

“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening,” is what young Samuel said to God when the Lord called the youth in the night. But, Samuel first had to be taught how to respond to the Lord’s call by the older, more mature Eli, who traveled further down the road of faith.

In this weekend’s first reading we hear of the call of Samuel, who was somewhat an apprentice in the Temple under the mentorship of Eli. In the middle of the night Samuel hears God calling him, but Samuel, who did not recognize the Lord’s voice, thought it was Eli who was calling him. So, Samuel rushed over to Eli, woke him up, and asked what he wanted. Eli tells the youth he did not call him, go back to sleep. Again, God calls Samuel. Again, he rushes over to Eli, wakes him, and asks what he wants. Eli, again, tells Samuel he did not call him, go back to sleep. The same happened a third time. It was then that Eli realized it was the Lord calling the boy, and then teaches him how to respond if he is called again. The Lord does call Samuel again, and Samuel responds as he was taught by Eli. In short, Samuel became a great prophet of the Lord to his people.

I often use this Scripture passage at baptisms. I instruct the parents and godparents that the little baby to be baptized will, in fact, become a son or daughter of God Most High, and an inheritor of God’s Kingdom. I also say that God is calling this little person to do something for Him, just as He calls each and every one of us to live in a certain way for Him.

I explain that the little baby is the “Samuel” in the story, and the parents and godparents are the “Eli figure.” As the child grows he or she should be reminded that he or she is a child of God. And, the God has a calling, a purpose, a vocation for him or her.

We often ask little ones “What do you want to be when you grow up?” A variety of answers might come, like: “I want to be a movie star.” “I want to be a hockey player.” “I want to be a veterinarian.” I suggest that a better Christian parent question to ask a child is: “Do you know what God wants you to be?”

Just like Eli, the adults in the child’s life are to teach the youngster how to respond to God’s call. Adults will do this first of all by living their own vocation faithfully, and by showing their young how to approach God in prayer and virtuous living. “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening,” is a great response to teach the young. It worked for Samuel, and is bound to work for every young person.

God does not create at random. God creates for a purpose. Everything God has created has a purpose. God has a purpose for every human life. No one is an accident. God wants us to live life fully and to fulfill the purpose for which He has created us for.

God never forces anyone to answer his or her calling. But, to do so will bring the greatest fulfillment to the individual, and bring God the greatest glory. A person’s vocation is like a custom made glove that fits the hand perfectly. If you haven’t discovered your vocation yet, keep discerning. When the Lord calls, try on the glove. It will fit perfectly.