

## Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

August 25, 2019

### *What Makes Us Unique*

#### GROWING SMALLER

1 Samuel 3:1-11

#### EXPLORING THE SERMON

- What did you hear?
- What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

#### KEY VERSES

*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. <sup>2</sup>At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" **1 Sam 3***

#### DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

The priest Eli is growing old, and he is the country's closest thing to a leader during this time of spiritual famine in Israel. He is training Samuel to eventually replace him as priest, since Eli's sons have no desire to serve God in this important role. In this passage, Eli could have felt offended that God was speaking to Samuel, and not to him. He likely felt that God had ceased reaching out to him since his sons had rejected their inheritance of the priesthood. Listening and praying on behalf of others requires an authenticity, as we see between Eli and Samuel. ***Just as God used Eli to help Samuel listen to God, who in your life has helped you listen to God?***

We see throughout scripture that practices of solitude, community, and service are equally necessary for positioning our lives to hear God's call. When God speaks to us during times of solitude such as prayer and scripture, we are reminded of his unchanging word and constant availability to us. ***Why do you think solitude alone is not enough to experience God's call to us?***

In the context of community, we have the privilege of seeking out the greatest good that God has in store for each of us. ***How do you think our individualistic culture prevents us from seeking out authentic community? How can defining our own truths lead us to spiritual lives that will never challenge us or lead us to new insights?***

Receiving insights through community does not require us to be spiritual experts, but a commitment and willingness to reveal all parts of our lives – not just the good parts. ***How have you seen God work through authenticity within a group? Do you have a group of people now with whom you can be your real self?***

Though our lives are increasingly fuller, with more opportunities than ever, we are not necessarily becoming more content. This fullness eventually leads to frustration and the feeling of not doing anything particularly well. ***How can you help your life grow smaller, not broader, as we enter into this new season?***

***Heavenly Father, thank you for the reassurance that in community, we belong to each other and to You. Thank you for the support and love of those with whom you have called to be our community. Help us to seek ways for our lives to become smaller and richer, as we listen for how you will speak to us when we gather together. Amen.***