**Series: Hearing God in 2016**

**Message #2. I’m Listening. How can we develop a posture of to better hear from God?**

**Book Reference**: John Ortberg's *God is Closer than You Think*

**These are the summary Notes**:

# Introduction:

## To listen

* ‘Hello Seattle, this is Dr. Frazier Crane and I’m listing.”
* “Why won’t you listen to me!” we have yelled to our kids as they seem to tune out the call of a parent. Secretly, this is one of the deepest desires we all have; to be listened to by our spouses, our friends, our church family.
* What does it mean to listen?

**lis·ten**

*intr.v.* **lis·tened,** **lis·ten·ing,** **lis·tens**

To make an ***effort*** to hear something: *listen to the radio; listening for the bell.*

**Synonyms:** alert, all ears, awake, aware, conscientious, enrapt, enthralled, fascinated, glued, heedful, hooked, immersed, intent, interested, listening, mindful, observant, preoccupied, regardful, studious, vigilant, watchful

## Examples of God speaking in the Old Testament

* Adam in the garden, Moses and the burning bush, Noah to build the Ark, and Abraham, leave his home for the promised land.
* We all wish, to some degree that God would speak this way

## There are times when we feel alone and isolated; wishing that God would speak

* One of my new favorite artist is Ben Rector. In his song, *Hideaway,* he shares this lyric:

*“Found out life was complicated, more grey and black and white.*

*Sometimes I wanna follow Jesus but sometimes he's hard to find*

*I never care about believing till I see I lost my way”*

* I often wonder if part of our not hearing from God is because we don’t really listen for him until, like the lyric states, “I see I lost my way”

In the text that we are going to look at today, God had been silent for awhile, but he decided to speak to a young man. What can we learn from this young man and how we can better hear from God? How did he listen? How can we hear and respond, “speak for your servant is listening”

# [Text: I Samuel 3:1-18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Samuel%203&version=NIV)

A.  Context of text

* Israel was being disobedient
* Moving from a period of judges to prophet/king
* Elli’s sons are disobedient – stealing from the offerings of the people and having adulterous relationships – they were in the temple, they were sons of the priest, but their titles did not keep them from Sin or Judgment
* Because of their sin and their father Ellis, failure to stop it, they and the house of Elli would receive judgment from God

B. Background of Samuel and Eli

* Samuel dedicated to the Lord by His mother Hannah; she placed him with Elli the priest
* Early Church history places Samuel at about 12 at this time
* He would have been involved in mundane/routine temple task at this time

C. In those days the word of the Lord was “Rare” (3:1)

* Burning bushes, plagues, voices on the top of a mountain giving 10 commandments, where in the past, a thing of memory and history. Hearing from God was not the norm.

# Characteristics of young Samuel that will improve our posture of listening

## A. Demonstrated a servant’s heart

***“The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Elli…”  (1st Sam 3:1)***

* Samuel’s tasks were small. They probably involved such things as lightening the candles, cleaning the tabernacle and being the shadow of  the priest Eli
* This is in sharp contrast to Elli’s son’s who shamed God and were punished
* I Think it is important to recognize that Samuel was faithfully serving, even in the small task, before God spoke.
* Are we being faithful and serving in the small things?

## B. Growing in his spiritual walk

***“The boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men” (1st Sam 2:26), we read of Jesus in Luke 2:52 “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”(NIV)***

* Not simply the outward appearance of working at the temple, but the inward growth
* How easy can it be to hear from God when we are not growing closer to him, but walking further away?

## C. Willingness to be persistent and demonstrate an effort to listen

**The Lord called Samuel four times *(3:4; 3:6; 3:8; 3:10*) and he kept responding**

* I would have thought I was hearing things and not got out of Bed
* Although Samuel was unable to discern immediately that this was God, he was committed and obedient to Elli
* Don’t dismiss those thoughts in your head that you think might be from God, talk to a trusted Christian brother/sister, mentor, and pursue it

## D.  Open and ready to God’s voice and direction

**“Speak for your servant is listening” (1st Sam 3:10)**

* Samuel completely opened himself up to Gods Call
* Is answer must have been so pleasing to God – he was willing.
* He didn’t know what God wanted.  He did not know if God would move him or take him to a strange place.  He did not know the future.  He did not know if he would be required to offer extreme sacrifice.
* BUT HE WAS LISTENING.  HE WOULD NOT DISREGARD GOD

## D. Faithful and obedient to the message he heard from God

***“He was afraid to tell Elli”  (1st Sam. 3:15) “So Samuel told him everything”  ( 1st Sam 3:18)***

* When God speaks, the message isn’t always “Hey, I want to make life easier for you”, as a matter of fact, I would be careful if that is what you think God is saying to you
* Often the task is challenging and will stretch and test our faith
* “**God doesn’t reveal himself to us to make us happy or to deliver us from loneliness.  He also comes to us so we can be conduits of His presence to other people” (*God is closer than you think*, Ortberg)**

# Improving our posture of listening

1. Spending time in your primary listening paths as discussed last week: Intellectual, Relational, Worship, Contemplative/Creation, Service, Action,
2. Spending time in God’s word and prayer.
3. Engage Christian Community: Worship, Friends, Activities, etc.
4. Honestly seek the Lord and his voice – listening is an effort to hear and a honest willingness to follow
5. Be reminded that even when we don’t hear, that doesn’t mean God has left us. Nothing can separate us from his love.