

**Faith Bible Study Guide**  
**For the Week of January 14, 2024**  
**2nd Sunday After Epiphany - "I'm Here!"**



**Be still [2 Minutes]:** As you hear these Centering Words, let us greet each other, greet the Holy Spirit, and begin with 1 minute of silence, breathing in the breath of God and allow the group to open themselves to the Holy Spirit today:

CENTERING WORDS: Let all who draw breath shout for joy and sing praises to the living God.

OPENING PRAYER: Before you formed us in our mother's womb, you knew us completely. Before a word is on our lips, you perceive it. You hem us in, before and behind. You call us as your own and lay your hand upon us. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is so high we cannot attain it. Even when we fail, Holy One, call us anew, that we might hear your voice and respond with expectation and joy: "Here I am." Amen.

**Be the Word:** 1 Samuel 3:1-20

Now the boy Samuel was serving the Lord under Eli. The Lord's word was rare at that time, and visions weren't widely known. <sup>2</sup> One day Eli, whose eyes had grown so weak he was unable to see, was lying down in his room. <sup>3</sup> God's lamp hadn't gone out yet, and Samuel was lying down in the Lord's temple, where God's chest was.

<sup>4</sup> The Lord called to Samuel. "I'm here," he said.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel hurried to Eli and said, "I'm here. You called me?"

"I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go lie down." So he did.

<sup>6</sup> Again the Lord called Samuel, so Samuel got up, went to Eli, and said, "I'm here. You called me?"

"I didn't call, my son," Eli replied. "Go and lie down."

(<sup>7</sup> Now Samuel didn't yet know the Lord, and the Lord's word hadn't yet been revealed to him.)

<sup>8</sup> A third time the Lord called Samuel. He got up, went to Eli, and said, "I'm here. You called me?"

Then Eli realized that it was the Lord who was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup> So Eli said to Samuel, “Go and lie down. If he calls you, say, ‘Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down where he’d been.

<sup>10</sup> Then the Lord came and stood there, calling just as before, “Samuel, Samuel!” Samuel said, “Speak. Your servant is listening.”

<sup>11</sup> The Lord said to Samuel, “I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of all who hear it tingle! <sup>12</sup> On that day, I will bring to pass against Eli everything I said about his household—every last bit of it! <sup>13</sup> I told him that I would punish his family forever because of the wrongdoing he knew about—how his sons were cursing God, but he wouldn’t stop them. <sup>14</sup> Because of that I swore about Eli’s household that his family’s wrongdoing will never be reconciled by sacrifice or by offering.”

<sup>15</sup> Samuel lay there until morning, then opened the doors of the Lord’s house. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. <sup>16</sup> But Eli called Samuel, saying: “Samuel, my son!”

“I’m here,” Samuel said.

<sup>17</sup> “What did he say to you?” Eli asked. “Don’t hide anything from me. May God deal harshly with you and worse still if you hide from me a single word from everything he said to you.” <sup>18</sup> So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him.

“He is the Lord,” Eli said. “He will do as he pleases.”

<sup>19</sup> So Samuel grew up, and the Lord was with him, not allowing any of his words to fail. <sup>20</sup> All Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was trustworthy as the Lord’s prophet.

L: The Word of God for all people

**P: Thanks be to God**

**Be present: [Being mindful of others and sharing time]**

1. Take a deep breath. How is it with your soul?
2. What do you think God’s voice sounds like?
3. Are you usually the first to show up (or be early), somewhere in the middle, or usually one of the later ones? (To work, to church, to a party, to an event, etc.) Do you remember what may have been the catalyst for your timing? Is it cultural? Learned? Innate?
4. Where do you feel the most “present” in your life? (When you are fully attentive to the world around you.) If you have a place or a moment in memory, please share it with us!

**Be rooted: [Bible Study]**

1. Why didn’t God just give Eli the message about his sons himself? Why did we need a whole story of Samuel, beginning with Hannah and Elkanah?
2. Who are you in the Samuel story? Who do you relate to best? (Identify the most with)

- a. Hannah - the mother who lifts up prayers for a child. Then gives her son back to God as an offering of gratitude?
  - b. Elkanah - the quiet supporting spouse of Hannah. He wants for her what his other wife has, children.
  - c. Eli - the hearer, the mentor, the guide? The parent of wayward children?
  - d. The sons, Hophni and Phinehas - the apprentice priests to Eli. The ones who disobeyed and disrespected God and the temple?
  - e. Samuel - the child offering to the temple. The one who hears the voice of God. And has no idea.
3. What if neither Samuel nor Eli knew it was God's voice calling? Would God have kept calling them? Does God keep calling us until we answer?
  4. What happens to us when God calls us? Do we say, "Here I Am, Lord!" Do we say, "Speak, Lord. For your servant is listening?" Are we transformed? Are we changed? How?

### **Be transformed: [Call to action]**

I like thinking that God said, "I'm Here," first. We often forget that in our listening/awaiting calls and answering, we don't realize that God is ALWAYS present first and has been jumping up and down saying, "I'm Here! I'm Here!"

1. Yet, often we say "No," to God without the realization that God may have been calling us in our lives. Have there been times in retrospect where you said "No" to God and realized that it may have been something you should have answered?
2. Consider what saying "Yes" to God would look like in your life? Would it take too much time? Would you need to sacrifice or reprioritize other things in your life for God? Does this question sound antithetical to what we should be doing when God calls us? (It should!)
3. When saying "Yes" to God, regardless of the challenges, how do you look for the blessings, miracles, and gratitude in your response when you do agree to follow Christ?

### **Prayers & Concerns**

#### **Prayers for healing and wholeness...**

Claretta Foster  
 Jack Hamada  
 The Sasaki Family; Jordan Sasaki, Sally, Ken, & Jason  
 Dave Cook  
 Jerry Osaka  
 Victoria Dela Torre  
 Diane & Destiny Ueda-Banda  
 Audrey Goto  
 Tak and Irene Ryono  
 Ralph Ichikawa's brother, Jim  
 Kurt Kuniyoshi (stage 4 colon cancer)  
 Alice Kajiya  
 Faye Toma

Virginia Flood  
 Jason's friend, Kaitlyn Sabedra  
 Scarlett Bone  
 Glenn & Millie Shimizu  
 Faith Tanaka

#### **Prayers for Grieving Families...**

Kirk Sinn passed on 12/4/23  
 Rev. Kim Scott (brother passed)  
 Akiko Kashiwagi (passed 1/7/24; service March 23)  
 Tom Tokishi (service on 1/20/24)  
 Helen Hayakawa passed, 11/27/23 (service 2/23/24)

Kim's niece of a friend, Asha (passed)

Rev. Allison's godfather's family in the passing of **For our hurting world...**

Uncle Vincent "Buffalo" Randall and her  
godmother's brother, Uncle Jack Brown.

Japan Earthquake

People of the Holy Land

Orion (Susan's niece), her father Bernard  
passed away

Families rebuilding after natural disasters

Minister Ainise's cousin, James Jethro passed  
away

**And Know that He is God:**

**You speak in unexpected places,**

**and with unexpected voices, God.**

**And we aren't always sure how to listen.**

**We aren't always sure who to listen to.**

**We aren't always sure if we're really hearing you.**

**Be blunt with us, please. Be clear.**

**Give us the challenge**

**of loving you,**

**of loving the other,**

**of loving ourselves.**

**And help us to live it out!**

**Because you are God who loves us all,**

**even when we don't know where to turn.**

**In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen! ~ written by Richard Bott**

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BIBLE STUDY EPIPHANY PARTY - January 28th - POTLUCK AFTER WORSHIP

January 21 - Ozoni Sunday