

# Samuel Grew Up 'In Favour Both With the Lord and With Men'

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the importance of honoring God and listening to His voice, as exemplified by Samuel's life and ministry.*

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 1:11, 1 Samuel 2:26-27, 1 Samuel 2:30, 1 Samuel 3:10, 1 Samuel 3:18, Luke 1:46

**Topics:** "Godly Parenting", "Obedience To God"

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## Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the powerful story of Hannah's prayer for a child, highlighting her selfless vow to dedicate her son to the Lord, shifting the focus from her need to God's need. Through Hannah's example, we learn the importance of honoring our commitments to God and raising children in the fear of the Lord. The contrast between Samuel's godly upbringing and Eli's failure to discipline his immoral sons serves as a lesson on the impact of godly parenting. Samuel's attentive listening to God's voice and his boldness in delivering God's message to Eli demonstrate the importance of being alert and obedient to God's leading.

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## Transcript

Hannah had prayed to the Lord for many years for a child. Finally she made a vow saying, "Lord, If You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give me a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life" (1 Sam 1:11). There was a shift in her focus now. At first, she thought only of her own need: "I need a son." Then she began to say, "If I have a son, I'll give him to the Lord, since the Lord has a need as well." When the focus of our prayer shifts from our need to God's need, that's when we begin to get answers to our prayers. The Lord taught us to pray, "Hallowed be Thy name" first of all. When Hannah gave birth to Samuel, she did not forget her promise. She brought her son to the temple and said, "For this boy I prayed. The Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him. So I have also dedicated him to the Lord. As long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord" (1 Sam. 1:27,28). She was never going to take him back. She taught that little boy to kneel down and worship the Lord there. It's wonderful to have a godly mother like that. Then she sang a wonderful song of thanksgiving to the Lord! (1 Sam 2:1-10). It is more than likely that Mary's song of thanksgiving (Lk.1:46-55) was inspired by Hannah's song - for the words are so similar.

Samuel grew up to be a young man who changed the face of Israel through his prophetic ministry - from the chaotic state we see in the book of Judges, to the glorious state under the reign of David. Eli, the

high-priest's sons were worthless, godless men, who had no fear of God (1 Sam 2:12). It was very sad when a leader's children are immoral and godless. The worst part was that Eli permitted them to take part in the ministry in the tabernacle. They would steal from the sacrifices and commit adultery with the women in the temple. And what was Eli's response to all this? He should have called them and told them to get out of the Lord's work immediately. Instead, he told them, "My sons, this is not good what I hear" (v.24). He was a spineless and useless leader. In contrast to those godless men, Samuel grew up "in favour both with the Lord and with men" (1 Samuel 2:26).

God then sent a messenger to Eli and told him that his ministry was finished because he had honoured his sons more than he honoured God (1 Sam 2:27-29). Then we find these beautiful words that God spoke - that we should remember all through our life: "Those who honour Me I will honour, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30). If you honour God, you can be certain that He will honour you.

In the midst of these godless surroundings, Samuel grew up pure. That is an example for all young people who find themselves in godless homes or surroundings. You may be in a church that is full of compromise. But do not allow yourself to be influenced by that. If you can be like Samuel, steadfast in your devotion to the Lord, without being corrupted, God can raise you up to be His voice in that situation, just as Samuel was.

One night, when Samuel was asleep, he heard a voice calling him, "Samuel, Samuel." He thought it was Eli and went to find out. But it wasn't. The voice kept calling Samuel, until Eli told Samuel to ask the Lord to speak to him. "Then the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, 'Samuel, Samuel.' And Samuel said, 'Speak for Thy servant is listening'" (1 Sam 3.10). Here is an attitude that all of us must have, throughout every day, to the Lord's voice: "Speak Lord, Your servant is listening."

God did not give Samuel a warning saying, "Tonight at midnight I am going to come and speak to you." No. Samuel had to be alert at all times. In the Scripture, we see again and again that God would suddenly call His prophets and speak to them. Then for two or three months they would hear nothing. Then again God would speak. So they had to be in a state of alertness at all times. But God speaks only to those who are eager to hear His voice. Your life and ministry can be totally changed if you develop the habit of listening to God, at least from now onwards.

God may speak to you in the middle of the night, or He may speak to you while you are reading His Word or while you are travelling in the bus. He may speak to you through a brother or sister. He may speak to you when you are in the midst of others or when you are alone. There are many ways in which God speaks. But we must always have a listening attitude: "Speak Lord, Your servant is listening." That's what enabled Samuel to grow up to be a prophet of God. When he listened, he could tell others what God told him.

God told Samuel that day, "I am going to judge Eli for his sin." In the morning when Eli called Samuel and asked him, "What did the Lord say to you?" Samuel told him (1 Sam 3:18) everything. Even though it was bad news for Eli, Samuel told him everything. A servant of God must be like that. Even though Eli had been very kind to Samuel, Samuel did not hesitate to tell him, "God said he was going to judge you. Your sons have brought a curse upon themselves, and you did not rebuke them."

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