

God's people are called to be available to hear, obey, and share God's Word with others.

It's at the end of the period of the judges, during a very tumultuous time, God spoke to a boy, Samuel, and gave him a message to receive, believe, and proclaim. In the story of Samuel, we see the proper response to hearing God's voice: receiving, believing, and proclaiming. Through the Spirit, we too are able to hear God speak through His Word today. As we respond in belief, we then proclaim the gospel of Christ to those around us.

As we continue with our weekly devotionals, we have worked our way through many chapters of God's Word, I pray you have heard God as He has spoken to you. Through the Judges cycle, He showed us His abundant mercy toward His people. With Deborah and Gideon, He reminded us that He is the God who fights on behalf of His people. With Samson, He showed us how He was the God who would claim victory over His enemies. In the Book of Ruth, He professed His loving kindness toward His people as their redeemer. In the events of each story, God has been speaking.

The Bible is God's voice. When we open the Word of God, we hear the words of God. Second Timothy 3:16 says that every word recorded in the Bible is inspired—breathed out by God. The words on each page come from His breath! God wants to be known, He wants to be near, and He wants to be worshiped. So, He speaks.

We begin this study with a little backstory on Samuel's life. This child was chosen before he was born to be a prophet to the nation of Israel. His mother named him Samuel (possibly meaning "requested from God") because she prayed for a baby and then dedicated him to the Lord. As soon as he was weaned, Hannah took Samuel to live at the temple and to be raised by Eli.

Eli was the priest in Israel, mediating between God and the people, and he had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. These two men were nothing like their father in regard to knowing and worshiping God. (See 1 Sam. 2:12.) People would come to worship God with sacrifices, but the sons of Eli would interrupt their worship and plunder all of the offerings the people would bring. As Eli grew older, he lost control of his home. This is where our story picks up.

Prayer: Lord, we want to recognize your voice. Teach us, through your Holy Word, what your voice sounds like so that we can know your truth. Help us to know you more, to recognize your voice, and in turn, to clearly hear your calling. We don't want to mistake the voice of the world with the voice of our Savior. We will discern your voice the more we spend time studying your Word. So, we are asking for your grace and your mercy to cover our home, our church, our world; grant us time and discipline to spend that time in ways that allow us to know You more. As parents, may we show our children a love for You and your Word that draws them to have a personal relationship with You. Holy Spirit, have your way in our lives and home. Speak, Lord, we are listening. Amen.

Our Availability:

Monday, August 3, 2020 – Read - 1 Samuel 3:1-10

AVAILABLE — able to be used or obtained; to be at someone's disposal. Are we available to God whenever, wherever, and however He leads and directs?

Notice that the word of the Lord was rare. This means that God was not speaking regularly to His people. The people would not listen to God's voice. So now, without hearing the word of God, the people were in distress. The word of the



Lord was rare, but not for long. As our story continues, we see that here, God did not choose to speak to the cultural elite, a leader, or even a general, but instead to a boy. Notice how it took three times for Samuel to realize that God was speaking to him. Verse 7 says that he didn't yet know the Lord personally. The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. But even though Samuel didn't know God, he was growing in his understanding. After this night, his life would never be the same.

Even Eli didn't seem to be expecting God to speak. It took both of them three times to realize that it was God calling in the night. Samuel was God's chosen instrument. Metaphorically, Eli's sight was growing dim, while Samuel's eyes were opening to the word of God. Samuel's eventual response to God's voice is worth considering: "Speak, for your servant hears." He was ready to hear the word of the Lord. To ask God to speak to us through His Word is to offer up our lives in faithful listening.

"The Lord called Samuel and he answered, 'Here am I'" (1 Samuel 3:4). Samuel was mightily used by God, because he made himself available.

- When God calls us to do something for Him, do we obey, are you available or do we feign ignorance?

"For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding 'Yes!' And through Christ our Amen ascends to God for His glory" (2 Corinthians 1:20 NLT).

- AMEN means YES. Do we say "yes" to God?
- Do you find yourself actively listening for God to speak through a sermon or Bible study you are attending? What are some things within our lives that might hinder us from listening?

Prayer: Eternal God, lover of our souls, we come to you this morning hungering for something from you that will change the rest of our lives. We come hungering for honesty instead of corruption; for generosity instead of greed; we come hungering for integrity instead of intrigue. We come hungering for our neighbors to be fed and for all to have employment to provide for the basic needs of their families. We come this morning hungering for righteousness to flow like rainwater and for justice like an ever-flowing stream. We come hungering and we come listening for your words to us, describing how we can participate in your great work of re-creation. We come listening for ways that we can become part of the solution and not part of the problem. We come listening in fear and trembling, praying that we will have the courage to respond and act. Speak, Lord, for your children are listening... (Silence) Amen.

Tuesday, August 4, 2020 – "I desire to do Your will, my God..." (Psalm 40:8 NIV).

When David penned these words, they were in every respect a song of thankful worship to the Father that pointed to the coming Messiah, who would be sent from heaven to become our sacrifice for sin. This psalm spoke of Jesus, Son of God, who humbled Himself to become a servant. Jesus, who did only those things that He heard from and delighted the Father.

As redeemed children we have been bought with a price and saved by grace through faith. We are ambassadors of Christ and servants of God who are called to be His witnesses to a world in need. May our highest joy and greatest delight be to live in the center of God's will and to treasure His word in our heart.

May our lives be a sweet-smelling example of thankful worship and humble praise, so that we may live and move and have our lives in the center of His will - so that we may become true witness to our heavenly Father, and a true reflection of Christ within us so that through us, God will be glorified in the world.

- Is His will your desire?

Prayer: Loving heavenly Father I delight to do Your will and meditate on Your word. Multiply my desire for You I pray, so that my life may be a testimony to Your love and grace, in Jesus name I pray, AMEN

Wednesday, August 5, 2020 – “And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’” (Isaiah 6:8 ESV)

Interestingly, Isaiah's call (or renewal-of-call) comes not in the form of a divine command, but rather in the form of a question. And the question is not even addressed to Isaiah. Rather, God speaks to the heavenly council, and Isaiah overhears the conversation. Nonetheless, as if overwhelmed with gratitude at having been forgiven and permitted to live, Isaiah cannot help but reply: *"Here am I; send me!"*

The closeness and enthusiasm of Isaiah's positive response represents a marked contrast with several other call narratives, including Jeremiah's, whose hesitancy recalls Moses' call (see Jeremiah 1:4-10). For Isaiah, there is no hesitation and there are no excuses, contingencies, or "what-ifs."

Not surprisingly, that eager prophet of verse eight, the ready follower of the mighty Lord of the temple who is so anxious to do the divine work, now sounds very different in verse eleven, after hearing what God has in mind for him. Instead of "Here am I," we now hear the prophet bleat, "How long, O Lord?" (Read Isaiah 6:9-10)

After Isaiah's fearful "how long," God gives him cold comfort by announcing that cities shall lie waste and the land will be desolate, finally presenting a vast emptiness (Isaiah 6:11-12). Somehow that stirring hymn, "Here I am, Lord," seems strangely out of place, or at least premature.

What can all this mean for the preacher of this famous text? By all means, call your people to follow the Lord, bid them give their lives for God's service. It is what we do! But to follow God rightly does not always lead to great congregations, multiple varieties of ministries or projects, and 100% paying of pledges and budgets.

What we are called to say to our world is that the last are first, the least are greatest, and the greatest among us is a servant. Such two-thousand-year-old words have regularly been met by dull ears, sightless eyes, and clouded minds; all of which have led again and again to wasted cities and empty lands, ravaged by wars and famines and hopelessness.

By all means, respond to the call of God. But be careful to know that the call is never easy, never simple to grasp, never designed for ready comfort and success.

Just ask Isaiah.

- How is God sending you personally? What will be your response?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me more of Who You are and show me how flawed my understanding is of who I truly am and of all that Christ has done for me. Thank you for cleansing my lips and washing me clean in the blood of Jesus. Thank You for sending Your Holy Spirit to live in me and for building me up, into the living Temple, with all who are saved by grace, through faith in Christ. In a world that has lost its way, I pray in Jesus' name, "Lord. Here am I, send me." Amen.

GOD'S AVAILABILITY:

Thursday, August 6, 2020 – “And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49) Jesus was available to His Father and walked perfectly in His will. (Read Luke 2:41-52)

This passage is the only Gospel story about the childhood of Jesus. At its heart is a remarkable tale of Jesus as a young boy taking advantage of a unique opportunity to talk about the things of God with the learned rabbis and Pharisees of the

Temple in Jerusalem. Moreover, this happened at the feast of the Passover, when roughly twenty years later, Jesus would lose his life at the hands of the religious authorities. In retrospect, it is a bitter-sweet story; the first and last recorded words of the Son of God are uttered at the Feast of Passover, Israel's great celebration of the saving acts of God.

A Jewish boy was considered an adult from thirteen, and the year before, at twelve years old, his father would educate him in the religious and practical duties of a manhood. Therefore, this was Jesus' special year of education and growth, and with great anticipation and excitement, the highlight of His first experience of worship in the Temple courtyard.

The heart of this story is well known. In the midst of these circumstances, Jesus failed to leave Jerusalem with the rest of his family and remained in the Temple, debating with the learned scholars in residence

- Are we available and ready to be used by God?
- What can we learn about the character of Jesus from this passage, and how much does the life of a teenager tell us about the adult (think of yourself)?
- Discuss how and why Jesus amazed the people with whom He spoke in the Temple? What could a child teach an experienced scholar?

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, open up our lives to the possibilities of Your grace. May we value the disciplines of our faith and also the freedom of Your Spirit; both of which are essential to the life of faith we seek to live. We ask You to lead us kindly, and show us how to live graciously. Praise You Lord Jesus Christ: AMEN

Friday, August 7, 2020 – “The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.” (Psalm 145:18).

Psalm 145 celebrates the greatness and goodness of God. We know God's superlative nature because of his powerful, gracious actions. In particular, the Lord cares for the fallen and the hungry (145:16). Yet he is "filled with kindness" for all and is "close to all who call on him" (145:17-18).

This does not mean, however, that we should fashion God in our own image, making him into whatever we like, and praying according to our particular biases and projections. Psalm 145:18 reminds us: "The LORD is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him in truth."

Whoever calls upon God in truth, with a sincere and upright heart, one that truly desires his salvation, to that person God is close. God is not only near to praying people, but:

- He will hear their cry.
- Fulfil their desires.
- Save them.

Lift up thy soul in prayer to this merciful God.

The Lord is close to all them that call upon him - There is a sense in which he is “close” to all, for he is present everywhere. There's a special sense in which he seems to be near to us; in which he shows himself to us; in which he gives us evidence of his presence. It is in prayer, in praise, in his commandments - in his gracious reconciliation on our behalf - in the peace and joy which we have in communion with him. Read - Psalm 34:18: “The Lord is close unto them that are of a broken heart.”

To all that call upon him in truth - in sincerity; not dishonestly; worshipping him as the true God, and with a sincere desire to obtain his favor.

Read - John 4:24. We can have no hope that God will hear us unless we are sincere in our worship. He sees the heart, and he will act toward us as we are, and not as we profess to be.

- How has knowing God through Scripture impacted the way you pray?
- How has knowing God's will through Scripture impacted the way you pray?
- Have you experienced God's closeness when you call upon him "in truth"?

PRAYER: Thank you, dear Lord, for the promise of Psalm 145:18. Thank you for being close to us when we call upon you, especially when we call upon you in truth. Help me, gracious God, to pray in this way. It is so easy for me to lay before you what I want for myself, to pray in light of my own selfish needs and desires. Yet I want my prayers to reflect your nature and your will. So, teach me, correct me, guide me, and inspire me, so that I might call upon you in truth. All praise be to you, O God, for your strength and grace, for your majesty and holiness, and for your closeness to me. Amen.

Saturday, August 8, 2020 – “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10 ESV).

Every Christian should be available to God for whatever He asks of them. Sometimes that demands sacrifice and often stepping out of our comfort zone. Obedience requires a Joshua mentality that faces fears, insecurities, the unknown, and then responds in faith with a firm, Yes God. (Read Joshua 1:1-9)

The answer to Fear:

God commands us, “Fear Not.” As Christians we will face frightening situations.

- We are not immune to trouble.

The disciples while walking with Jesus faced fearful problems.

- Facing tax collectors with no money.
- Crossing the lake in the storm.
- Being in a wilderness area with a multitude of people and inadequate food.
- In each case their human resources were insufficient.
- Christ was the only resource they needed.

Fear strikes when -

- Our resources are depleted.
- Have exhausted our strength.
- Have exhausted our bank account.
- I have exhausted our schemes.

Christ is the only resource I need.

The answer to fear is the realization of His presence.

- "Ye though I walk through the valley..." (Psalm 23)

"Be not dismayed." - Christians will face confusing situations. We don't always understand our situations.

Things will happen for no apparent reason.

- You may get fired from your job.
- You may suddenly get sick.
- You may get in an accident where you are to blame.
- Your loved one may die.

The more we try to reason some of these things out, the more confused we get. Yet the Lord says, "be not dismayed." Quit trying to figure it out. It isn't necessary to understand God's ways. "All things work together for good..." We find it so hard to rest in faith. We seek to understand why. If you really knew what God was doing, you'd probably panic. God is working by a completely different set of values. Eternal. Yet faith is the only place where you will ever find true rest.

"I am your God." He doesn't give us the answer, He gives us Himself as He strengthen us."

- Do you feel your strength slipping and you can't hold on much longer? Don't be afraid, He is there.
- "I will help thee." Have your friends let you down just when you were needing them?
- Is the load too heavy for you?
- Don't be dismayed, He is there. "I will uphold thee."

Prayer: Loving and Faithful One, I will not fear. When I feel fear I will cast my eyes on you and remember your commands. Help me to fear not. Give me strength and know that I am never alone. I trust you to work all things for the advancement of your kingdom, amen.

God does not ask about our ability or our inability, but about our availability.

We need to be AVAILABLE to do the ministry that God has called us to do. God uses those who make themselves AVAILABLE to Him. When we make AVAILABLE what little we have, He will lead us into deeper and greater things. In the Christian world, we can find all sorts of excuses not to be available to God's call: "It's the preacher's job." "It's not my gift." "I've already served, let someone else do it." "I'm too busy or too tired or too old or too young."

It has been said, "Excuses are tools of the incompetent, and those who specialize in them seldom go far." Ben Franklin wrote, "He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else." Gabriel Meunier stated, "He who excuses himself, accuses himself."

God may assign you a demanding task, but his call keeps us going when we don't want to go and are ready to quit. We have the promise of God's purpose. "I chose you before I formed you in the womb; I set you apart before you were born" (Jeremiah 1:5). The promise of God's purpose allows us to let go of our own plans and to receive God's plan without fear. Like Jeremiah and Jesus, we need to accept that our future is not our own. We are God's. He has a distinct plan and purpose for our lives.

GOSPEL SONG – "I'm Available to You (Rev. Milton Brunson)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJznj1a8I1w>

You gave me my hands to reach out to man
To show him Your love and Your perfect plan
You gave me my ears, I can hear Your voice so clear
I can hear the cries of sinners
But can I wipe away their tears?

You gave me my voice to speak Your Word
To sing all Your praises to those who never heard
But with my eyes I see a need for more availability
I've seen the hearts that have been broken
So many people to be free

Lord, I'm available to You
My will I give to You
I'll do what You say do
Use me Lord to show someone the way and enable me to say

My storage is empty and I am available to You
Now I'm giving back to You all the tools You gave to me
My hands, my ears, my voice, my eyes
So You can use me as You please
I have emptied out my cup so that You can fill it up
Now I am free, I just want to be more available to You

Lord, I'm available to You
My will I give to You
I'll do what You say do
Use me Lord to show someone the way and enable me to say
My storage is empty and I am available to You

Use me Lord to show someone the way and enable me to say
My storage is empty and I am available to You
My storage is empty
And I am available to You
You, you, you my storage is empty
And I am available to You
To You