

1 Leadership Retreat

Pass our handout

Read 1 Samuel 2:12-4:1 use the NLT

A. ABSENCE OF GOD'S WORD TO HIS PEOPLE (3:1)

1 Sam 3:1b "Word of the Lord rare, not many visions (NIV)." 3 things happening here

- God was not speaking (his messages were rare)[What would cause God to be silent?]
- No one was hearing from God
- What Word of God was given was not broadly known

1 Sam 2:27-28 (a people called by God that do not hear Him)

Special Revealing Vs 27 – God reveals himself to Eli's ancestor's Aaron

Special Position Vs 28a – God chose Eli's Ancestor (Aaron's line) to be his priests (note "my priest")

Special Task Vs 28b – God chose them to care for and oversee ministry, lead people in worship of God

Special Blessings Vs 28c – Priests received a portion of God's offering (eat meat).

So God gave Eli and his ancestors these 4 special things but Eli, nor any of his family line was hearing from God. The very specific people God had ordained, raised up, given a mission and task to, and were blessed of God for it, were not hearing from God. God was not speaking to them. This is a very serious thing – a deep and dark thing that should trouble your souls because this is not just history.

Special Revelation – God reveals himself to man through his son Jesus Christ to begin building his church

Special Position – God chooses leaders to be his messengers (apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers)

Special Task – God chose them to care for and oversee a very sacred thing, the mission, his people)

Special Blessings – There is a special place in heaven for leaders (those who sacrifice much for the Lord)

So God gave leaders of his church 4 special things, how many leaders are hearing from God? The very specific people God has ordained, raised up, given a mission and task to and are blessed of God for it, are they hearing from God or is his message to them rare? Leaders, if you are not hearing from God, this a deep and dark thing that should trouble your souls.

Danger of not hearing from God as a leader

Prov 29:18 - Where there is no vision, the people perish: Literally, where there is no *Word of God, revelation, divine guidance*) people run spiritually amuck, it is spiritual anarchy

Because you are all leaders: (because of a title, role, position, influence) All of you have a part in shaping the future of our faith community, our neighborhoods and our world. As leaders if you do not hear from God, spiritually anarchy will reign. Your influence impacts people, God's church and the unfolding of his mission. If you are not hearing from God as a leader then how are you leading, from where is your influence originating from? Where there is no message from God, people will fall into spiritual anarchy. The only way you can lead well is if you are hearing from God.

Q. Can't people hear from God directly? They don't really need a leader to hear from God?

Yes – they can hear from God directly BUT this does not mean they don't need a leader

- + God ordains leaders (Gifting, Paul appointing Leaders, Jesus and disciples)
- + Leaders are responsible to oversee or care for God's people (1 Peter 5:2)
- + Leaders are responsible for teaching God's truth and leading people on in the mission with Jesus. Like a commander leading an army, an army will scatter where there is no leader; soldiers will do what seems best without a leader.

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Q. What do you mean by hearing from God?

- How do you lead? What things do you do? How do you know what to teach? How do you know who to invest in? How do you navigate circumstances that are out of your control? – Hopefully you pray about these things and God tells you.
 - + Whispers, impressions, God guides leaders.
 - + There are dry times in every leader's life where God seems silent (I am not talking about this)
 - + Most likely you will hear from God about things you have submitted to him in prayer.

Q. I don't think I have heard from God as a leader, why?

- You do not take things to God in prayer (key to establishment & expansion of church)
- you are not listening for God or are listening to something or someone else (lead by feelings, jump from one thing to the next.)
- You are too busy entertaining the desires of the flesh
- You are living in sin (unaddressed sin issues)
- You do not believe God actually speaks
- You do not believe He cares about your specific problems

In our midst (in the very walls where we worship) there are men and women begging to know the Word of God. I know because I have met with them and even wept in spirit for them. They want to be disciples and led but they don't know where to turn even in the midst of God's people. But it doesn't stop there because we have a community where the Word of God is not broadly known. Some have heard bits and pieces, rumors perhaps that God has done something awesome through a certain Jesus Christ but they know little more than that.

Leaders must we rise up and be adamant that in our day, the Word of Lord will not be rare. Leader, you must hear from God. I pray that God will not allow any leader to remain in a position of influence if they are not hearing from him. Your Job as a leader is too great for you to do. You have to hear from God to lead well. Leaders, when you don't hear from God, others don't hear from God and people perish (there is spiritual anarchy, people run spiritually amuck). Today you will have time to slow down and listen to God. You will have time to talk to God and hear him.

B. ELI'S APATHY, DISOBEDIENCE AND UNREPENTANT HEART (3:2)

- Eli was blind (3:2, 4:15, 4:18 mentions he's fat)

Q. Why does scripture tell us that Eli was almost blind or that he was fat? Does his blindness or weight make a difference in the story?

A. **Messages (Visions) from the Lord were rare**, next verse, **Eli is almost blind**. The author is making a huge statement by telling us Eli is blind. His blindness and fatness describes his spiritual condition also:

- He doesn't see the Lord or His word anymore, consequently God's Word is not known
- He is apathetic
- He shows contempt for the position God has given him.

The author clearly wants us to see Eli's spiritual blindness and apathy. But Eli probably was not always apathetic though he had been for a long time; long enough that people noticed God was not speaking to Him, that he was spiritually blind and fat. Yet Eli is not totally blind as of 3:2, God has one more important task for him (3: 8b-9). God uses Eli to instruct Samuel.

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Primary importance for understanding Eli's spiritual blindness and Fatness is its impact on God's people.

Sins of Eli (The sins of a leader)

1 Sam 2:17,22	Though aware of sin, he would not deal with it (As a leader it is your responsibility to deal with sin)
1 Sam 2:29a	He treated the Lord's offering (gifts, resources, time) with contempt. Are God's special things (our task, calling, his people) little things to us.
1 Sam 2:29b, 30b	He honored his sons above the Lord; He became fat on God's blessings
1 Sam 2: 12-13	He had no respect for the duties and office God had ordained, nor for the people of God.

= In Chapter 2 we get a glimpse at Eli's leadership and character

= In Chapter 2 we see how God was going to deal with Eli's sin (God reaffirms that in Ch. 3)

Eli gives a glimpse at what happens when leaders become apathetic and or complacent?

= They just go through the motions (Eli held the title and did the duties but was in sin)

= They become self focused (Eli stop ministering to others and became fat)

= They lose sight of God's purpose for them (Eli scorned the duties God had charged him with)

= They are unwilling to make necessary sacrifices (Eli would not deal with son's sin)

= They become disobedient (Eli, gave more glory to his sons than to God)

As we see, it doesn't look pretty when a leader fails to lead. It is disaster when a leader no longer hears from God, nor seeks to. An apathetic leader is a cancer.

Q. How does a leader keep away from apathy? Apathy, is one of many fiery arrow of Satan

Eph 6:16-17 "In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

Faith = not just belief but trust

- It seems like we don't have to trust God for much and this is dangerous.

-Those who trust God for little will find it hard to deflect the arrows of Satan

A. To avoid apathy Leaders need to understand

- What is at stake if they don't lead well. They must grasp the magnitude of their role

- The church is the epicenter of God's work in declaring truth and establishing his kingdom. Church is not a place or a religious institution; it's much more than that. Jesus did not die for a religion, institution or building.

- They must depend on God: They have to live on their knees.

Leaders recognize their need for God, even in things they can do well

Leaders ask God for things beyond themselves and trust him for it

Leaders seek God to go before them in every facet of ministry

Leaders ask for God's direction

Leaders confess their sins, never losing sight of God's forgiveness and grace

Leaders live in biblical community (iron sharpens iron, no man is an island, rope of three strands, don't forsake gathering of selves, Jesus call to be one)

If you lead alone you are in great danger, you have no one protecting your back.

D. DIVINE WORD OF GOD TO SAMUEL (3:10-15)

God had warned Eli and Eli didn't repent. Now God was giving his message to Samuel. The first thing God does is share with Samuel what he will do among his people that will make all their "ears tingle." This divine Word that God shared with Samuel was the start of a new day for Israel. For in the day's of Eli the Lord of the Word was rare, but no longer for God has raised up to himself a new leader who will proclaim his Word.

Some of you are Samuel's and God is just waiting for you to respond. He has been whispering and he is just waiting for you to listen. Don't fear or let anything hold you back but take what God is giving you and lead.

- C. ELI STILL WANTS TO KNOW GOD'S TRUTH (3:16-18)

Eli was warned by God (2:27-34) about his sin and the sin of his sons but he didn't seem to care much. There was no real repentance or change. Yet, when God spoke he was eager to hear. What does he say to Samuel (vs 17) "May God deal with you ever so severely if you hide anything from me."

Why would Eli be so eager to hear God's Word when he wasn't obeying it? I think in one sense, we all want to hear from God if he speaks. Often times though when we hear from God, if we don't like what he says we ignore His Word or dismiss it. In Eli's case he was curious for sure. But was it just curiosity that made him say such strong words to Samuel, "May God deal with ever so severely if you hide anything from me." It is likely that Eli still wanted the recognition of a leader. He wanted to be the one who could say I heard from God. I am still in the know. Yet when he heard God's message from Eli what does he do. He responds again with no repentance or change of heart.

There are many that will use God's Word for their own devices. They use His Word as a platform for recognition, power, authority. Such leaders will be judged strictly by God. They are like the leaders of whom Jesus said in Matt 18:6 "it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." Such leader care not for God's flock nor for God's glory. Their mission is their own and is not the one Jesus Christ called us to.

- B. SAMUEL'S GROWTH IN GOD (3:19)

- "let none of his words fall to the ground" All that Samuel spoke God blessed, His Words did not fall on closed ears.
- Samuel's word was as that of the Lord's (9:6), every word came true.
- Everyone knew that He was a prophet (God's messenger)

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The most important sentence in this verse is this:

“The Lord was with Samuel.” The Lord has also promised to be with you leader. This means there is no challenge or obstacle that you will face alone.

Rom 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

1 John 4:4-5 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

By the way, your personal lives are not disconnected from your leadership. As your personal life goes so shall your leadership? They may be disconnected for a while but they will catch up with each other. This is why scripture says that if a man can't manage his own household, how can he lead in God's household.

- A. RETURN OF GOD'S WORD TO HIS PEOPLE (3:19B-4:1)

- “Samuel's words went out to all the people of Israel (NLT)

This is the crux of everything. For we began with a crisis statement, “The Word of the Lord was rare.” But now we end with a statement we can rejoice in, “And Samuel's Word came to all Israel.”

When a leader hears from God there is Spiritual revival. When a leader proclaims and lives the Word of God there is Spiritual Renewal. I hope you see leaders from God's Word, that the tale of two leaders is meant to teach us something. The author wants us to know this very important truth that God's Word returned to Israel through Samuel. May God's Word come through you. May you hear God often and lead well, for this will result in:

the body of Christ being built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
Eph 4:12-13

- A. Absence of God's Word to his people (3:1)
- B. Eli's apathy, disobedience and unrepentant heart (3:2)
- C. Divine call to Samuel (3:3-9)
- D. Divine Word of God to Samuel (3:10-15)
- C. Eli still wants to know God's truth (3:16-18)
- B. Samuel's growth in God (3:19)
- A. Return of God's Word to his people (3:19b-4:1)

7 Leadership Retreat

3 hours with God

We will be having lunch shortly and then you will have 3 hrs of alone time to spend with God. This is whole retreat was planned with this 3 hours in mind.

You are in varying degrees and in various ways, spiritual leaders in Jesus' church. This means you lead others on toward God's agenda for their lives. You cannot do that well without deep dependence on God. You cannot lead well unless you spend time with your Father to talk with hear from Him. As God's word challenged us this morning, some of you have business to attend to with your heavenly father.

- Some of you are going to spend your time in deep repentance. Perhaps you may not even intend to but as you spend time with God he will open your heart and show you things about yourself that will make you tremble. Oh how I pray God will bring those to repentance who need to repent.

- Some of you are going to spend your time trying to hear God's whisper. Perhaps you don't think God will speak to you but after you have slowed down and are tired of trying on your own strength you will rest in Him and hear his whisper so clear you will look around to see if anyone nearby is hearing what you are.

- Some of you will spend much of your time just pouring out your heart to God. You have recognized that you have not been praying about things, about family matters and relationships or about your leadership and how God is calling you to lead next.

For most of us, it will take a significant portion of time to slow down and quiet our hearts. You will likely wrestle a bit with just slowing down and being in God's presence.

With 3 hours of time, just you and God you will likely spend time in:

Prayer Bible Reading – Lectio Divina Reflection

Some of you may find out that you are incredibly weary and you will:

Nap (hopefully not for three hours)

There are no expectations here. It is just you and God. When you get alone with God, if you find it awkward and uncomfortably silent, here are some things to help you start communicating with the lover of your soul.

Pass out Lecto Divina Cards: Use a popular passage such as Prov. 3:5-6
On back of cards will be suggestions for how to use their time with God.

Finally, some of you may desire to hear from God. You will want to use this time to truly be with your heavenly Father but you will come away feeling as though he was strangely absent. That is okay to. Do not put pressure on yourself nor think yourself unloved. God speaks to whom he will speak, and he is silent to whom he is silent. His timing is perfect. This is not a contest to see who can experience God in the most remarkable way.

Lunch and then back at 3:15.