

Introduction:

- Although God calls all Christians to serve Him, He calls some to serve Him in vocational ministry. In 1 Samuel 3, we see a picture of how He does so.

Point #1: The Lord initiates the call (vv. 1-8)

- This passage is clear that the Lord was the one who called Samuel (vv. 4, 6, 8, & 10), and He is the one who still calls gospel ministers and missionaries today.
- Eli stated clearly that he was *not* the one who called Samuel (vv. 5, 6). Similarly, no one other than the Lord can initiate the call today. That means:
 - A denominational entity (state convention or local association) can't initiate the call
 - A well-meaning pastor or family member can't initiate the call
 - An individual can't call themselves
- Not only is the Lord the one who initiates the call, but He is also persistent in doing so, calling out to Samuel four times in ten verses (vv. 4, 6, 8, & 10)
- Application:
 - God has been calling His people to serve Him in ministry leadership for centuries. Perhaps He is calling you. If He is, He will be persistent. He will not give up easily. He will give you a growing and inescapable desire to teach and preach His Word.

Point #2: The church recognizes the call (vv. 8-9)

- After Samuel came to him the third time, the priest Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy (v. 8). He then helped Samuel process the call (v. 9).
- Similarly, as God calls individuals to vocational ministry today, He uses the church and its leaders to help recognize, evaluate, and process that call.
 - Side note: If an individual expresses a call to ministry but is not connected to a local church, there is sufficient reason to question the individual's "calling."
- Application:
 - Although God is the one who initiates the call, the church will recognize that calling in an individual's life. Has anyone asked if you are called to ministry? Do they recognize that you have the qualifications and gifts to serve in ministry leadership?

Point #3: The called answer the call (vv. 10, 19-20)

- When God called Samuel, Eli couldn't answer the call for him. Only Samuel could do so.
- Samuel listened to the Lord, and all Israel eventually recognized that he was a confirmed prophet of the Lord (v. 20). 1 Samuel 4:1 states, "Samuel's words came to all Israel," thus showing that he answered the call of God on his life.
- Application:
 - If God is calling you to ministry leadership, you're the only one who can answer that call.
 - The first step of obedience is to answer God's call. Will you do so today?