



*HEARING  
GOD*

IVP SIGNATURE BIBLE STUDIES

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*BIBLE STUDY*



*DALLAS WILLARD*



6 STUDIES FOR INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS



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SESSION ONE

**CONVERSING  
WITH GOD**

*1 SAMUEL 16:1-13*

**THE LORD INTENDS FOR US** to have a conversational relationship with him. In such a life, we learn to readily recognize his voice speaking in our hearts as occasion demands. God has made ample provision for this to happen in order to fulfill his mission as the Good Shepherd, which is to bring us life and life more abundantly. The abundance of life comes in following him, and “his sheep follow him because they know his voice” (John 10:4).

It is essential to the strength of our faith that we are in some measure capable of inwardly identifying with Samuel’s experience in this passage, as he conversed with the Lord in the midst of Jesse’s family. Such conversation makes life a partnership with God, open to new ideas and adventures.

**SESSION GOAL**

Observe that God leads step by step as we converse with him about the things that matter to us.

**READ**

Preface and chapter one of *Hearing God*

**REFLECT**

- \* Some people feel impatient to reach their destination, while others seem to patiently enjoy the journey—whether that be going to college or traveling. Where do you usually find

yourself: eager to arrive, patient on the journey, unwilling to start, or somewhere else?

- \* When, if ever, have you wished God would just give you the answer? The verdict? Now?

### STUDY

Following God's instruction, Samuel had anointed Saul to be king of all Israel. But as Saul turned from God and ignored God's instructions, God regretted having made Saul king. Samuel, the judge and prophet who had anointed Saul, was disappointed and angry and cried out to the Lord all that night (1 Samuel 15:11). **Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13.**

<sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

<sup>2</sup>But Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me."

The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'<sup>3</sup>Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate."

<sup>4</sup>Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?"

<sup>5</sup>Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

<sup>6</sup>When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”

<sup>7</sup>But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

<sup>8</sup>Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” <sup>9</sup>Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.” <sup>10</sup>Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.” <sup>11</sup>So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

<sup>12</sup>So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

<sup>13</sup>So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

1. Why was Samuel reluctant to go to Jesse's house? (See 1 Samuel 15:10-11; 16:1-2.)
  
2. Conversational life with God involves asking questions. What question did God ask Samuel? What question did Samuel ask God?
  
3. What does a person need to think, feel, or believe about God in order to unhesitatingly ask God questions?
  
4. What does it tell you about Samuel that he didn't insist on knowing the instructions before leaving home, but moved forward on God's assurance that he would show him what to do (v. 3)?

**The Bethlehem town elders questioned Samuel about coming in peace (v. 4). This could have been a simple question about whether this was an official visit of Samuel the judge-prophet, or if Samuel was acting as an emissary for the suspicious and vindictive King Saul (1 Samuel 7:15; 22:6-19).**

5. What about Eliab apparently made Samuel think he might be the one God was choosing to be king?

**When Samuel anointed Saul, Israel's first king, the text says Saul was "as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else" (1 Samuel 9:2).  
But Saul did not live up to expectations.**

6. God answered Samuel's thought by saying he didn't look at someone the way people did. Today, what are the things people look at to consider someone a potential leader for God?
7. Taking into account the character of God and how God works with people, what do you think God was looking for in a king (v. 7)?
8. The choice of David seems to have been unexpected, possibly surprising Samuel, Jesse, and Jesse's other sons. What has to be true about us in order for us to expect the unexpected from God?



 **RESPOND** 

- \* What would you most like about having a conversational life with God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- \* What are you and God doing together these days? If you're not sure, ask God right now to show you.

 **PRAY** 

As you pray, experiment with conversing with God about the ordinary events of your life. Ask God to help you grow in your awareness of his friendship and approach life as a conversation with him. Thank God for helping you learn to readily recognize his voice speaking in your heart.

 **NEXT STEPS** 

This week, pause briefly between everyday tasks, being open to anything God might want to say to you about these tasks. You might want to have a special object or picture nearby to help you pause and be still for a minute or two.



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