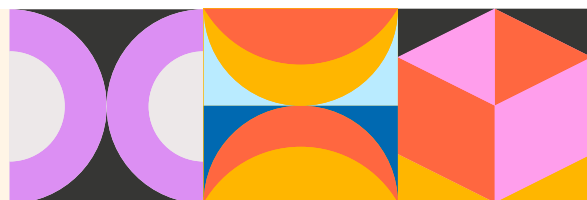
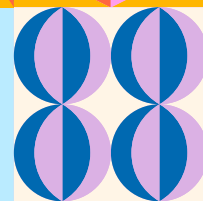


# Answering & Following the Call



## 1 Samuel 3 & 4



### Key Bible Texts

1 Samuel 3 & 4

### Key Bible Verse(s)

“And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.” (1 Samuel 3:10)

“And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.” (1 Samuel 4:3)

## Background to the Study

Samuel started his ministry under Eli's guidance. This was a dark time in the history of the Tabernacle worship. Eli was the high priest, but he did nothing to restrain the behaviours of his two sons, even though he knew that they were desecrating the Tabernacle. Weak leadership often leads to moral decay as evidenced in the lives of Eli's sons and the people of Israel, who also worshipped idols at this time. Most seemed uninterested in God or His messages to them. Ch 3 v. 7 says, “Samuel did not yet know the Lord.” This means he did not yet have the experience of receiving God's Word. When God called, Samuel did not recognize that he was hearing the voice of God. After hearing his name called for the third time and running to Eli, Eli understood that something great was happening and helped shape Samuel's answer for when God called again. Eli was 98 years old at this time and almost blind. He lived in a room next to the sanctuary. Samuel is thought to have been about 12 years old when the Lord called him. He slept near where the Lamp and the Ark of God were kept. The Lamp in the sanctuary was supposed to burn continually, not just during the night, and it was Samuel's job to see that it stayed lit. Because of this, as well as Samuel's ministry in the Tabernacle, there was still a divine presence in Israel. It is interesting to note that God chose to tell Samuel His message, rather than the high priest. Eli then had to seek God's message from the child, Samuel. The phrase in verse 20, “all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba,” referred to the widespread reputation that Samuel was developing. Dan was the farthest north of the

provinces, while Beer-sheba was the southernmost territory, thus giving a visual of the far-reaching effects Samuel had in the land.

The Ark of the Covenant, in which Israel had placed their trust, was a beautifully constructed box that Moses had built following God's instructions. The Ark was constructed of a wood called eron (in Hebrew), but more commonly known as acacia. It measured five spans; a span being the distance between the tip of the thumb and the tip of the little finger fully extended; generally accepted to be nine inches. The breadth and height were three spans each. A lid was attached with gold hinges. Two golden rings were attached to each of the longer boards and passed through the entire box. Gilt bars passed along each board through the rings, to enable the priests to carry it on their shoulders. On the lid were two images, which were called cherubims. The entire Ark was overlaid inside and out with pure gold so the wood was not seen. The things that God wanted kept in the Ark were: the two tables of stone upon which the Ten Commandments were written, Aaron's rod that budded, and shewbread. God had told Samuel about the impending demise of Eli and his two evil sons. As Hophni and Phinehas retrieved the Ark and went forward in battle, they were fulfilling the very words God had spoken to Samuel – that He would bring down Eli's house and the iniquity would not be purged either with sacrifice or offering. Eli, his two sons, and his daughter-in-law all died that day. Generally, Israel's enemies were the aggressors, determined to defeat them before anything was started. But this was one of the times Israel used their initiative and went out against the enemy. Ebenezer was about three miles east of Aphek, where the Philistines were camped.

## A TESTIMONY FROM OUR DAY

*My two youngest daughters enjoy using the computer to talk online with their friends. Whenever a call comes on our phone line and my daughters are using the Internet, the name and number of who is calling pops up on the computer screen. They have the choice at this time to accept the call and get offline, to answer it, or to ignore the call and continue talking with their friends. Often, from what I have heard, they choose not to answer the phone. When confronted about this, they will usually say that they did not know the caller. The screen had told them the caller's name was "unavailable." In today's text, Samuel did not know what the call of God sounded like nor "was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him". Still, he answered, running to Eli the priest when he heard his name called, thinking that Eli had called him. As we see in Ch. 3 v. 19, Samuel grew and the Lord was with him because he responded to God's call. In the world today, God calls Christians to be His messengers. Maybe they will not hear an audible voice as Samuel did, but their calling is just as real. Some may be called to preach or to minister to the sick. Others may be called to share their testimony with a neighbour or relative. Some may be called to give their time to writing a message of salvation and hope to those in need. Regretfully, some choose to ignore God's call. They may rationalize that they want to do something different or less demanding. As a result, they miss out on the wonderful blessings the Lord wanted to give them. Because of their disobedience, they also put themselves in grave danger of missing Heaven and eternal life. Like Samuel, we, too, can have the reputation among those who know us that we are the Lord's. As we endeavour to hear the Lord's voice in this noisy world, He will be faithful to guide our lives and to make us a blessing to those around us. May we always listen for the Lord's voice and be quick to answer, no matter what His message is. As we heed God's call, others may feel inspired to follow our example. Many souls could be won for God's kingdom as a result of our decision. Let's each be a "Samuel" today, listening and answering God's call, telling the world there is salvation and eternal life through the Saviour of the world.*

*A while back, my mother gave me a letter she had copied more than fifty years ago. It was called, "Our Saviour's Letter." Some of its contents stated that if the commandments were observed, many blessings would be received. If a woman in childbirth had a copy of this letter, she would safely deliver her child. Any seagoing vessel having a copy of this letter on board would not be lost. The original writer of the letter stated that it had been written by our Blessed Lord Jesus and had been found under a stone eighteen miles from Jerusalem, sixty-eight years after His crucifixion. I was told that over the years, this letter had been kept as a good luck letter, and my mother was told that if this letter were kept in the house, there was no danger of the house burning. It was just a piece of paper with words written on it, and it had no power at all. Similarly, I have heard of others carrying a New Testament in a shirt pocket for good luck. While keeping a Bible close by is good, unless it is read and practised it will not keep individuals safe or bring good fortune. True security is not in possessing a letter or even a Bible; true security is in having faith in the living God to provide, protect, and bless our lives. The Children of Israel had been defeated by the Philistines, and in the process had lost four thousand men. This loss was due to Israel's disobedience to God. Instead of searching their hearts and confessing their sins, the elders believed that if they had the Ark of the Covenant in their possession, it would save them from the enemy. They were merely attempting to use God to accomplish their purpose. To move the Ark from one location to another, it had to be carried upon the shoulders of four priests. Eli's two wicked sons were sent to fetch the Ark from Shiloh and bring it to their battlefield. God will not be used to fulfil the selfish purposes of sinful people. The Children of Israel were looking to the Ark of*

*the Covenant to save them like people trusting good-luck charms. Possessing a symbol of God does not ensure His presence or power. Needless to say, their faith in the Ark was misplaced. They lost thirty thousand footmen, and the enemy captured the Ark. God requires obedience, submission, and purity of heart. A “good luck” letter will not stop a vessel from breaking apart in rough seas. Neither did the Ark of the Covenant prevent God from pronouncing judgment upon sins. If we are covered by the Blood of Jesus Christ, we can fully trust in God for daily victories.*

## A Closer Look

### Question 1

What was young Samuel’s response to God’s call and what can we learn from his example? 1 Samuel 3:1-10

### Question 2

Why did Eli respond with acceptance and offer no excuses when Samuel told him what the Lord had said?

### Question 3

How might the Lord call us today? Is it in a different way than He called Samuel?

### Question 4

In this portion of text, we find the nation of Israel attacked by a familiar enemy, the Philistines. According to 1 Samuel 4:1-11, what was wrong with Israel’s approach? What can we learn from this?

### Question 5

Hannah, Samuel’s mother, is a great example of God’s blessing extending to others through one person’s obedience. Conversely, what tragic events do we see in 1 Samuel 4, which were a result of the priests’ sins and Israel’s disobedience?

### Question 6

Share a specific instance in your life that caused you to have confidence in God.

## Take Home

Many times it may seem easier to ignore God’s message and continue with what we are doing or “sleep” through it. We may ignore a phone call once in a while, a call to dinner because we are working, or a call to do something we don’t have time for, but let’s always keep our hearts tuned for the call of God! In addition to this, a person who has his heart covered by Jesus’ Blood has the greatest protection afforded to mankind. Such a person does not need a good luck charm.