

**Godly Choices Bring Godly Significance**  
**1 Samuel 3:1-21**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Something that everyone of us in this room today has in common is that we all make choices in life.

One thing is certain. The choices we can bring about a significance in God's eyes. If we choose to live our lives apart from God, we miss out. And this isn't a small issue. We can miss out on living a life in a way that glorifies God.

God teaches us about the importance of making choices that are obedient to His Word. Today we will learn about one of these lessons in the book of 1st Samuel.

**THESIS: *Taking a stand with God and being committed to the Lord through our choices will bring our lives godly significance.***

**I. ISRAEL'S REBELLION**

1 Samuel 3:1 - **“Meanwhile, the boy Samuel served the Lord by assisting Eli. Now in those days messages from the Lord were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon.”**

The events from the books of 1st and 2nd Samuel take place around 1120BC. Israel was in a morally, spiritually and politically deteriorating condition. Some of the priests serving Israel were leading in dishonesty with no fear of God. Scriptures say in Judges 17:6 - **“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”** Israel was a nation led by God. There was not a monarchy in place where one person played the role of a king. And more and more, the people of Israel were becoming more disgruntled with this because they desired to be ruled by a king like all the nations around them.

**Hannah's Story**

Even in the midst of this turmoil, God chose to intervene through the prayer of a godly woman. Hannah, had been through much agony in her life due to being unable to have children. To her culture it was actually a curse to be barren. But she came to God with her bitterness and asked God to provide a child that she would dedicate to God for His glory.

1 Samuel 1:11 - **“And she made this vow: “O Lord of Heaven's Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the Lord, his hair will never be cut.”**

This was a choice that Hannah made in the midst of her own issues of being barren and childless. She chose to honor God and no matter what, let Him receive all glory. She was over being bitter and letting her own will control something that she ultimately had no control over. God heard her prayer and remembered her when she went to lay with her husband and God blessed her with a son named Samuel. Hannah not only gave birth to Samuel but also had two more sons and two daughters. But the first child she bore, Samuel, was the one that she had proclaimed was God's all the days of his life. Samuel was one of the Bible's greatest prophets, judge and priest. The Lord even links Samuel with Moses in Jeremiah 15:1 as two men whose prayers had great influence on Him.

### **Samuel's Early Years**

We aren't told anything in the Bible about those early years of Samuel, but can you imagine the stories that Hannah most likely told him? Amazing stories of God's love for His covenant people and of the wonderful things God had done for them. Samuel was raised by his mother very similarly to Moses. The mothers provided for their children basic needs and spiritual needs. And after each boy was weaned, they were separated into the plans that God had for them. Both Moses and Samuel became mighty spiritual leaders of God's people.

After Samuel was weaned from Hannah, she brought him to Eli the high priest of Israel. Imagine being 5 years old and being at the feet of the high priest serving God day in and day out. His life was revolved around serving in God's tabernacle as far back as Samuel can remember.

### **Eli and his Sons**

Now, Eli was the high priest of Israel. So what is a high priest? What are their responsibilities? Hebrews 5:1 says, **"Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins."** A high priest was a position held by an appointed man. Eli **"had judged Israel forty years"** it states in 1 Samuel 4:18. This is a testimony to the service he for the nation of Israel.

But his responsibility of being the high priest of Israel was marred by the sinful blasphemy of his sons, and by Eli's failure to remove them from their sacred position. You see, even though Eli was God's appointed man to lead Israel spiritually, he dealt with his own sins.

There has never been a human to fully represent us without sin, except Jesus Christ our high priest. Jesus Christ is our high priest. There is no need for animal sacrifices because it would be a repetition and could not appease the God our Father. Only Jesus was able to defeat sin once and for all.

Hebrews 4:15 - **"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."**

In Christ and Christ alone, priesthood and sacrifice have been brought to fulfillment and to finality. And that is something to celebrate!

Eli and his son's made wrong choices against God. Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas were priests in Israel. The Bible says in 1 Samuel 2:12, "**Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the Lord.**" Worthless can also be translated, useless and despicable. Eli's sons were corrupt and they were defiling the tabernacle of the Lord.

For example, Eli's sons sent their servant to fish out of boiling cauldrons the priest's portion before the Lord had received his portion. Those who insisted that the Lord's portion should first be burned on the altar were threatened with violence. These priests were treating the offerings of the Lord with contempt. They were also seducing young women who were assisting at the Tabernacle of God. Eli approached his sons about the immoral acts they were committing against God himself. But that's as far as he went in his conversations. They were left in their spiritual position without being removed by Eli.

This was a choice that Eli made. His conviction was that they were in complete sin against God and were not changing in their ways. But Eli did not follow through with his responsibility as God's high priest. He made a wrong choice. And along with it came God's judgment which we will read about in the rest of this chapter.

Perhaps the impurity and sin that was happening in the tabernacle had corrupted the whole nation of Israel and provoked God to withdraw the Spirit of prophecy until he planned to raise up a more faithful priest and prophet. Look at what God's word says about the condition of the nation of Israel.

Psalm 74:9 - "**We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet, and there is none among us who knows how long.**"

Amos 8:11 - "**Behold, the days are coming,**" declares the Lord God, "**when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.**"

## **II. SAMUEL CALLED BY GOD**

So this leads us to our main text today, where we read about God's calling on Samuel's life. Let's read 1 Samuel 3:2-4:1

One night Eli, who was almost blind by now, had gone to bed. <sup>3</sup> The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle near the Ark of God. <sup>4</sup> Suddenly the Lord called out, "Samuel!"

"Yes?" Samuel replied. "What is it?" <sup>5</sup> He got up and ran to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"

"I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go back to bed." So he did.

<sup>6</sup> Then the Lord called out again, "Samuel!"

Again Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"

"I didn't call you, my son," Eli said. "Go back to bed."

<sup>7</sup> Samuel did not yet know the Lord because he had never had a message from the Lord before. <sup>8</sup> So the

Lord called a third time, and once more Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"

Then Eli realized it was the Lord who was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup> So he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed.

<sup>10</sup> And the Lord came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!"

And Samuel replied, "Speak, your servant is listening."

<sup>11</sup> Then the Lord said to Samuel, "I am about to do a shocking thing in Israel. <sup>12</sup> I am going to carry out all my threats against Eli and his family, from beginning to end. <sup>13</sup> I have warned him that judgment is coming upon his family forever, because his sons are blaspheming God and he hasn't disciplined them. <sup>14</sup> So I have vowed that the sins of Eli and his sons will never be forgiven by sacrifices or offerings."

<sup>15</sup> Samuel stayed in bed until morning, then got up and opened the doors of the Tabernacle as usual. He was afraid to tell Eli what the Lord had said to him. <sup>16</sup> But Eli called out to him, "Samuel, my son."

"Here I am," Samuel replied.

<sup>17</sup> "What did the Lord say to you? Tell me everything. And may God strike you and even kill you if you hide anything from me!" <sup>18</sup> So Samuel told Eli everything; he didn't hold anything back. "It is the Lord's will," Eli replied. "Let him do what he thinks best."

<sup>19</sup> As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him, and everything Samuel said proved to be reliable. <sup>20</sup> And all Israel, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south, knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord. <sup>21</sup> The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh and gave messages to Samuel there at the Tabernacle. 4:1 And Samuel's words went out to all the people of Israel.

Samuel was only about 11 or 12 years old in this section from scriptures. It is amazing to think that during a time where Israel was in rebellion and had made so many wrong choices in keeping their relationship with the Lord pure, that God would call a 12 year old to be the person that he used to speak truth to the people of Israel. But that is exactly what we see here. Samuel was called into an active role as a mouthpiece for Israel as their priest and prophet.

If you and I live our lives not focused on God, we will make choices in our lives that are based on our own knowledge. And that is where we get into big trouble. Samuel is an example for us today as we see practical ways that we can make Godly choices in our lives, bringing godly significance for God's glory.

First, lets look at the following statement:

### **1. We can make godly choices by GOING to a place where we can hear God speak.**

Samuel was dedicated by his parents to be God's servant. He was from the very beginning given to God

for God's use and glory. And at the age of 4 or 5, Samuel was placed in the tabernacle of God as a servant. Although Samuel didn't personally know God till he was 12 years old, he was in a place that he could hear from God.

In biblical times, Jewish men wore this garment called a prayer shawl all the time -- not just at prayer. Talith contains two Hebrew words; TAL meaning tent and ITH meaning little. Thus, you have little tent. It was intimate, private, and set apart from anyone else -- enabling them to totally focus upon God. This was their prayer closet!

1 Samuel 3:7 says, "**Samuel did not yet know the Lord because he had never had a message from the Lord before.**" Hannah knew that in order for her son to be fully utilized by God that she needed to help put him in a place where He would learn through observations and experiences. And this was Samuel's first personal encounter with God. God called him three times and he thought that Eli was calling him. The first time that Samuel thinks Eli is calling scripture say in verse 5 that he "**ran.**" The second and third time it says that he "**arose.**" Notice he's getting a little slower at moving. Most likely Eli getting a little bit cranky from being woken up by Samuel. He was an old man that needed his rest.

But look at what Eli counsels Samuel to do in verses 8-9. The Bible says Eli "**perceived that the Lord was calling**" Samuel. So Eli tells him to lay down and the next time he heard the voice to say, "**Speak Lord, for your servant hears.**"

The second point I want us to see is this;

## 2. We can make godly choices by TALKING to God when we hear the Lord speak.

Samuel's first words to the Lord were, "**Speak, for your servant hears.**" What is very significant about this is the choice of words that Samuel uses. Look at the first word "**speak.**" If you get real honest with yourself I am sure that you have and will get to places in your life where you would rather ask God not to speak.

The second part of what Samuel says is vital too. He says, "**for your servant hears.**" What is a servant? The dictionary actually establishes a servant as one who, "gives the service and respect due to" and one who will "comply with the commands or demands of." Samuel recognized who he was in the presence of. He learned about God and His ways as he worked in tabernacle ever since he was 5 years old. But at this moment, Samuel finally recognized the voice of God. And his first words to God were that of obedience and that of an open heart to hear and serve.

### III. SAMUEL'S CHOICE

## 3. We can make godly choices by DOING what God has spoken to us.

I am sure that Samuel had no idea what God was about to say to him, but he was in that place representing a pure heart. So what does God tell him? Tell Eli that destruction is coming upon his house.

Look at what the Lord says:

**<sup>11</sup> Then the Lord said to Samuel, “I am about to do a shocking thing in Israel. <sup>12</sup> I am going to carry out all my threats against Eli and his family, from beginning to end. <sup>13</sup> I have warned him that judgment is coming upon his family forever, because his sons are blaspheming God and he hasn’t disciplined them. <sup>14</sup> So I have vowed that the sins of Eli and his sons will never be forgiven by sacrifices or offerings.”**

Samuel was actually gently encouraged by Eli in verse 17. **“What did the Lord say to you? Tell me everything. And may God strike you and even kill you if you hide anything from me!”** Maybe gently is not the right word. More like commanded! We see that Samuel does not hold back anything and spoke everything that God said. Eli then proceeds to say, **“It is the Lord’s will, let him do what he thinks best.”** Eli knew God. He wasn’t a perfect man just as none of us are. But he knew that God is a just God. And so he accepted God’s decision.

1 Samuel 3:19 says the following: **“As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him, and everything Samuel said proved to be reliable.”** It doesn’t say that some of the words that Samuel shared through his life were truth, it says that **“everything”** he spoke from God was truth. Over the life of Samuel, you will see that he became well respected as a prophet of God. All the way from the top of Israel to the bottom of Israel, people respected Samuel and this glorified God.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The choice that Hannah made to ask God to take away her bitterness that was ultimately destroying her life, was a choice that God honored and blessed. He gave her a son that was obedient and helped lead the nation of Israel during a time of a spiritual famine.

The choice that Eli made to let his two sons stay priest while in blasphemy against God, was a choice that brought destruction and insignificance to their lives.

The choice that Samuel made to go where God was, talk to God and obey God, were choices that brought about Godly significance to his life, to the nation of Israel and ultimately to God.

## **APPLICATION:**

What areas of your life are you running from God? What areas have you been in disobedience to God?