

How to Position Yourself to Hear God's Voice, No Matter What Season You're In

This January, our city experienced a huge winter storm, a blizzard that dumped 11 or so inches on our ground, leaving thousands of homes without power for several days. During that time everything seemed so still—silent. It was as though the accumulated snow was a blanket that God had woven and made to cover the earth; made to act as a sound absorber. Schools and businesses shut down, even church services were cancelled. Everything stopped.

I felt like the snow was making a statement, beckoning us—or better stated, prophesying to us, “Will you stop a moment and rest from all your activity? Consider the silence.”

When I was a kid, I learned in science class that seasonal snow is an important part of the earth's climate system, because the snow cover would help to regulate the earth's temperature and provide long-term refreshment for the land. I gazed through the window, watching the snow flurries fall to the earth at heaven's command—dancing to a music I could not hear. It made me long to hear the intangible.

I thought about what I had learned in science all those years ago. I would turn and walk away, returning on the half hour, continuing in amazement as the ground and surrounding trees were blanketed in pure white stillness.

My thoughts raced again. What if the Lord really was prophesying through the snow? What if He was inviting us to take a rest from all the things that make us weary, ministry and work included? “Slow down; come listen in the quiet; allow Me to refresh, reset and regulate the temperature of your life.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (NLT) says that “for everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. ... A time to be quiet and a time to speak.” I know, maybe you thought the Beatles wrote that! But one fascinating thing about seasons is that we don’t get to choose them—they change with or without our permission or approval. And, we never know what they hold—below-freezing temperatures or intense heat.

I would never allow my children to stand at a bus stop in below-freezing temperatures without first preparing and providing for them to do it in a way that would help them stand against the harshness of the season. And I bet you wouldn’t either. No, we would be sure to give instruction: wear your coat, keep your gloves on, wrap your scarf around your neck and mouth, put your boots on and so forth. And we would follow it up with: “Did you hear me? Are you listening?” As a parent, I recall the satisfaction I felt when my own child would respond with, “Yes, I am listening.” All good parents try as best they can and want to be sure they have prepared their children on how to make themselves ready in any season.

There is a story in the Bible where we can read about a spiritual season, a time when things change dramatically in the life of a young boy. We read how he is given instruction on how to prepare himself for the season, a season where he shifts from not knowing God to knowing His voice and walking with Him. I think it is so for all of us—every season we face, we have an opportunity to listen, grow, learn and change and to posture ourselves to hear the Lord’s voice, receive instruction and walk closely with Him.

The complete story can be found in the first book of Samuel.

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days. There was no vision coming forth. ... Then the Lord called to Samuel, and he answered, “Here I am.” He ran to Eli and said, “Here I am,

for you called to me."

And he said, "I did not call. Return, lie down again." And he went and lay down.

The Lord called Samuel again. So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me."

And he answered, "I did not call, my son. Return, lie down again."

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord been revealed to him.

The Lord again called Samuel a third time. So he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me."

Then Eli understood that the Lord was calling to the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down. And it will be, if He calls you, that you will say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant listens.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The Lord came and stood, and He called as at other times, "Samuel, Samuel."

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant listens" (1 Sam. 3:1-10, MEV).

And through his one simple act of obedience, Samuel learned what the voice of God sounded like; and he received a word from God's heart, as God shared with him His thoughts and intentions. Samuel's entire life shifted that night. God imparted to Samuel what was needed for the strength to go forward and to keep going.

The season was changing for Samuel, and the Lord was inviting this young boy to participate and to partner with Him. The Lord used Eli that night to instruct young Samuel on how to posture himself before the Lord with anticipation, waiting for

the Lord to speak, to initiate conversation—silently listening. Samuel had first heard his own name being called out, but it was when his listening was intentional and deliberate and when he obeyed as he had been instructed that everything changed.

This obedience and correct posture set Samuel up to listen for and hear the Lord, to then understand His heart and begin speaking on behalf of the Lord to his nation. He grew in stature and in favor both with the Lord and the people. So much so that none of Samuel's words fell to the ground (1 Sam. 2:26, 3:19).

Over and over throughout the day, as I watched the snow continue to fall, the silence grew louder and louder, as my thoughts continued to trail back to the boy Samuel. I was seeing the parallel between the snow commanding silence and the voice calling to come away and listen.

I may never get to experience having the Lord stand before me in person here in this life, as Samuel did, but one thing is for certain: When I choose to sit silently before the Lord, everything changes; for *it is in resting in Him that we are saved and in quietness and confidence that we receive strength* (see Isa. 30:15). This is a truth that, if allowed, will blanket and cover us in a way that can never be uncovered or removed.

Let's be purposeful in our silence. Let's not just be silent, thinking that maybe we have heard something in the distance. Samuel heard his name and ran to Eli. He knew one thing for sure: If his name was being called, it was for a purpose. He just needed to learn how to respond. There is a difference between listening in silence and merely being silent. When Samuel was sleeping, he was silent, but he was not intentionally listening. He could hear with his ears but could not discern what was happening.

Similarly, we may read or hear about God and even learn the things that please Him, just as Samuel was being trained to do. But the Scripture is clear that Samuel had not known God, nor had he known His voice, until his focus and attention turned to receive and to listen for what was being said. In knowing God's heart, we learn His will and His ways.

Would that we would do as the young boy Samuel—to wait upon God, purposefully expecting Him to respond when we pray, “Here we are, speak, Lord, for Your servants are listening”; and that in so doing, the same would happen for us—a repositioning would take place, and we would come into a greater understanding of the call of God on our lives. Just as it was for Samuel.

May God grant us all the kind of obedience the boy Samuel walked in, to grow in knowing without a doubt that the Lord is with us—so that when we speak, none of our words fall to the ground.

As for me, I will wait silently before Him. I will listen. I think I heard Him call my name. Can you hear yours? {eoa}

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