

Here I Am
I Samuel 3:1-10
January 15, 2012

John Gottman is known as the relationship expert. He has studied the relationships of thousands of couples. In a 1998 study, Gottman developed a model to predict which newlywed couples would remain married and which ones would divorce four to six years later. He claims that his model has a 90% accuracy. He also claims an 81% accuracy for another model indicating which marriages will survive after seven to nine years.

More recently he has written a book entitled *The Relationship Cure*. In this book, he states that the bid is a fundamental unit of emotional communication.

For example a child who pushes a key on the computer while you are trying to use it, is making a bid. The child is bidding for your attention. The parent's choice is whether to see it as an annoyance or as an invitation to stop for a moment and invite the child to sit in the parent's lap or play.

A bid by one person to another, especially in a marriage relationship takes the form of a question, look, touch or gesture. Those in a marriage or even dating relationship need to notice and interpret the questions, looks, touches or gestures of their partners as requests to feel connected. In good relationships, couples pick up on the bids each of them offers and responds to the requests for connection.

In our scripture passage today, God is seeking to make a connection with Samuel. God is making a bid. The Lord calls to Samuel three times. Each time Samuel thought that Eli the priest is calling to him. It is not until after the third time that Eli realizes that it is actually Yahweh calling Samuel. Finally God bids for Samuel's attention the fourth time and Samuel responds.

Our passage states that the word of the Lord was rare in that time. There were not many visions. So it understandable that Eli didn't comprehend that Samuel wasn't just dreaming, but that the God of Israel was calling. We should also note that in verse seven, we are told that the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to Samuel. Even though Samuel was serving in the temple with Eli he seemingly did not have a relationship with God yet.

Here I Am
I Samuel 3:1-10
January 15, 2012

God bids for our attention whether we are in relationship with him or not. He calls out to the Christian and the non-Christian. He is bidding to deliver us from our sins. God is bidding to speak to us and to guide us. Yahweh is drawing close to us and waits for our response.

In this day and age, God doesn't usually speak to us in an audible voice, but let me suggest that God speaks in three different and complementary ways.

God speaks to us through our circumstances. When we are wondering what to do and circumstances seem to indicate that a certain decision could be God's will, then we need to consider the other two guideposts.

By themselves circumstances could lead us astray. We must also ask ourselves if the direction I am headed based on circumstances is consistent with scriptural guidelines. Some things are obvious. If we are considering lying to someone to get our way, scripture indicates that would be a sin and not God's will.

If we are considering whether to move or take a new job, that's a different story. Then we seek the guidance of God's Spirit. We pray and ask God for direction and peace about our move or job. Everything should line up. Circumstances, scripture and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, through the divine peace he offers, should be in agreement; indicating that the decision we are to make has God's blessing and is indeed his will.

Today, the unequivocal message we have heard is that God loves the world so much that he sent his Son, Jesus Christ. The communion table reminds us that this was a very costly love. It required the death of Christ as God's perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins. By faith we respond to God's bid for relationship through Christ.

Today, we should be thankful people that God made the most costly gesture to save and call us as his people. We are grateful that we heard God's call and were by God's unmerited favor, able to respond by faith.

Let us affirm God's call to intimacy, salvation and peace. By faith, let us partake of communion. Amen.