

From Judges to Kings  
"And a Little Child Shall Lead Them"  
1 & 2 Samuel  
Nov 4, 2007

**BIBLE VERSES** (Red = memory verses)

**OT Lessons: 1 Samuel 3:1-11, 16:10-13** (NRSV)

**3: 1** Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. **2** At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; **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! Samuel!" <sup>f30</sup> and he said, "Here I am!" 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** The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up 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** The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up 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 is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. **10** **Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."** **11** Then the Lord said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.

**16: 10** Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." **11** Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, [David,] but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." **12** He sent and brought [David] in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. **The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one."** **13** Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.

**NT Lesson: Matthew 18:1-6** (NRSV)

**1** At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" **2** He called a child, whom he put among them, **3** and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. **4** **Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.** **5** Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. **6** "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.

**God uses unlikely people to further God's plan – even children!** When God liberated the Israelite nation from Egypt, God expected to be the sole source of protection and sustenance for God's chosen people. But humans are humans, and as God gave them what God promised and brought them into the Promised Land – what we know today as Palestine / Israel – God's people shifted their loyalties to the customs of the people who lived there.

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The neighbors had a practical way of viewing their deities. They preferred deities who did not like humans, but who supposedly accommodated them once they did ritual gestures and sacrifices (many which would XXX rated today), and made their crops grow. In addition, the neighbors had a main dude – a King – to hand out justice in the courts and physically lead them in combat – rather than an absentee God.

After many years battling the Philistines, God's people demanded to be ruled by a king – just like the others on the block. Judges were too passé, and because they were chosen and sanctified by God they were not subject to human intervention and sanction. God finally gave in and first had Samuel, the last of the judges, anoint Saul as king for God's people. As with any human, Saul started out just fine, but then lived up to his human title. Saul disobeyed God's edict, and then refused to own up to his mistake. After a few chances God gave up on Saul, and told Samuel to anoint God's next choice: one of Jesse's sons – but which one? Samuel went chronologically through Jesse's sons, most of whom would have fit human standards for a king, but God kept saying, "No, you have the wrong one. I look at the heart, and not the outside like humans do." Finally, Samuel came to Jesse's youngest son and found the one God was waiting for – a young boy with a good heart. God was appointing a mere boy to be anointed King, too young by human standards; but Samuel understood – he, himself, was called as a young boy to become God's last judge.

This is an important point – while they were still children, God called two boys to mission, and they ended up as two of the most powerful people in the Old Testament. Samuel had been dedicated by his mother to serve God, and as a young boy went to live with the prophet, Eli. At the age of 12, while sleeping in the temple one night, Samuel kept hearing someone call. Three times he thought it was his mentor, Eli, calling him, and woke him up. After the third time, Eli finally understood what was happening and told Samuel, "The next time you hear the voice say, 'Here I Am, Lord, what do you want of me?'" This Samuel did, and the first task God had Samuel do is to speak God's wrath to Eli for letting his own boys get away with horrible things, all in the name of God. Answering God's call can be dangerous – both to the surrounding people and to the person answering God's call! However, Scripture teaches us that God always takes care of those whom God calls, and so God asks us to set aside our fears and answer as Samuel did – "Here I am, Lord, what do you want me to do?!"

As a young boy, David was tasked by God to kill a giant man named Goliath. David understood it would not be David who slew the enemy of God's people, but God by using David's skills. David accomplished his goal by using a tactic unexpected by his enemy – a slingshot. Using a tool used by shepherds, and today by children, David saved his people from a formidable enemy. So, who today is God calling you to stand up to? Who today is the giant God no longer will allow to hurt God's people, and what is your slingshot – a tool wholly unexpected by society, but one that will affect God's will?

However, as wholly pure in heart as David was as a child, as David gained human power and prestige, the power corrupted David. The last straw was David having a man killed (Uriah) just so David could have Uriah's wife (Bathsheba) as his own. But, when God sent David's pastor, Nathan, to confront David, unlike Saul, David understood how he had wounded and dishonored God, and repented fully. Because of David's true trust of God, and his willingness to take responsibility for doing wrong, David did not end up disowned by God as Saul was, but instead was forgiven by God, and became Jesus' ancestor.

God understands we are human. God calls us to rise above our human instincts to put ourselves before others, but still loves us fully and deals with us with God's miraculous grace when we fail. Just as God accused David through the prophet Nathan, and forgave David when he repented, so God also calls us to trust God with a child-like trust, and then own up to our actions that hurt others and God. Through our baptism, God promise to fully forgive us always when we repent and re-trust in God, rather than

ourselves, because of Christ's death on the cross. Only by reading and learning Scriptures are we assured that God always keeps God's promises, even when we as humans fail. In fact, we arrogantly view trusting God as insignificantly easy, but God actually has to gift this trust us because we are incapable of generating it on our own. Thanks be to God that God knows us, loves us, and even provides us the faith to be God's Chosen people through baptism.

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## **A PRAYER for This Week**

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Oh, Most Gracious and Forgiving God,

We think we are so great, so perfect, so full of our own accomplishments, yet we always manage to miss the mark. We are unable to love you fully, we are unable to put others before ourselves 24/7. We know through Scriptures that your punishment for our behavior is death, yet you actually chose to die on the cross in our place so that our sins are forgiven. This is too much to understand, and we pray to you for another mustard seed of faith to trust that this gift truly belongs to us through baptism.

Increase our faith, so that we can trust you have our backs and stop worrying about our life, in order to allow you to turn our focus to be on others. Show us what you have called us to do, and open our hearts and our minds to accept your Word for us today.

In Christ's name and only through your Holy Spirit we pray, Amen.

### **Children Called by God to Lead**

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- ✦ **God called Samuel even while he was in his mother's womb, and God called David while he was working in the fields**
  
- ✦ **God called you through baptism into the priesthood of all believers, and calls you daily to trust God with the faith of a child, repent, and return to God. What is your response?**  
**Can you trust God as a child? *Are you young enough for God to use?***

## Activities & Questions to Ponder

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***Create space and time when family faith dialogue can develop and flourish.***

***The activities suggested below are listed from younger to older, to foster faith activities at home, or in the car, and to help reinforce the week's lesson.***

- ✦ Play games to help your child develop both trust and listening skills. "Peek-a-Boo" helps children learn that not seeing a person does not mean the person does not exist. "Simon Says" helps children develop listening skills, as well as trust when consistent rules are applied to all who play. What other games or activities does your family do that helps to foster trust within your family? Discuss these activities unique to your family with your children, especially about how vital trust is between family members, and within your family especially.
- ✦ Samuel and David were both directly chosen by God to rule God's people, but each had different lives and skills. Samuel was the first child, dedicated to God before he was born, and raised by Eli the priest and judge. David was the last born, chosen by God when he was older, and raised to tend sheep by himself in the fields. Each used his unique skills to help God's people: Samuel used his faith and trust to follow God, even when God wanted him to chastise his beloved mentor; David used his skills honed in the fields to defeat Goliath, who was trying to kill off God's people. Talk to your child about the unique gifts that God has blessed him/her with – what sets them apart from everyone else in the family. Talk to your children, also, about the gifts God has given to you, and how you are using them each day in the job God called and equipped you for to help others.
- ✦ God chose Samuel and David for unique callings. God chooses each of us now through our baptism, and then calls us to unique lives and ministries. Where do you think God is leading you? What makes you unique?
- ✦ Read 1 Samuel 16. Discuss how you think David's older siblings reacted when he was anointed. They knew him all their lives – do you think they thought of him as a king? How does this relate to your life, and how people will react when they realize what God has called you to? Who will have the hardest time accepting you? Read Mark 6:1-6. Who had the hardest time accepting Jesus? Why?



- ✦ What did Jesus mean we could only enter heaven if we changed and became like children? How is this different from how we act today? Does it mean being immature?