

Presence, Process, and Courage Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part altogether, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What's a strange place you have slept?
2. If you had to lose your sight or your hearing, which would you choose?

Read the following passage: 1 Samuel 3:1-21.

With an economy of words, the author of 1 Samuel relates that when the leading priest in Israel was losing his vision and the word of the Lord was rare, Samuel, though still a boy, was close to the presence of God. While resting in this place near the ark of God, God spoke to Samuel. Samuel's inability to immediately recognize the voice of God is a reminder to us that spiritual growth is a process. We need to keep on listening until we recognize when God is speaking to us.

The next morning, Samuel was put in a very awkward position. Eli pressed Samuel to reveal the message God spoke to him. Eli, of course, did not know that it was a message of judgment on Eli's family. Here we see a considerable contrast. Samuel, a boy with no status or authority, courageously did the right thing. Eli, on the other hand, avoided doing the right thing when his sons blasphemed God.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Eli failed to take action and remove his sons from their positions when they dishonored God. Because of this failure to act, God sent judgment on Eli's house. Are there areas in your spiritual life or in your relationships in which you are being too passive? Explain. What is one step you can take in the next few days?
2. Read Proverbs 9:8. Do you proactively invite feedback or critique? Explain. If not, how might you begin doing this in your life?
3. "Fools do not respond to words. They only respond to consequences." How might this proverbial idea be relevant to your life?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Ephesians 3:14-19; 4:29-32. How does being a "temple of the Holy Spirit" or Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith make our experience of God's presence different from those who lived under the old covenant? How might our behavior impact our experience of God's presence? Are you satisfied with your current experience of the presence of God? Explain.

5. Are you experiencing spiritual growth in your life right now? Explain. What are some ways you would like to grow?
6. Are there any “hard things” you feel you should be doing right now?

Pray