

**1 Samuel 3:1-10,(11-20)**

**Being open to God**

The boy Samuel was apprentice to the priest Eli at the temple of the Lord in Shiloh. In the dark, three times he heard someone calling his name and thought it was Eli. Eventually, Eli realised that God was calling Samuel, and Samuel responded to God. God gave Samuel an insight into what was soon to happen and, as he grew up, all Israel came to know that Samuel was a great prophet of the Lord.



**Bible notes**



The desolate state of Israel is highlighted at the beginning of this chapter: the word of the Lord was rare. By the end, the word of the Lord is abundant through the prophetic ministry of Samuel, and Israel is back on course as a people in close relationship with their God. What caused this turn to the good? This story is set in the old temple at Shiloh, where the Lord chose to speak to the boy Samuel. Eli, the old, disgraced priest, played a key role in helping him to respond to the Lord. The previous chapter (2:27-36) recounted the words of an unnamed prophet who pronounced God's doom on Eli and his sons for corruption, and Eli's poor sight (v.2) symbolises his failure to recognise the responsibilities of his role. Despite this, he gave Samuel the insight to respond appropriately to God. The repeated visits to Eli highlight Samuel's uncritical enthusiasm to obey the old priest's call, and Eli's dismissal would have been confusing for him. The boy's life as a prophet began with equally enthusiastic acceptance of the Lord's call – when Samuel realised that he was hearing the word of the Lord, he named himself as 'your servant'. Yet he quickly discovered the challenges of his new role and the ways in which it would change his relationship with Eli. The Lord's ear-tingling word focused on the disaster coming upon Eli, and Samuel was afraid to pass this on (v.15). As a young boy, dependent on Eli for his place in the temple, he was vulnerable to Eli's anger. He did not yet have the trust in God's faithfulness that would allow him to take risks in proclaiming the Lord's word. Again, it was Eli's encouragement that gave him the confidence to speak out, and Eli found the resources to accept God's hard words to him, coming from one he called 'my son'. Samuel was no longer the child Hannah had left in the temple; he was on the way to becoming the prophet and king-maker God intended him to be.

**First impressions**

- In what ways might God speak to you?
- How did Jesus show openness to listening to God in his ministry?
- What might God want to say or do in your life?



As a family or group of people, do something where everyone's view and input is important. You could cook a meal, learn a new board game, bake a cake, create a poster. As you do, make sure everyone learns from and listens to each other.

**REFLECT**

The name 'Samuel' means 'God has heard' – given to him by his mother, Hannah, after God heard her prayer for a child. God called Samuel by name and calls us by name too. Do you know what your name means? If not, try and find out why you were given that name.

**A prayer of adoration**

Lord God, you spoke to Samuel in the middle of the night. He needed Eli's help to hear you; but you persisted till he heard. Lord, you speak to us – sometimes directly, the middle of the night is good! – sometimes through others, and that can be equally unexpected and amazing. You speak, you persist. Where would we be without you, most patient Lord? Amen.

**Pray**



This week, keep a journal of your prayers and note the different ways God might be answering them.

**WATCH**

View the Netflix movie *The Sea Beast* together and explore how, often someone younger than us, can be the voice to listen to. What are the things we need to hear from each other?