

THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL TODAY

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Chris Katulka, An Audible Call, Part 1

1 Samuel

When God wants to highlight in the Scriptures a truly important Biblical figure He spends a lot of time talking about the characters life. So you may get a birth story or even a story behind the birth story of the character. You'll get insights into the characters childhood, how he or she was raised. The Scriptures will share about the call, the purpose, or the mission of the Bible characters life, or even a moment of change that happened to cause the figure to chase God instead of this world. You may get a glimpse of a sin committed by the Bible character followed by forgiveness and reconciliation. And finally, you may read about the characters death.

So when God wants to highlight in the Scriptures a truly important Biblical figure you get a full picture of their life. This process is called character development, where the whole life of a character develops before you as your read the Bible, helping you and me, the readers, know more about each Biblical character. In the Bible some character development may only take three chapters like the life of Samson, and other could occupy almost two whole books like the life of King David!

It's important to recognize character development in the Bible because folks serving God isn't made up of little snippets in life, it's all of life. For some serving God happens before they are even born!

Just like the character we'll be looking at over the next few weeks, Samuel.

Samuel is one of the most unique characters in the Bible... Why? Because he held several important ancient Israelite titles. God kept this one man many very busy... he served the Lord as a Priest, a Judge, and Prophet. It's unusual to see one man occupy so many important positions. Additionally, Samuel served the Lord during a crucial transition in Israel's history. He is often referred to as one of Israel's last judges... because he stood on the cusp of Israel transitioning from the Lord being King of Israel and the Judges monitoring Israel's spiritual pulse, to enthroning a human King to rule over Israel. Samuel the priest, judge, and prophet was not happy about this move.

The title of this series on Samuel is An Audible Call.

Samuel was intentionally purposed by his mother, Hannah, to serve God. Remember the story behind Samuel's life, Hannah, Samuel's mother was barren, she couldn't have children. In the

culture of that time, a man's worth was bound up in sons to bear his name so he wouldn't be forgotten. You can see this in the Bible when you come across biblical genealogies, you can see how important the father - son relationship is. So if a woman, like Hannah, couldn't bear a son in her mind she would have been regarded as someone cursed by God.

Hannah would travel yearly with her husband to Shiloh, where the Tabernacle of the Lord stood and Eli the priest was ministering. There she would pray fervently vow to God to provide a son!

“O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.” (1 Sam 1:11).

Hannah's prayer gave purpose to Samuel's life before he was even conceived, he hasn't been called yet, but he certainly has a purpose.

This is a fresh reminder for me as a father of three... my prayer for kids should be for them to have a life purposed to serve God, I don't know what their call will be but I can certainly purpose them to serve God by the way we raise them, pointing them to God. But the rest is up to the Lord. Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:27 says that God has

given me this child Samuel... as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD.

In Hannah's vow to dedicate Samuel's life to serve the Lord she promised that "no razor shall come upon his head." (4:48) Hannah is alluding to what's called the Nazarite vow from Numbers chapter 6. Nazarite comes from the Hebrew word Nazar, which means to consecrate oneself or separate oneself. So... to show that a person was separating themselves from serving God they would do things to show separation from the world to God. They would refrain from drinking alcohol, they would stay away from a dead bodies, and they would not cut their hair.

Now remember when Hannah dedicated Samuel to serve the Lord she promised he would serve God ALL of his life. This doesn't mean when he turns 18 he will go to the Tabernacle in Shiloh to serve God. It means as soon as he can eat on his own Hannah will take the son she's been longing for and dedicate him to the service of the Lord. He won't return home to Ramah at the end of the day, he will stay in Shiloh with Eli the Priest.

It's in Shiloh where Samuel's purpose will meet his call. (5:58)

According to Josephus, the Jewish Historian, Samuel was around 12 years old when God audibly called him. It was just before dawn in 1 Samuel 3:3 and Samuel was sleeping in the inner room of the Tabernacle just outside the Holy of Holies where God's glory remained. He probably slept in the inner room of the Tabernacle so he could be ready to perform his priestly duties. Even though he was only 12 1 Sam 3:1 says the boy was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli.

As Samuel was sleeping the Lord spoke to him, and Samuel jumped up and ran to Eli and he said, "Here I am, for you called me?" Eli, probably startled by Samuel kindly told the boy to return to bed. Again, the Lord audibly spoke to Samuel and said, "Samuel!". So again Samuel jumped up and ran to Eli, and again Eli, maybe a little more agitated this time told Samuel to go back to bed.

Finally, the Lord called Samuel a third time. Samuel did his routine and ran to Eli, but this time Eli realized God was doing something. During Eli's ministry it was rare for God to speak (1 Sam 3:1), so when he realized it was the Lord calling Samuel, Eli knew something big was on the horizon.

Samuel told Eli, next time the Lord calls you just say, "Speak Lord, for your servant hears."

Samuel took Eli's advice and when the Lord called, Samuel responded, "Speak Lord, for your servant hears."

The young 12 year old boy who was purposed to serve the Lord by his mother, was called by God to take Eli's position as priest in Israel. Eli's sons failed to live up to the standards for carrying the priestly torch from their father and so God would eventually cut off the Eli's family from the priestly line.

Samuel would become Israel's priest, he would hold the responsibility of connecting the people of Israel with the God of Israel.

I want to focus for a moment on what it means to be called! Samuel was privileged to hear the audible voice of the Lord. The Lord told Samuel EXACTLY what was happening to the house of Eli and called him to a specific task! I wish God's calling was always that defined, clear, and specific.

I've often heard people say, "I feel like I should be doing ministry, but I don't know what I've been called to do?" A calling to serve God is extremely important in the life of a believer... and the reason why is because it gives direction as to how you will serve God and use the gifts he's given to you.

If you are a believer in Jesus as the Messiah, the savior of the world, and you have put your faith in him, you have been called! All believers have been called to serve God. Think about this, the writer of Hebrew says, “For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, (OT Outward Cleansing ONLY) how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” So what qualifies you here to be called to serve God... simply that you have placed your faith in Christ!