



BIBLICAL CLARITY: HOW TO HEAR GOD'S WORD

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We are living in a time of great confusion – morally, socially, spiritually. It can seem there is no clarity on anything in our world. And the truth is that, unless we look to God's Word, that's absolutely true.

But a lack a clarity in our culture does not mean a lack of clarity in God's Word.

Hebrews 13:8 says...

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

God's Word does not change. So we need people who are able to hear, understand, and communicate God's Word to those who lack clarity. We need believers like Samuel.

Samuel lived in a cultural climate with striking parallels to our culture today, and I believe his story offers invaluable insight for how we can face our situation today and let God work through us to change society.

1 Samuel 3:1 (NKJV) says...

Now the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.

Samuel was born during a time of great conflict for the nation of Israel – a time in which the Word of the Lord was rare. It was so rare, in fact, that there was no widespread revelation. In other words, God seemed silent to most people.

What was going on in the nation of Israel in those days? The Philistines threatened Israel from without, and the nation lacked the clarity or courage from within to make the right governmental decisions to counter this danger. The priesthood was corrupt, spiritual leaders were asleep, and the entire nation teetered on the brink of war and moral bankruptcy.

Does that sound familiar?

External threats, internal apathy. Moral confusion, lack of leadership, absence of conviction. That's the situation into which God called Samuel to speak – to be His mouthpiece to the nation on the edge.

And his example offers us a biblical blueprint for how we can speak God's truth, wisdom, and grace into our culture today.



First, we need to have the right focus in ministry.

There's a clear pattern of ministry laid out in both the Old and New Testaments. See if you can see the pattern in these verses.

1 Samuel 2:11, "And the boy Samuel ministered before the Lord." 1 Samuel 2:18, "But Samuel ministered before the Lord." 1 Samuel 3:1, "Now the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord."

Exodus 28:1, "Now take Aaron your brother... that he may minister to Me as priest." Deuteronomy 10:8, "The tribe of Levi was set apart... to stand before the Lord as His ministers." Acts 13:2 says God spoke as the disciples were "ministering to the Lord."

Ministry is first what we offer God. When our focus is in the right place, we don't go to church so that someone can minister to us, we go to church so that we can minister to God. And when we minister *to* Him, it creates room in our heart to receive ministry *from* others.

Why? Because it's more blessed to give than it is to receive. See, we have it backwards in church. It is not what can this place do for me. It is instead, what first can I do to minister to God.

The God who has everything desires something. He desires your attention, your affection, your service.

The Hebrew word for ministered in this context is the word "*sharat*." It means to attend, to serve, to wait upon, in the sense of a waiter serving an individual at a restaurant.

Priests in the temple were often assigned practical duties, things that didn't really seem spiritual in nature. They had to trim the wicks of the lamps, remove ashes from the burnt offerings, put out bread, set up lamp stands, clean the altars, open the doors. This was ministry unto the Lord because it helped create an environment for people to interact with the Almighty.

There is no insignificant task as it pertains to ministering to the Lord. So first, our focus needs to be in the right place. We are each called to minister first to the Lord. That's where Samuel started. From an early age, he was in the temple, ministering to the Lord.

Secondly, we must be faithful to God's Word.

1 Samuel 3:1 ends with an indictment on the nation of Israel... "In those days, the Word of the Lord was rare, and there was no widespread revelation."

When a church lacks biblical fidelity and people lack biblical awareness, you will always find a lack of revelation, an inability for vision, and a disregard for truth.



The Word of God calls men to account. It needs to become the canon by which all other ideas, philosophies, opinions, and preferences are judged.

People can have political opinions, sexual identities, worldviews, preferences... but what does God's Word say?

Our culture is on a collision course with Scripture. No amount of nuance, maneuvering, theological gymnastics, or unhitching from Scripture can prevent the conflict that is coming. As the culture lurches towards paganism, the scriptures compel us towards fidelity.

Christians must choose which master we will serve.

Either we will serve the gods of culture, or we will serve the one true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

1 Samuel 3:1 could in many ways describe the state of some segments of the Western church. I've heard pastors give 12-week sermons on critical race theory without ever mentioning the Word of God once.

Spiritual leaders will lament the end of *Roe v. Wade* because they don't want to upset their communities—and yet they'll not once mention what God's Word has to say about life.

When pastors become little more than echoes of the culture's most popular heresy, we are in trouble.

By contrast, when you're a man or woman of the Word, it gives you God's perspective on life's events so that you can properly contextualize whatever season you're in.

It's no wonder David says in Psalm 119:105,

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

Without the light of the Word, we are left with cheap imitations that leave us stumbling along in a state of confusion.

Beware of any theology that reduces the authority of the Word. Beware of any movement that diminishes the inspiration of the Word. Run from false teachers who will not rightfully interpret the Word.

We are messengers of God's Word, not editors. I've found that often, those who want to change the Bible are the ones who have been unchanged by it.

But here's the truth...



If you find a problem in the Scripture, the problem isn't the Scripture. The problem is you.

The Bible stands alone as the exhaustive revelation of the Father. It equally calls to repentance all types of sinners. And most importantly, it equally calls us into the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we continue to read, we find that 1 Samuel 3:2–5 says...

One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

One of the jobs of the priest in the temple was to keep the lamp burning until sunrise, so that at no time would there be darkness in the house of God.

There's deep symbolism in this.

Because where there is darkness in the temple, there is chaos in the culture.

We need to keep darkness out of God's house. This is a wake-up call for the church. It's an opportunity for a new generation of leaders to rise up to make sure the light of Christ continues to shine bright in the church and into the world.

1 Samuel 3:5 reveals the next thing we must do to hear from God.

Third, we must make ourselves available to God.

Samuel's response of "Here I am" is a major theme in Scripture.

In Genesis 22, Abraham responds to the voice of God by saying, "Here I am." In Genesis 46, Jacob responds to a vision from God by saying, "Here I am." It happens with Moses. It happens with Isaiah. Over and over again in scripture, God calls individuals, and they respond with those three words... "Here I am."

What I love about this story is that the Lord calls Samuel four times before he realizes it's God speaking to him. Samuel was likely only twelve years old when God first called him. He wasn't perfect, he wasn't even fully grown and matured yet. He still needed to learn to hear and recognize God's voice.



But God did not give up on him, just as He doesn't give up on us.

Do you know how you learn to hear the voice of God? By knowing His Word. The more you know God's Word, the more that you know His voice.

Some Christians spend their whole life chasing prophetic words. And God does give prophetic words to and through His people. But He has also provided 66 books of prophetic words at our disposal. And Scripture provides the standard by which all other words are assessed.

And this is why the enemy works overtime to keep people out of the Word.

Because when we know what the Word of God says, it gives us a courage and a boldness to be everything that God has asked us to be.

And in a world filled with confusion and chaos, we desperately need the clarity and voice of God to echo in the chambers of our heart.

Because just like society in Samuel's day, our society is teetering on the brink. We need to hear God's voice so we can speak God's truth to others – especially those within the Church.

Look at what 1 Samuel 3:11 – 12 says...

And the Lord said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end."

Notice where the judgment started. It began first in the house of God. Samuel's first ever prophetic word was that God was going to kill Eli's sons and end Eli's ministry.

The spiritual climate of the nation was following the spiritual climate of the temple, and until the temple could be cleansed, the nation couldn't be reached.

I believe that we are in a prophetic time as the body of Christ. But we need to get things right in the Church before we can speak effectively into the culture.

Finally, we need to prepare the next generation to hear from God.

Perhaps the most profound commentary on the life of Samuel comes from 1 Samuel 2:26:

And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with people.

If this verse sounds familiar, it's because Luke's gospel quotes it almost word for word when he writes in Luke 2:52 that Jesus "grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man."



Notice that both passages describe a vertical development and a horizontal development. They grew in their relationship with God, and out of that growth, they developed meaningful and impactful relationships with others.

As parents, we have a sacred responsibility to raise our children in God's presence, just as Samuel was raised.

It's not enough for our children to visit church every once in a while. It's not enough just to hear Bible stories, or study what God used to do 100 years ago.

Our children need a story of their own. When we raise them in the presence of God, they will discover that hearing His voice and walking with Him is the deepest and most meaningful experience of their lives.

When we raise our kids in the presence of the Lord, God will release a generation of Samuels to function as prophetic voices that will call the church of Jesus Christ back to a high fidelity to Scripture that empowers the transformation of culture.

Take Your Study Further

For verses about ministering to the Lord: *1 Chronicles 15:2, Psalm 101:6, Isaiah 56:6, Jeremiah 33:21.*

For passages about being available to God: Isaiah 65:1–3, 1 Corinthians 14:1–40, 1 Peter 4:10

For encouragement to prepare the next generation: Deuteronomy 4:9–10, Proverbs 22:6, Isaiah 54:13, 1 Timothy 4:10–11

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