

Reflection: Who's Calling? [1 Samuel 3:1-10](#) [John 1:43-51](#)

We settle down to pray with good intentions, but there are so many calls upon us, so many distractions and obstacles!

Calls to say hello, calls for help, calls to ask for something, to pay for something, calls upon our time and attention which drain and overwhelm.

These obstacles are not new or unique to us in our modern, multi-media, 24-hour on-call world. Look at what happened with the call of Samuel, who would become one of the great priests of God.

In the time of the chief priest Eli (the name, which, ironically, reflects the name of God), worship in the temple had become corrupt. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, "were treating the Lord's offering with contempt" (1 Samuel 2:17) and Eli himself was frail and almost blind. This poor eyesight is a symbol of his poor insight: insight into his sons' appalling behaviour and, more importantly, into God's word. Eli struggles to see and also to hear God: "the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions."



Edward Burne-Jones, detail of 'Samuel' (1873), Vynning Memorial Windows, Christ Cathedral, Oxford.

In our Gospel reading, Nathanael is cynical about Philip's excited call that "we have found the one Moses wrote about". How can anything good come out of some little village in the middle of nowhere?

Thank God for persistence!

For God's insistent call which will not be silenced by our own failings and failures, that continues to call even when we might be cynical and full of doubt.

God calls into lives in all kinds of ways. The young Samuel, who "did not yet know the



Lord", was sensitive to the voice which called him. He didn't know at first who it was, but he was eager and ready to follow. Eli, even in his weakened state, was able to guide Samuel to the threshold of a new relationship with God.

Philip is not deterred by Nathanael's cynicism, but simply says, "Come and

see.” God’s desire works in partnership with humanity in order to share the exciting, life-changing, world-changing news of his love.

Nathanael is amazed that Jesus saw him before he saw Jesus. His question, “How do you know me?” is one which we could reflect on for ages. It is a knowledge which goes beyond our human understanding. It is a knowledge which recognises, loves and gives life to things in ourselves which we do not know.

It is a knowledge which calls out to us in the very depths of our being, and also which calls out in us that which we cannot know for ourselves. In hearing and accepting that call, we are transformed.

So much around us may feel very debilitating, throwing us into disarray, doubt and even cynicism. Yet these accounts of the call of Samuel and Nathanael remind us that whoever we are, however we are feeling, God calls us. Be patient. Just follow that encouragement to “Come and see”, without any expectations or provisos.

And even if we are feeling weak, or perhaps full of bounce and joy, we too have a place in encouraging others to hear God’s call. What an amazing privilege to be participating with God in this way! Remember that your interactions with others matter. We live in relationships with others. You may be the first step in helping someone grow in their faith. So do keep in touch – both with our loving Father God, and with one another.

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