

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

Communication is a two-way street. When one person speaks, the audience should listen. To ensure an effective communication, the listener needs to have a proper reception device. It is not just the ears, but also the heart. We know it is not the best time to discuss important things when a man is watching sports, when a lady is watching drama, or when a person is on the phone. Talking about phone, you cannot even make a call if you do not have the right phone. Recently, I was forced to buy a new phone. My carrier informed me that my device would stop working on July 1 because it cannot receive 4G signals. I was dumbfounded, since I just bought the phone last year. It is a relatively new model. I knew it was a software issue. I researched everywhere but could not find a solution. I had no choice but to get a new phone. Being a cheap guy, I always buy used ones. A phone is like our hearts. We cannot get a message correctly unless the communication channel is clear. Besides interacting with people, we have to spend time with God too. We must pay attention to God's voice. When God calls us, He expects an active response. God was about to speak to little Samuel as we come to chapter 3 of the book of 1 Samuel. As a future prophet, Samuel must learn to discern God's voice.

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 接受神的話語 Receive God's Word

Samuel was a person who humbly received God's Word. As he continued to grow, he also increased his love for God. Verse 1 tells us: **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.** By this time Samuel was probably a teenager. He was learning about the duties at the tabernacle from Eli. Samuel's focus was not only on the work, but also for whom he did it. I am sure our attitude will be very different if we truly understand that we do everything for the glory of God. He wants us to be faithful before He makes us successful. Your job may seem tedious. Your classes are perhaps boring. You may not be able to change your circumstance, but you can ask God to change your heart. Pray that God will give you joy every morning when you get up. You can always experience God in exciting ways when you walk closely with Him. During that time, God did not speak much to His people because Israel as a whole was being lukewarm to God. The word "vision" can be understood as prophecies. A phrase like "this is what the Lord says" appear everywhere in the Old Testament. Bible authors were only secretaries who recorded what God told them. Before Samuel's time, Moses was a major spokesperson for God. The Lord gave the Law to His people to learn and obey it. Although they had the written Word of God, they did not receive much inspiration from Him. The Israelites set up the tabernacle to worship God. There were priests to present animal offerings. They had rituals, but they lacked a heart for God. Israel worshipped God plus other idols. People could worship Jehovah at the tabernacle once a year

and bowed down to other deities at other times. Therefore, God stopped speaking when there was no ear to listen and no heart to obey. But Samuel had a different attitude. God called Samuel one night in his sleep. Samuel went to Eli, for he thought it was his teacher's voice. Eli told Samuel that he did not call him, and asked Samuel to go back to bed. God called Samuel again. By the third time, finally Eli realized that it must be God talking. He gave Samuel instructions in verse 9-10: **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."** Samuel responded when God called him the fourth time. God began to speak when there was a faithful listener. Now Samuel experienced the voice of God. In comparison, many believers suffer from hearing loss. Paul describes the problem in 2 Timothy 4:2-4 that: **2 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.** This is perhaps the last book Paul wrote before he died for his faith. He gave some final instructions to his apprentice Timothy, who was a young church pastor at that time. Paul urges Timothy to preach God's Word at any time. He must guide people in the right direction and correct them when they go astray. When people get tired of hearing God's truth, they will crave for false teachings that suit their appetites. It is like weeds will take over if you do not plant something in a barren ground. There are endless well-known speakers today who teach a false gospel. They have programs on the TV or the internet. They say God wants us to be happy, healthy and wealthy. They portray Jesus as a Santa Claus who likes to spoil us with goodies. They preach that since God loves all of us, everyone will end up in heaven. People feel good about themselves as they walk out from those churches. We must discern whether a speaker is explaining God's Word, or he is giving personal opinions from religious psychology. Sadly, many Christians go to a church to look for religious entertainment but not spiritual education. Worship music must be loud and exciting. Sermons should be humorous and not dogmatic. Is your heart ready to receive God's Word every time you come here? Reading the Bible should be like seeing a doctor. God diagnoses our souls and points out things we need to change. Then He prescribes His grace to restore our spiritual health. God will speak to us when we are ready to listen. We call the Bible God's Word for a good reason. God speaks to us through written words as we read a passage. His Word is a timeless truth. We must spend time to know the truth before applying the truth. People often look for some quick solutions before they understand the problems. They turn Christianity into a self-help program. Seminars like five ways to have a successful career or seven secrets to a happy marriage or to nurture children attract many audiences. Many of them are willing to pay high prices to go to Christian concerts. But they show less interest to attend free Bible studies at their churches. Few believers enjoy reading books that talk about how to study the Bible or how to build a closer relationship with God. We should desire after God's wisdom instead of human wisdom. We train our hearts ready to receive God's Word. We can learn from Samuel. We say to God: "Speak, for your servant hears."

## 2. 顯明神的話語 Reveal God's Word

Samuel was ready to receive God's Word. Therefore, God revealed His message to Samuel. The content is in **verse 11-14**. God confirmed the prophecy the man of God spoke to Eli in chapter 2. God decided to judge Eli along with his two sons. There would be no old person in the family. The two young men would die on the same day. No animal sacrifice could cover their sins because they showed contempt to the ritual. God would appoint a man to replace Eli and his descendants as the next priest. People would be shocked about what happened to the family. If God would not spare a priest's family because of their honorable position, then who could be exempted from God's discipline? God sets the same standards for everyone. He shows no regard to what we put on our resumes and business cards. Since Eli did nothing to stop his sons from sinning, God would hold him accountable. Once again, it highlights the important roles of a Christian father. We want to give the best to our children: best food, clothes and education. Does bringing them to the Lord on your list? Do you also give them the best spiritual nourishment? A child is like a lump of clay. You have to shape them while their hearts are still soft. We are fighting against the secular world to redeem the souls of our kids. They will not love God and obey His Word if they do not see you doing the same things. Otherwise, they will become a weekend Christian. Eli sensed that God must be giving an important message to Samuel. When morning came, he urged Samuel to reveal everything God told him. We see Eli's reaction in verse 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."** Eli helplessly accepted the outcome. It was too late to say: "If I had known earlier." God had determined to cast down His judgment on the family. Nothing would stop Him. Contrary to most people think, God is in fact immensely patient toward us. He always waits for sinners to repent. But eventually God will deal with sins. The apostle Peter tells us in 3:9 of his second letter: **The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.** The context is about Jesus' second coming. One day Jesus will return to judge the world. If people do not seek God's forgiveness, then they will have to bear the eternal consequence for their sins. We do not know when Jesus will return. No one can even foresee what will happen tomorrow. If we are not being naive, we must admit that an accident can happen to anyone at any time. Therefore, we need to pray for non-believers that God will open their hearts and save them. Since God had rejected Eli's family, He prepared Samuel as a replacement. We continue our reading in **verse 19-21**. God started a new era with the introduction of the next messenger. The Israelites were aware that Samuel was a true prophet. God appeared to Samuel and He gave him His words. All that Samuel said would come true. People could witness that God was with him. God demands faithfulness from a prophet. He should not be afraid to speak the truth, though it may not be something people like to hear. In the Bible, prophet Jeremiah suffered under the king of Judah because he told the king that the nation would be lost to Babylon. On the contrary, some false prophets kept preaching good news of victory. Eventually, God's discipline came true. But there would still be hope. Those who submitted to God's plan and surrendered to their enemy would live. Though they would be taken to Babylon as captives, God promised to bring them back seventy years later. Even today, we have to tell people the bad news before conveying the

good news. God hates sins but He loves sinners. People must admit that they are sinners before they realize that they need a Savior. Evidently, we need wisdom on how to communicate the message. However, we should never water down the gospel message. The salvation story must be centered on Jesus Christ and His cross. Jesus died for us out of His love, but it was also due to our sins. We should not worry that discussing God's truth will scare newcomers away or bore them to death. We may need to spend extra time to explain some basic concepts to them in a Bible study. After all, they know that this is a church, not a YMCA. If we do not reveal God's truth, then it is no different from a community center. Only God's Word can change people and save their souls. There was a true story about a couple in Germany. Let us just call the husband Ming. He is a Chinese immigrant. His wife, let us just call her Karen, is a Chinese grew up in Germany. Once Karen wanted to buy a Chinese book as a birthday gift for Ming. But the only item she could find was a Chinese Bible. Ming did not appreciate the present because he was a Buddhist. Later he picked up the book and read it anyway because it is written in his mother-tongue. The more Ming explored, the more he was convinced by the truth revealed in the Bible. That upset Karen for she was an atheist. In order to win over her husband, Karen started reading the book too! Then the couple engaged in spiritual debates. In the process, both of them were persuaded by the truth and they eventually became believers. What a neat story that proves God's Word is powerful.

## 結論 CONCLUSION

When God calls us, He expects an active response. God did not speak to the Israelites because they disobeyed God. He did not give His message to Eli and his two sons because they showed contempt to the sacrificial system. But God revealed His Word to young Samuel because he was eager to listen. God will speak to us when we are ready to hear Him. Let me conclude with an interesting story. Two men were walking along a busy street. There were people around them and cars passing by. Suddenly, one man stopped and asked his friend: "There is a cricket chirping in the bushes. Can you hear it?" The second person replied: "What do you mean? It's so noisy everywhere." Then the first man grabbed a coin from his pocket and threw it to the ground. It bounced a few times and made some clanking sound. A few pedestrians turned their heads and tried to look for the coin. The man then said to his friend: "We hear what we listen for." The same is true for us. We hear what we listen for. Patrons waiting in a restaurant for their seats will be eager to have their number called. People in a close relationship long for their lovers to call them. A mother knows her child is calling for her attention from a few crying babies. If we love God, we will love to hear His voice too. God is still calling us. Are you listening? If you are not a Christian, God is calling you to an eternal relationship with Him. Are you ready to commit your life to Jesus? Most of us are believers. God is calling you to submit to Him. Perhaps God wants you to be more serious about your relationship with Him. God wants you to build a habit of daily Bible reading and weekly church attendance. No matter what it is, will you listen to God and follow His instructions?

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

溝通是雙向的過程。當一個人在說話時，聽眾必須留心聽。為了確保有效的溝通，聽眾需要有適合的接收設備。他不只需要用耳朵，還需要用心聆聽。我們都知道，當男士在看球賽、女士在看連續劇或一個人在講電話時，都不是討論重要事情最適當的時候。談到電話，如果你沒有適合的手機，你根本無法打電話。最近，我被迫要買一部新手機。電話公司通知我，我的手機在 7 月 1 日便不管用，因為它無法接收 4G 信號。我很納悶，因為我去年才買那部手機。它是比較新的型號。我知道那是一個軟件的問題。我在網上到處尋索，但卻找不到解決方案。我別無選擇，只好買一部新手機。我這個人很小器，我只會買二手貨。電話就像我們的心。除非溝通渠道暢通，否則我們無法收到正確的信息。除了與別人互動之外，我們也必須花時間與神交流。我們必須注意神的聲音。當神呼召我們時，祂期望我們有積極的回應。當我們來到撒母耳記上第 3 章時，神準備要向小撒母耳說話。作為未來的先知，撒母耳必須學會辨別神的聲音。

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 接受神的話語 Receive God's Word

撒母耳是一個謙卑地接受神話語的人。隨著他不斷長大，他對神的愛也持續增長。第 1 節告訴我們：**童子撒母耳在以利面前事奉耶和華。當那些日子，耶和華的言語稀少，不常有默示。**在這個時候，撒母耳可能已經是個少年人了。他向以利學習在會幕中服事。撒母耳不只是專注於他的工作，他的重點放在為誰而做。如果我們真正明白我們所做的一切都是為了榮耀神，我們的態度會非常不一樣。神要求我們的是忠心，而不是成就。你的工作可能看起來很乏味。你的學習可能挺無聊。你可能無法改變你的環境，但你可以祈求神改變你的心。你每天早上起床時祈求神賜給你喜樂。當你與神緊密同行時，你便能經歷神的同在。在那個時候，神很少向祂的子民說話，因為以色列對神不冷不熱。「默示」這個用詞可以理解為預言。「耶和華如此說」或類似的語句經常出現在舊約中。聖經作者只是記錄神講話的秘書。在撒母耳時代之前，摩西是神的主要代言人。神將律法賜給祂的子民學習和遵從。雖然他們有神的話語，但他們沒有從神那裡得到很多啟示。以色列人設立會幕敬拜神，並且有祭司獻祭。他們有儀式，但他們缺乏對神的心。除了耶和華之外，以色列也敬拜偶像。人們可

以每年到會幕敬拜耶和華一次，其他時候他們向別的神明下拜。因此，當沒有聆聽的耳朵和順服的心之時，神便停止說話。但撒母耳有不同的態度。有一天，神在撒母耳的睡夢中呼喚他。撒母耳便去找以利，因為他以為老師在叫他。以利告訴撒母耳他沒有呼喚他，並叫撒母耳回去睡覺。神再次呼喚撒母耳。到了第三次，以利終於察覺一定是神在說話。他在第 9-10 節給撒母耳指示：**9 因此以利對撒母耳說：「你仍去睡吧；若再呼喚你，你就說：『耶和華啊，請說，僕人敬聽！』」撒母耳就去，仍睡在原處。10 耶和華又來站着，像前三次呼喚說：「撒母耳啊！撒母耳啊！」撒母耳回答說：「請說，僕人敬聽！」**當神第四次呼召他時，撒母耳便向神回應。當有一個忠實的聽眾時，神便開始說話。現在撒母耳體驗到神的聲音。相比之下，很多信徒的聽覺可能出了毛病。保羅在提摩太後書 4:2-4 中如此描述：**2 務要傳道，無論得時不得時，總要專心，並用百般的忍耐、各樣的教訓責備人，警戒人，勸勉人。3 因為時候要到，人必厭煩純正的道理，耳朵發癢，就隨從自己的情慾增添好些師傅，4 並且掩耳不聽真道，偏向荒渺的言語。**這可能是保羅殉道之前寫的最後一卷書。他給徒弟提摩太一些最後的指示。提摩太當時是一位年輕的牧師。保羅提醒提摩太要傳講神的話。他必須引導人們正確的方向，當他們走差時要糾正他們。當人們厭倦神的真理時，他們會找適合自己胃口的虛假教導。就像你如果不在空地上種一些東西，很快雜草便會佔據一樣。今天有很多名講員教導錯誤的福音。你可以在電視或網上找到他們的節目。他們說神希望我們快樂、健康和富有。他們把耶穌描繪成一個喜歡送禮物給人的聖誕老人。他們宣稱，既然神愛所有人，每個人最終都會上天堂。當人們走出那些教會時，他們的心靈都覺得很舒服。我們必須辨別一位講員是在解釋神的話語，還是發表宗教心理學的個人意見。可悲的是，許多基督徒去教會是尋求宗教娛樂而不是屬靈的教導。敬拜的音樂必須吵鬧而使人振奮。信息應該是風趣而不是充滿教條。當你每週來到這裡時，你的心準備好接受神的話語嗎？看聖經應該像看醫生的那樣，神診斷我們靈魂的狀況，並指出我們需要改變的地方。然後祂給予恩典來恢復我們的屬靈健康。當我們準備好聆聽時，神會向我們說話。我們稱聖經為神的話語是有原因的。當我們閱讀一段經文時，神會通過文字對我們說話。祂的話是永恆的真理。在應用真理之前，我們必須花時間明白真理。人們經常在了解問題之前就忙於尋找一些快速的解決方案。他們把基督信仰變成一門自學的課程。人們喜歡參加一些介紹速成方法的研討會，例如五個事業成功的步驟或是七個達致美滿婚姻或教養兒女的秘訣。很多人願意花錢去聽基督徒音樂會，但比較少的人有興趣參加免費的聖經學習班。很少有人喜歡看有關如何學習聖經或如何與神建立更密切關係的書籍。我們應該追求神的智慧，而不是人的智慧。我們必須準備好接受神的話語。我們可以向撒母耳學習。我們對神說：「請說，僕人敬聽！」

## 2. 顯明神的話語 Reveal God's Word

撒母耳準備好接受神的話語。因此，神向撒母耳顯明了祂的話語。信息的內容是在第 11-14 節。神印證了祂的使者在第 2 章對以利所說的預言。神決定審判以利和他的兩個兒子。他的家中不會有老人。兩位年輕人將在同一天去世。任何獻祭都無法贖他們的罪，因為他們藐視儀式。神會揀選別人代替以利和他的後裔成為下一任祭司。人們會對這個家庭發生的事情感到震驚。如果神不饒恕祭司家所犯的罪，那麼誰能免於神的管教呢？神對每個人都有相同的標準。神不在乎我們的履歷表和名片上寫什麼。由於以利沒有干預兒子們的罪，神會追究他的責任。這就再次強調了基督徒父親的重要角色。我們願意給孩子一切最好的：最好的食物、衣服和教育。把他們帶到主的面前有在你的清單上嗎？你是否也給他們最好的屬靈糧食呢？孩子就像一團泥土，你必須趁他們的心還是柔軟的時候去塑造他們。我們不斷與俗世在交戰，贖回我們孩子的靈魂。他們必須看到你的榜樣，否則他們就不會愛神並遵守祂的話語。結果，他們便成為週末的基督徒。以利感覺到神一定在給撒母耳一些重要的信息。天亮時，他催促撒母耳說出神告訴他的一切。我們在第 18 節看到以利的反應：**撒母耳就把一切話都告訴了以利，並沒有隱瞞。以利說：「這是出於耶和華，願他憑自己的意旨而行。」**以利無奈地接受那個結果。他不能說「如果我早點知道的話」，因為已經為時已晚了。神早已決定要審判這個家庭，沒有什麼能攔阻祂。神實際上對我們非常有耐心，祂總是等待罪人悔改，但最終神會對付罪。使徒彼得在他的第二封書信 3:9 告訴我們：**主所應許的尚未成就，有人以為他是耽延，其實不是耽延，乃是寬容你們，不願有一人沉淪，乃願人人都悔改。**這段經文的上下文是關於耶穌的再來。有一天，耶穌會回來審判世界。如果人不尋求神的赦免，那麼他們必須為自己的罪承擔永恆的後果。我們不知道耶穌什麼時候再來，甚至沒有人能預料明天會發生什麼事。如果我們不是過份天真，我們必須承認意外隨時都可能發生在任何人身上。因此，我們需要為非信徒禱告，求神打開他們的心，拯救他們。由於神厭棄了以利一家，祂準備了撒母耳作為下一任的祭司。我們繼續閱讀第 19-21 節。神引入下一位使者開始了一個新時代。以色列人知道撒母耳是一位真正的先知。神向撒母耳顯現，並向他傳達信息。撒母耳所說的話都會應驗，從此可以見證神與他同在。神要求先知要忠心。他們不應該害怕說真話，儘管人們不喜歡聽。在聖經中，先知耶利米在猶大王的手下受苦，因為他告訴王國家將被巴比倫打敗。同時，一些假先知不斷地預言勝利的假消息。最終，神的管教應驗了。但是神仍然賜下盼望。那些順服神的計劃並投降敵人的人會活下來。雖然他們會被俘虜到巴比倫，但神應許會在七十年後把他們帶回來。就算在今天，我們也必須在傳達好消息之前告訴人們壞消息。神恨惡罪，但祂愛罪人。人們必須先承認自己是罪人，然後才意

識到自己需要救主。顯然，我們需要運用智慧來傳達信息。然而，我們不應該沖淡福音的內容。救恩故事的核心必須是耶穌基督和祂的十字架。不錯，耶穌的死顯明祂的愛，但也是因為我們的罪。我們不應該擔心討論神的真理會嚇跑新朋友或使他們覺得反感。我們可能需要花額外的時間在聖經學習中向他們解釋一些基本概念。畢竟，他們知道這是一所教會，而不是健身房。如果我們不顯明神的真理，那麼這裡和社區中心沒有什麼分別。只有神的話語才能改變人，拯救他們的靈魂。有一個真實故事是關於一對住在德國的夫婦。我就稱呼先生做阿明吧。他是華人的移民。他的妻子，姑且叫她凱倫，是在德國長大的華人。有一次凱倫想要買一本中文書送給先生作生日禮物。但她能找到唯一的中文書是聖經。阿明不喜歡那份禮物，因為他是個佛教徒。後來他還是拿起那本書來看，因為它是用他的母語寫的。阿明越去探索，就越相信聖經所顯明的是真理。這讓凱倫很不高興，因為她是個無神論者。為了要和老公辯論其中的內容，凱倫也開始看聖經了！就在辯論的個過程中，他們二人都被真理說服了，最終成為基督徒。這個故事證明了神的話語是大有能力的。

## 結論 CONCLUSION

當神呼召我們時，祂期望我們有積極的回應。神沒有對以色列人說話，因為他們不順服神。祂沒有將祂的信息傳達給以利和祂的兩個兒子，因為他們藐視獻祭的制度。但神對年輕的撒母耳顯明了祂的話語，因為他渴望聆聽。當我們準備好接受神的信息時，祂就會向我們說話。讓我以一個有趣的故事結束。兩個人走在一條繁忙的街道上。周圍有人群，有車子經過。忽然，一個人停下來問他的朋友：「樹叢裡有一隻蟋蟀在叫。你能聽見嗎？」那個人回答：「你是什麼意思？到處都很吵。」然後第一個人從口袋裡拿出一枚硬幣，扔到地上。它彈了幾下，發出叮叮噹噹的聲音。有些路人轉過頭來，到處找那枚硬幣。然後那位男士對他的朋友說：「我們只會聽到我們想要聽到的聲音。」我們也是如此。我們只會聽到我們想要聽到的聲音。在餐廳等待座位的顧客期待服務員喊他們的號碼。在戀愛中的人渴望情人打電話來。母親可以從幾個哭鬧的嬰兒中辨別她的孩子的聲音。如果我們愛神，我們也會喜歡聽到祂的聲音。神今天仍在呼喚我們。你在聽麼？如果你不是基督徒，神正在呼召你與祂建立永恆的關係。你準備好把你的生命交給耶穌了嗎？我們大多數人都是信徒。神呼召你順服祂。也許神希望你認真地重視你與祂的關係。神希望你養成每天閱讀聖經和每週去聚會的習慣。無論是什麼，你願意聆聽神的話，並順從祂的吩咐嗎？