



HERE AM I

MCG
Study Guide
Here I Am
Dates February 14 – 20

MISSIONAL
COMMUNITY 

Wednesday February 14th – The Silence of God

Reading: I Samuel 3:1

In those days the word of the Lord was rare

I think that many people wrestle with silence. We have an aversion to being alone with our own thoughts and so we fill the air with radio, or iPods or T.V. even if it is only for background music. We find it awkward when we are with others who go silent. We have this urge to say something to break the silence, and when God is silent, this can be the most difficult and hardest silence of them all.

Although we find it hard when God is silent towards us, what we often find most difficult is when we long for God to speak and call to those who we love that do not know Him. How can we help them to hear God's voice when, to them, God's voice is silent?

In the prologue to Leadership Jazz, Max DePree writes:

Esther, my wife, and I have a granddaughter named Zoe, the Greek word for life. She was born prematurely and weighed one pound seven ounces, so small that my wedding ring could slide up her arm to her shoulder. The neonatologist who first examined her told us that she had a 5 to 10 percent chance of living three days. When Esther and I scrubbed up for our first visit and saw Zoe in her isolette in the neonatal intensive care unit, she had two IVs in her navel, one in her foot, a monitor on each side of her chest, and a respirator tube and a feeding tube in her mouth.

To complicate matters, Zoe's biological father had jumped ship the month before Zoe was born. Realizing this, a wise and caring nurse named Ruth gave me my instructions.

"For the next several months at least, you're the surrogate father. I want you to come to the hospital every day to visit Zoe, and when you come, I want you to rub her body and her legs and arms with the tip of your finger. While you're caressing her, you should tell her over and

over how much you love her, because she has to be able to connect your voice to your touch."

God knew that we also needed both his voice and his touch. So he gave us not only the Word but also his Son, and he gave us not only Jesus Christ but also his body, the church. God's voice and touch say, "I love you." [1]

Your MCG not only helps to connect you to one another, but also to God. We are also the touch of God to each other, helping us to discern His voice.

Meditation/Application

Take time to be still and quiet while holding out one question to God: God is there someone you want to touch through me this week? As people come to mind, write them down and then consider what God might have you do to bless them in His name.

Reflecting on the reading:

Why is God sometimes silent? (You may find it helpful to think about your own relationships with others and consider why you or they might go silent.) Try to list some of the reasons why God is silent:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

1. Today is the day we think of love. Thank God for those who you love and are loved by.
2. Our Summer Student Job Application was declined. Pray for our next steps in conversation with the Government.

Thursday February 15th – Shaped by Your Surroundings**Reading: 1 Samuel 3:1 – 3**

Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was.

It would have been very odd if the boy Samuel, being brought up by a priest, living in the temple, sleeping near the ark of God had not become curious about God and open to His presence.

More than any other place in the community of Israel, God was present in the Holy of Holies, under the shadow of the wings of the angels who bowed before the cover of the Ark, the mercy seat of God.

Perhaps it was Samuel's awareness of God's presence, the daily sacrifices for sin he witnessed, the constant chanting of the temple prayers, the lingering smell of the offerings, or maybe the accumulative effects of all these God-centered activities upon his senses, that shaped Samuel as a prophet of God. The places where we are have the power to shape us, too.

A person who grows up in India is shaped differently than a person who grows up in Iceland. A person who grows up in the slums of Chicago is shaped differently than a person who grows up in the mansions of Beverly Hills. It is as if we become sons and daughters of our neighbourhoods.

But it's not just our ethnic environment that shapes us. A study published in December 2014 in *Child Development*, found that the type of emotional support that a child receives during the first three and a half years of life has an effect on education, social life and romantic relationships even 20 or 30 years later.

Babies and toddlers raised in supportive and caring home environments tended to do better on standardized tests later on, and they were more likely to attain higher degrees as adults. They were also more likely to get along with their peers and feel satisfied in their romantic relationships.

"It seems like, at least in these early years, the parents' role is to communicate with the child and let them know, 'I'm here for you when you're upset, when you need me - and when you don't need me, I'm your cheerleader,' " says [Lee Raby](#), a psychologist and postdoctoral researcher at the University of Delaware who led the study.[2]

As Christians we have dual citizenships, we are citizens of heaven as well as our earthly location. Our heavenly citizenship can shape us so that we can reflect God's Kingdom on earth. Our earthly citizenship allows us the unique privilege of being especially suited to be local missionaries – we already know the language, the culture and the customs. It is as if God has sent us, and prepared us to be missionaries right where we are. Coincidence? I think not.

Meditation/Application

Think of how your environment has shaped and made you into the person you are today. Thank God for those positive influences and offer to him those which are painful.

Reflecting on the reading:

Theologians talk about "thin places". These are places where it seems as if heaven is closer to earth, more tangible. It is as if the veil between heaven and earth is not so thick. Where do you find "thin places" where God's presence seems more real to you?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

1. Pray that the cultural influences of consumerism & individualism would provide us to be neighbourhood missionaries who shine a different light on life and living.
2. NBBC Leaders meet tonight @ 7:30pm

Friday February 16th – Acknowledging God**Reading: 1 Samuel 3:4 – 15**

...the Lord called Samuel.
Samuel answered, "Here I am."

Eli's instruction to Samuel was quite straightforward - simply acknowledge God. If we began to acknowledge God's in private conversations, might we then begin to acknowledge God in public acts?

In a sermon by Dale Durie, he tells the following story:

One fall afternoon, my grandfather was at home with my grandmother and heard a knock on the door. The visitor was a neighbour lady who said to my grandfather, "I was out feeding the horses, and I felt like God was prompting me to come and say thank you for the difference you've made in my life."

She sat down and began to tell stories about times when my grandfather had been merciful to her as a widow and cared for the cows and horses and done all of kinds of practical things. She thanked him for being so real. She went through this litany of good deeds, including bringing peace in relationships with some of her children. She finished with, "I just felt like God wanted me to tell you that."

My grandfather paused and looked at her and said, "It was the Lord Jesus Christ who did it."

There was another pause, and my grandmother struck up a conversation with this lady. A few seconds later they heard a cough and saw my grandfather slumped over. He was with Jesus.

My grandfather's last words were, "It was the Lord Jesus Christ who did it."

Acknowledging God, while seemingly simple, is often hard for us - at least at first. By and large we fail to acknowledge God for several easily remedied reasons:

- First, we don't take time to think over our day and reflect on where God was present to us.
- Second, we often don't allow our minds to be quiet and invite God to speak.
- Third, we assume that God is less humble than He usually presents Himself and so we often rack up to coincidence what God had carefully orchestrated.

Might it be that God has been doing more, speaking more or being closer by than you initially thought? If so, simply acknowledge Him.

Meditation/Application

Over the next week consider trying an experiment. Before you fall asleep, review the events of your day and simply acknowledge where God was working, that you may have taken for granted. Did you awake in good health? Did an unexpected friend call and make your day? Did you find a quarter on the sidewalk? Did your kids help you with a chore? Did a verse come to your mind? Simply acknowledge the tiny presences of God in your day.

Reflecting on the reading:

In verse 7 it says of Samuel, "the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him." What do you think this meant?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

1. Young people with anxiety and mental health concerns.
2. The weekend is a respite for some and for others like working students, retail, medicine, single parents and others it is busy.

Saturday February 17th – Difficult Conversations

Reading: I Samuel 3:15 – 18

“What was it he said to you?” Eli asked. “Do not hide it from me.”

I love the Bible for many reasons; one is that it does not sugar coat anything. This is also probably one of the main reasons why we can believe that it is God’s word. God cannot lie!

We are prone to leave out unflattering details about a well-known leader, because – after all – we want our leaders to be held in high esteem.

Eli the High Priest was very good and dedicated to his role, he was able to guide those who came to him for answers - except when it came to his own two sons.

God revealed to Samuel that the time has come for judgment on Eli, because of his unwillingness to discipline his sons and warn them of the severe consequences of not changing their immoral behaviour. Samuel loved Eli. He was a father to him, always kind and loving. It no doubt broke Samuel’s heart to have to bring him terrible news.

Difficult conversations are something we dread. Nobody wants to confront a friend, a co-worker or a family member with something they already know. Yes, you heard right! The problem is not that they just heard a revelation they knew nothing about. When we confront them, we are not telling them anything they do not already know!

The extreme discomfort is caused by the fact that, what they have been trying to suppress – maybe for years – they are now forced to face! There is anger against the person who does the confronting, because our biggest fear (that of having been discovered as being something other than we appear to be) has finally caught up to us!

On a recent Dr. Phil show I watched the story of a mother and her daughter, who was 21 years old, who had a child when she was 15 and has been working as an escort for the past 4 years. The mother is

looking after her child, who is now 4 years old. The mother was very upset about the way her daughter earned a living, but was willing to accept money from her to look after the child. The daughter was totally closed off and her suppressed anger against her mom was clearly visible.

During the show it was revealed that the daughter has been in counselling for 5 years because, growing up, the mother had various boyfriends in and out of the house and had neglected the daughter. One of these boyfriends sexually abused her and the mother did nothing about it.

Dr. Phil got them to talk to each other, the daughter confronted her mother and as a result the mother apologized to her daughter for the first time. This hardened daughter was visibly touched, her facial expression showed the love she had always had for her mother and these two broken and shattered people have begun the journey toward reconciliation.

Bad news is not always bad, as it is often necessary before we are able and ready to receive good news – and can begin to walk in a different direction.

Meditation/Application

Why not take some time to have an honest (and difficult) conversation with yourself before God and ask Him to search your heart and reveal if there are things in your life that you need to confront?

Reflecting on the reading:

Why do you think Samuel was afraid to tell Eli what God had said to him in the night?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

1. Unity at the Olympic games and the opportunity for the world to gather together; to know and be known
2. Family Day weekend. (As there is room below: perhaps a doodled prayer as record of a conversation with God as you reflect with or about family)

Sunday February 18th – When God Calls, Pick up the Phone!**Reading: 1 Samuel 3****Sermon Notes:**

Saying “here I am” communicates three things:

1. Here I am to _____ God.
2. Here I am to _____ my obedience to God.
3. Here I am to _____ into the person God designed me to be.

Meditation/Application

As you think about today’s sermon what is one action point that you are taking away?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

1. Sabbath keeping is for the purpose of both a physical and spiritual need. Consider praying that God would show you what it means to depend on Him for these needs.
2. Pray for our Worship Arts ministries as they continue to be directed by God in forming how we gather on Sundays and once a month (first Thursday night of each month) for worship.

Monday February 19th – Answering The Call

Reading: I Samuel 3:19 – 21

The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up.

I can remember seeing the movie Schindler's List and learning of the sacrifices that Oskar Schindler made to protect 1200 Jews from being exterminated in concentration camps during WW II. He spent millions and died penniless. We would be right to look at a man like that and think he was great, but what we don't like to hear is that he had many moral flaws, excessive drinking to the point of alcoholism and his many long-term affairs with a variety of women.

It seems that even great men of the Bible reveal moral flaws which cast a shadow on their greatness: David with his affair with Bathsheba and conspiring to kill her husband; Noah's drunkenness as one of the first things he did after getting off the ark; Jacob's scheming and deception. While we may rightly call these biblical characters great, it seems that their greatness was limited to great moments or great acts.

Samuel is a man considered as one of the greatest of Old Testament characters. In Jeremiah 15:1 God places Samuel alongside Moses. But the startling thing about Samuel is that he isn't really known for great feats of miraculous power. What we find with Samuel is a life that was lived entirely consistently and faithfully in his devotion to God. Samuel seems to have lived a life of unbroken purity, integrity and righteousness. His dedication to the service of the Lord seems to have run through all his years with no moral lapses or failures. In his old age he is able to say in front of the nation of Israel "I am old and gray... I have been your leader from my youth until this day. Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the LORD and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these things, I will make it right." ...and we are told that the people replied by saying, "You have not cheated or oppressed us" ... "you have not taken anything from anyone's hand."

Samuel was a great man because he walked his whole life faithfully before God. There is something very attractive about that kind of life from a leader.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "I still believe that standing up for the truth of God is the greatest thing in the world. This is the main end of life. The end of life is not to be happy. The end of life is not to achieve pleasure and avoid pain. The end of life is to do the will of God, come what may." [3]

Each day we must commit our lives to Jesus. Certainly, there is a first day when we invite Him to be Lord, but it is the day by day surrender to obedience that welcomes God's near presence so that we might know what the psalmist meant when he wrote, "Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life..." [4]

Meditation/Application

Imagine what your life would be like today if you had not asked Jesus to be your Lord and saviour. Void of His presence and blessings what kind of person would you be? What kind of circumstances would you be in? Respond to his goodness and love which has followed you in a way that you feel is appropriate.

Reflecting on the reading:

We are told in verse 21 that God continued to reveal himself to Samuel through His Word. Think of a time when God's word spoke to you and come prepared to share this with your MCG.

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

1. Youth drop in is after school today 3-5pm. Pray for (needed) new leaders that might be inspired to connect with these 20+ students.
2. Missional Community Groups in Tansley & Palmer.
(Mountainside is a future potential)

Tuesday February 20th – Game Changer

Reading: Revelation 3:20

“Here I am!... If anyone hears my voice... I will come in...”

Jonathan Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, once referenced what he called the "counter-intuitive phenomena of Jewish history"—a phenomena that applies to Christians as well. "When it was hard to be a Jew," Sacks wrote, "people stayed Jewish. When it was easy to be a Jew, people stopped being Jewish. Globally, this is the major Jewish problem of our time." [5]

It seems that Canadian Christians are beginning to feel a bit of pressure for following Jesus. This is not necessarily a bad thing because it moves us out of our lukewarm condition, and what we find, when we move from that place of indifference, is that Jesus is there. He had been calling us there all along.

In December, 2011, article in USA Today analyzed a surge in a group of Americans called the "spiritually apathetic." They aren't atheists. Instead, according to the article, "They simply shrug off God, religion, heaven, or the ever-trendy search-for-meaning and/or purpose. Their attitude could be summed up as 'So what?'"

The article pointed to the following statistics from recent surveys:

- 44 percent of respondents told a Baylor University study that they spend no time seeking "eternal wisdom," and 19 percent said, "It's useless to search for meaning."
- 46 percent of respondents told LifeWay Research that they never wonder if they will go to heaven.
- 28 percent told LifeWay that "it's not a major priority in my life to find deeper purpose."
- 18 percent denied that God has a purpose or plan for everyone.

One professor of religion concluded, "The real dirty secret of religiosity in America is that there are so many people for whom spiritual interest, thinking about ultimate questions, is minimal."

We live in a time when it seems people are either indifferent or hostile to religion. This is the time for the church to heed the words of Jesus and "Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die..." He's knocking - will we open our hearts to Him again today?

Preparing for your MCG

As you come for you MCG be prepared to share:

- POTLUCK: Be mindful about a story you might share regarding the importance of MCG regular group meeting together. (ie. What it means to you, or how the group has seen God work through them or in them)
- STUDY: Share from your time of Meditation/Application from each day study. What from this study made an impression on you or what confused you?
- PRAYER WALK/ACTIVITY: be creative and intentional as you pray/work together.

Prayer Request:

Record the prayer requests that are shared at your MCG to inform your prayers this coming week.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Missional Community Group (MCG) Covenant

We desire to grow as followers of Jesus who represent Him and His Kingdom well in all of our life. We recognize that God's plan is for us to grow in and through relationships with other like-minded disciples. As those who identify as neighbourhood missionaries we enter into this covenant so that we might be transformed by God's grace and that together we might be transforming agents in our neighbourhood.

To this end, this year, we therefore covenant to:

- Meet regularly for weekly encouragement, accountability, and fellowship in our Missional Community Group and corporately with all of NBBC.
- Seek to grow in likeness to Jesus by engaging in NBBC MCG's shared practices.
- Nurture loving relationships within our Missional Community, accepting others as Christ has accepted us.
- Faithfully steward the resources that God has given us: time, abilities, resources and energy.
- Together discern where God is at work and join Him in His mission to bring the Kingdom of God to our neighbourhood.

In all that we covenant, we recognize that we are dependant upon the grace of God to enable us and so we joyfully enter this covenant in hope of what He might do in and through us.

Missional Community Group Shared Practices

1. Daily engage in reading Scripture and pray for God to bless NBBC in its missional calling.
2. Weekly purposely and intentionally bless another person.
3. Monthly practise table fellowship with someone in your Missional Community.
4. Respond to the Spirit's prompting as you sense Him leading and directing.
5. Share with others the stories of what God is doing in your life as opportunities arise.