

15.03 God Speaks to Samuel (1 Samuel 2:12–17, 22–36; 3:1–21)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *holy*: separated unto God
- *godly*: living as God would have one live

Scripture: (ESV)

1 Samuel 2:12 Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the Lord. 13 The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest’s servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, 14 and he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. All that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest’s servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, “Give meat for the priest to roast, for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw.” 16 And if the man said to him, “Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish,” he would say, “No, you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force.” 17 Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the Lord, for the men treated the offering of the Lord with contempt. . . .

22 Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 23 And he said to them, “Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. 24 No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the Lord spreading abroad. 25 If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?” But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the Lord to put them to death.

26 Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and also with man.

27 And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh? 28 Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel. 29 Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?’ 30 Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever,’ but now the Lord declares: ‘Far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. 31 Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father’s house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. 32 Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. 33 The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. 34 And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day. 35 And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. 36 And everyone who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and shall say, Please put me in one of the priests’ places, that I may eat a morsel of bread.’”

3:1 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.

2 At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. 3 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.

4 Then the Lord called Samuel, and he said, “Here I am!” 5 and ran to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down.

6 And the Lord called again, “Samuel!” and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

8 And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. 9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And the Lord came and stood, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears.” 11 Then the Lord said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. 12 On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13 And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. 14 Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.”

15 Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. 16 But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” And he said, “Here I am.” 17 And Eli said, “What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.” 18 So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, “It is the Lord. Let him do what seems good to him.”

19 And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. 20 And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the Lord. 21 And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

Introduction/Review:

Hannah gave her firstborn son, Samuel, to the Lord. He was a servant to the high priest, Eli. He would serve the Lord as long as he lived. That’s what his mother had wanted.

Story:

Ungodly sons

Sad to say, in today’s story, some men whom people would expect to be godly were not godly. Who were they? They were Eli’s sons, priests of Israel. ✓There’s nothing quite so sad as the man of God—preacher, pastor, or missionary—whose children don’t do right. In fact, in the New Testament if a pastor’s kids don’t obey their dad, the Bible says that man should not be a pastor.

Being the priest’s sons and sinning was one thing, but far worse, Eli’s sons were priests themselves. In the Old Testament, a priest handed down his job to his sons. God had commanded His priests, who offered sacrifices to God, to be godly and blameless—to be holy, separated from the world to God. But Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, “did not know the Lord” and were wicked, wicked men. First Samuel 2:17 states, “Their sin was very great before the Lord.” They stole some of the meat from the sacrifices. They broke the seventh commandment. They did not sacrifice animals in the way God said to do it.

How would you like to have a pastor like that—always sinning openly before God and the people? But these wicked men continued to be priests. As a result, the people “abhorred the offering of the Lord” (2:17).

✓They didn’t even want to go to Shiloh [locate] to sacrifice to God.

Rebuke

✓What should Eli have done to Hophni and Phinehas? The answer is that he should have corrected them even though they were grown men. He should not have let them take the sacrifices and act as a priest until they stopped sinning. However, Eli’s scolding was quite gentle: (1) “Why are you doing such things?” (2) “You make the Lord’s people to sin”; (3) “You are sinning against the Lord.” Hophni and Phinehas didn’t pay any attention to Eli’s words.

So God sent a man of God to Eli in order to rebuke him soundly. [Use the visual found below for the following eight points.] The man said, (1) “You honor your sons more than you honor Me. (2) You make yourselves fat with the best offerings of all the people. (By the way, Eli himself was overweight—*very* heavy.) (3) Your family will no longer be priests. (4) In fact, no man among your grandchildren will live to old age: they will die when they are in their strongest time of life. (5) Your family will become poor, even begging for a small piece of silver and a bit of bread. (6) Someone else will take your family’s place, someone who is faithful to God. (7) All your descendants shall die by the sword of men. (8) You will know this all will come to pass because God is giving you a sign: both your sons will die on the same day.”

In this message God included a lesson for us: The Lord says, “I will honor those who honor Me; but those who despise Me I will think of very little” (“lightly esteem”). Matthew Henry stated, “The way to be truly great is to be truly good.” You students are not too young to be truly good. If you choose not to do good, God will not bless you as He blesses the obedient.

Call

One young man who lived in the midst of Hophni and Phineas’s wickedness was working for and obeying the Lord. That young man was Samuel. For about one hundred years (from Gideon 1201 B.C. to Samuel 1103 B.C.), God had not been speaking to people as He had spoken with Gideon and others, but He was about to speak to Samuel. This is how it happened.

Both Eli and Samuel, who apparently ✓had bedrooms close to each other, had gone to bed and were perhaps sleeping.* ✓Suddenly, Samuel heard someone call his name, “Samuel!” Thinking Eli had summoned him, Samuel ran to Eli’s room, saying, “Here I am, for you called me!”

Eli answered, “I didn’t call you; go back to bed.”

Samuel went back to bed but heard his name again: “Samuel!” Thinking Eli had called him again, Samuel ran to Eli’s room, saying again, “Here I am, for you called me!”

Eli answered again, “I didn’t call you; go back to bed.”

A third time Samuel went back to bed and heard his name again: “Samuel!” Thinking Eli had called him a third time, Samuel again ran to Eli’s room, saying, “Here I am, for you called me!”

This third time Eli figured out that God was calling Samuel. He told Samuel to go back to bed, and said, “If the voice calls again, say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.’”

Sure enough, the Lord called Samuel once again. This time Samuel answered, “Speak, for your servant hears you.” Then the Lord gave Samuel a message that included more harsh predictions about Eli and his sons: (1) Their family would be cut down, and (2) their sin could never be purged with sacrifice forever because Hophni and Phineas had made themselves vile and Eli hadn’t stopped them.

What a sober message to hear from God about his teacher-priest! Samuel lay awake all night, thinking about God’s message and fearing to tell Eli such tragic news.

Report

But Eli called Samuel in the morning, and Samuel had to go to him. “Here I am,” he said.

“Tell me everything the Lord told you last night,” demanded Eli. “Don’t hide one bit from me.”

So Samuel told all the sad things that were going to happen to Eli’s family. The Bible doesn’t tell us what was in Eli’s heart when he heard God’s message about him and his sons. One might expect him to be fearful or fretful, but Eli’s response was quite calm: “It is the Lord: let him do what seems good to him.”

Was Eli trusting God? Again, the Bible doesn’t tell us, but it seems as if ✓Eli was more indifferent than concerned or submissive. It’s good to accept God’s punishment, but wouldn’t it have been better for Eli to repent?

These are all sad and heavy thoughts, but 1 Samuel 3 ends on a positive note. In contrast to Hophni and Phineas, Samuel stands out as a man of God. The Bible states that the Lord was with Samuel as he followed God. As he grew, his words became authoritative. All Israel from Dan to Beersheba [locate] knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the Lord. After long years of silence, the Lord was again speaking to His people through Samuel, “for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh [locate] by the word of the Lord.”

*The term *temple* must refer to the tabernacle since the temple had not yet been built. However, the dwelling place of the priests was likely a solid structure. The ESV translation of 1 Samuel 3:3 soundS as if Samuel was actually in the Holy of Holies, where only the high priest could go once a year. Perhaps a better rendering of the verse is “And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep.”

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
Samuel grew “both in stature and in favor with the Lord and also with man” (1 Samuel 2:26). The same nearly exact words are spoken of Jesus: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

Activities:

- Play dough: bed
- Snack: A middle-of-the-night warm milk (or cocoa) and cookie.
- Read other books of this story.
- Have students arrange flannelgraph figures as they retell the story.
- Play act the story.
- Sing this song (altered; copied from mssscrafts.com, a site that now seems to be unavailable):

“Samuel Was a Wee Little Boy” (Tune: Zacchaeus)

Samuel was a wee little boy, a wee little boy was he.
He went to live in the tabernacle; a helper to Eli was he.
He lit the lamps and swept the floors; he did as he was told.
And when he heard, [spoken] “Samuel, Samuel!”
He listened to the Lord; he listened to the Lord.

- Sing “Samuel” by Diana Dow found at <http://www.biblesongsandmore.com/songs/old-testament-songs/samuel-song/>. See a photo of my visual for this song below or on the “Songs” page at teachingthebibletochildren.org. Students love to move Samuel from his bed to Eli.

- Review questions: (Game: If using a flannel board, print the ten ears found below, back with flocked paper or paper towel, and cut out. If using a pocket chart, print on cardstock and cut out. For each correct answer, a student may place an ear on the board or in the pocket chart.)
 1. What were the names of Eli's sons? [Hophni and Phineas.]
 2. Describe the character of Hophni and Phineas. [They were wicked, worthless men who did not know the Lord.]
 3. Give one example of how Hophni and Phineas misused their priestly duties. [They stole some of the meat from the sacrifices; broke the seventh commandment; did not sacrifice animals as God said to do it.]
 4. When Eli scolded Hophni and Phineas, how did they respond? [They didn't pay attention to him.]
 5. Tell one thing the man of God said to Eli when he rebuked him. [(1) You honor your sons more than God. (2) You make yourselves fat with the best offerings of all the people. (3) Your family will no longer be priests. (4) No man among your grandchildren will live to old age. (5) Your family will become poor. (6) Someone who is faithful to God will take your family's place. (7) God's sign that all this will happen is that both Eli's sons will die on the same day.]
 6. What happened when Samuel was in bed? [The Lord called his name.]
 7. What did Samuel do when he heard his name? [Went to Eli, thinking Eli had called him.]
 8. How many times did this happen? [Three times.]
 9. What did Samuel say the fourth time the Lord called him? ["Speak, for your servant hears."]
 10. Even though it was difficult, what did Samuel do when Eli asked what God had told Samuel? [Told him everything.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Psalm 55:17: "Evening, morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice."

Handwork:

- Print enough of the clipart ears below to give each student one pair. Print and cut one printed strip and two short strips found below for each student. Before class, glue (or staple) the short strips to opposite ends of the printed strip. Students will glue the inside of the ears (so that they can stick out) to the Xs on the printed strip. Adjust to fit on a student's head by fastening the strips in back with a paper clip. The photo shows larger ears than our craft, but it gives an idea of the end product. (Photo is from <https://www.abcjesuslovesme.com/ideas/samuel-listens-to-god/>.)

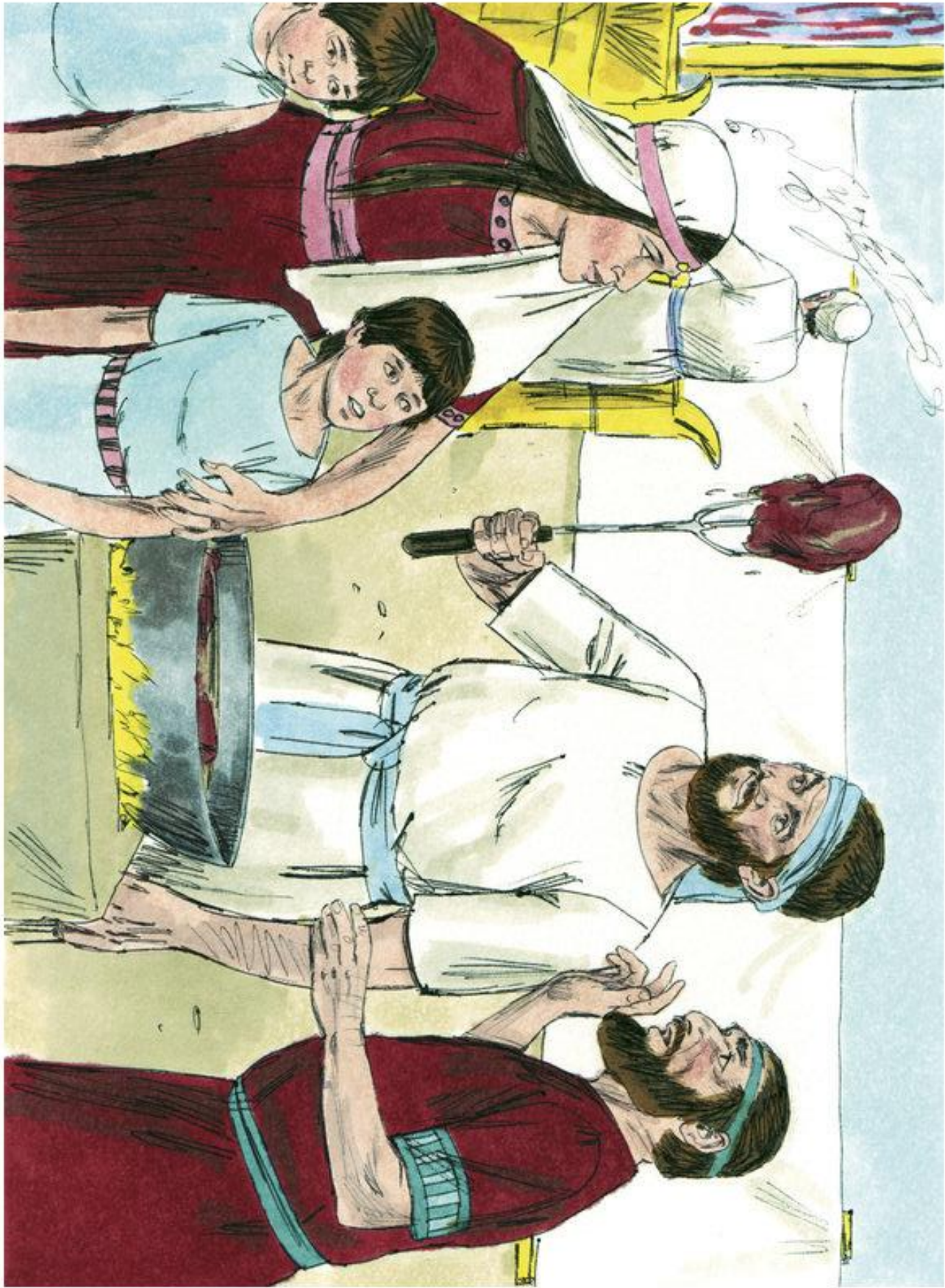


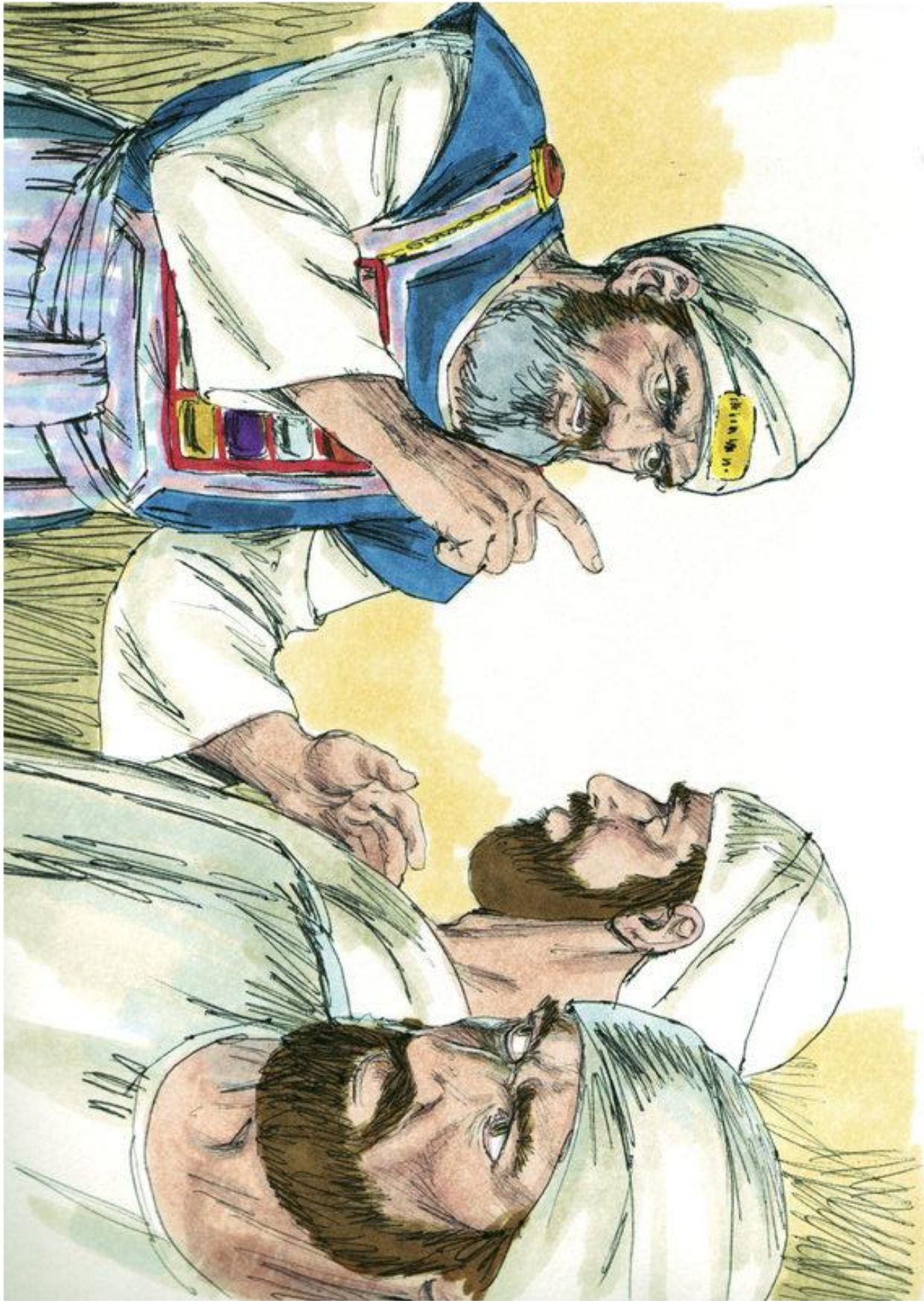
holy

godly

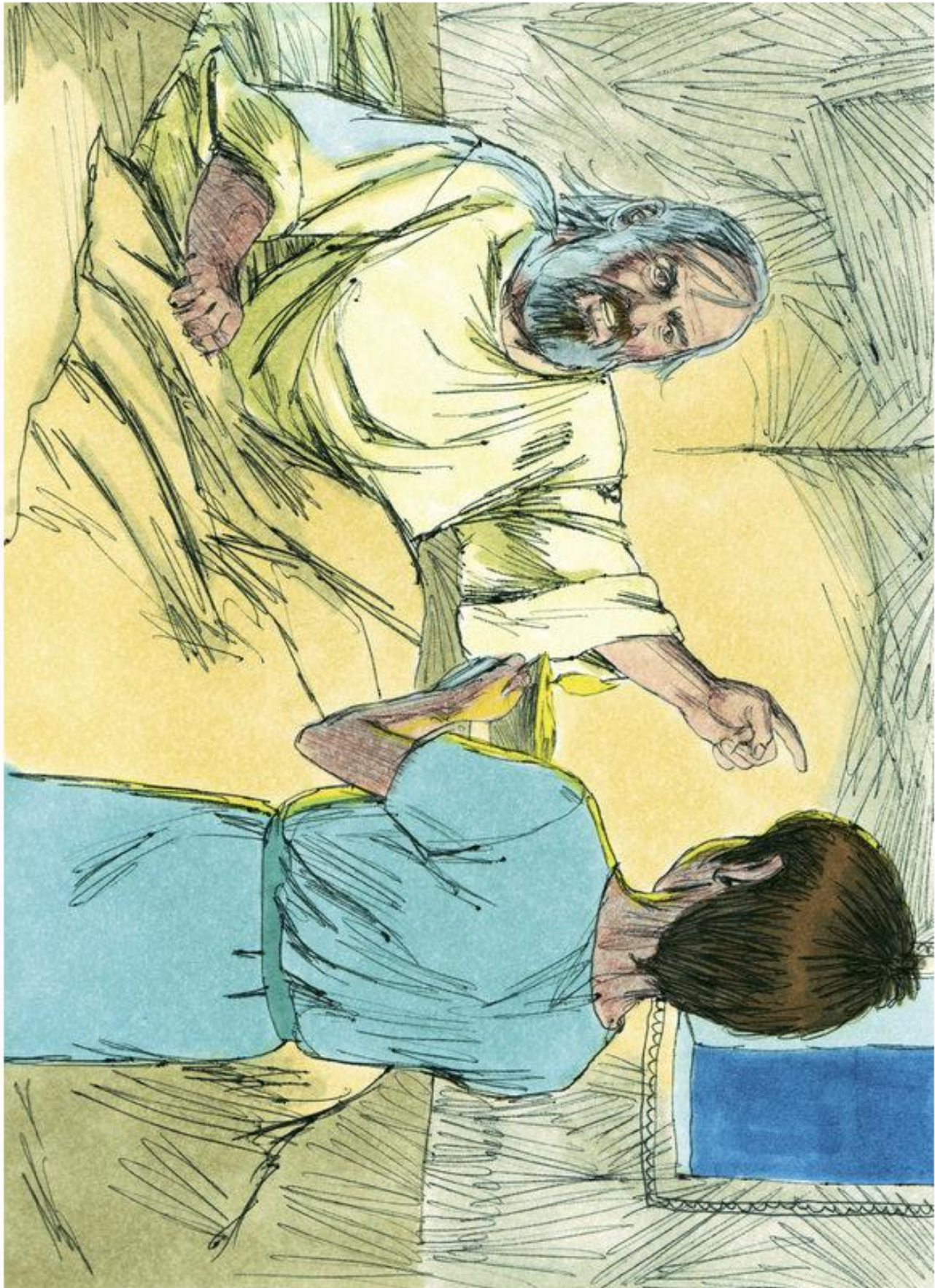
Rebuke of Eli

- (1) You honor your sons more than God.**
- (2) You make yourselves fat with the best offerings of all the people.**
- (3) Your family will no longer be priests.**
- (4) No man among your grandchildren will live to old age.**
- (5) Your family will become poor.**
- (6) Someone who is faithful to God will take your family's place.**
- (7) All your descendants shall die by the sword of men.**
- (8) God's sign that all this will happen is that both your (Eli's) sons will die on the same day.**















There was a boy named
Samuel.
He was asleep in bed.
He did what Eli said.

"Speak, for Your
servant hears You."

"SAMUEL,
ELI, SAMUEL"

"Here I am, Eli."

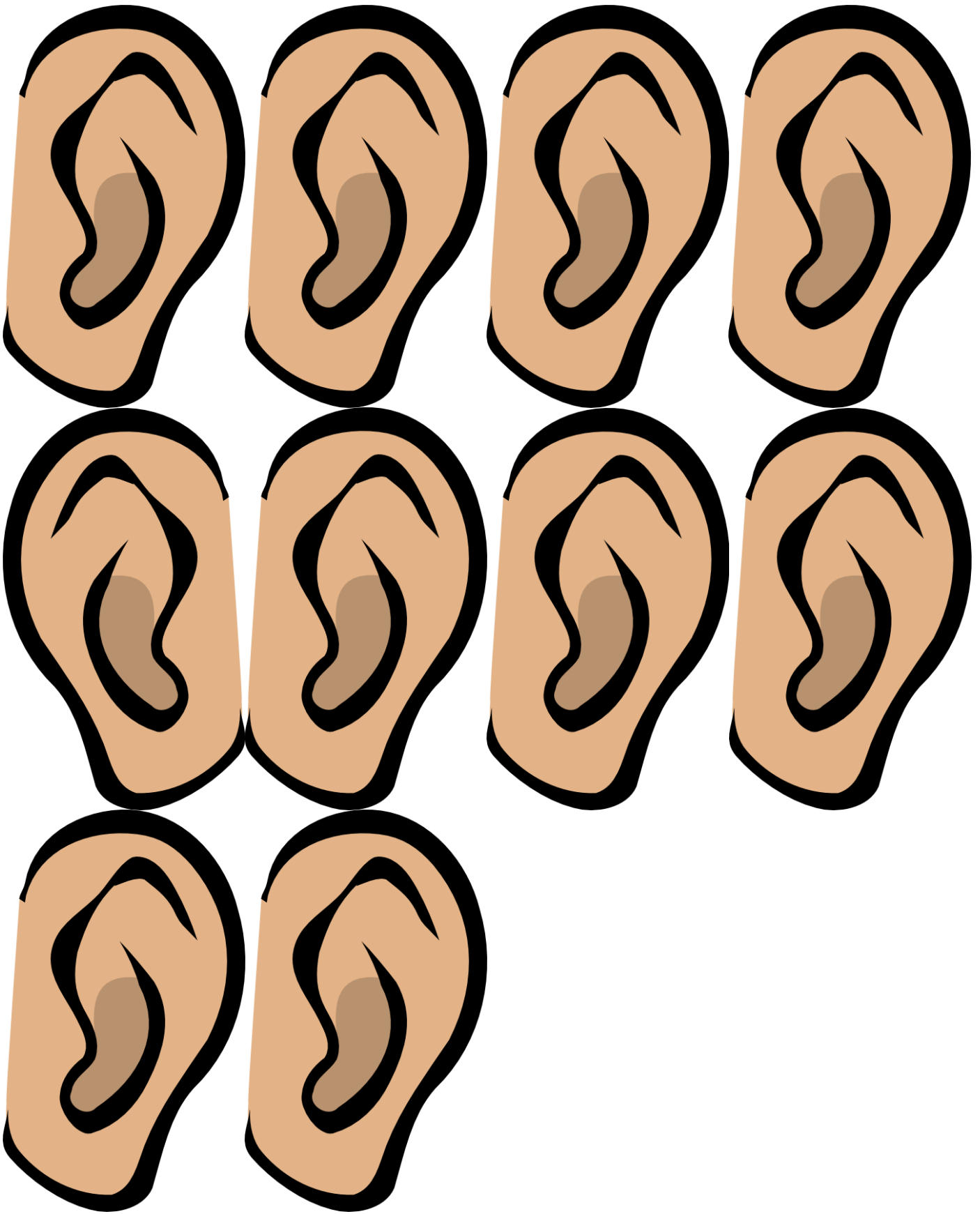
"I did not call you."
"Go back to bed."

"I did not call you. It must
be the Lord."

"If it happens once again,
here's what you must say,
'Speak, Lord, for Your
servant hears You.'"



Cut out Samuel separately. Put sticky tack on the back of Samuel.
Move him from a prone position in his bed to standing before Eli
at the appropriate points in the song.



X “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” X

X “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” X

