014

1 Samuel 2

*"Hearing God"*

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Pastor Gary's second message in this series will help us learn more about the three basic ways God speaks to us today: by his voice audibly, by his Spirit inwardly, and by his Word eternally. We also learn about the importance of godly parenting and the impact we can have in the lives of our children.

### Historical Background

1. Eli, the priest, had two sons who served in the House of God: Hophni and Phinehas.
  - a. In Hebrew the name Hophni means, "fighter," and Phinehas means, "mouth of brass."
  - b. The Bible describes them as being greedy, selfish, disrespectful, rebellious, and sexually immoral.
2. God sent an unnamed *"man of God"* to Eli to warn and exhort him, and although Eli rebuked his sons concerning their behavior, the Bible tells us Eli did nothing to *"restrain them,"* so God judged the sons and killed them.
  - a. **1 Samuel 2:25b** - *"... [Eli's] sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the Lord's will to put them to death."*
  - b. God held Eli responsible, but he also held Eli's sons accountable because they were full-grown men.
3. The account of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, should remind us the need for all parents to be engaged in the lives of their children, and when they do rebel or misbehave, we shouldn't just talk to them, we should do something about it, like impose consequences so they can learn.

- a. It's also important for parents to love their children and set a godly example.
4. In sharp contrast to the wicked behavior of Eli's sons we read in [1 Samuel 2:26](#), that *"... the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men."*
5. It's odd, but it seems like Eli did a better job parenting his "adopted son," Samuel, than he did with his biological sons, when you consider that we read that Samuel was righteous and Hophni and Phinehas were wicked.

### God Speaks To Samuel

6. Samuel has been living in the House of God for about 10 years, which means he's about 12 or 13 years old.
7. Eli was 98 years old, and he could barely see.
  - a. [1 Samuel 3:2](#) - *"[Eli's] eyes were becoming so weak he could barely see..."*
  - b. [1 Samuel 4:15](#) - *"[Eli] was ninety-eight and [his] eyes were set so that he could not see."*
8. One night when Eli was sleeping in his usual place in the Tabernacle, and Samuel was sleeping by the Ark of the Covenant, just before dawn,<sup>1</sup> the Lord spoke audibly to Samuel three separate times.
  - a. The third time Samuel came in response to the voice, Eli finally figured out that it was the voice of God that Samuel was hearing.
9. [1 Samuel 3:10](#) - *"The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'"*
10. God gave a message to Samuel, which was pretty heavy stuff for a boy his age!
  - a. [1 Samuel 3:11-14](#) - *"And 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. At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family - from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'"*

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<sup>1</sup> [1 Samuel 3:3](#) - *"The lamp of God had not yet gone out..."*

- b. God is going to use Samuel as a prophet to change the course of the nation, and God is teaching Samuel how to hear his voice, so he can communicate the word of God, and this time it was a word of judgment against the man that Samuel had been living with, Eli, and his family!
11. Imagine how Samuel felt as he returned to his place by the Ark, as he thought about the fact that he'd just seen and heard from God!
  12. Later that same morning, Eli asked Samuel to tell him what God said, and he had to force it out of Samuel, because he was afraid to tell him the severity of God's coming judgment.
  13. According to [1 Samuel 3:18](#), when Eli heard what God told Samuel, he seems to have had a blasé response, saying, *"He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes."*

#### God Wants To Communicate With Us And Have Fellowship With Us

14. [Genesis 3:8](#) - *"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden."*
15. [Isaiah 58:9a](#) - *"Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I."*
16. [Hebrews 1:1-2](#) - *"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."*
17. [Jeremiah 33:3](#) - *"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."*
18. [John 8:47](#) - *"He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."*
19. Sometimes God speaks through other people, but that's indirectly speaking to us; and another person's words should only confirm what God has first spoken to us.
20. Sometimes God speaks through visions and dreams, circumstances, and angels.

## God Speaks To Us By His Voice Audibly

21. Pastor Gary said this point would make Charismatics joyous and Fundamentalists nervous, but it's true that we cannot discount the audible voice of God, because after all, who are we to limit how God speaks!
22. There are quite a few examples of times when God spoke audibly, including: Moses, Joshua, and Abraham in the Old Testament, and Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, Ananias concerning laying hands on Paul, and Paul, in the New Testament.
23. Over the course of 4,000 years of human history that the Bible records, God spoke audibly many times to people, but this was the exception, not the rule.
24. When you look at Scripture and church history, it's safe to say that the audible voice of God can be heard, but it is rare, because God seems to reserve his audible voice for very important times/situations.
25. The audible voice of God was rare, even in Samuel's day, according to [1 Samuel 3:1](#), which says: *"The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions."*
26. By inference, we learn from this account that God's voice is not mysterious, deep, nor does it come with a built-in echo, like some have portrayed his voice to sound; but it must have sounded very natural to Samuel because he mistook God's voice for Eli's three times.

## God Speaks To Us By His Spirit Inwardly

27. [John 16:13-15](#) - *"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and make it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you."*
28. Like any easily recognizable voice of a friend or family member, the inward voice of the Holy Spirit is discerned over time and by relationship, because it takes time to discern and distinguish.
  - a. For example, how would it be possible for a close friend or loved one to call you on the phone and you instantly know who it was by the first word they speak, unless time and relationship had taught you to recognize their voice?

29. [John 10:4-5](#) - “[The Shepherd goes on ahead of his sheep], and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”
30. [John 10:27](#) - “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”
31. [Jeremiah 29:12-13](#) - “Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”
32. Comedienne Lily Tomlin once asked, “Why is it that when we speak to God we are said to be praying, but when God speaks to us we are said to be schizophrenic?”
33. [1 Kings 19:11-12](#) - “The Lord said, ‘Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.’ Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.”
- a. The KJV uses the phrase “still small voice” versus “a gentle whisper.”
34. Seven times, in the letters to the 7 Churches in [Revelation 2:1-3:22](#), Jesus said: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches...”

### God Speaks To Us By His Word Eternally

35. [Psalm 119:105](#) - “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”
36. [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) - “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
37. One of the ways we can test the inner word of God is through the written Word of God, and we can trust the fact that God never violates his written Word.
- a. Someone might say, “God told me not to pay my taxes!” but that goes against [Romans 13:7](#), which says, “If you owe taxes, pay taxes...”
  - b. Someone might say, “God told me to quit my job and he’ll provide all of my needs!” but that goes against [2 Thessalonians 3:10](#), which says, “... If a man will not work, he shall not eat,” and [1 Timothy 5:8](#), which says, “If

*anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."*

38. God spoke to Samuel primarily through his Word (Old Testament Scriptures).
  - a. **1 Samuel 3:21** - *"The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word."*
39. Samuel's request of the Lord was, *"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."* (1 Samuel 3:10)
40. Brother Lawrence, a monk who lived in the 1600s, said: "There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God."
41. The lyrics to the famous hymn, *In the Garden*, written by Charles Miles, help us understand the privilege and blessing of hearing from and meeting with the Lord.

*I come to the garden alone  
While the dew is still on the roses  
And the voice I hear falling on my ear  
The Son of God discloses*

*And he walks with me and he talks with me  
And he tells me I am his own  
And the joy we share as we tarry there  
None other has ever known*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **1 Samuel 3:1-21** to provide an overview for this study.
3. How did the Lord speak in your life before you came to faith in Christ?
4. How has the Lord spoken to you since you came to faith in Christ?
5. Do you have a hard time discerning the "voice" of the Lord?
6. Read and discuss the Scriptures (See #14 through #18) that tell of God's desire to communicate with us and have fellowship with us.

7. Read [John 16:13-15](#) and talk about the way the Holy Spirit speaks into our lives.
8. Spend time talking about the ways the Lord has been the Great Shepherd who leads, protects, guides, and comforts you.
9. Read [Psalm 119:105](#) and [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#), and focus your discussion on the ways the Word of God speaks in your life.
10. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: give thanks that the Lord wants to communicate with them and have fellowship with them; have listening ears and hearts, that they may be tuned in to the still small voice of the Lord; develop a love for reading and applying the Scriptures, that they might receive the Lord's ministry through his Word.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).