

I

Corinth was the ancient equivalent of Sin City. Most of the people of the pagan world engaged in blatant immorality, but some of the worst were those in Corinth. They even had their own saying to justify their behavior. No, it was not, "What happens in Corinth stays in Corinth." It was, "Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food." It was like saying, "You have no choice: you gotta eat, and you have no choice: you've got to behave immorally." Paul tells them and us that we are so much better than that. Our bodies belong to the Lord. We are members of the Body of Christ. We are far more than animals with nothing but animal instincts. We share in the Body of Christ. He goes on to use a very important phrase: our bodies are Temples of the Holy Spirit. If we are immoral, we are sinning against our own bodies, sinning against our union with Christ.

That is a beautiful concept: we are Temples of the Holy Spirit.

That is why we avoid immorality, particularly sexual immorality. It is not a matter of some sort of Catholic *no no*, rules that a person might not understand but does his or her best to follow. This whole area of morality is far more important than that. It goes to the heart of whom we are. We are Christ and He is ours. So, we do our best to fight off our temptations because we are united to Christ. He flows through us. We are not animals. We are so much better than that.

Let us take a mental tour of Rome, specifically the most beautiful chapel in the world, the Sistine chapel. The chapel is beautiful not because on its architecture, it is rather plain that way. It is beautiful because of the artwork inside it. Here in this relatively small building attached to St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican complex in Rome, we come upon frescos by Michelangelo, Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Perrugino, and others. Every year, hundreds of thousands of visitors gaze up at the ceiling at Michelangelo's depiction of creation and the first sections of the Bible. The cardinals who meet in conclave to pick a new pope also do so under these magnificent frescos. The paintings are often shocking to people who depict Catholics as sexually inhibited prudes. The frescos are, as you know, nudes. They emphasize the beauty of the human body with God himself as the source of this beauty. In the frescos, the creation of man begins with God touching Adam's hand and concludes with the creation of Eve. Adam needed Eve and Eve needed Adam to overcome the loneliness of the human condition. They needed to give themselves totally to each other. And here is the message behind these frescos: the only way that we can find ourselves is by giving ourselves away. We are made in the image of God. God is a Trinity of Love, Father, Son and Spirit, forming a community of self-giving love for all eternity. We are created in the image of this love, in the image of God. When Adam and Eve gave themselves to each other, they felt no shame. They could be naked. Shame came when they began to use each other.

St. John Paul II spoke about this in the lectures that make up the Theology of the Body. He said that human happiness depends on self-giving, not self-assertion. That is the difference between love and lust. Love makes a gift of oneself to

another for his or her good. Lust is taking from another for personal pleasure. For us Catholics, sexual morality is more than self-control. It is self-mastery. For us sexual morality is the mastery of the desire that allows us to give ourselves to another in a way that affirms the other. Married love is the human reality that best images the commitment, the intensity and the passion of Christ's love for the Church, for whom He laid down His Life.

Now back to Corinth and to ourselves. Using others to fulfill selfish wants is no different than the sexuality of animals. It is imposed, instinctive and merely physical. We are far more noble than that. We have been created for love, love freely given and freely received, love which is based on a commitment for life. In this light, St. John Paul II speaks about chastity not as a matter of what we cannot do, but as a virtue that frees us to love another person as a person, not an object. That is why we speak about the chaste love of husbands and wives for each other. The married give their deepest selves totally to each other, entrusting their emotional center to each other. You here who are married are free to love each other as Christ loves us.

Let's reflect again on Paul's message to the Corinthians, and us. *"Do you not know that your body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price, the Body of Christ on the cross. Therefore, glorify God in your body."*

This is not the way of the world. But we are called to holiness, to be separated from the world. Sexual morality itself is one of the many ways that we express this holiness. It takes a lot of determination and courage to be a Catholic. It takes determination and courage to love.

Fr Joseph Pellegrino

II

A couple of weeks ago I warned you that occasionally, I will give sermons that will make people uncomfortable. Today is such a day. For those of you who are parents, you know sometimes it is just difficult to talk to your children about something, but you know it the right thing to do.

For those of you who have given THE TALK you know what I mean.

The mother of two daughters, ages 9 and 7, decided it was time to tell them about the birds and the bees. She sent off for a booklet recommended by the PTA and, having read it, called the girls in for a long chat. When she finished, she said, with her heart in her throat, "You may ask me any question you want to."

The oldest said, "Anything?"

The mother said, "Yes, anything," then she took a deep breath, thinking, "Here it comes."

The little girl asked, "Can we have a new baseball bat?"

It should not surprise you if I say that our culture has become saturated with talk about sex. Way back in 1987 a study by Planned Parenthood indicated that 65,000 sexual references a year were broadcast over television during prime afternoon and evening hours and that the average television viewer sees 14,000 instances of sexual material every year. Surely the numbers today are even more staggering and the content is definitely more explicit.

One dramatic change is in the sexual mores or lack thereof of the lead characters in television dramas. People laughed when Dan Quayle chided the television character Murphy Brown for bearing a baby out of wedlock. Mr. Quayle may not have known how to spell "potato," but we have reached a moral tipping point in our society. As never before, our entertainment media is encouraging bed-hopping as normal, healthy recreation with no thought as to the consequences. Even the news media goes into great detail about telling us exactly how someone sexually harassed someone else.

Even in the church we are accepting behavior as normal today that we would have regarded with serious concern just a generation ago. So it is time to raise a red flag and to cry "STOP!" We need to do some serious soul searching. We can determine the attitudes of the culture of which we are a part by changing the station, we do need to understand the role of sex in a Christian's life. For you see, there was a time when sexual purity was one of the clear distinctions of Christian living. As one writer said in describing the distinctiveness of the early church from its surrounding culture, "Pagans shared nothing but their wives. Christians on the other hand, shared everything but their wives."

One new virtue entered the ancient world with the Christian Church. That virtue was chastity. When Christianity was born, it was the radical counter-culture. Our faith was born in a world of moral decadence. And so Christians set themselves apart by embracing a higher standard. We are approaching a similar situation today a morally decadent society except that today many Christians are adopting the mores of the greater society. And I'm not talking simply about our teenagers. Young people will always struggle with the issue of sex. Raging Hormones start bubbling and even the finest young people will struggle. That's part of growing up. But I am sensing more confusion on the part of their parents and even their grandparents about this important issue. Some of who are more like teenagers than adults So, we can no longer be silent. Particularly when we come to a text like these words from the Epistle: "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price.

Therefore honor God with your body.” There are several principles we need to understand about sexuality from a Christian perspective.

First of all, our sexuality is a gift from God. In the first chapter of Genesis we read, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.’” (27-28) God created the first couple and said to them, “Go have fun, kids, and produce a lot of offspring.”

Sexuality is a gift from God. We were created as sexual beings. That was God’s intent. He made it good so that people would procreate but also be joined together. Dogs react to hormones, people react to love.

Sexuality is a gift from God. Motivational guru Zig Ziglar tells about some reading he has done on Puritans in the New World. He says Puritans have gotten a bad rap in our popular literature. Based on his research, he says the Puritans “were far more fun-loving than they’ve been accused of being, but they insisted that the pleasures of the flesh be subordinated for and to the greater glory of God. They were not ascetics, and they never even hinted that they wanted to deny or prevent the enjoyment of earthly pleasures.” In fact, he reports that Puritanism was a youthful, highly educated movement. The Puritans revived Cambridge University and founded Harvard only six years after founding the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Puritans consistently extolled sex within marriage. One Puritan pastor was typical in calling sex “one of the most proper and essential acts of marriage,” to be enjoyed “with goodwill and delight, willingly, readily, and cheerfully.” One congregation even excommunicated a man for sexually neglecting his wife.

(1) This is our American foundation.

Let’s do away forever with the idea that many people have about the Christian view of sex that God simply said, “Don’t.” Even St. Paul writes in I Corinthians 7: “The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (3-5).

Since Paul is often accused of being sexist, please note the emphasis here on the couple’s equal responsibilities with regard to sex. Paul emphasizes what the woman needs: not merely sexual relations, but the affection due her. If a husband is having sexual relations with his wife, but without true affection to her, he is not giving his wife what she is due.

“Affection also reminds us that when a couple is unable for physical or other reasons to have a complete sexual relationship, they can still have an affectionate relationship, and thus fulfill God’s purpose for these commands. On the same idea . . . the wife is not to withhold marital affection from her husband. Paul strongly puts forth the idea that there is a mutual sexual responsibility in marriage; the husband has obligations towards his wife, and the wife has obligations towards her husband.” (2)

In other words, persons who are married have a spiritual obligation to fill one another’s sexual needs, not grudgingly but joyfully. This is a gift God has given us.

But there is a second thing we need to see. **Like all of life, everything is good in moderation.** Catholics unlike other Christians drink things other than water, because it is good even St Paul notes that a little wine is good for the stomach. When we are not moderate, in other words drunk it is not good. **sexuality is to be used with moderation.** This makes sense, doesn’t it? Every gift God gave us is to be used responsibly, or else we spoil it.

Paul actually begins our text for today writing about food. “Everything is permissible for me,” he writes, but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me” but I will not be mastered by anything. “Food for the stomach,” he writes, “and the stomach for food” but God will destroy them both.

In other words, food is good. However, if you let your stomach be your master, you will regret it. There are enough people in our culture who are trying to diet to prove the truth of this proposition. And, like food, sex is good. But, if you do not discipline yourself with regard to sex, it can ruin your life. The moderation in sex is marriage.

Nobody said this was easy. Particularly when you are young. There is an old advice column by Abigail Van Buren that deals with one of the oldest ruses in the gender book, the boy who says, “If you love me, you’ll prove it . . .”

Dear Abby writes, “Girls need to prove their love through illicit sex like a moose needs a hat-rack. . . . Clear the cobwebs out of your head! Anybody who asks you to prove your love is trying to take you for the biggest, most gullible fool that ever walked. That proving bit is one of the rottenest lines ever invented. Does he love you? It doesn’t sound like it. Someone who loves you wants whatever is best for you. Figure it out; he wants you to commit an immoral act, surrender your virtue, throw away your self-respect, risk the loss of your reputation, risk getting pregnant, getting diseased or getting into trouble. That’s the biggest laugh of the century. He wants what’s best for him! He wants a thrill he can brag about at your expense. Love? Who’s kidding who? A guy who loves a girl would sooner cut off his right arm than hurt her. In my opinion, this self-serving so-and-so has proved that he doesn’t love you. The predictable aftermath always finds Don Juan tiring of his sport. That’s when he drops you, picks up his line, and goes casting elsewhere for a bigger, and equally foolish, fish. If he loves you, let him prove his love at the altar.” (3)

I realize how old-fashioned these words may sound to some people today. And that, of course, is the problem. We’ve changed, and we’ve done so quite dramatically. For one thing, guys now may be as likely to be confronted with sexually aggressive females as *vice versa*. The contemporary attitude is often portrayed with these words: “It’s only sex” No big deal.

There was another letter to Dear Abby. A young woman writes: “I’m a twenty-year-old girl, and I’ve been dating the same boy for seven months. We have been intimate, and I used the pill but now I’m pregnant. I believe he should share the cost of having the baby, but I don’t know him well enough to discuss economic matters.”

She doesn’t know him well enough to discuss economic matters, but she’s having his child? No big deal. It’s just sex.

Friends, sex is a big deal. “Do you not know,” writes St. Paul, “that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” Let me repeat that last phrase: “Honor God with your body.” If you are doing anything with your body, or to your body that dishonors God, you are in spiritual danger. Only sex? Not hardly. Your body is a temple. You are not to despoil it with excessive food, with dangerous chemicals, or with indiscriminate sex. It makes no difference if you are young and single or older and married. Sex is a gift from God and it is to be exercised with discipline.

Here is the final principle from today’s lesson: **the highest form of sexuality is within a life-long monogamous relationship.** We remember the old joke about the little boy who was asked what you call the practice of having two wives and he answered, “Bigamy.” Then he was asked

what having one wife was called. “Monotony,” he answered. We also might call it, “What God intended for most people.”

Please do not misunderstand. Marriage is not for everyone. It wasn't for St. Paul. At least not at this stage in his life. There is evidence that Paul had been married at one time. He was a faithful Jew and in that day, Jews considered marriage to be a duty, to the extent that a man reaching 20 years of age without having been married was considered to have sinned. Unmarried men were often considered excluded from heaven. Paul also could not have been a member of the Sanhedrin if he had not been married. Perhaps Paul's wife left him when he became a Christian, or perhaps she died some time before or after he became a Christian. (4) He might have been a widower or he may have been single because of a failed relationship. And, of course, even if he were never married, it wouldn't matter to God. Single people need to see that. You never need apologize for your status in life, whatever the reason may be. A person does not need to be married to be a whole person in God's eyes. We are all valued.

But it is important to understand that sexual relationships are to be a part of a life-long monogamous relationship. As someone has said, “God created safe sex. He called it marriage.” We need to awaken to the moral drift that is occurring in our culture, even among church members, and ask ourselves whether we have allowed ourselves to become a part of a culture that is very much like the pagan culture into which our faith was born and against which the early Christians rebelled. Maybe we need to be part of a counterculture again.

There is a story about an English teacher who allowed her car to roll through a stop sign. She was immediately pulled over by a young police officer. The officer turned out to be a former student of hers who immediately recognized her. He couldn't resist saying: “Mrs. Smith, a stop sign is meant to be a period, not a comma!”

We need to reinstate the stop signs in our society. Our sexuality is a gift from God. It is to be exercised with discipline. Our bodies are the temple of God, and we should honor God with how we use our bodies. Sexual relations are to be exercised joyfully and thankfully within a lifelong monogamous relationship.

1. Zig Ziglar, *Up, Up, Staying Up in a Down, Down World* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 2000).
2. David Guzik, <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/4607.htm>.
3. Bob Gass, *Word For Today*, <http://www.wordforyoutoday.com/bobgass.php>.
4. Guzik.

A New York columnist set out to prove that no one really listens to what other people say at a cocktail party. He says that when he is invited to such a party, he always arrives late. When he arrived late for one such party the hostess greeted him and he explained why he was late. "I had to stop along the way and murder my mistress," he said, "and it took longer than I thought."

Without blinking an eye, the hostess said she understood perfectly, "I was almost late myself, everyone is quite busy. Enjoy yourself. Have a good time."

As the columnist mingled around the party, someone asked him what he did for a living. He said, "Oh, I am the executioner for the State Penitentiary."

The person said without reaction, "Well, that must be an interesting line of work. How does business look this year?" (1)

Nope. Nobody listens. Even to people who are important to us.

A young woman tells of a time when her father went on a three weeks' vacation to London, England. He called her one evening just to check up on her and see if all was okay. The phone line had some form of static on it. For the life of her, she says, she didn't recognize his voice. She heard the person say something like, "Hey Hun, all is well?" She responded positively but she had no clue who she was speaking with.

Her grandmother with whom she was staying was close by. Her grandmother saw the puzzled look on her granddaughter's face and asked her, what's wrong? The girl explained, "Someone just called checking up on me, but I have no clue who."

Her grandmother asked if it was a male. She said, yes. Then her grandmother asked what the person's exact words were. Then her grandmother said, "That was your father. Don't you recognize your own father's voice, even if there's static in the telephone?"

Well, I suspect all of us have been stumped at some time or another when somebody called us and didn't identify themselves.

That happened once to a young boy named Samuel. It wasn't a phone call with static on the line. He simply heard a voice in the night. He was living in the temple of Shiloh. It was in the late hours of the night. The writer of the book of I Samuel reports that the lamp of God had not yet gone out. That's a phrase that actually could mean one or two things.

It might mean simply that it happened late at night. The only light in the temple was a candle hanging high up in the temple ceiling. And it was still burning. But it was obviously near the point when it would soon burn out.

On the other hand, this phrase could have symbolic meaning. Eli the high priest was at an advanced age. He was nearly blind. His sons who were in line to take his place in charge of the temple were scoundrels who abused their roles as priests. They were moral misfits who had no business taking over the temple duties. So the writer may have been saying that, even though the worship of God at Shiloh was not what

it should be, God was still dwelling there. He hadn't removed his presence, his light still shone even though dimly.

Whatever this phrase means, Samuel heard a voice, the voice of the Lord.

You will recall that Samuel was in the temple because of a promise that his mother had made. Hannah, his mother was one of two wives of a man named Elkanah. It's a situation that seems to occur often in the Old Testament. The other wife named Peninnah was prolific at having babies. But Hannah could not seem to get pregnant no matter what. Peninnah taunted Hannah unmercifully about this. Hannah would weep and pray passionately that God would give her a child. Her husband Elkanah would try to reassure her. He would say, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?" His reassurances, however, fell on deaf ears.

One day Hannah was at the temple of Shiloh. She was on her knees, praying fervently for a child. It was then she made a promise to God, "Lord, if you give me a son, I will give him back to you." She was moving her lips without making any sound as she prayed.

Eli watching her pray so passionately, moving her lips but making no sound, thought that she must be drunk. He said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

"Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then, says the writer, "She went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast."

And the Lord did give Hannah the desire of her heart. They named him Samuel, which means "I begged from the Lord." And after he was weaned, Hannah placed Samuel under the care of the elderly priest Eli in the temple of Shiloh to fulfill the promise she had made to the Lord.

Now it is some years later. Samuel, about 11 or 12 years of age, is lying on his bed in the house of the Lord late at night, when he hears a voice calling to him. Samuel assumed the voice belonged to Eli. You can imagine that Eli, being almost blind, would call on Samuel quite often to get things for him and assist him as he grew older and weaker. So Samuel ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went back and lay down.

Again the voice called, "Samuel!" Now if this was some of us, we would be either frightened or very upset because we really don't like to be bothered when we are asleep. But Samuel simply got up and went to Eli again and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

Then the writer explains a key component to the story. He says, "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him."

That's interesting and it might suggest how ineffective Eli was as a high priest. Here Samuel was under his direct tutelage nearly all his young life and Samuel did not yet know the Lord.

A third time the voice called, "Samuel!"

And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that Samuel was hearing the voice of the Lord calling him. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

And Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

This is a beautiful story that many of us learned as children. And it is an important story. Samuel would later become a Judge of Israel and one of its most important prophets. In fact, he was the last of Israel's Judges and the first of its prophets. Remember, it was Samuel who anointed both King Saul and King David to be kings. He had an important role to play in the Old Testament. He played that role thanks to a mother's promise and his own openness to the voice of God. Of course, we are interested in what the story of Samuel means for our lives.

First of all, it reminds us of the importance of listening listening to God and listening to one another. Most of us will not be hearing mysterious voices in the night. At least, I hope not. I did read recently that, according to recent research, the experience of hearing voices is not all that unusual. Estimates suggest that more than half of the "normal" population have heard strange voices at some time or another, while about 4 per cent of the population hears voices regularly.

Mental health professionals usually define hearing voices as a symptom of medical illness and I would suggest that, if this happens to you, you consult a medical professional. However, many people who hear voices are able to live with them and may consider them a positive part of their lives. Some of you may watch the television program "Perception" where the main character is schizophrenic and hears voice and sees people who are not there. Sometimes these voices help him solve crimes. Many people hear voices but never find them a problem.

You may think you have never experienced this, but are you sure? You may have had the experience of hearing someone call your name only to find that there is no one there. Indeed, research shows that, especially for recently bereaved people, it is not uncommon to hear the voice of someone they loved after they are deceased. (2)

Hearing voices does not necessarily mean you've got problems, though certainly it can. Especially if these voices tell you to do something violent.

It's important to note that when God speaks, it is rarely in an audible voice. You'll remember the story in 1 Kings about a prophet named Elijah who was told by the Lord to wait on a mountain top. Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper (12-13).

God sometimes speaks through a gentle whisper. Generally God speaks in the quietness of our own hearts.

Rabbi Burt Visotsky, in the Bill Moyers' PBS discussion on Genesis, at one point says, "You know, I'm actually surprised to be surrounded by people who so readily hear voices. I'm a praying Jew, so I talk to God all the time, but I don't usually hear answers. It's a much more subtle process with me. God may tell Abraham and Sarah to get up and go and change everything about their lives. But nobody ever says that to me. If I hear God at all, it's somewhere between the lines of a page I've been studying for hours when I am reading Torah, and all I ever hear is, 'Burt, turn the page.'" (3)

That's the way it is for most of us. God most often speaks to us without words. He speaks through our life experiences. He speaks to us in the silence of our own thoughts after a time of laying out our needs and concerns before Him. That's the importance of prayer. We come before God with our needs and concerns. God already knows those concerns before we enunciate them, but it is still important that we bring them to Him. Then it's important that we pause and wait for a few moments to see if God has something to say to us. Remember, God has concerns, too. They may be concerns about how we are living our lives. It may be about someone in our family who needs our attention. It may be about something that needs to be done in the church or in the community. Give God a chance to speak. Take time in your prayer life to listen.

It is also important that we take time to listen to one another particularly in the family. Mark Merrill writes about family relationships. He was writing recently about multi-tasking. He says that multi-tasking can be a good thing. But when it comes to relationships . . . maybe not so good. He recently was sitting in their family room and asked his daughter a question about a friend of hers.

Without looking at him, she gave him a one word answer and started doing something else. He then asked her if she was listening to him. She said, "Yes . . . I'm just multi-tasking."

Later he explained to her that he felt unimportant to her when she did not give

him her full attention when they were talking. Hmmm . . . , he thought, "I wonder how many times I've done the same thing to her." (4)

We all know what he's talking about. We rarely give each other our full attention.

Two men were talking over coffee one day. One said: "I'm concerned about my wife. She talks to herself a lot these days."

The other said: "Mine does too, but she doesn't know it. She thinks I'm listening."

No one in this room will be surprised if I say that this is the biggest complaint of most women: "He doesn't listen to me."

It is important when someone is speaking to us, particularly someone we love, that we look them in the eyes as a signal that we are giving them our full attention.

Barbara Roberts Pine compares it to a catcher on a baseball team. Catchers rivet their attention on the pitcher. The pitcher is the absolute center of things. Heaven help the team if the catcher grows bored by his own moment of inactivity and decides to practice signals while the pitch is sent. (5)

Author Bruce Larson once put it like this: “One of the greatest gifts that God can give us in life is the gift of listening. Listening is the key to success and perhaps even survival in most relationships. We have all seen beautiful double-page magazine ads in which reputable business systems companies claim that they will teach the members of your firm how to listen. They suggest that the art of listening leads to business success. I don’t know if they can deliver what they promise, but I am convinced that every year many businesses will fail, not because their product is faulty or their service poor, but because management and workers are not listening to each other. I am convinced that every year some marriages will fail because two people, though lovers, do not know how to listen to each other. Even the one who looks so strong and adequate may be trying to communicate, “Help me. I’m frightened. I’m lonely.” Every year there are parents and children who will begin an irreparable breach because of feelings that can’t be put into words. Family members speak past each other and a relationship diminishes.” (6)

Listening may be the most important sign of love. Samuel listened to the voice of the Lord and became a great man. We will become greater men and women if we, too, listen for the voice of the Lord speaking to us. And it is equally important that we listen to one another.

The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”

And Samuel answered, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

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1. Tim Zingale, <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/the-world-of-words-tim-zingale-sermon-on-divinity-of-christ-54454.asp>.

2. <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-a-z/H/hearing-voices/>

3. The Rev. Dr. William Carl, III, http://day1.org/1119-having_trouble_sleeping_through_the_night. 4. <http://myfamilyminute.com/dailyemail/signup/index.php>

5. *Life With A Capital “L,”* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994), p. 28.

6. *The Communicator’s Commentary: Luke* (Waco: Word Books, 1983), p. 143.

King Duncan esermons.com