

# The heart of a servant

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[ 0 : 00 ] I want to give out those little sheets today because there's some very important applications I want to make from this morning's message.

! Personal applications, challenges, and in a way it's very easy to receive a challenge in your head and not do much about it.

By having something to write down that may just embed it. This Wednesday we had a time at our house and we looked at some words to do with Christmas.

And they're all very traditional. But here's one of the biggest words of Christmas time. It's actually the word servant.

It's rather remarkable to see just how frequently within the Christmas story the Bible writers are very anxious and careful to describe the various characters in servant language.

[ 1 : 11 ] Gabriel's an interesting case. Gabriel the angel when he appears to Zachariah. And Zachariah rather questions what this is all about. And Gabriel as it were almost draws himself up to his full height and says, I'm Gabriel.

I stand at the right hand of God. And the angels are described in the book of Hebrews as ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation.

Which was exactly what Gabriel was doing when he appeared to both Zachariah and to Mary. He was serving the Lord in that way. And so Mary responds in that way.

I am the Lord's servant. Greater than all, greater than all of these is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who is the servant par excellence. The one who was prophesied as the servant of the Lord.

[ 2 : 25 ] It says in Hebrews chapter 10, please turn to that with me. Hebrews chapter 10 verse 5.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world. Striking thought, isn't it?

When he came into the world, the world that he had made. When he came into the world, he said, sacrifice an offering you did not desire.

But a body you prepared for me. With burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, here I am. It is written about me in the scroll.

I have come to do your will. Oh God. The servant heart of Jesus. On the screen.

[ 3 : 22 ] From the book of Philippians. Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God. Something to be grasped or used to his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant. The followers of Jesus Christ have this same mark about them.

Absolutely inevitable. This is exactly what we are called to be. They are the servants of God. So the apostle Paul describes himself in exactly that language as he writes to Titus.

He says, Paul, a servant of God. The servant of God. The servant of God. The servant of God. The servant of God. If being a servant of God is the universal mark of the Christian.

We do well. We do well to look again at the start of this new year to our life description. As lovingly given to us by our heavenly father.

[ 4 : 28 ] But before we dive in. I thought it might be good just to consider this thought. How does being a servant as a Christian fit with being a child or a son?

Because that language is also used, isn't it? That we're not only servants of God, but we're also children. Are those two thoughts in conflict in some way?

I think we must say that these two ideas actually come together.

And ought never to be separated. If we were just servants, we might think that we would do. Just do the job.

Without choice. And doing perhaps the bare minimum. But we're not just servants. We are sons. And that changes everything.

[ 5 : 33 ] So we serve gladly and willingly and cheerfully. Our service of God must always be marked by the gratitude and willingness of those who have been bought.

Being bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ our Savior. But still, it is service. And it is obedience.

Because that is exactly right and fitting. For those who have been made in the image of God. To serve the God who has made us. I thought of a rather inadequate picture of this.

As last week, I uncovered some tape recordings that I had made of my father. When he was in his early 80s. I just sat down with him one day.

With other members of the family. And I just spoke with him. And asked him about his life. Really lovely to come across the recordings again. And to sort of hear his voice.

[ 6 : 37 ] And when he was growing up in London. There was a kind of a family retainer. You know what a retainer is? A sort of a...

Somebody who's sort of linked with the family. And this was Nanny. Nanny had come into his life at a very early age. And she was a paid employee inside the family.

But actually, she was like a member of the family as well. So much so that she never stopped being part of the family. And she was looked after to the day she died. And she had that sort of lovely relationship in the family.

Of being both a servant and a sort of family member. So close to the family. So close to her employer in a way.

So I don't think we should... It would be very unhelpful for us to draw a distinction between those two words. Now we're going to go into the book of 1 Samuel.

[ 7 : 45 ] Chapter 3. Because that reminds us that God's people have always had this mark about them. Even 1000 years before the birth of Jesus. And the early chapters of Samuel are extremely eloquent and helpful pictures.

And descriptions for us of what it means to be a servant of God. And to have a servant's heart. So let me give you some background. And I'll give you a picture as we do so.

Because Samuel is an extremely visual book. And so on the screen you have in the background Eli, the old priest. And there is the boy Samuel and his mother Hannah.

So if you're not familiar with the story. Let me just give you a brief resume of how this goes. And this is in 1 Samuel chapters 1 and 2.

It's a time of some spiritual poverty in the land of Israel. There is worship. But it's spoiled and corrupted. The chief priest Eli is old and he's indecisive.

[ 8 : 50 ] His two sons Hophni and Phinehas are actually running affairs. And in a very disgraceful way practicing sexual immorality and extortion in an open fashion.

And Eli does too little too late. The sons are out of control. Fathers, we have a particular responsibility to set boundaries for our sons, our children.

And Eli stands as a big warning of somebody who failed to do that until it was too late. There were some who have stayed faithful and kept going but with difficulty.

And Hannah is one of these people. She's childless. Just like Elizabeth was later childless. And goaded by her husband's other wife, she is driven to distraction.

So that the times in the spiritual year which should have been really high points of gladness and happiness. Were actually for her times of trauma, distraught misery.

[ 10 : 04 ] But she's a servant of God. So has learnt in her most desperate times to pour out her soul's distress to God. And I pause just to say, how about you and me?

In times of emotional trauma and distress. Where we can feel absolutely distraught. What a healthy example Hannah sets before us.

She pours out her spirit to God. She prays for a son. And the God who hears prayer hears Hannah and gives her this son. His name is Samuel.

Which might mean asked of God. According to her promise to God she dedicates him completely to the service of God. And that prompts me to ask.

Have you ever promised God something? Have you actually fulfilled that promise? She prays a prayer of thanksgiving that sounds remarkably like that of Mary's and Zachariah's.

[ 11 : 19 ] Eli's wicked sons continue to create spiritual mayhem. Ignore their father's rebuke. And eventually with their father's lack of action. Bring God's judgment on their entire family.

Meanwhile and quietly Samuel grows and learns. God has plans for the young boy. So parents what plans does God have for your children?

It's healthy to think about that. Healthy to pray. That they would do what God has planned for them. So we come to chapter 3. The scene is set.

Then the Lord called Samuel. First the gift of hearing. Speaking surely of the Messiah.

Psalm 40 verse 6 says. My ears you have opened. The gift of hearing. God spoke. God spoke. Samuel heard the voice of God for the first time.

[12:24] He heard God speaking to him. But in the beginning he didn't know that it was God. He thought it was Eli the priest. And so he goes to Eli. Go and lie down.

I haven't called you. And you recall the story. It happens twice doesn't it? And then Eli. Recognizes what's been going on. It's a very special moment in young Samuel's life.

He was hearing the voice of God for the first time. And we read that very clearly in verse 7. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord. The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

And I take great theological comfort from that particular phrase. Because I think it tells all of us. That all of our children. Have got to come to know the Lord.

That it isn't an automatic. That just being born into a Christian family. Does not make you a Christian. Does not make you a servant of God. Samuel had to hear the voice of the Lord for himself.

[13:31] And he did. And he did. And this was a gift from God. It was a gift in two ways. Firstly because.

In those days we read in verse 1. The word of the Lord was rare. There were not many visions. It was in fact a time of judgment.

When God had effectively distanced himself from his people. And was not speaking to them. So it was a very precious thing that happened to that young boy.

And he was young. We don't know exactly. But probably pre-teen. 10, 11. God spoke. How did God speak in those.

Pre-Bible days. It was interesting that verse 1. Talks about visions. And. There's a similar. Verse later on.

[14:36] Also speaks about. Visions. You might think. There must have been some sort of. Sign. Something he saw.

That's our idea of vision. But actually. Most of this chapter. A call. From God. That was heard. So verses. 4. 10. And 17. All talking about. The fact that God spoke. Something. And it was not just any voice. But it was the voice of the Lord. Eli knew what was happening.

And was wise enough. To tell Samuel. What to do. It's a gift. What to do. That God should speak. It's a tragedy. When the word of the Lord is rare. When the word of the Lord is rare.

That's not true. That's not true. Because. That's not true today. Because. Almost everybody. In this room. Is holding a Bible in their hands. And that is a fantastic gift. That you have a Bible.

[15:32] That's in your own language. You can read it for yourself. And. It's a gift. That God should speak. It's a tragedy. And it occurs in Old Testament times.

When the word of the Lord is rare. You and I might think. Well. That's not true today. Because. Actually. Almost everybody here in this room. Is holding a Bible in their hands.

And that is a fantastic gift. That you have a Bible. That's in your own language. You can read it for yourself. And the word of the Lord is there. And that is a great gift.

But of course. It's not so much of a gift. If the book stays closed. And there's something more. Than having words on a page. How many messages have been spoken. Over the Christmas period. In this country. Even over the airwaves.

[16:32] How many words have been said. Even Bible words have been said. And God can certainly use that. Because it is his word. But before every service.

That takes place here. You'll notice that. Elders. And others go into the back room there. And the prayer that we pray. The prayer that we pray. The prayer that we pray.

Is that God will be present with us. By his spirit. Almost every Sunday. That's the prayer we pray. That's the prayer we pray. Not just to have.

The words on the page. But to hear the voice of God. God spoke to Samuel. God spoke to Samuel. God spoke to Samuel. In a way that. In the end. Became unmistakable. I'm sure this is the sort of thing.

[ 17 : 35 ] That the early apostles were looking for. And expecting. When they met together. Sure this is what. The apostle Paul.

Is referring to. When. When he speaks to the. Galatian Christians. These people who are wandering away. And he's saying. I just want you to remember. Remember when we came amongst you.

And when you first heard. The preaching of God's word. And I want you to remember. Especially. That day. When.

I spoke to you. The Lord. Jesus Christ. Being crucified. And there's a reference here. In Galatians 3 verse 1. This is what he says.

Before your very eyes. Jesus Christ. Was clearly portrayed. As crucified. That was a day.

[ 18 : 36 ] That was a day. When the people. Perhaps for the first time. Savior.

And. The words were spoken. But it was more than words. What was happening. They saw. What had taken place. Upon that cross. Before your very eyes. Jesus Christ. Was clearly portrayed. As crucified. As if they had been there. As if they had been there. And such happens.

When the Holy Spirit. Takes the word of God. And applies it to our hearts. Or as he says.

To the Thessalonian Christians. In another setting. He looks back. With great fondness. And gladness. As he realizes. As he realizes. Was in that time. When he spoke to the Thessalonians.

[ 19 : 35 ] And. He says. Because our gospel. Came to you. Not simply with words. But also with power. With the Holy Spirit. With deep conviction. Conviction.

Is that your prayer. When you come to church. On a Sunday morning. I think it should be.

I think it should be all our prayer. That the word. Should not come to us. In word only. But in power.

With the Holy Spirit. And with deep conviction. And we should look forward to that.

And have an expectancy. And not be satisfied. If I could put it that way. Not be satisfied.

With less than. What God. Appears to offer to us. To us. May this. Be the experience. Of Calvary Church.

[ 20 : 45 ] In 2017. May this. Be our experience. Because we need to hear the word.

As it comes. From the living God. But there's a second aspect. To the gift. To Samuel. He was able to.

Hear. God's voice. And to hear it. As God's voice. This was a spiritual gift. This is a spiritual gift.

And it is the gift.

Of God alone. You and I. Cannot hear God's voice properly. Until God gives us the gift. Of spiritual hearing. Hearing. There's an interesting.

Chapter. In the gospel of John. John chapter 8. Verse 43. Where Jesus.

[ 21 : 55 ] Is addressing. Verse 31. Who had believed him. These were not. Opponents.

Antagonists.

People against Jesus. These were people. Who wanted to follow him. In some way. They were attracted to Jesus. Jesus. But it's quite clear. As Jesus begins.

To speak to them. That they don't get. What he's saying. So he says to them. In verse 43. Why is my language.

Not clear to you. Why is my language. Not clear to you. Now think of that. If there was ever a moment.

In human history. When the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit. Was present. If there was ever a moment. When a word of God. Was spoken. By a preacher. That was absolutely.

[ 22 : 51 ] Pure. Straightforward. Direct. Every word. Given. If ever that moment. Occurred. It was when Jesus.

Was upon earth. And speaking his word. To people. People. But Jesus says. To these people. These people. In the presence. Of the son of God.

The one from heaven. Who always says. That his father. Wants him to say. He says. Of those people. Why is my language. Not clear to you. They didn't get it.

Didn't get it. Because. He says. You are unable. To hear.

What I say. You are unable. To hear what I say. And that's the. That's the human condition. That's the position. Of every single.

[ 23 : 50 ] One of us. Because we are fallen. We are born. In sin. We are born. With deafness. Spiritual deafness.

So that we cannot hear. The things of God. That's exactly what. Happened then. Exactly what happens now. So there can be days. And there will be days. God willing. There will be days. When the Holy Spirit. Falls on this place. In a most powerful way. And. May God. Grant. That you be present. At that time. So that you would be able. To say at that time. The Holy Spirit. Was present.

God's voice. And you might turn. To your neighbour. And you would say. To your neighbour. And you would say. Oh. And they might say. I don't know. What you're talking about.

[ 24 : 49 ] Same place. Same spirit. Same. Same. If you like. But the person. I don't know. What you're talking about. And that's a sadness. And that's a pity. And that's a shame.

And it tells us. That we have to get. Spiritual hearing. From God. And it's a gift. That only he can. Only he can give. And if you're a Christian today. You have received. The gift.

Of spiritual hearing. Of spiritual hearing. From God. And it's a gift. That only he can. Only he can give. And if you're a Christian today.

You have received. The gift. Of spiritual hearing. And if you have members. In your family. And friends.

And work colleagues. And neighbours. Who are not in that place. And yet. They've heard the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. The prayer is. Lord. Open.

[ 25 : 44 ] Their ears. To hear. We need God's powerful work.

By his spirit. To be able to receive. God's word. Into our lives. But it's also possible. That we might be like the Jews. Who somehow.

Believe Jesus. At the same time. Were unable. To understand. What he said. Because their spiritual ears. Were still blocked. There's a frightening. Passage. Chapter two here.

Where. We read. Of Eli. Going back. To his sons. Who undoubtedly. Were schooled. In the things. Of God. Been brought up.

Within the tabernacle. They knew all about. Everything. To do with the ways of God. Highly privileged. Highly privileged. Because of that. But because. They had run amok.

[ 26 : 42 ] Their lives. Were out of control. And they had got so used. To their sinfulness. It says that when Eli. Spoke to them. They ignored him.

They ignored him. He spoke strongly to them. It is not right. What you're doing. They ignored him. Because not only. Had they been born. With spiritual deafness.

But their spiritual deafness. Had got worse. And worse. And worse. By their failure. To respond. To the word of God. And so.

They got to a place. Where it says. Not only were they like that. But that was part of God's judgment. Upon them. For their sinfulness. That they could. Not hear.

And that's a very awesome. And a frightening thought. Isn't it? To be coming to Calvary Church. Sunday by Sunday. But not hearing the word of God.

[ 27 : 39 ] What is it doing to you. Spiritual hearing. It's a good prayer for all of us to pray.

Let us make sure. And challenge one another. To continue to be reading our Bibles. And attending. The teaching and preaching. Of God's word. These are good habits.

Let us be much in prayer. That when we read our Bibles. And hear God's word preached. That it will be with the presence. And power of God's Holy Spirit. And that God would give us spiritual hearing.

To be ready. To be ready. To be ready. To be ready. To be ready. To be ready. To be ready. An attitude of readiness is our second point.

Jesus himself says, here I am. That was his attitude. I've come to do your will. An attitude of readiness. The heart of a servant.

[ 29 : 05 ] Religious experience has always been fascinating. During the times of revival, there were always people who were absolutely fascinated by what was going on. They used to come to hear the preachers of the time. There were people who would sort of flock out from the theatres of London to hear George Whitefield speak.

Because they were so impressed by his oratory. Where did you get that skill? There was a character in the book of Acts who wanted to buy whatever power the apostles had.

But these aren't the hearers that God is seeking. He's not to be served by thrill seekers or the just interested. To have a servant heart is to be personally willing to listen to what God has to say because of our relationship with him.

Not as equals or observers. But he as the Lord and we as his servants. How do we get spiritually tuned to hear the voice of God? Many religions do it by noise, excitement, atmosphere, stirring the emotions.

But I think we can learn something from Samuel's example here. In 1 Samuel chapter 3. It was night time.

[ 30 : 17 ] And Eli says to Samuel. When he realises what's going on. He says to Samuel. Just go and lie down. Just go and lie down.

And do you know what was happening at that precise moment? As Samuel lay down. The lamp. The tabernacle was flickering. Do you know what was happening?

Dead. Quiet. Quiet. It was quiet. Absolute stillness.

It was quiet. Samuel was waiting. And he was quiet. There was space.

There was readiness. Think of Gabriel again. attending on the Lord. Waiting. Waiting. To hear what God would say to him.

[ 31 : 22 ] In a noisy world. Our hearts and minds can be noisy. And God's voice may be just one of many. Our own included. Clamouring for attention.

Might be a good thing for us. To be still. And when we open our Bibles. When we open our Bibles. Just.

Just. Just. Be still. And there was then a straightforward request. This is what Eli told him to say.

And that's exactly what he said. He says. Speak Lord. The first thing to hear. The first thing to hear. What God has to say.

We have. All have our concerns and agendas. But it's an important and profound. Reality for us. That our first request. Is that God would speak to us. And I want you to notice also.

[ 32 : 30 ] There was personal attention. Speak. Lord. For your servant. Is listening. Samuel was waiting for God's personal voice to him.

What has God to say to me. As it happened. God had something to say to Samuel. That was not about him at all. But the message was delivered to him.

He was the one person. Who was privileged to hear God's voice. In a very. Personal way. So make a simple application of this. And to say.

As you face the new year. Are you willing to set aside. Your personal agendas and plans. And pray that like Samuel. Speak Lord. For your servant is listening. And thirdly.

The practice of obedience. Jesus himself says. I have come to do your will. Here is the third aspect of a servant heart. Verse 11 we read.

[ 33 : 34 ] And the Lord said to Samuel. The Lord said to Samuel. What God had to say to Samuel. Was really quite surprising.

It was an announcement. Of what God intended to do. In judgment. Upon Eli. And his family. Something that would be both a personal tragedy. For Eli. And the family.

But also something. Of immense national interest. And significance. So just think of it. Here's a young lad. 10 or 11 years old. Hearing personally.

Directly. Uniquely. Of specific acts of God. Which would affect. The spiritual nation. This is the first clear word of God. To Samuel. It's extraordinary isn't it.

To think of that. What would you say. To a 10 year old lad. What would God say. To a 10 year old lad. What was the first thing. He would say to that. That lad.

[ 34 : 34 ] Something. Cozy. And comfortable. And. Familiar. God. God knew what he was doing. Because Samuel.

Had been prepared. In his life. He'd been prepared. He'd been prepared. For that point. When he first heard. The word of the Lord. God. So God.

Knew. What he was doing. And he knew. That when he was going to say. That word to Samuel. That Samuel. Would be able to receive it. And to do something with it. It was a desperately sad message.

Wasn't it? Eli. Had been Samuel's father figure. And spiritual mentor. The two of them. Had a very close bond. And the first thing.

God has to say to Samuel. Is a message of judgment. On. This man. What a sadness. What a Burden. What an embarrassment.

[ 35 : 31 ] Did he wonder. If he'd just been dreaming. Doesn't appear so. It says he laid down. Until morning. He laid down. Until morning. Seems unlikely.

That he slept. Turning over and over. The message that God. Had given him. What was he to do. With this information. To listen.

Yes. He'd done that. To remember. He couldn't hardly forget. But God had not told him. What to do. With the information. It required a human.

And providential prompt. Eli. As God knew. And planned. Put Samuel. Out of one misery. And into another. What was it. He said to you.

Says Eli. And at this point. Samuel might well have softened the blow. But Eli put him under a severe obligation. To tell everything. And he did.

[ 36 : 29 ] So he read in verse 18. You can read it there. So Samuel told him. Everything. Everything. Hiding nothing. Nothing. From him. That was the moment.

Of Samuel's first act of obedience. To God's personal voice message to him. Thrown into the deep end. But God knew what he was doing.

He knew how Samuel had been prepared. He knew that he was up for the first challenge. A clear statement. In this passage. That obedience to God.

Is seldom straightforward. Or easy. But it was the beginning of a life. That would be marked from beginning to end.

By wholehearted obedience. In contrast to the half-heartedness of the nation. And tragically. The man they called to be their king. Saul. A man of great spiritual giftedness.

[ 37 : 26 ] But defective obedience. So we read in verse 19. The Lord was with Samuel. As he grew up. And he let none of his words. Fall to the ground.

It's a lovely picture. This lad. Obeying the Lord. When God spoke to him. He obeyed the Lord. And he did exactly.

What God wanted him to do. At that time. With that information. And that. As it were. Set the standard. For the rest of his life. So all the things that we find.

In Samuel's first act of obedience. Get played out. In the history. Of that man. Of the nation. When the nation. Was wandering far from God.

It was Samuel. Who stood firm. When they were being half-hearted. It was Samuel. Who called them back. To wholehearted obedience.

[ 38 : 30 ] It isn't sufficient. To hear God's voice. Or even to hear it. With a good heart. And sincerity. God speaks to us. So that we may. Do something. With what he tells us. How much has God said to you.

That you have quietly. Shunted away. Or glossed over. Or left. For a more convenient time. So I'll make some applications.

Here. And this is where you might need. A piece of paper. So here we are. On the first day of 2017. And.

Most of your faces. I know. And I know you've been here. Many times. And I know you've heard. God's word many times. And I know you've had the privilege. Of hearing it. Quite clearly spoken. Many times. And. If you are like me. You have also heard God. Speaking to you. About specific acts. Of obedience. And if you are like me.

[ 39 : 35 ] You also know what it is. To actually. Shunt. Some areas of obedience. To another time. A better time. When I'm in a better frame of mind.

But I don't think really. God gives us that. Option. And opportunity. So here are some thoughts. On a screen. And they're completely random. But they're necessary. They're necessary. For you to be. Following up on. And maybe you'll find yourself. In one of these. Or at the very end.

There'll be a space. But it's for you to actually. Because you know. What it is. That God's been challenging you about. In your life. So wouldn't it be wonderful today.

If somebody here. Was to take a step. Of reliance upon. God's son. Jesus Christ. As the only one. Who can save you. From your sin. Provide complete forgiveness. And bring you into the family of God.

[ 40 : 35 ] Wouldn't that be a wonderful moment. May God grant that it will be. Or perhaps if you've been wandering. Far from God.

For you to rededicate yourself again. And to say. There's no other way. No other saviour. No one else I'm going to trust in. Or perhaps you should be publicly.

Declaring this by personal baptism. And becoming an active member. Of the church family. By committing yourself. As a church member. So please don't put that off. It's on the screen.

But you can write it down. Because maybe you should be doing that. And maybe you should be joining regularly. With your spiritual brothers and sisters. At the Lord's Supper. And it was good to see a number of folk here today. But we could see double that number. It's a precious part of our family life together.

[ 41 : 32 ] It's an act of obedience. Do this in remembrance of me. Or maybe we should be obeying the first commandment. Which is Exodus 20 verse 1. And not having any other gods in your life.

But the one God. What idols are trying to sit on the throne. That belongs to God. We've all got that. We're all facing that. Maybe we should be confessing all known sin to God. Rather than excusing it. Trying to cover it up. And living with it as an uncomfortable family member. Or maybe we should be giving. Ourselves.

Yourself. To whatever work of service God wants you to do. Maybe to continue. Maybe to continue. Or to start. With something. A new.

[ 42 : 31 ] It says at the very end of Samuel's life. He just went around on the circuit. He just went around on the circuit judging.

He just did his job. To the very end of his days. He started as a young man. He was still in harness when he died. Still judging. Still granting wisdom.

Still doing what God had called him to do. Maybe it's something new. Great to be talking to someone before the service.

And saying. I didn't think I'd ever be doing this. Most of us don't think we can be doing the things that we haven't done before.

We think it's a big risk. It probably is a risk. But if it's the thing that God's called you to do. Then he'll give you the grace and the wisdom and the strength to do it. Or maybe.

[ 43 : 36 ] There's an unhelpful relationship. Which needs to be broken. Because that relationship. Keeps on stopping you. Getting. Properly close to the Lord. There's many a Christian life that's just been completely shipwrecked.

By an unhelpful relationship. Are we hearing the other day?

Telling us last night. The verger goes off with someone from the church. What? These things are happening inside the church of Jesus Christ.

You can be obsessed and consumed. By a relationship. It's just completely supplanting the place of Jesus Christ in your life.

Deliberately planning a more spiritual relationship with your life partner or close Christian friend. In conversation. Spiritual reading. Prayer. Priorities. And decisions. So I'd like to challenge all of us today.

[ 44 : 55 ] If you have the privilege of being able to be with somebody else. Sharing your life with them. Well may the Bible be present in that life.

May you be reading your Bibles together. And being able to pray together. You might say. Oh I just find that pretty embarrassing to do that. But it's worth having a go. It's worth trying to do that.

It's a real blessing to get into that habit. I would suggest. Maybe you've got a non-Christian partner. And I'm going to bravely suggest to you.

You might say to them one day. Do you know what? Do you know what? Is it possible we could just maybe read a verse from the Bible? Well I know for a fact that there's that situation occurring in this church at this time.

Where two people surprisingly are reading a Bible together. Why not? God could so speak through that.

[ 46 : 04 ] Or asking God for the grace and courage to do whatever he wants you to do. Because you'll know dot dot dot at the bottom. Whatever it is God's calling you to do. And so here we come to the end of the message.

But of course it isn't the end. Because no message actually has an end. Until there's obedience. So that's the challenge isn't it? That's the challenge of this word this morning.

Because 1 Samuel 3 didn't just end with the Lord saying to Samuel. But it came to a very solid conclusion.

When Samuel put into practice what God told him to do. So let's close our eyes. Bow our heads. Just have a moment of quiet.

If there's anything that God is talking to you about. And telling you about. Then that's between you and the Lord. But you might just want to. Drop that down.

[ 47 : 12 ] And make your commitment. To him. Because you're his servant. You're his child. And you're his servant.

And he calls you to a life of. Willing. Glad. Sacrificial obedience. Heavenly Father. Please. Look upon us in your mercy and kindness today.

We are frail and weak. We sometimes have good intentions. But. Just don't ever carry them out.

So we ask for your forgiveness for that. And we thank you so much for this day of grace. This day of a new opportunity. A fresh start. We thank you so much that you can cleanse us from all our sin.

However deep and bad. And. And. Ashamed of it. We might be. We thank you so much that you can cleanse us from our sin. And we thank you so much for the gift of your Holy Spirit given to us.

[ 48 : 17 ] That we might. Live for you. To. gladly and willingly live for you. Help us to do that individually in our homes, in the places where you have put us and in this church so that the light of Christ might be seen in us in all we do and say.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.