



# Community Group Discussion Guide

September 8, 2024

1 Samuel 2:27-36; 3:1-21; 4:1a | Here I Am

## MOTIVATE

Starter Question:

⇒ *Why does a new beginning sometimes require the end of an old way?*

## DISCUSS

1 Samuel 2:27-36; 3:1-21; 4:1 continue the story of God's call on Samuel's life. These passages legitimize God's intent to install Samuel as Israel's next leader while also explaining God's condemnation of the corrupt house of Eli. Eli was meant to be the nation's spiritual leader during the pre-monarchic period. His inability to control his wicked sons clearly removed him from that role. It is appropriate, then, that his replacement as spiritual leader and eventual kingmaker for Israel was Samuel.<sup>1</sup> (See [1 Samuel Overview](#) for more information.)

- ⇒ *The sons of Eli become increasingly sinful while Samuel became great in his faith. These young men were all three from priestly families. How does one explain the difference?*
- ⇒ *Discuss this quote: Eli's sons were morally corrupt and conducted themselves unworthily in fulfilling their duties as priests. A holy God would not allow this to go on without punishment.<sup>2</sup>*

The prophetic judgment speech against Eli contains four parts:

1. God summarized the grace He extended to the line of Aaron.

**1 Samuel 2:27-28** *And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh? 28 Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel.'*

God sent an unnamed prophet to reveal His judgment against Eli's house. The phrase "man of God" is the second most common designation for a prophet in the Old Testament. The messenger also began his statement with the classic prophetic introduction, "Thus says the LORD."

Out of all the twelve tribes of Israel, God chose Aaron and his Levitical tribe to be His priests (Exodus 28-29). In addition, God ordained that the sacrificial meat portions given to Him by the Israelites were to be eaten by the priests. This office was to be taken seriously because the priests were to mediate between God and man.

⇒ *How is the calling of Aaron a sign of God's grace?*

2. God identified the sin of Eli and his sons.

**1 Samuel 2:29** *Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?*

<sup>1</sup> Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 76). Zondervan.

<sup>2</sup> Andrews, S. J., & Bergen, R. D. (2009). [1, 2 Samuel](#) (Vol. 6, p. 19). Holman Reference.

God condemned Hophni and Phinehas for their presumption in taking the fatty portions of every offering that was to be burned in the fire. Eli was also condemned for honoring his sons more than God. Eli verbally reproved them (1 Samuel 2:23–24), but he took no decisive action to restrain them (1 Samuel 3:13) or remove them from their office. God would not allow this to go on.

- ⇒ **Why is it vital we seek the discernment of the Holy Spirit to reveal any actions in our ministry and service that arise from self-serving or personal motivations?**
- ⇒ **Why must our simple desire be to seek to glorify God?**

3. God declared an end to this family’s domination of Israel’s priestly activities.

**1 Samuel 2:30-34** *Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever,’ but now the Lord declares: ‘Far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. 31 Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father’s house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. 32 Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. 33 The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. 34 And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day.*

Because of their disobedience, Eli’s family was under God’s curse. In verse 30, God repealed a promise He had previously stated as eternal. The surpassing wickedness of Eli’s sons led God to nullify that promise.

The specifics of God’s judgment against Eli are both corporate and personal. Eli was under God’s judgment for failing to restrain his sons and for participating in their sins by eating sacrificial portions they had wrongly taken from their fellow Israelites. The entire house of Eli would suffer the consequences of this wickedness through premature and often violent death. The immediate and personal application for Eli related to his sons: they would both die on the same day for their unrepentant, sinful ways.

- ⇒ **Discuss this quote: The message is clear. God will punish those who use their religious positions to further their own selfish and sinful purposes. The fall of the house of Eli stands as a stark warning to those who minister in the church.**<sup>3</sup>

4. God prophesied the appointment of a faithful priest.

**1 Samuel 2:35-36** *And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. 36 And everyone who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and shall say, “Please put me in one of the priests’ places, that I may eat a morsel of bread.””*

In the place of Eli’s house, God declared that He would raise up a faithful priest. This new priest would act in accordance with God’s will and purposes. In turn, God would do two things for him. First, God would build him a “sure house,” meaning descendants from his line would remain true to their priestly calling. Secondly, as a measure of honor, this faithful priest would minister before the LORD’s Messiah forever.

- ⇒ **What is the stark contrast between God’s actions toward Eli’s house and Samuel?**

<sup>3</sup> Andrews, S. J., & Bergen, R. D. (2009). [1, 2 Samuel](#) (Vol. 6, p. 21). Holman Reference.

**1 Samuel 3:1** Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.

1 Samuel 3 describes how God called Samuel to be the faithful prophet to replace Eli and his wicked sons. As a boy Samuel ministered to the LORD under Eli's direction. This came at a time when Israel rarely heard from God. In this context, this is not simply about the end of Eli's priesthood but about the beginning of Samuel's prophetic leadership and renewed communication between God and Israel.<sup>4</sup>

⇒ **Why did God stop speaking to Israel?**

**1 Samuel 3:2-9** At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. **3** The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. **4** Then the LORD called Samuel, and he said, "Here I am!" **5** and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. **6** And the LORD called again, "Samuel!" and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." **7** Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. **8** And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. **9** Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Part of Samuel's service involved spending the night in the sanctuary in order to keep the sacred lamp burning until dawn. It was a violation of priestly regulations to allow this flame to go out before morning. The fact that the lamp had not yet gone out indicates God's call came in the early morning hours, just before the oil was gone (Exodus 27:20-21).

The reference to Samuel's sleeping near the ark of the covenant does not mean he was actually sleeping in the Most Holy Place, only that he had a room with the priests, presumably near Eli's. This arrangement was in case the elderly, nearly blind Eli needed Samuel during the night. When Samuel heard a voice, it was natural for him to assume Eli needed help. Samuel was willing to serve, but he was puzzled about the identity of who was calling him.

In Verse 7 the author explains that Samuel was inexperienced in the ways of Yahweh and that the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to Him. Samuel's lack of experience and knowledge led to confusion in this moment of a call from God. Samuel asked the elderly priest what he wanted. Eli told Samuel it was not he who had summoned the boy and told him to return to bed.

⇒ **How can you develop your spiritual listening skills so you'll be ready when God calls?**

This happened two more times with Samuel further explaining to Eli, "Here I am, for you called me." On the third time, Eli discerned that the LORD was calling Samuel. Eli taught Samuel how to respond to God's call, instructing the boy to ask God to speak to him further. The next time Samuel would be ready with these words, "Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears."

⇒ **Discuss this quote: How has all of 1 Samuel 1 and 2 led up to this point?**

**1 Samuel 3:10-14** And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears." **11** Then the LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. **12** On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. **13** And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. **14** Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

<sup>4</sup> Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 81). Zondervan.

At a time when prophetic revelation was rare, God was certainly persistent. On this fourth time, God stood in Samuel's presence and called his name twice. Samuel answered as he was instructed by Eli.

⇒ ***Describe the last time you said anything close to, "Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears."***

The message of judgment God gave to Samuel was difficult to bear. God confirmed the harsh prophecies previously announced against Eli and his family line. In the Old Testament, ears "tingle" when people received news of approaching punishment (2 Kings 21:12; Jeremiah 19:3). Yahweh informed Samuel that He was about to fulfill His word spoken through the "man of God" regarding the end of Eli's priesthood (1 Samuel 2:27–36). There was no turning back now—there was no amount of sacrifice or offering that could make atonement for the sins of the house of Eli. God's judgment would be complete.

⇒ ***Discuss 1 Samuel 3:14 in greater detail. How imposing is this verse?***

**1 Samuel 3:15-18** *Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. 16 But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here I am." 17 And Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." 18 So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the Lord. Let him do what seems good to him."*

When morning came, Samuel went about his daily routine. He was afraid to tell Eli the dreadful message. Even though the prophecy was against Eli and his house, Eli knew that Samuel must share what God spoke to him. Eli's admonishment taught Samuel to be faithful in speaking God's word even if it hurt those closest to him. Samuel must boldly and fully declare the prophetic word from God to those to whom it is directed.

⇒ ***Why does the church need faithful servants who will listen for God's call and be obedient to it?***

⇒ ***In what ways did Eli prepare Samuel for his call?***

When Samuel recounted God's prophecy, Eli responded with resignation. He understood that the sovereign LORD was free to punish sin and was just in doing so. Not only did Eli take full responsibility for his actions, but it also seems that at this point he realized God had chosen Samuel to be his successor.

⇒ ***"God will do what seems good to Him." Why must we fully accept this truth?***

**1 Samuel 3:19-21** *And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. 20 And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD. 21 And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.*

The power of God's call on Samuel's life was shown in the faithfulness of God's presence with his ministry. As Samuel grew, the LORD was with him, establishing him as a faithful prophet at a time when Israel desperately needed to hear from God. Samuel's reputation as an accurate and insightful messenger from God soon made him famous among all the tribes of Israel. This is portrayed in the expression "from Dan to Beersheba." Dan was located in the far north of Israel, Beersheba to the extreme south. This was a common phrase used to refer to the whole land of Israel.

The "falling" of a word is its failure to come to fruition. When God defined the nature of Israelite prophecy, He said He would put His own words in the prophet's mouth (Deuteronomy 18:18), and the Israelites would be able to distinguish true prophets from false prophets by whether or not their

prophecies came true.<sup>5</sup> Whatever Samuel proclaimed as a word from the LORD came to pass. Samuel's words were trustworthy because they were the LORD's words.

⇒ ***What is the key to the reliability of Samuel's prophecies? How do we apply this in our own lives?***

The final legitimizing feature of Samuel's new role is the continued manifestations of Yahweh to Samuel at Shiloh, where God revealed Himself by His Word. The early morning call was not an exceptional appearance of God to Samuel, but rather the first of a series of regular revelations from the LORD to His faithful prophet.

**1 Samuel 4:1a** *And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. God called Samuel to be His prophet and then blessed him in such a way that all of Israel recognized him as a true prophet of the LORD.*

⇒ ***Based on the spiritual depravity of Israel at this time, why is there great hope in this verse?***

## TRANSFORM

**1. Make personal application:** God speaks to His people of every generation. He does not often speak audibly, as He did to Samuel. But He continues to speak clearly and regularly through His written Word to all who will listen. When God calls, it's vital we are prepared to surrender our hearts and lives to Him and to say, "Here I am, LORD."

- ⇒ ***Is there something that keeps you from listening to God's Word?***
- ⇒ ***What are you currently asking of God?***
- ⇒ ***What is God currently asking of you?***

**2. Pray:** Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to listen to God and how to be sensitive to the needs of others. Confess those sins to God that keep you from listening to Him. Pray He will give you a spirit like Samuel that says, "Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening."

## STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Holman New Testament Commentary, 1 and 2 Samuel, pages 18-45.*
- *The NIV Application Commentary, 1 and 2 Samuel pages 72-90.*
- *Shepherd's Notes, 1 and 2 Samuel, pages 7-11.*

<sup>5</sup> Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 83). Zondervan.