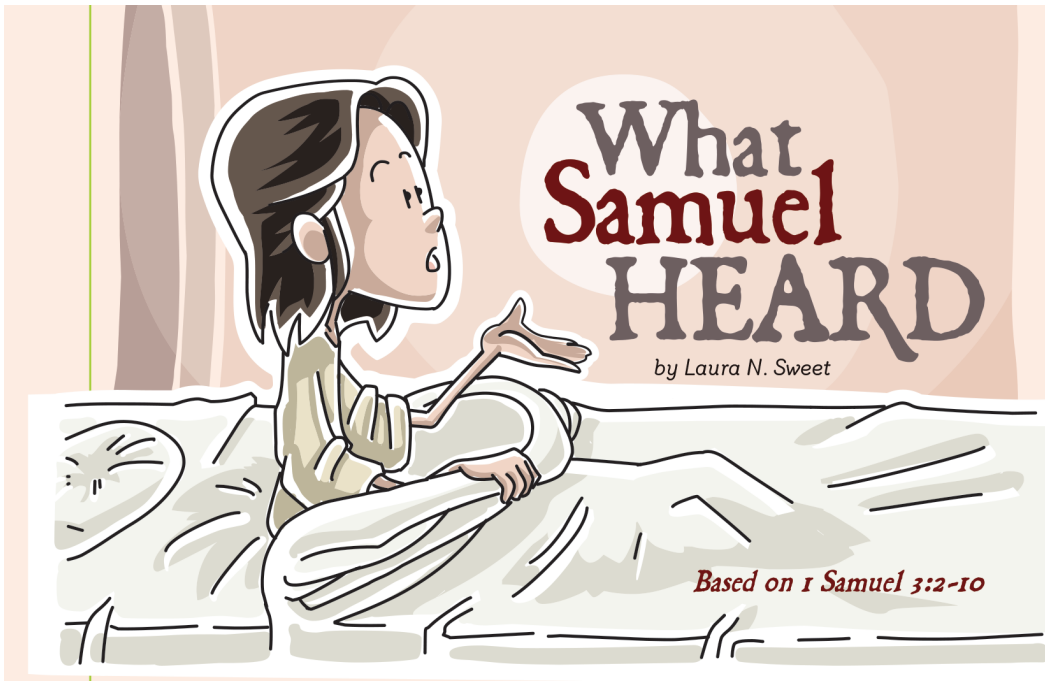


RISING GENERATIONS

THE UPPER ROOM



Samuel was ready for bed after a busy day. Since he was a young child, Samuel had served in the tabernacle—the large tent where God’s people worshipped. It was his job to help the priest Eli with his daily work in the tabernacle. Eli was getting older and was nearly blind. As the days went by, he needed more and more help from Samuel.

Samuel loved the Lord, and he enjoyed his work. But it felt good to settle into bed after a busy day. He was just about to close his eyes when he heard a voice calling his name:

“Samuel!”

I wonder what Eli wants, Samuel thought as he crawled out of bed. Perhaps we forgot to take care of something today. Or maybe Eli’s sick! He hurried to Eli’s bed. “Here

I am,” he said. “You called me.”

But Eli said, “Go back to bed, Samuel. I didn’t call you.”

That’s strange, Samuel thought. He shrugged and headed back to his bed. But he had no sooner pulled his blanket back up when he heard the voice again:

“Samuel!”

The voice sounded urgent. Samuel didn’t know what to think. Again he went to Eli.

“Here I am,” he said again. “You called me!”

Eli turned over and looked at Samuel. *What is going on?* he wondered. He said kindly, “My son, I did not call. Go back, and lie down.”

Samuel sighed and left Eli’s room. But now Eli was thinking, *What could the boy have possibly heard?*

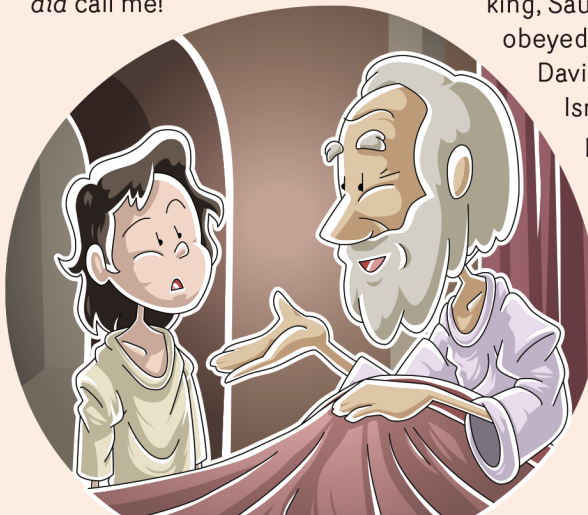
Eli knew that Samuel was honest and would never make up a story. He was special in so many ways. Could it be God's voice Samuel was hearing? It had been a long time since God had spoken to the people through a prophet. Had God chosen Samuel as a prophet? Was it God trying to speak to Samuel?

Samuel was confused, too. He was positive he had heard his name, but Eli insisted that he hadn't called. There was no one else in the tabernacle! Was Eli playing some kind of game with him?

Once again, Samuel settled into his bed. Once again, the insistent voice called out:

"Samuel!"

Samuel returned to Eli's room with a determined look on his face. "Here I am, Eli," he announced, "because you *did* call me!"



Eli sat up. Now he knew the truth. It was God calling Samuel. "This time, Samuel," he said, "go back to bed. If the voice calls again, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"

Samuel went back to his bed and waited. Was it really possible that God was calling to him? Once again, he heard: "Samuel!"

"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening,"

Samuel replied, just as Eli told him to do.

The Lord did have a message for Samuel—about things that would soon happen in Eli's family and in the nation of Israel. Samuel was still just a boy, but God was calling him to be a prophet and deliver God's message.

This was just the first time that Samuel heard God's voice. Samuel grew up to be a mighty prophet. He served Israel's first king, Saul. Later, when Saul disobeyed God, Samuel anointed David to be the next king of Israel. Samuel was God's prophet until he died as a very old man.

But it all began with the boy Samuel learning to listen to God and answering, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." ■