

# CONTENTS

---

<b>1</b>	Who Are You Talking To? <i>1 Samuel 3:1-14</i>	5
<b>2</b>	Who Have You Been Talking To? <i>1 Samuel 12:1-25</i>	11
<b>3</b>	Who Do You Think You're Talking To? <i>1 Samuel 17:1-54</i>	17
<b>4</b>	Who Would You Like to Talk To? <i>1 Samuel 28:3-25</i>	25
<b>5</b>	How Long, Lord? <i>2 Samuel 2:1-28</i>	31
<b>6</b>	Is This It, Lord? <i>2 Samuel 7:1-17</i>	38
<b>7</b>	How Could He, Lord? <i>2 Samuel 12:1-15</i>	44
<b>8</b>	Which Way, Lord? <i>2 Samuel 16:5-14; 19:16-23</i>	50

1 Samuel 3:1-14

Learner  
Session  
Guide

**Focus Statement**

Discerning God's voice and call in the middle of the demands of life can be a challenge. Scripture tunes our ears to discerning God's call and inspires us to follow.

**Key Verse**

Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."  
1 Samuel 3:10

## Who Are You Talking To?

**Focus Image**



© Design Pics / SuperStock

### Gather

#### Check-in

A rabbinical saying states that God created humankind for the love of stories. Our time together in this study will give us an opportunity to hear and learn more about stories—our own as well as those we encounter in the Bible. Begin your time by sharing a little bit about your own story with someone in the group.

#### Pray

*Gracious God, in your love you created humankind, and you long to be in relationship with us. May the stories of faith and struggle we find in Scripture resonate with our own stories. Open our hearts and minds to hear your call, even in the midst of darkness. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### Focus Activity

Can you identify where the following statements come from and who makes them?

"We're not in Kansas anymore."

"What's up, Doc?"

"To infinity and beyond."



Notes

### Open Scripture

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-14.

- Summarize what happened in the text.
  
- Which images in the text did you find funny, touching, or troubling?
  
- What surprised you?

### Join the Conversation

#### Historical Context

1. The books of 1 and 2 Samuel tell the story of the establishment of Israel's monarchy. As 1 Samuel begins, leadership is exercised by the priest Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Read 1 Samuel 3:1-3 again.

- What words give clues to where the scene takes place?
- What do you discover about the leadership situation in Israel?
- Compare this depiction to the last verse in the book of Judges (21:25).

2. Eli and his sons had both religious and political roles, swaying significant power over the people. Read the following passages and identify some of the leadership issues raised by their behavior:

- 1 Samuel 2:12-17
- 1 Samuel 2:22-25
- 1 Samuel 2:27-30

3. Samuel lives in the temple as a result of the vow his mother made to God when praying for a child.

- Discuss the content of her vow in 1 Samuel 1:11.

- Compare her vow to the commitments made by parents and sponsors in the baptismal liturgy (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 228).

4. In 1 Samuel 3:11-14 we read God’s reaction to the behavior of Eli and his sons.

- How might have Samuel, who was only a child at the time, received this message?
- How might Samuel feel about delivering this message to his mentor, Eli?
- In verse 11, God’s message to Samuel is identified as “something . . . that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.” Name some ways this phrase might capture our own disappointment with political and religious leaders who violate the trust given to them.

### Literary Context

1. Small descriptive details about a story can be critical to its message. Look at 1 Samuel 3:3.

- Other than providing a factual detail, what might the phrase “the lamp of God had not yet gone out” mean?
- How does young Samuel—by his age and his humble origins—embody this hope of light in the darkness?

2. As you read 1 Samuel 3:4-8 again, have someone in the group physically enact Samuel’s movement in the text.

- How is comedy used in this scene?
- Look closely at Samuel’s and Eli’s responses each time Samuel is called. What changes do you notice? What do those changes communicate?

3. After the fourth time he is called by God in the middle of the night, Samuel says, “Speak, for your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:10).

- What is the function of repetition in helping Samuel recognize God’s voice?
- How might this be similar to the way repetition helps us learn a new language?
- What role does repeatedly hearing God’s word through Scripture play in how we learn to recognize God’s voice (God’s language) in our daily lives?

4. The broader issues of darkness and the void of God’s voice are personalized in this child, who according to 1 Samuel 3:7 “did not yet know the LORD.”

- What does this say about Eli, his mentor?





### Notes

A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a thin orange border, intended for taking notes.

- What are the things that may have prevented Samuel from knowing God's voice?
- How are people who grow up in the church today prevented from knowing and recognizing God's voice?

### Lutheran Context

1. A key understanding of human nature for Martin Luther was the idea that we are at once saints and sinners—a concept known by its Latin rendering *simul justus et peccator*.
  - How is this insight reflected in God's choice of Eli to be Samuel's mentor?
  - What are your expectations of those who mentor young people?
  - Imagine having someone like Eli as a leader in your church. How would you feel about God using that individual as a mentor to young people?
2. At a time when "visions were not widespread," God calls on this child not once, but three times. Finally, Eli realizes what is happening and in 1 Samuel 3:8-10 provides Samuel with the appropriate "liturgical response."
  - How do you think Eli felt when he realized it was God calling the child?
  - How might Samuel have felt as he repeated the words given to him by Eli?
  - Note that in repeating Eli's words, Samuel doesn't say "Lord." Why might this be?
  - In light of this story, name some ways that liturgy allows us to "borrow the words of tradition" to express and explore our faith.
3. Lutherans speak of all Scripture pointing to Christ, the living Word of God. The situation in this story takes place centuries before Jesus physically appears. In what way does this text point to Christ?
  - Consider this: How is the image of light shining in darkness physically expressed in the story of Samuel's call? How is the living Word described in John 1:1-5?
  - Take a moment to jot down some of the ways that "darkness" is present in our world today. Now discuss ways the light of Christ may shine in that darkness.

### Devotional Context

1. Think about the way you were able to recognize the source of the movie quotes above (p. 5) simply by listening to a short phrase.
  - What has helped those quotes find their way into our memories and hearts?

- Compare your ability to recognize these quotes to Samuel's first encounter with God. What is similar or different?
- What role does repetition—of stories and of phrases—play in our own ability to recognize God's voice (become *fluent* in the language of God)?
- What opportunities are offered through your congregation, and which have you found most helpful, to revisit and hear anew Scripture at different points and stages in life?

2. Often people who are not active in church in their early adult life find themselves returning to church when their children are young.

- Looking at the Focus Image for this session, make a quick list of reasons why you think it's important that children attend church.
- Review that list, highlighting which of those reasons you think apply to adults as well.

3. With all his warts, God used Eli to be Samuel's mentor.

- Who have been your mentors?
- Who have you been a mentor to, or who do you feel called to be a mentor to?

### Wrap-up

Be ready to look back over the work your group has done in this session.

### Pray

*Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, which you have given us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.* (ELW, p. 72)

## Extending the Conversation

### Homework

1. Read the next session's Bible text: 1 Samuel 12:1-25.
2. Watch a movie with a child this week, preferably one of the child's favorite movies. Talk about the characters and pay attention to what excites the child and what helps him or her to remember and feel that he or she knows the characters. Act out a scene with the child, pretending to be characters in the movie. Reflect on what you learn from this experience about how to tell kids the core stories of our faith and help them come to know the characters in the stories.



Notes



### Notes

3. Watch *The Princess Bride* (20th Century Fox, 1987) and pay particular attention to the power of storytelling for teaching and building relationships.

### Enrichment

1. First and Second Samuel are considered by scholars to be part of a larger work that encompasses 1 and 2 Kings. In this study we are focusing on some of the central themes and texts while drawing from the broader context of the books. Through the week you may want to read not only the assigned text for the next session, but larger portions of the text as well. Here is a suggested breakdown of seven daily readings:

Day 1: 1 Samuel 1:1—2:10

Day 2: 1 Samuel 2:11—3:20

Day 3: 1 Samuel 4–5

Day 4: 1 Samuel 6–7

Day 5: 1 Samuel 8

Day 6: 1 Samuel 9–10

Day 7: 1 Samuel 11

2. Reread some of your favorite Bible stories in a variety of sources—various translations, children’s and study Bibles, and so on. Imagine that you are casting a movie. Whom would you cast to play the various characters in the story? If money was no object, what would you use to create the scenery for the story? Are there parts of the story you would “flesh out”?

### For Further Reading

*The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World: Electronic Culture and the Gathered People of God* by Tex Sample (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998). Sample argues that stories carry meaning and help shape and inform people’s everyday lives. Christians, he says, need to develop a set of counter-images that can enable us to engage in a healthy critique of our culture (p. 99).

Available from [augsburgfortress.org/store](http://augsburgfortress.org/store):

*Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation* by Walter Brueggemann (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989). Brueggemann masterfully explores the impact of stories in shaping an alternative vision of the world. He proposes that the church lives in the culture as an exile. The society does not always promote or tell *our* stories. So, like the people of Israel, we find ourselves needing to reconnect with the stories that shape us, so that they may provide an alternative vision of the world—a God-given vision.