

HEARING THINGS

Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy.

—1 Samuel 3:8

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever thought you heard someone calling your name, and it turned out to be nothing? Maybe you were out on the playground, and all the kids were making a lot of noise as they played together and yelled to one another. Suddenly you heard what sounded like somebody calling you. So you went running up to your parent or teacher and asked them what they wanted, and they just gave you a funny look and said, "I didn't call you!" Then you walked away scratching your head.

Sometimes, as a Christian, you might wonder whether God is calling to you and trying to tell you something. It can take time to learn how to recognize his voice. The more you grow spiritually, and the longer you have lived with God in your life, the easier it is to tell when he is speaking to you. Meanwhile, you can always get some help figuring it out!

Today's devotion is based on 1 Samuel 3:8, which says, "Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy." The devotion is called "Hearing Things."

DEVOTION

In the Bahamas, Megan and her parents were walking along a beach. "What's that?" Megan said, spotting something on the sand. Running ahead, she picked it up. "Look, I found a conch shell!" The big brown shell had a spiky top. Inside, it was smooth and pink. As her parents caught up, Megan held it to her ear. "I can hear the ocean!"

She handed the shell to her mom, who listened. "I can too."

Megan's dad smiled. "I hate to burst your bubble, guys, but that's not the ocean you hear. It's all the sounds around us, resonating inside the shell." Just then they heard a large wave crash on the shore, and he said, "Now, *that's* the ocean!"

If you think God is speaking to you, ask older, godly people to help you make sure. They'll help you compare what you think God is saying with what the Bible says. That's important! God will never tell you something different from what he's said in the Bible. For example, he won't tell you to cheat or steal. A wise person can also help you understand God's message, when God really is talking to you.

PEOPLE IN BIBLE TIMES

When God spoke to Samuel, the boy thought Eli was calling him! Eli was the old priest Samuel lived with in the tabernacle. He helped Samuel understand that God was talking to him. (See 1 Samuel 3:1–18.)

QUESTIONS

1. There are three main ways in which God speaks to people today. Can you guess what they are?

The answers are: through the Bible, through other Christians, and directly to you through the Holy Spirit.

2. What are some things you can do to get better at recognizing when God is speaking to you and what he is trying to tell you?

Some answers are: read your Bible regularly so you know what God has said; pray often to practice listening with your spirit and give God a chance to speak to you; learn from older, wiser believers about how to hear God's voice more clearly.

3. The thing that most often prevents people from hearing God speak is sin. What should you do if you have this problem?

The answer is: confess the sin you've been committing, stop doing it, and live your life in such a way that you'll stay close to God. That way, you can hear him better!

4. Jesus said that he is the Good Shepherd who calls his sheep and leads them. Do you remember what he said his sheep would do?

The answer is, they would recognize his voice and follow him (John 10:1–16).

5. How does this promise give you confidence that, as a believer in Christ, you'll be able to recognize his voice when he speaks to you?

6. How do you know when it's the Devil or one of his demons who is speaking to you?

Some answers include: you won't recognize their voice, because they are strangers, not the Good Shepherd (John 10:5); they will tempt you to disobey God's commands in the Bible.

7. What should you do when that happens?

Some answers are: using the authority that Jesus gave all of his followers, tell them, "Go away and leave me alone, in Jesus' name!"; pray and ask God to help you tune in to his voice instead; don't do anything they are tempting you to do!