

When God called Moses, He said, “Moses!” When God called to Samuel, He said, “Samuel!” and the third time He said, “Samuel, Samuel.” God desires to be known on a first name basis. When God came to Moses He revealed who he was. “I am who I am. I will be what I will be, in a self-disclosing, intimate dialogue kind of way.” He wants to do that with all of us. God told Moses and Samuel what He was about to do. “Samuel, this is what I am about to do. Moses, this is what I am going to do.” Psalm 25:14 says, *“The Lord confides in those who fear him. The secret of the Lord is for those who fear him.”*

I want to remind you about the burning bush. The burning bush is a symbol. It was burning, but not consumed. It is a symbol that God will take the common ordinary, even ineffectiveness of our lives. It does not consume us, but it transforms us. What consumes people is not God. It was slavery in Egypt. It is making bricks in hard labor in some modern way. People are caught up in a rat-race of living. It is not the whip of an Egyptian taskmaster. The call to Moses and to Samuel is a call to each one of us to partner with God and to deliver others from the things that bind them and from the things that enslave them. The call to Samuel is the call to speak a word of hope to a generation gone deaf, so that they too might come out of isolated living into community.

Hebrews 1:1 says this: *“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways.”* God speaks to us to turn or return to God. God want us to align ourselves with what God has been trying to tell us. When we open our minds and ears, when we are intimate with the Lord Jesus Christ, we can do our best what God wants us to do.

January 26, 2020  
Experiencing God (4)  
**God Speaks to You**  
1 Samuel 3:1-10  
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This morning we’ll look at some ways that God speaks to us, but before we do that, here are a few things to consider about communication. First, as with any conversation, speaking is only half of the equation. If my wife speaks to me, but I’m not listening, it doesn’t matter what her message is. Similarly, when God speaks to us as His followers, if we’re so distracted by other things, we can easily miss what He’s seeking to say to us. Second, God spoke in an audible voice on occasion in the Bible, and there are those with whom He still communicates in that manner. With that said, I’ve personally never heard God’s audible voice, except as He speaks to me through another person.

However, in my spirit, I have discerned His voice clearly many times. He is the inspiration of everything I write, and I trust His voice to guide me, just as I believe He guided the authors of the Bible. Perhaps, it would be helpful to think of God speaking as simply communicating. You know that a high percentage of human communication is nonverbal. So it shouldn’t surprise us that God seeks to communicate with us in many nonverbal ways. This is in no way intended to be a comprehensive report of every way God speaks. However, God seeks to communicate with us in a language that is specific to every person. He very much desires each of us to hear and understand what He’s saying.

This morning I would like to focus on whether we are hearing God or not hearing God when He speaks to us. The main question is not, “Does God speak to us?” God speaks all the time. The question is, “Do we listen to God?” The heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the work of His hands. That is natural revelation. That’s one way of God speaking to get our

attention. According to today's text, everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes. If you read before Chapter 3, you will see a story of the priesthood, Eli and his sons. They were supposed to be listening, but they were deaf.

How do we hear God speak to us? First, we must be ready to hear. Samuel did not yet know the Lord, because the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. (7) In the case of Samuel and Moses, God started with an attention suited to each of their specific needs and circumstances. For Samuel it was an indistinguishable voice. For Moses it was a burning bush. In both cases there is a great deal of ignorance about who God is. In Moses' case Moses did not have a clue who God was. So God told him that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In Samuel's situation, he was surrounded by religious stuff. Yet, he still did not know personally who the Lord was.

When Jesus saw there was a certain level of attentiveness, He said, *"Come and see."* (John 1:39, 11:34) God looks for turnings. He looks for readiness. When Jesus preached, He said at the end, *"Let those who have ears to hear, let them hear."* (Matthew 11:15) How ready are you to hear what's being said? Sometimes crisis opens our ears because crisis breaks down our defenses. Crisis creates readiness to hear in a new way. When Moses turned to look at the burning bush, God spoke to him. It wasn't until he gave attention to God's nudge that God spoke more clearly. So God always looks for those turnings and returnings; anything can be a signal.

To Samuel the voice came three times. But he didn't understand. God tries to get our attention repeatedly before we truly respond in faith. Our whole spiritual growth is measured by a sense of progressive attending. Every time when God speaks, we have two options – openness or closedness. At the point when we keep saying, "Yes, Lord," we move forward. Whenever we say, "No, I don't think so or I am not sure I want to hear this," we regress.

Revelation and response; revelation and response; revelation and response. It is a continual thing.

After teaching the parable of the sower, Jesus said four different responses about hearing God's word. And He said this in Luke 8:18: *"Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has (ears) will be given more; whoever does not have (ears), even what they think they have will be taken from him."* In the second half of 1 Samuel 3, Samuel really started to get to know the Lord. Samuel said that he did not let one word fall to the ground and kept it in the fertile soil of his heart. So we need to be ready to listen and respond to what God is speaking. When God is speaking to us, many times the way to discern is very specific. It is pinpointed on a certain thing. Being ready to hear is the first thing that allows us to hear God's voice.

Secondly, in order to hear God speaking to us we need to have an intimate relationship with the Lord. Verse 7 says very clearly, *"Samuel did not yet know the Lord."* He didn't have intimacy with God, or knowledge of Him, or a personal relationship with Him. We can understand this from our own experience. Let's say you see someone that you would like to get to know, but you don't have the courage to go up there and speak to them. So you ask somebody else, "Do you know that person? Do you know her? Do you know him?" The answer can vary. "Oh yeah I know him/her. He/she is a great, great friend of mine." Then you may ask, "Oh good, then would you talk to him/her for me?" Or, they could answer, "I don't know him/her very well. They just sit next to me in history class." Likewise, you may know the Lord or don't know the Lord very well. Do you know the Lord? Do you recognize Him and does He recognize you and your voice? Do you spend time in intimate conversations with the Lord? Do you know that God is alive? Do you know that He exists? God is there for us in an intimate relationship. In an intimate relationship, we will be open to hearing more and more.