

When God Calls Your Name

[A Story for Children]

When I was in the first grade, there were two of us in class named Susan. All year long, when the teacher said “Susan,” I’d look up, thinking she was talking to me, but half the time I was wrong. “Susan, come to my desk,” she’d say, and both of us would walk to the teacher’s desk. It was awful!

The teacher tried to fix the problem by calling the other girl Susan and calling me Suzie. Now, Suzie is a fine name, but it wasn’t *my* name. I never got used to answering to it. The teacher would call me over and over, “Suzie, Suzie, Suzie,” and I wouldn’t even look up because it wasn’t my name. But when she called “Susan,” meaning the other girl, I always answered. Sometimes the other children in the class would laugh at the mix-up.



There’s a story in the Bible a little like my what happened to me. A young man named Samuel wasn’t confused about *who was being called* (he knew it was him) but about who was *doing the calling*. Let’s see if you can figure it out.

One night long ago, Samuel went to bed, as usual. Samuel grew up in the tabernacle at Shiloh. His mom, Hannah, promised God that if He gave her a son, she would give her son back to God. As soon as Samuel was old enough to eat regular food from the table, his mom brought him to help the elderly priest, Eli. Eli had sons of his own, but they were wicked boys. Eli was glad for Samuel’s help and taught him to serve before the Lord.

When Samuel went to bed on this special night, Eli was sleeping in a room nearby, just as he always did. Suddenly, late in the night, Samuel woke up. He heard someone call his name, “Samuel.” Samuel said, “I am here.” and hurried in to Eli. “Here I am, for you called me.” Samuel said. But Eli said, “I did not call; lie down again.”

Samuel obediently went back to bed, but again, he heard someone call his name. He went back to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” (Have you figured out who was calling Samuel?)

So once again, Samuel went back to bed. And once again, he heard someone call his name. And once again, he hurried in to Eli. But this time, Eli understood that *God* was calling Samuel, and so Eli said, “Go, lie down, and if He calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.’”

So Samuel went back to bed, and waited. Do you think he slept? I doubt it. He must have been trembling at the thought of God speaking to him directly, and wondering what God might say. Sure enough, soon he heard, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears,” just as Eli instructed.

God had bad news for Samuel. He was going to judge Eli for not correcting his wicked sons, and then God was going to punish the sons. Samuel listened carefully to everything God had to say. In fact, Samuel spent the rest of his life listening carefully to God and telling God’s people what He said. Men and women God chose to do this were called prophets. Through the prophets, God told His people to trust Him, to leave wickedness and to be holy. But sadly, just as I didn’t hear when the teacher called me Suzie, the people usually didn’t hear God.

Did you know that God still speaks to people—even children? The Bible says that in times past, God spoke through prophets like Samuel but now He speaks to *all* His people through His Son, Jesus. When we read about Jesus in the Bible, or listen to our pastor preach about Jesus, the Holy Spirit can make those words apply to us.

Do you remember the illustration at the beginning of the story—how I always answered when my name was called, but didn’t hear when the wrong name was called? In a way, the Holy Spirit helps us to hear God’s word with our name attached. When the Bible says, “Trust Jesus,” I might ignore it, as I did when the teacher called me Suzie. But if I’m listening carefully, the Holy Spirit might cause me to understand, “Susan, *you* need to trust Jesus.” God might speak to you through the Bible in the same way.

Let’s be like Samuel. The next time you hear God’s word being taught, pray, “Speak Lord, for your servant hears.” And maybe just like Samuel, you’ll hear what God has to say to you.

Copyright © 2009 Susan Verstraete.

Permission granted for reproduction in exact form. All other uses require written permission. Find more free articles at www.BulletinInserts.org, a ministry of Christian Communicators Worldwide: www.CCWtoday.org