

Apostles Houston
Life Group Study: 1 Samuel 3

Love and Laughter (~15-25 min)

Creating a Sacred Space

Welcome→ Embrace→ Refresh

Remembering Our Purpose (~5 min)

Why Do We Do Life Groups? (*feel free to communicate this in your own words*)

In Acts 2, we read how early Christ followers devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. In Life Groups we follow their example with the hope of becoming more like Jesus, the goal of our salvation.

Being Known (~10 min)

Story Telling

We believe that loving God and others begins by being known.

In 5-7 minutes, what do you want us to know about yourself (~5Hs)?

Pray and Celebrate

Be sure to honor whatever is good or beautiful about their story, and ask one or two people to pray over those who just shared.

Following Up (~5-10 min)

Responding to God's Word

Last week, we discussed how we are called to lives of repentance. How have you lived into that reality this past week?

Hearing the Word (~45 min)

Hearing: (*Read "Context" and then 1 Samuel 3*)

- Before we dive in, what are some big themes that stand out to you as significant in this passage? Or from the sermon this past weekend?
- In v 2 we are told of Eli's blindness. This is not just a physical but a spiritual blindness. What does it mean for Eli to be spiritually blind? How can we also become spiritually blind? What is the impact on others when we are spiritually blind? On ourselves?
- Notice how God calls Samuel four distinct times. In the last call (v 10), we read that God "came and stood" as He called to Samuel. What does this persistence show us about God's character? How has God demonstrated faithfulness and persistence in your own calling?
- Read vv 3-18 one more time. This time, as you hear the words, use your imagination and pretend to be in Samuel's place. How do you feel? How do you pass the night? (v 15) What does it mean for you to deliver this message to your mentor? What gives you the strength to be so bold? How can we be more like Samuel in our own lives?

Obeying (application):

- This week, spend time each day asking God to reveal himself to you as he did to Samuel, and, importantly, spend time in silence awaiting a response. Inspired by Samuel, be faithful to heed God's call if it's an imperative. Otherwise, devote time to meditating and praying through what He says. If no word comes, savor this silent time in God's presence.
- How else may the Spirit be leading you to respond this week in your own context?

(Teacher prays for the grace to respond faithfully to the Spirit's leading)

Soul Care (~20 min)

Prayer Requests

As people share their needs, pause and ask for a volunteer to lift that need up when we begin praying. Depending on the size of your group, decide if it is best to split up or pray as a group.

Announcements (~5 min)

- Look ahead and plan your Meal Night!

Teacher's Notes

Context

Beyond their recounting of historical information, the Old Testament histories are highly stylized using literary devices to impart theological meaning. This story takes place when Israel did not yet have a king and was still ruled by judges and prophets. Eli is the priest responsible for leading worship to God and has now been entrusted with a young Samuel in his care. As you read, pay attention to how Eli is characterized as blind both physically and spiritually. Notice what this means for the story and how God responds. Also notice Samuel's actions and consider what you would do in his situation.

Specific Insights

- In the Bible, physical blindness is often a metaphor for lack of spiritual vision. (Mt 15:14, 1 Jn 2: 11) Eli's blindness is demonstrated earlier in his mistaking Hannah's praying as drunkenness (1 Sam 1:14). Likewise, we are told in chapter 2 that he was blind to his son's evil practices until his old age. In our passage for the week, it takes Eli three times to realize that God is the one calling Samuel; one would expect the seasoned man of God to have sensed this earlier!
- We read in v 1 that the word of God was rare in those days. Perhaps, God's perceived quiescence was more a factor of wayward priests. We do see a prophet come to Eli and prophesy judgment on his lineage at the end of chapter 2. Yet, God did not give up on his people. If Eli and his house are unfaithful, God raises up a faithful prophet in Samuel to bring his word and lead his people.
- Using one's imagination and placing oneself within a biblical passage is a type of prayer traditionally linked to the medieval priest St Ignacius of Loyola. The use of the imagination may help us go beyond a strictly intellectual reading of the Bible and open up God's word to us with childlike wonder.

Handout

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