

As I took on the challenge of writing my first book last year, I enveloped myself in the many call stories of the Bible. What I found is that they were all so different. What I found is that most of the people God called to serve were not trained or ready, but with God’s help they were able to move forward and accept God’s calling upon their lives. Today, like the disciples, we have been called to “come and see” what Christ has for us in the year 2021.

As we heed Christ’s invitation, we also celebrate the call stories of Samuel from the Old Testament and Andrew and Peter from the New Testament. While these calls from God were very different, we see that God calls us in community.

In Psalm 139, we are reminded that God our creator formed us and knows us. There is nowhere that we can go that God is not. So, when God calls us to do something, God is not making a mistake.

Sometimes in our lives it is easy to feel like we are an imposter and maybe God meant to call someone else for “such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). And yet, the Holy Spirit affirms for us what God has called us to do.

In 1 Samuel we see that Samuel didn’t realize he was being called by God and he needed a mentor to tell him how to hear God’s voice.

It has always been interesting to me that Samuel was unable to decipher the voice of God. I mean you think he would have received faith by osmosis through all the prayers and tears of his mother Hannah, who wanted to have a child so badly.

Through the faith of his mother, he was surrendered to the church as she fulfilled her promise to God. As a young boy, Samuel was shaped by the traditions and liturgy of the church. He was a priest from the line of Levi and took part in making ritualistic sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people of God.¹

Samuel’s mentor Eli knew God’s voice. He may have been blind, but his deep relationship with God allowed him to recognize what was happening with Samuel.

At first, Samuel thought the voice belonged to Eli. Who else would it be? I mean Eli was the only person there with him in the room and sometimes don’t our mentors voices sound like the voice of God? They are the people in our lives that can help us discern what God is calling us to do. This was an amazing moment in the life of Samuel and the people of God, the moment that Samuel would hear and respond to God voice.

Samuel was being molded to become a prophet for this important moment in time. Scripture tells us that during that time there had been a lack of visions and commentary tells us that “Samuel has no basis on which to recognize the Lord’s summons.”² Also it was only Samuel who was hearing the voice of God and not Eli so Eli could only respond to Samuel’s behavior.

I think this is where mentors get all the credit. They are our spiritual bystanders who can name that God is working within us and through us. The truth is we all need someone in our lives who can help us recognize the voice of God. Whether it is a pastor, friend, or family member, we seek out affirmation from others as we move forward into what God is calling us to do.

This is why we are **called in community**. God’s calling upon our lives is not insular. This call exudes from within us even when we are trying to hide them from ourselves and others. So often we try to run away from God’s calling upon our lives, but God is relentless and continues to pursue us to call us to serve and make disciples.

Call is affirmed in community. We are always called to be on the lookout for how God is moving and then voice that movement to others, encouraging them to use their gifts to serve.

Affirming the call of another person also means that we must create room within our lives for some endings. Commentary also shares that this passage of Scripture “is a story of endings.”³ Life as we know it cannot be the same when we live and breathe in the kingdom of God on earth.

We must sacrifice our time to recognize the gifts of others. To sit with them, to pray with them, to help them discern next steps. When we mentor other people, we surrender to God’s will for our lives. Our call is reaffirmed as we see the excitement and joy of another responding to their call.

We are all called to have a mentor and be a mentor. We have a mentor because like Samuel throughout our lives we will continue to need others to help us further discern what God is calling us to do.

We are called to be a mentor like Eli, because in so doing, we are taking part of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Eli knew that his time being the priest was ending, but he was invited to be part of this new beginning, this new thing that God was doing to bring about redemption in the world through Samuel.

We see in the New Testament that John the Baptist was a mentor for many. Jesus' baptism greatly impacted John the Baptist and gave him even more passion to share the good news of Jesus Christ. As John stood there one day telling anyone who would listen about Jesus, two of his disciples took notice and wanted to know more. So, they followed Jesus and he turned to them and said: “What are you looking for?”⁴ What a great question from Jesus.

We are all looking for something aren't we? Whether it is acceptance, a way forward, peace, joy, or love, we are all on a journey. Andrew and Peter recognized that they had come across someone special, and they felt it. In their spirit they already felt that they needed to follow this person, so they asked Jesus where he was staying to which Jesus responded: “Come and see.”⁵

This was not simply an invitation to see the accommodations of Jesus Christ, but a call to discipleship. Then the most amazing thing happened, they listened to Jesus's invitation and followed him.

Right before “The Great Commission” we hear the words “come and see” again. This time they are not uttered by Jesus, but by an angel of the Lord who showed the women who came to the tomb that Jesus was not there. Every day Christ calls us to come and see the ministry to which we have been called to do, but sometimes we do not heed Christ's invitation. We make excuses and say, “Maybe later Lord.”

Sometimes we can't let go of distractions due to our own personal agendas or the sad events in the world, and we stop looking for Jesus Christ. Sometimes we feel like we are not ready to answer God's call. Other times it is pride or fear that stop us from answering God's call. The same Peter who heeded Christ's call to “come and see” was the one who denied him three times in his greatest time of need, but God was not done with Peter. Peter claimed his call on the day of Pentecost when he preached a powerful sermon and over 3,000 people were baptized.⁶

Just as the disciples waited 50 days for the coming of the Holy Spirit, we also must wait for guidance from the Holy Spirit about our next steps on this journey of discernment. We must realize that God cannot be put in a box and that God does not answer us on our timeline. Be patient, know that discerning God's call on your life may take some time. Be determined as you also will need to put in the time, the work, the study, and prayers as you continue to answer God's call on your life.

Know that God’s call can change over time. Be open the infinite possibilities of where God may call you to serve and find people who support and celebrate your call. In the meantime, look for what God is already doing in your life. Be in mission and ministry where you are.

God also calls us to this new life through surrender. This is our life song: God calls, we surrender, and God works through us for God’s glory. The disciples surrendered their livelihoods, being with family, the comforts of their homes, their pride, their whole selves to the work of Christ. Are you ready to take a step of faith and surrender your whole life to God?

It is scary, isn’t it? To cut it all loose. I still have butterflies of anxiety in my belly when God calls me to do something new, and yet this is what God does. God continues to call us out of our comfort zones to sing “a new song” all for God’s glory.⁷

Answering God’s calling upon your life can be scary, but it is also freeing. It is a chance to move forward into God’s preferred future for us individually and for us all as a community of faith.

Church, the good news of our lives today is that God’s call frees us for joyful obedience, to be the hands and feet of Christ.

How is Jesus calling you to come and see? Is it over and over again like the call of Samuel? Is it through a mentor who sees God working in your life like Eli? Or is it more direct like Peter and Andrew’s experience?

Through our baptism, God is calling all of us to serve. Christ is calling you to come and see. You are invited leave behind your fear, your anxiety, your past, your preconceptions, your failures, perhaps even your plans, and walk confidently into the future to do God’s work. God is with you. God has been with you. God will be with you. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Endnotes

¹ <https://overviewbible.com/facts-prophet-samuel/>

² New Interpreter’s Biblical Commentary. Vol 2. Abingdon Press: Nashville, TN. 1998. P. 992.

³ Ibid, P. 994.

⁴ John 1:38, NRSV.

⁵ John 1:39, NRSV.

⁶ Acts 2:41, NRSV.

⁷ Psalm 96, NRSV.