

**The God Who Knows Us, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. E2060115**  
**1 Samuel 3:1-20 and John 1:43-51**  
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We have in the book of First Samuel, chapters one through three, the touching story of an old man and a boy. The old man was Eli, priest of the temple at Shiloh. His sons were the worst of what are often called “P.K.’s”—“preacher’s kids.” The stereotype PK can be a brat because sometimes the minister-parent is too busy to spend any time with his or her own children. Please, however, do not refer to my children or to other minister’s children as P.K.’s. It is a demeaning title.

Eli’s sons were real brats. They had sex with different women, and weren’t married to them. They stole the church offerings. Old Eli must have been discouraged about how his own sons turned out.

Indeed, for any religious person, it was a discouraging time to be alive: “The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.”<sup>1</sup> And, if the priest Eli’s sons behaved the way they did, what were the prospects of the common citizens? The boy Samuel had been dedicated by his mother Hannah to God and to service in the temple. He was delightful company to the old man who was growing blind.

The story goes, “One night, when the lamp of God had not yet gone out,”<sup>2</sup> Samuel heard a voice calling him. What does the Bible mean when it says, “the lamp of God had not yet gone out?” Was it... A votive lamp of eternal flame? A lamp which lights the temple but had not yet gone out? The Spirit of life within Eli who was growing old? Eli’s eyesight which was growing dim? That the word of God in the land of Israel was waning, but had not completely grown silent? It could have been any of those. Whichever the lamp was, it had not yet gone out.

The boy heard a voice calling to him. He thought it was the old man Eli. It wasn’t. Eli eventually realized it was God calling out to Samuel.

Samuel’s is just one of many Biblical examples of close relationships with God. He was known throughout the territory to be trustworthy. It is important, especially when society seems to be falling apart, to know that there is someone you can trust. God’s call to us can be as simple as, “Be trustworthy!”

From time to time people ask me why God doesn’t talk to them today the way God talked to Samuel. We pray to God for answers, but we don’t hear anything. That is discouraging and we think either God does not care, or the stories of the Bible aren’t true.

A friend of mine tells me this particular passage means a great deal to her as a minister. She heard this Bible story as a high school student, and she prayed that God would call to her in the middle of the night the same way God called to Samuel. She wanted to serve God in the same way. She never heard anything and grew discouraged. One day she talked with her pastor about her concern. His answer was, “God has already called you. That’s why you’re praying so hard to hear!”

Perhaps in our frustration God has already spoken to us. That is why we so earnestly want to hear God’s voice the way we *think* we ought to hear it.

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<sup>1</sup>1 Samuel 3:1

<sup>2</sup>1 Sam. 3:3

Nathaniel's story of being called by Jesus is similar.<sup>3</sup> This sarcastic judgmental young man was inspired to follow Jesus because Jesus knew him. Nathaniel heard his call.

God knows us also. As the psalmist said in Psalm 139, "O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely."<sup>4</sup>

It is a bit frightening to think of God's knowing everything I do, think, and say. When I was a boy, my father frequently knew what I had done. One day I was walking home with my friend Dick Page. Now, neither Dick nor I got into much trouble when we were alone, but when we were together, trouble just seemed to find us. We had a way of goading each other into mischief.

At the corner of Townley Road and Lomond Blvd., there was a street sign, as there was on every corner in Shaker Heights. With Dick's encouragement, I shinnied up that street sign and turned the names ninety degrees so that Townley now ran this way and Lomond that. What simple delight two adolescent boys took in thinking that strangers to the neighborhood would turn down the wrong street and get confused.

That night there was a knock on the door. It was the police. See, a woman who lived on that corner was a good friend of my mother's. Just because I didn't know her didn't mean that I wasn't known by her! And the talking the police officer gave me was much more pleasant than the punishment my father gave me.

We may not want God to know us. It is a fearsome thing to realize that God knows all we do and all we say, and all we think. After all, there are things we do in private we don't want others to know about. There are thoughts we think that we don't want others to know about. We may be ashamed by who we are and what we do. Our shame does not stop God from loving us. It only blocks our desire to have a close relationship with God.

When we realize that God knows what we think and do, we will think and do better things, just like when I realized that I couldn't go anywhere in my neighborhood without someone knowing who I was and letting my parents know.

Let us listen for God's call. God is calling us to be the best we can be. Knowing that God knows us will make a positive difference in our lives and relationships.

God knows us because God is our loving parent. My mother and father cared about how I behaved because they loved me and wanted me to be responsible and ethical. I suppose they wanted me to be a good reflection of them and their parenting skills, bBut they also wanted me to reach my fullest potential.

Is God any different? Doesn't God want us to be a good reflection of God? Is not that what is meant by saying that we are created in God's image?

The God who knows us loves us and cares about us. God knew us before we were even born. Like any good parent, God knows our potential. Knowing that God knows us will make this a better world.

This is God's world, and we are God's children. It is wonderful, awe-full, beautiful, and comforting to know that God knows us!

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<sup>3</sup>John 1:43-51

<sup>4</sup>Psalm 139:1-4