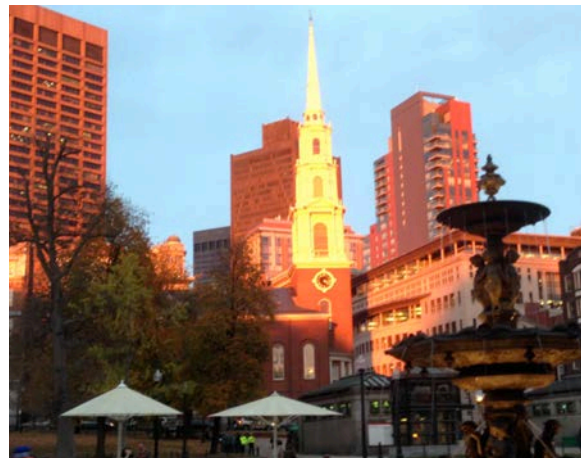




Caravaggio, "David with the Head of Goliath" c 1607  
oil on wood, 35.6 in × 45.9 in, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

## Session 4 1 Samuel 3

# A Study Guide for Park Street Church Small Groups



## Study Guide for Session #4

**NOTE: This Study Guide on 1 Samuel 3 was contributed by Pat Chen, our Director of International Student Ministries.**



### **I. READ and PRAY over 1 Samuel 3:1-19 [ESV]**

Stop and pray after each paragraph.

#### The LORD Calls Samuel

3:1 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; **there was no frequent vision.**

2 At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. 3 The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was.

4 Then the LORD called Samuel, and he said, "Here I am!" 5 and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down.

6 And the LORD called again, "Samuel!" and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." 7 **Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.**

8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. 9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears." 11 Then the LORD said to Samuel, **"Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. 12 On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13 And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God,[a] and he did not restrain them. 14 Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."**

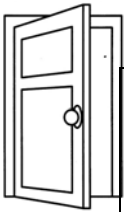
15 Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. 16 But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here I am." 17 And Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." 18 So

Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, “It is the LORD. Let him do what seems good to him.”

19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.  
20 And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD. 21 And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

Footnotes: a. 1 Samuel 3:13 Or blaspheming for themselves

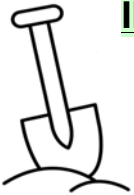
## II. INTRODUCTION



Summary: in chapter 2, Samuel is a young priest, ministering before God in a linen ephod. In chapter 3, the LORD establishes a new line of priests and prophets through the calling of Samuel. Priests are not above the law and the LORD will restore to his people a righteous and faithful order of priests. The LORD will not leave himself without a witness among his people (Acts 14:17).

Outline: Setup to Samuel’s Calling (3:1-10); God reveals self and Word (vision, message) to Samuel and for Eli (3:11-18); and Confirmation of Samuel’s Calling as Prophet of God (3:19-21).

## III. DIGGING INTO GOD’S WORD



- First, a follow-up answer to a question from a study of 2:11-36. [What is an ephod and what is its significance?](#) An ephod is a sacred vestment worn by priests (Exodus 28:4) and made of linen. The ephod worn by Samuel (2:18) while assisting the aged Eli was made by Hannah and was typical of those worn by priests. The high priest wore the ephod under a breastplate with precious stones: 12 on the front and 2 on the shoulders. The high priest’s breastplate also had a “bag” which contained the urim and the thrumhim, which were used to consult God by means of casting lots. In contrast, David’s ephod was made of “ordinary linen” instead of the “fine linen” reserved for priests. Gideon’s ephod was nothing like the priestly ephods, as it served a different (unknown, but idolatrous) purpose, according to Judges 17:5 and 18:14.
- Verse 1: Samuel’s vision itself is remarkable because there “was no frequent vision” at that time. Compare with verse 21.
- Verse 3: “The lamp of God had not yet gone out” indicates time. The lamp was lit at dusk and extinguished at dawn. So it places the events of the vision after dark, probably at some point after midnight and before morning (v. 15).

- Verses 2, 4-6: Samuel's main duties were caretaking of the temple of the Lord and assisting Eli. He likely slept in an adjoining room to the temple of the LORD and within hearing range of Eli who was "lying down in his own place" (3:2). Samuel hears a voice calling to him which he mistakes as Eli's voice. He did not yet know the LORD so he did not expect to hear God.
  - Verse 7: Samuel "did not yet know the LORD." This is one key to understanding the chapter. [What might be the significance of this narrative "aside"?](#)
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- Verses 8-9: After Samuel's third misguided visit, Eli discerns that God must be speaking to Samuel. Only after Eli explains that the voice could be the LORD's does Samuel recognize the LORD speaking to him. [What role do we Christians have in helping seekers perceive and understand the LORD and his invitation to follow, know and love God in Jesus Christ?](#)
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- Verses 10-14: Samuel's vision recaps the lengthy rejection of Eli, sons and their household, as given by the "man of God" from 2:27-34. [What might be the reason\(s\) or purpose\(s\) behind Samuel's vision? For Samuel? For Eli and his sons? For Israel \(2:35-36\)?](#)
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- Verses 15-18: Eli acquiesces and resigns himself to God's plenary judgment and curse upon his household for the dereliction of fatherly (Eli) and priestly duties (father and sons). As consequence of God's judgment (2:27-34; 3:10-14) and seen by chapter's end (3:19-21), God begins to transfer Israel's prophetic office from Eli's household to

Samuel. What can we infer from Eli's response to God and the curse against his household? What does Eli's behavior reveal about the nature of God?

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- Verses 19-20, 21: Samuel is confirmed as prophet by God's presence and grace (to speak and act effectively), and by acceptance from all of God's people. The last part is evidenced by the mention of tribes of Dan in the north and Beersheba in the south, which is a literary device known as synecdoche (the whole of *Israel* represented by *tribal parts* of the whole).
  - Verse 21: "and the Lord **appeared again** at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD" (emphasis mine). Before the calling of Samuel, there was no person among the tribes fit to receive and interpret the visions of the Lord. This verse makes clear that the revealing of God's Word to Samuel by vision indeed signals the renewal of God's prophetic activity among his people. God will not leave himself without a witness among his people (Acts 14:17). **In what ways might God be speaking to you (us) today? By God's activity in our lives, what might we infer about God's goodness and love for us?**
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### **III. DISCUSSION: "Knowing" God is the distinctive**

Compare and contrast between Samuel and Eli. There are few/no visions prior Samuel's calling (3:1) because no one among the tribes knows God, not even the priest Eli stationed at the temple of the Lord. Samuel's vision signals the the Lord's re-establishment of a righteous and faithful priest at the temple of the LORD, through whom God reveals his Word for his people.

- The Lord speaks three times to Samuel (3:4-8). None of these are intelligible to Samuel because he "did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him" (3:7). The LORD speaks to Samuel a fourth time, "calling as at other [previous] times" (3:10), but this time Samuel comprehends because the LORD has revealed himself and his Word to Samuel directly, and indirectly through the help God directs Eli to provide.

- Eli raises Samuel, presumably in similar ways to Hophni and Phineas who were thoroughly depraved and recalcitrant. Despite the similar upbringing, Samuel remained uncorrupted and steadfast to his office and its duties. Samuel honored the Lord, and so God honored Samuel (2: 30). He also exemplified Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instructions.” Also compare with Parable of the Talents (Matthew 5:25:23).
- Despite his lack of effectiveness, Eli knows the LORD and his ways. Eli recognizes a characteristic three-fold manner by which God addresses his servants. Eli accepts the vision to be authentic and from God, even as it confirms the sinfulness of his sons and his inability as father to address their failings.