

small group **discussion**

Faithfulness: the Life of Samuel

For the sermon on September 20-21, 2014

“The Voice”

Get Acquainted

When you were 16, who had the strongest voice in your life?

Get Started

What resonated with you most as you listened to this week’s sermon? What was the single most compelling or impactful thing you heard?

Background to the Story | 1 Samuel 2

As we see young Samuel grow up in the Tabernacle, we get a picture of the evil rebellion that is imbedded in Israel. 1 Samuel 2 chronicles the crimes of Eli’s sons (Hophni and Phinehas), and the impending doom that will befall the priestly family. They were responsible to administer the sacrificial system and used their positions in a way that “treated the Lord’s offering with contempt.” In this context, we see Samuel developing an impeccable reputation of faithfulness in an environment marked with corruption. He will be a man who stands out rather than blends in.

Listen to the Story | 1 Samuel 3.1-16

- **Option 1:** The small group leader tells the story accurately and passionately from memory. The group listens with Bibles closed.
- **Option 2:** Someone from the group reads the story while the group listens with Bibles closed.

Tell the Story | 1 Samuel 3.1-16

- **Option 1:** Everyone gets a partner and retells the story to their partner from memory.
- **Option 2:** One or two people volunteer to retell the story to the group from memory.

Read the Story | 1 Samuel 3 (complete chapter)

- Read the story with everyone following along in their copy of the text. Feel free to use another Bible version if you have read it before.

Explore the Story

What do you see? What does this mean?

1. Who are the characters and what roles are being played in the story? What did they say and do?
2. Describe the tension in the story.
3. What choices are being made? What choices *could* be made? What are the outcomes of the choices?
4. What did you find compelling in this story?
5. What questions do you have? (Something you don’t understand or need more information about.)

How does this story connect with *your* story?

Faithfulness in difficult environments (1 Samuel 2.12-26). In the days of young Samuel, the nation of Israel was mired in a cycle of rebellion. The people were desperate for a leader to rescue them from the consequences of their disobedience. In addition, Israel's rebellion had leaked into the tabernacle. The sons of the priest, Eli, had blasphemed God with their practices. Eli knew this but did not stop it. Young Samuel was called to be faithful in a difficult place. Even as a young boy, Samuel didn't blend in, he stood out. Describe an environment where you find it incredibly difficult to live as a devoted follower of Jesus.

Disobedience: "Times Up" (1 Samuel 2.27-36). In this story, blatant disobedience is taken seriously. Eli refuses to restrain his sons and the ax is about to fall. Discuss these statements about God's response to sin: **God calls us but we refuse to answer him. He takes sin seriously and there can be a time when he says: "Time's up! I'm not calling you anymore."** What thoughts or emotions are evoked in you when you consider God saying, "Time's up!"

Speaking Hard Truth (1 Samuel 3). The boy Samuel has to tell Eli something that he probably won't enjoy hearing. This is not a happy message. Later Samuel will have to confront the people with their sin and King Saul with his disobedience. Samuel would need to learn the art of speaking hard truth to people. What prevents us from being faithful to speaking words people need to hear? **Read Ephesians 4.11-16 together.** What principles or guidelines does Paul give us for speaking hard truths into people's lives? What's the right way and wrong way to speak hard truth? What is required for us to speak truth in love to one another in this group? What is the result of doing this well?

Blend In or Standing Out. Read Matthew 5.14-16 together. Samuel didn't conform to his environment, instead he contrasted to it. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, in essence, is asking us, "Are you blending in or standing out?" What motivations (good or bad) do we have in blending in to our culture? How should we stand out? Are there bad or counter-productive ways to stand out? Explain.

Transforming Obedience. Read Romans 12.1-2 together (read it from *The Message* if possible). Our world and culture have a way of pressing us into its mold. Where in your life do you see the threat of being "conformed" to the culture?

How can this small group help you renew your mind and keep from being pressed into the mold of our culture?

How can this small group help you live more faithfully in the difficult environments of your life (sports teams, work, college, families)? What can we do in this group to build up each other's character in these areas? What's your next best step in being more faithful in a tough place?



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