

Celebration of Discipline 12: GUIDANCE

1. **REMEMBERING** Share a time in your life when you felt strongly God was guiding you to do something. What was it?
2. **REFLECTING** Why were you convinced God was leading? If not, did you become convinced later?
3. **DISCOVERING** Read 1Samuel 3:1-18. Eli is an older priest whose days are numbered. Samuel is a boy who eventually becomes one of Israel's great prophets.

- What are challenges to hearing, recognizing, and responding to God's voice in this story?

The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. One night, Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. 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. Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So, he went and lay down.

Again, the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So, Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.' So, Samuel went and lay down in his place. The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

And the Lord said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. At that time, I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'"

Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the Lord. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son." Samuel answered, "Here I am." "What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you." So, Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him.

4. **CONNECTING** What adjustments would you need to make in order to overcome your own challenges to hearing, recognizing, and responding to God's voice?
5. **RESPONDING** What would you be willing to do this week to make progress in this area? Here are some suggestions or come up with your own. Check those you're willing to try:

- Ask God to direct you where to read in Scripture each day
- Begin each reading of Scripture by asking God to speak to you through your reading
- Listen for God's voice as you hear yourself describe to others what you've been reading in his Word
- Listen for what the Spirit may be saying to you through other people
- Pay attention to thoughts and feelings you have while engaging in God's work or any works of service
- Ask your small group to seek God's wisdom in an area where you need guidance, and to share it with you
- Write down any impressions, thoughts, or inclinations you have and share them with a spiritual friend
- Spend time in prayer making your requests known to God, and then listen in silence for his answers
- I will...

We are usually surrounded by so much inner and outer noise that it is hard to hear our God when he is speaking to us.

- Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New*