

Series: Learning to Listen

October 13-14, 2018

Title: Ready to Listen

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Text: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

To Know God Better:

To know God:

You were made to know God. Your presence in this world is no accident. You are not just a speck in a vast, uncaring Universe. Every nerve, every fiber of your being was specifically designed for you to know God.

Funny how we can understand this idea when it comes to our phone. One of the very first things we do when we wake up is check the phone for messages, the weather, email, Instagram, you name it. We understand that that little flat device is designed to connect with a network so that we can know things. Never for a moment would we think that our phone just happened. No, we understand that it was painstakingly designed to connect us with others.

Well, God painstakingly designed you...to connect with Him.

To hear His voice:

And what does that connection look like? Check out the experiences of the people who came to know Him and you will find one thing they all have in common: they *heard His voice*. Oh, I don't mean that they all heard a physical voice, although some of them did. But they discerned that God was communicating with them, speaking to them, and inviting them into a conversation.

Abraham served three strangers dinner, but what really happened was a conversation in which the LORD announced the imminent birth of a miracle baby. Moses saw a bush that was on fire but not consumed. But what really mattered was the voice that came from within the flames, calling him to lead Israel out of slavery. God spoke to Jesus when He was baptized, calling Him His most loved Son. It was the continuing of a conversation.

To know God better:

Paul's greatest desire for his friends was that they would know God better. He prayed that God would give them a "spirit of wisdom and revelation," and that He would enlighten their minds so that they could truly know God in a personal way.

And isn't that the way relationships work? Getting to know a person means having a continuing conversation. It's a conversation that grows as we learn to trust each other and care for each other. A conversation means sharing; a conversation means listening. That's how relationships work.

So, if you want to get to know God better, you need to learn to hear His voice. And when He speaks, you need to learn how to listen.

Before we know God

The boy Samuel:

Samuel was a young boy who had been apprenticed, as it were, to an old priest named Eli. His story begins like this:

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1 Samuel 3:1-3 The Message

*The boy Samuel was serving God under Eli's direction. This was at a time when the revelation of GOD was rarely seen or heard. One night Eli was sound asleep (his eyesight was very bad – he could hardly see). **[Slide 3]** It was well before dawn; the sanctuary lamp was still burning. Samuel was still in bed in the Temple of God, where the Chest of God rested.*

It was a dark time. Eli had allowed the worship of God to be horribly corrupted by greed and sexual misconduct. God was speaking, but no one was paying attention. And here is a young child, learning the ropes around the Temple, sleeping in the presence of God right in God's dwelling.

Which way would Samuel go? Would he grow up to follow the wicked patterns of Eli's corrupt sons? Or would he come to know God?

God calls:

Then it happened:

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1 Samuel 3:4-5 The Message

Then GOD called out, "Samuel, Samuel!"

Samuel answered, "Yes? I'm here." Then he ran to Eli saying, "I heard you call. Here I am."

Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back to bed." And so he did.

Ever been there with a kid? "Mommy, I had a scary dream, can I sleep with you?" I can imagine Eli was just trying to figure out how to keep a little boy from keeping him up all night.

But God wasn't finished:

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1 Samuel 3:6-7 The Message

GOD called again, "Samuel, Samuel!"

Samuel got up and went to Eli, "I heard you call. Here I am."

Again Eli said, "Son, I didn't call you. Go back to bed." (This all happened before Samuel knew GOD for himself. It was before the revelation of GOD had been given to him personally.)

Before we know God:

We're all like Samuel. None of us are born knowing God. There is a time in our lives before God reveals Himself to us *personally*. So if God were to reach out to us – call us by name – very likely we might not even know Who was calling.

Think of Paul: When Jesus came to Him on the road to Damascus, Paul's first question was: "Who are you?" He simply didn't know. He didn't know God yet.

But we were created to know Him and to know Him in such a deeply personal way that our relationship with Him is the most important and powerful relationship we ever experience.

And He wants nothing more than for us to know Him. Which means that He has no doubt been calling you for some time now. You just didn't know it was Him. You may have had tears flow down your face when you sang a song about Him. You may have felt His unseen Presence. You may have had the sense that someone has spoken to you deep inside. But you haven't known what to do with it. That's okay: there is always a time before we know Him.

Ready to Listen

A simple command:

God doesn't give up. Even when we don't have a clue that He is calling to us, He finds a way to break through. And that's what He did with little Samuel:

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1 Samuel 3:8-9 The Message

GOD called again, "Samuel!" – the third time! Yet again Samuel got up and went to Eli, "Yes? I heard you call me. Here I am."

That's when it dawned on Eli that GOD was calling the boy. So Eli directed Samuel, "Go back and lie down. If the voice calls again, say, 'Speak, GOD. I'm your servant, ready to listen.'" Samuel returned to his bed.

I wonder if Eli had suddenly remembered what it was like when God first talked to him? A voice not his own had broken into his thoughts. He had listened. And God had become so real! Now could it be that it was happening again? Was the voice of God to not be a rare occurrence anymore?

Only one way to find out: listen.

Three's a charm:

Samuel did what he was told. He went back to bed, pulled up the covers and waited. The mysterious Voice came one more time:

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1 Samuel 3:10 The Message

Then GOD came and stood before him exactly as before, calling out, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Samuel answered, "Speak. I'm your servant, ready to listen."

Ready to listen:

You were made to know God. Your presence in this world is no accident. You are not just a speck in a vast, uncaring Universe. Every nerve, every fiber of your being was specifically designed for you to know God.

God is calling you by name. You're that precious to Him. You have no doubt already heard His call, even if you didn't know it was Him. That's okay. But He's not finished.

This time try something different: When you sense His presence, just say: "Speak, I'm your servant, ready to listen."

How can we ready ourselves to listen?

- Find a quiet time/place with no distractions.
- Invite God to be with you and speak to you: "Speak, I'm your servant, ready to listen."
- Don't try to be in control.
- Listen to the "still, small voice" that speaks to you.
- Take the time to write down what you sense God is saying, so you can remember it later.

You were made to know God. He is calling you by name. It's time to listen!