

Worship Material
Being open to God
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 2nd June

Begin with opening prayer

Open our minds, O God;
open our hearts, O Christ;
open our souls, O Spirit;
that we might hear your call afresh,
respond with enthusiasm and commitment,
working together to build your kingdom,
to your praise and glory.

Amen.

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10,(11-20)

Bible notes

The desolate state of Israel is highlighted at the beginning of this chapter: the word of the Lord was rare. By the end, the word of the Lord is abundant through the prophetic ministry of Samuel, and Israel is back on course as a people in close relationship with their God.

What caused this turn to the good? This story is set in the old temple at Shiloh, where the Lord chose to speak to the boy Samuel. In the first place, Samuel's inexperience meant that he did not realise this. Eli, the old, disgraced priest, played a key role in helping him to respond to the Lord. The previous chapter (2:27-36) recounted the words of an unnamed prophet who pronounced God's doom on Eli and his sons for corruption, and Eli's poor sight (v.2) symbolises his failure to recognise the responsibilities of his role. Despite this, he gave Samuel the insight to respond appropriately to God.

The repeated visits to Eli highlight Samuel's uncritical enthusiasm to obey the old priest's call, and Eli's dismissal would have been confusing for him. The boy's life as a prophet began with equally enthusiastic acceptance of the Lord's call – other prophets showed greater reluctance (see Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 1:6). When Samuel realised that he was hearing the word of the Lord, he named himself as 'your servant'. Yet he quickly discovered the challenges of his new role and the ways in which it would change his relationship with Eli. The Lord's ear-tingling word focused on the disaster coming upon Eli, and Samuel was

afraid to pass this on (v.15). As a young boy, dependent on Eli for his place in the temple, he was vulnerable to Eli's anger. He did not yet have the trust in God's faithfulness that would allow him to take risks in proclaiming the Lord's word. Again, it was Eli's encouragement that gave him the confidence to speak out, and Eli found the resources to accept God's hard words to him, coming from one he called 'my son'. Samuel was no longer the child Hannah had left in the temple; he was on the way to becoming the prophet and king-maker God intended him to be.

Prayer

Lord God, we thank you for speaking to Samuel;
and for speaking to us.

We thank you for the Elis in our lives; how they point us to God and listen even when the message is uncomfortable.

Thank you for each one of us here in church today; as we are open to you and each other, we can do great things in your name.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Go in the name of the Lord
to your homes, your neighbours, your communities.

Go and make a difference.

Raise up those who are disheartened.

Tell others about the risen Christ.

Visit those who are lonely,

and may your heart and mind be open

to receive all that God gives to you and asks of you.

Amen.