

God Calling: Will Someone Answer?
(1 Samuel 3:1 – 10; John 1:43 – 51)

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Who can blame Samuel for not recognizing God's voice calling him in the middle of the night? After all, he was only a boy with no experience hearing God's voice and especially hearing Him speak to him. Besides, the very thought of such a thing happening was a bit scary in the dimness of the dark temple where he slept. Twice, he ran to his master, Eli, believing it was he who called.

The first time, Eli roused himself up to assure the boy he was only dreaming, then rolled over and went back to sleep. However, the second time the boy shook him awake, a light began to dawn. Eli realized it must be the Lord calling. Samuel went back to bed, plucking up his courage to answer the third call: *Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.*

The Lord did, indeed, speak to Samuel, telling him he would be God's spokesperson for all Israel. The boy matured into a man and according to Scripture, the Lord remained with him and, *let none of his words fall to the ground.* (1 Samuel 3:19). When Samuel spoke for God, the people listened.

I have to admit, I sometimes get uncomfortable when people tell me they speak for God. They usually begin the conversation, *God told me...* Who in their right mind is going to argue against the words of the Almighty? These folks put us on the spot and back us into a corner with their, *God told me*, words.

Yet, with all my heart, I believe God does speak to us. The question is, how does God speak? How does God call? There are a few saints to whom God may speak directly. For most of us, however, God communicates more obliquely.

I remember praying for God to bless a plan that I was working on. I rather smugly made a decision believing the Lord had directed me. After a few weeks however, I realized it had not been a good decision – another course would have been wiser. What was I to make of that?

A goat farmer friend cried on my shoulder one day because several baby kids were born and died without attention because she and her husband had been away on a one day trip. *Why did you leave*, I asked, *when you knew those mother goats were so close to giving birth? Because*, she wailed, *I asked God to take care of them while we were gone!*

I came to see, and this was probably God speaking to me, that the things we often pray about so earnestly are based on our strong beliefs and hopes. We want so much for something, we talk ourselves into believing God gives his approval. But the Lord has given us intelligence, conscious and common sense which he expects us to use in living our lives.

And yet, I know God does speak to me, as he does to you. Often, he speaks through the Bible and other books or from the lips of people. Most of all, when I listen to what is going on around me, God nudges me in all sorts of ways in every day events. When I am completely open, He can

come into my thoughts in a whisper so gentle I don't even recognize it as God's. Sometimes, weeks later, I look back in amazement and awe: *that was God speaking to me!*

Why does God speak to us?

Why does God call?

He calls us because he can't do otherwise. Out of His great love for our wounded humanity, God invites us to a life of healing, joy and forgiveness. God also calls us, so we may call others.

When Jesus asked the 12 disciples to follow him, he called them to, *fish for people held in bondage, to heal wounds and to bring victory to the defeated.* (Mark 1:17)

John's account of Nathaniel's conversion, his friend Philip had already discovered Jesus was the long-promised Messiah. Not able to keep such good news to himself, he wanted Nathaniel to find the joy he had discovered. Nathaniel however, was contemptuous of the idea. *Can any good come out of Nazareth?* he scoffed. (John 1:46)

Philip didn't insist, *Nathaniel, God told me you MUST come around to my way of thinking.* He simply said, *come and see.* Nathaniel went, and his life was never the same after that.

The best argument to win others to Christ is still, *come, come and see for yourself.* Before we can extend God's call, we must answer it ourselves. Hanging up on God or ignoring his voice is foolhardy because we risk missing the opportunity of hearing how to live our lives with hope, compassion and joy. And we also forgo the privilege of extending the call to others. Amen.