

THE CALL OF SAMUEL

(1 Samuel 3:19–20)

Purpose: To show that it wasn't enough to know about God, to serve in His house, or to have religious parents; we must know Him in our hearts, and give our lives to Him.

Long ago there lived in the land of Israel a little girl named Hannah. As she played with her doll, she looked forward to the day when she would have a real little baby all her own.

As the years passed Hannah grew up to be a lovely young lady.

And one wonderful day she married a fine young man named Elkanah, who loved her and was kind and generous to her.

Both Hannah and her husband trusted in God and worshipped Him, and together they prayed that He would bless them with a little child. But as the years went by Hannah's childhood dream did not come true. She did not have a baby of her very own.

Some of the young mothers were unkind, and poked fun at her, pointing to their own children.

Often she would become so sad that she would creep away by herself, great tears rolling down her cheeks. How she longed for a little child!

Each year Hannah and her husband made a journey to a place called Shiloh to worship God in His Tabernacle there.

And this year Hannah had a special matter to take up with the Lord. She asked God to give her a baby and promised that if she had a son she would bring him to serve in God's house.

And not long after, God answered Hannah's prayer. How happy they were when the baby was born! They called him "Samuel," which means "asked of God."

As soon as he was big enough to go away from home, Samuel was taken to Shiloh just as his mother had promised.

There at the temple they talked to Eli, the high priest. *"Take Samuel and train him for the Lord,"* Hannah said.

Now Eli was getting old and knew that he should begin to train someone to take his place some day, so he gladly took Samuel to live with him in God's house.

As time went by, Samuel was able to assume some important temple duties to help Eli. He opened and closed the doors and kept the lamps cleaned and filled and burning.

How pleased Samuel was to see his parents when they made a visit to God's house! Each year his mother brought him a new coat to wear over his simple linen gown. It was hard for Hannah to leave Samuel at the temple and go back to her home in the country...

...but the Lord blessed her and soon there were other babies in her house, Samuel's brothers and sisters.

As Samuel grew older, Eli taught him to read the scrolls which contained the laws and history of God's people, the Israelites.

The people grew to love Samuel and were ready to listen when he read to them from the books of the law. But the Bible says, "*Samuel did not yet know the Lord.*" He was in God's house and he knew about God, but that was all.

One night, as Samuel was asleep in bed, he was suddenly awakened by a voice calling, "*Samuel! Samuel!*" He sat up quickly. Who was calling? It must be Eli!

He ran into the high priest's room. "*Here I am! You called me.*"

Eli was very surprised. "*No, I didn't call. Lie down again.*"

So Samuel went back to bed as he was told. Soon the voice called again, "*Samuel! Samuel!*" And again Samuel ran to Eli. And when Samuel said, "*Here I am for thou didst call me...*"

Eli shook his gray head. "*I called not, my son. Go and lie down again.*"

Samuel went back to his bed, but he was puzzled. Who could have awakened him? Who could have called him?

It wasn't long before the clear voice called the third time. "*Samuel! Samuel!*" Again the boy ran into the aged priest's room.

This time Eli realized that something unusual was happening, and that it was the Lord Himself who was calling Samuel.

Eli said, "*Go and lie down, but if you hear the voice again, say 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.'*"

This time Samuel couldn't sleep. He waited in the darkness, his heart thudding against his ribs. Did Eli mean that the Lord Jehovah was calling him? That He would speak to him? Could the God who came in glory to Shiloh have a message for a little boy?

Then came the wonderful voice: "*Samuel! Samuel!*" "*Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.*" The Lord was there and talked to Samuel, and told him of many things that would happen in the future.

The Bible says that after that "*Samuel grew...and the Lord was with him...and all Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.*" Samuel would be the one who would bring God's message to the people.

It wasn't enough that his parents loved and worshiped God...

...or that he had been dedicated to the Lord and served in God's house...

...or that he was familiar with the laws of God and was respected and loved by the people.

...Samuel had to know that the Lord Jehovah was his God; he had to give his heart and life to Him.