



1 SAMUEL 3: 1-10

OPEN YOUR
EARS AND
LISTEN

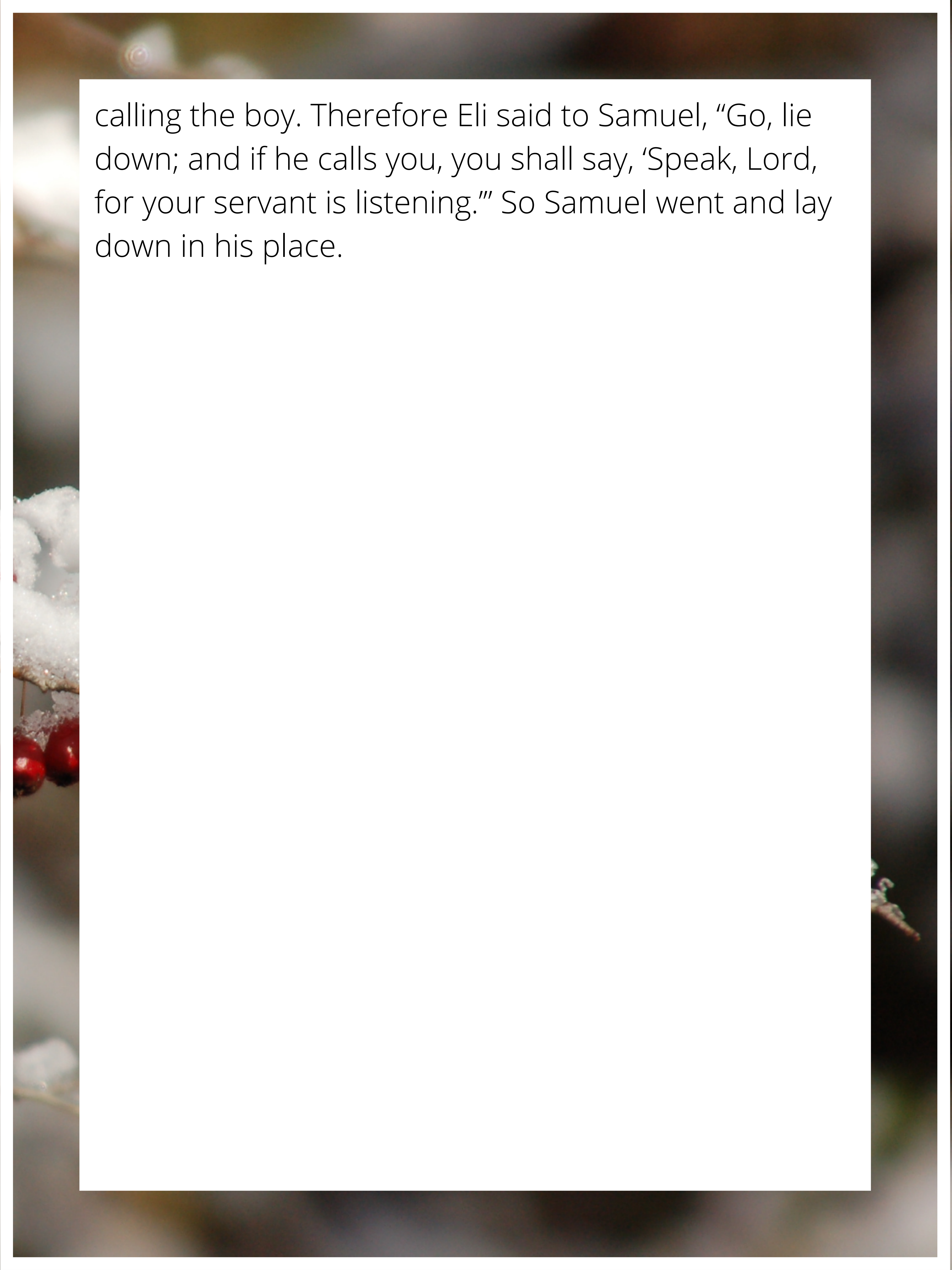
REV. IN KEE KIM

Scripture Passage

1 Samuel 3: 1-10

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!"[a] and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was



calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Sermon

Open Your Ears and Listen

Jesus often said, 'my time has not yet come'. Right from the beginning of his ministry, he said that. When he performed his first miracle, turning water into wine, he said that. His mother came to him and said, 'I have no wine, I ran out'. He said to her, ***"And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour (time) has not yet come.'"*** (John 2:4).

Life has Rhythm

'My time has not yet come'. This sounds odd to us. We don't say things like my time has not yet come. To us, time is simply a schedule. Time to eat, time to work, time to play, and time to sleep. It is a schedule. We think that time is in our hands. But to Jesus time was not in his hand. It was not a schedule that he made. Jesus lived his life, waiting for the time. What does this mean? What does that kind of life look like? To Jesus, life is more than what we control and what we schedule. Life is not just about doing anything at any time we feel like doing it. Life has its own course and its own rhythm. Jesus knew that and he respected that

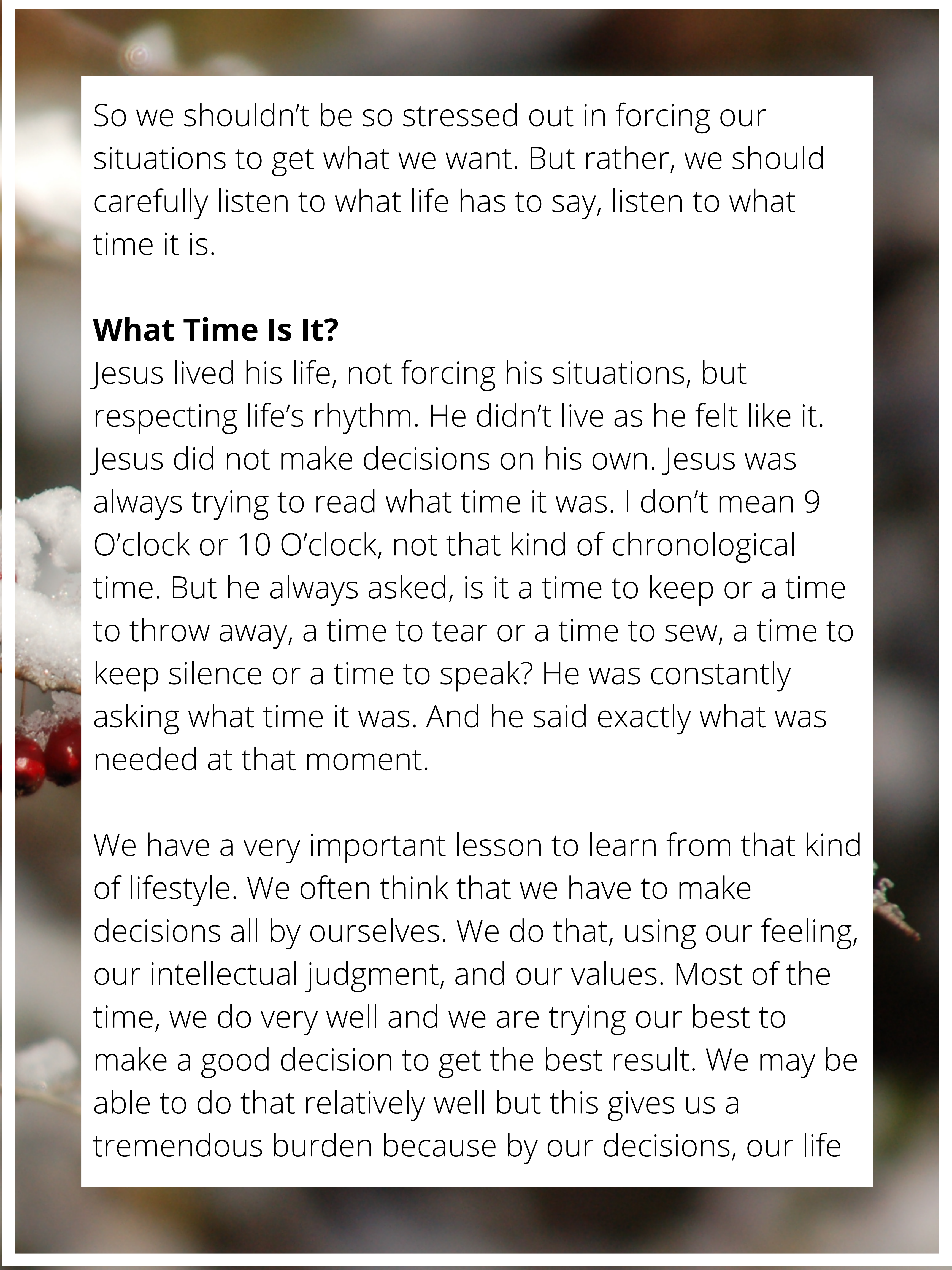
about life. That was why he said, 'My time has not come'.

But also, he knew when the right time came. For us, we don't always know the right time. But Jesus knew what the right time was. So when that time came, he spoke to us a very important message. Listen to what he said when the time came: ***The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:23-25).*** Eternal message. When the time came, he spoke this truth.

Life has its own time. Wasn't that what the writer of Ecclesiastes said?

***a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is
planted...***

***a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance
(Ecclesiastes 3:2, 4).***



So we shouldn't be so stressed out in forcing our situations to get what we want. But rather, we should carefully listen to what life has to say, listen to what time it is.

What Time Is It?

Jesus lived his life, not forcing his situations, but respecting life's rhythm. He didn't live as he felt like it. Jesus did not make decisions on his own. Jesus was always trying to read what time it was. I don't mean 9 O'clock or 10 O'clock, not that kind of chronological time. But he always asked, is it a time to keep or a time to throw away, a time to tear or a time to sew, a time to keep silence or a time to speak? He was constantly asking what time it was. And he said exactly what was needed at that moment.

We have a very important lesson to learn from that kind of lifestyle. We often think that we have to make decisions all by ourselves. We do that, using our feeling, our intellectual judgment, and our values. Most of the time, we do very well and we are trying our best to make a good decision to get the best result. We may be able to do that relatively well but this gives us a tremendous burden because by our decisions, our life

can turn out very differently. Our decisions have profound implication for our lives. Life can turn out very differently depending on our decisions. That's why we get stressed out. No wonder we are stressed out.

A Strong Pull

But when we look at Jesus' life, we realize that his life was not all about his decisions; there was a certain power that pulled Jesus' life. That power was bigger than him. You see - there are two kinds of lifestyle. *One is life that we control by our decisions. And the other is life that is pulled into a certain direction by the power that is bigger than us.* Life that we push with our own power and the life that is pulled by the power that is beyond us. When these two are in harmony, our life is in peace. We call it 'good life'. This is what we desire.

I often told you this story. A boy is crossing a river with his mother. The current is so fast and strong. The boy holds mother's hand so tightly because he doesn't want to get swept away by the strong current. He's afraid to lose his grip. But at one moment, he realizes that mother's strong hand holds him tight. It is stronger than his grip. And that's when he experiences peace. We try our best, trying to make the most out of our

lives. But we realize that there is a strong hand that holds our life and leads it. When these two are in harmony, we find peace in life.

God's Calling

What was that strong power that pulled Jesus? I believe that that was the calling. Our calling is a power that pulls us in a certain direction. This calling defines who we are and what we desire in life. It is not something we decide by our logical calculation. It is the pulling power that is greater than us. Calling is *not what we decide*; it is *what we discover*. When we follow the calling, sometimes we look even foolish. People who don't know us tell us we look foolish. It looks like a foolish life.

St. Paul confessed in this way, ***"We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honour, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless, and we grow weary from the work of our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we speak kindly. We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day"***.

(1 Corinthians 4:10-13). He felt like he was foolish but he was compelled to follow his calling. That's what calling is like.

God Leads Us

The Bible tells us many stories of people who made life decisions by the power that pulled them. They didn't do it because it was their decision or because they liked it. They just followed that strong pull. That strong pull brought Abraham out of Haran into Canaan. He didn't know what benefit he would get by moving to Canaan. As soon as he got there, he had to run away to Egypt. But there was a strong pull that pulled him to that move and he followed. That strong pull brought Moses out of Midian to enter into Egypt to save his people. It wasn't that Moses liked it. He refused it at first. 'Send somebody else, I can't go'. But that power was too strong for Moses to refuse so he followed that calling. That power pulled the disciples to leave their nets and follow Jesus.

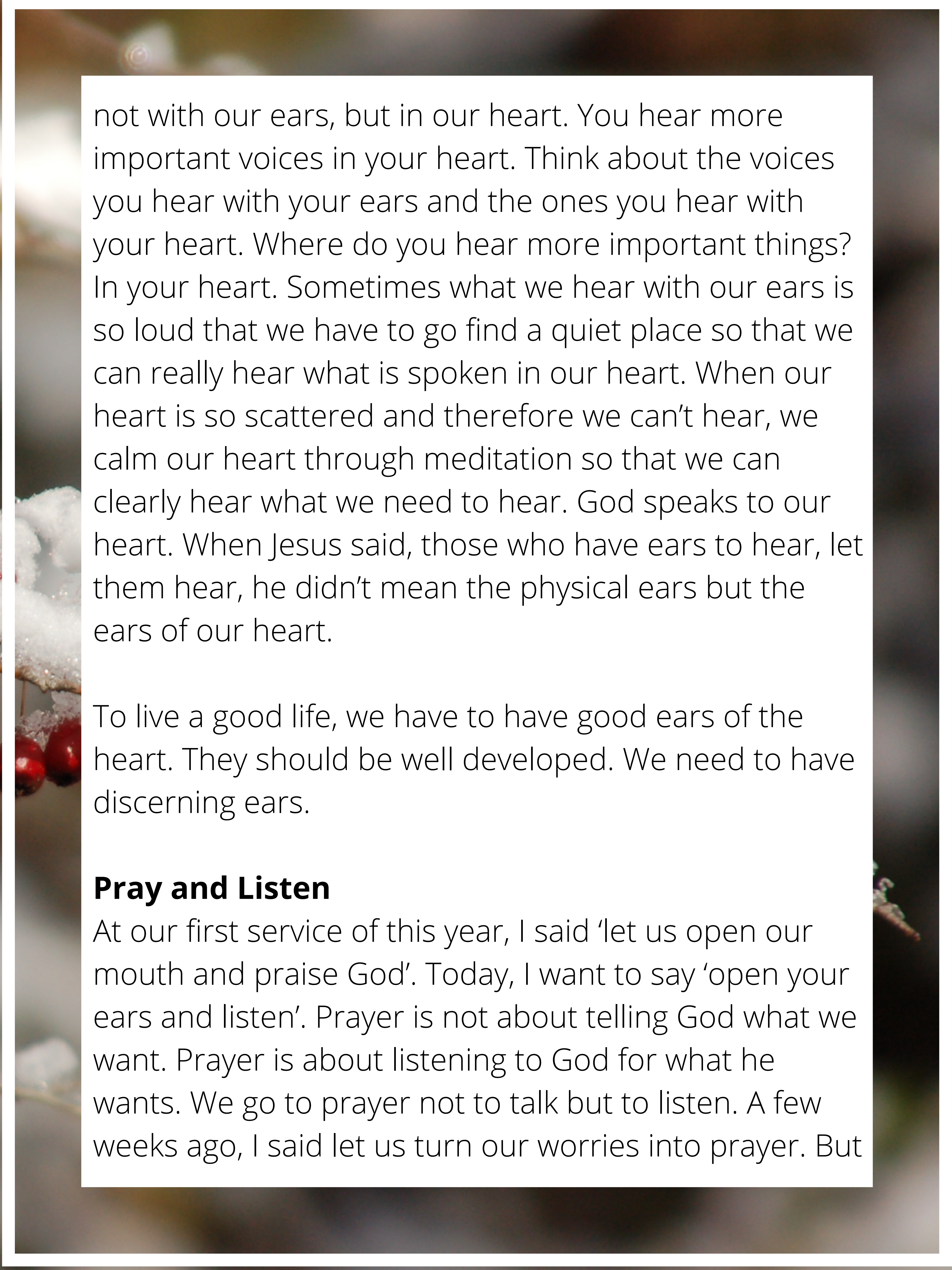
Our God is God who calls us. He called the world into existence. He called the light and the light was there. When God called us, we came into existence. When Jesus called Lazarus, the dead Lazarus came out of the

tomb. God leads our lives by calling us.

Listen with Your Heart

There is calling in life. Life has its own calling. We have to hear the voice of this life calling. When we reflect on what is going on in our lives, we will be able to hear that voice. Some voices are very loud and clear so we can hear them easily. But other voices are small and hard to hear. Some voices we cannot hear because they are buried in the noises around us. God put these voices in our life. Of course, to lead us. Jesus heard that voice very clearly. Jesus knew what was going on in his life very clearly. And he knew what to do, and he knew what to say. Jesus wants us to live our lives listening to those voices in life. That's why he often said, 'those who have ears to hear, let them hear'.

As we look back on our lives, we heard the voices. And these voices have led us. Sometimes, because we neglected these voices, even though we heard them very clearly, we neglected it and we struggled and suffered. Of courses, these voices are not what you hear physically with your ears. These are voices spoken in our heart. Actually, what we hear with our physical ears are not that important. We hear important things

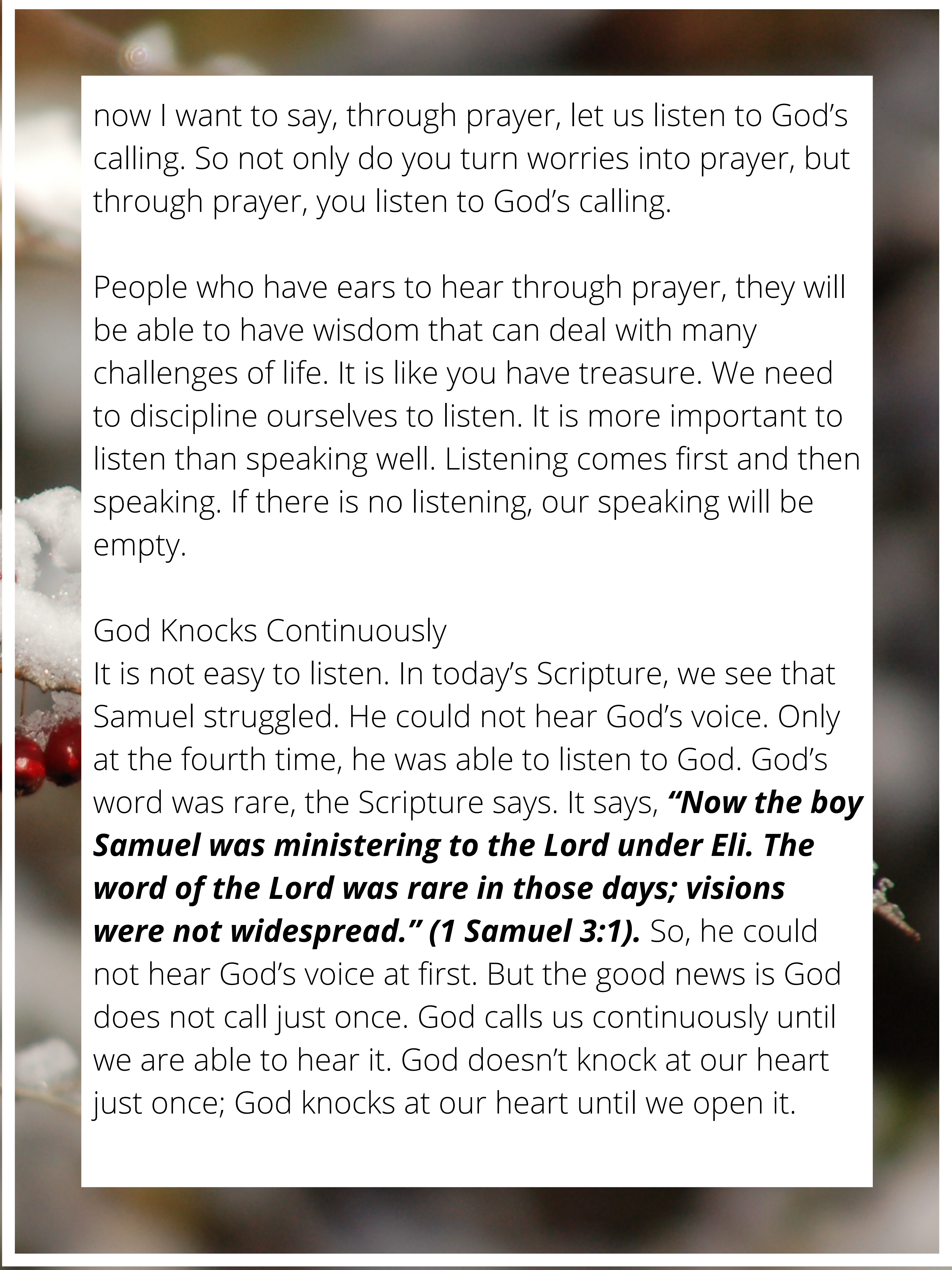


not with our ears, but in our heart. You hear more important voices in your heart. Think about the voices you hear with your ears and the ones you hear with your heart. Where do you hear more important things? In your heart. Sometimes what we hear with our ears is so loud that we have to go find a quiet place so that we can really hear what is spoken in our heart. When our heart is so scattered and therefore we can't hear, we calm our heart through meditation so that we can clearly hear what we need to hear. God speaks to our heart. When Jesus said, those who have ears to hear, let them hear, he didn't mean the physical ears but the ears of our heart.

To live a good life, we have to have good ears of the heart. They should be well developed. We need to have discerning ears.

Pray and Listen

At our first service of this year, I said 'let us open our mouth and praise God'. Today, I want to say 'open your ears and listen'. Prayer is not about telling God what we want. Prayer is about listening to God for what he wants. We go to prayer not to talk but to listen. A few weeks ago, I said let us turn our worries into prayer. But

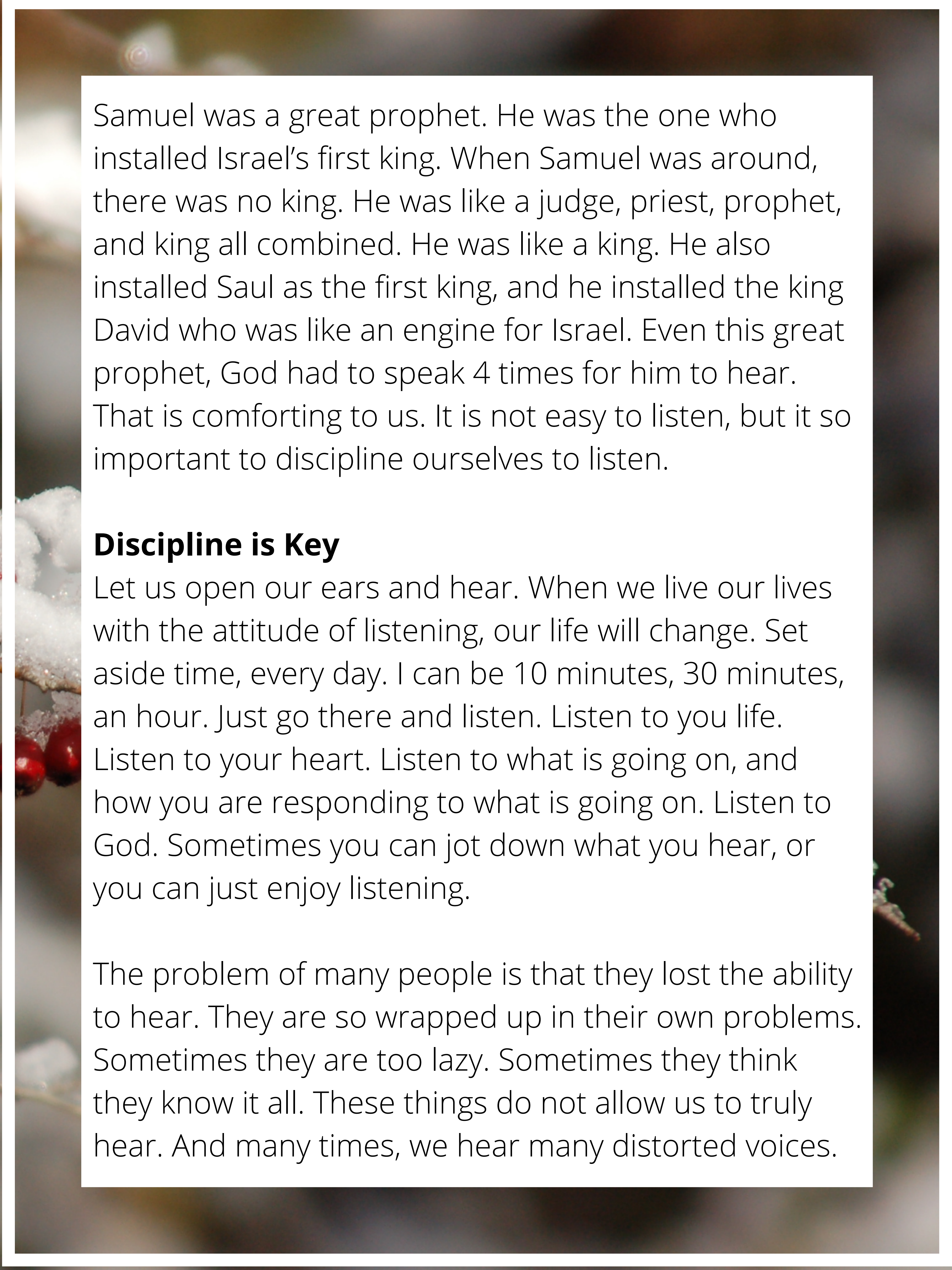


now I want to say, through prayer, let us listen to God's calling. So not only do you turn worries into prayer, but through prayer, you listen to God's calling.

People who have ears to hear through prayer, they will be able to have wisdom that can deal with many challenges of life. It is like you have treasure. We need to discipline ourselves to listen. It is more important to listen than speaking well. Listening comes first and then speaking. If there is no listening, our speaking will be empty.

God Knocks Continuously

It is not easy to listen. In today's Scripture, we see that Samuel struggled. He could not hear God's voice. Only at the fourth time, he was able to listen to God. God's word was rare, the Scripture says. It says, ***"Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread."* (1 Samuel 3:1).** So, he could not hear God's voice at first. But the good news is God does not call just once. God calls us continuously until we are able to hear it. God doesn't knock at our heart just once; God knocks at our heart until we open it.



Samuel was a great prophet. He was the one who installed Israel's first king. When Samuel was around, there was no king. He was like a judge, priest, prophet, and king all combined. He was like a king. He also installed Saul as the first king, and he installed the king David who was like an engine for Israel. Even this great prophet, God had to speak 4 times for him to hear. That is comforting to us. It is not easy to listen, but it so important to discipline ourselves to listen.

Discipline is Key

Let us open our ears and hear. When we live our lives with the attitude of listening, our life will change. Set aside time, every day. I can be 10 minutes, 30 minutes, an hour. Just go there and listen. Listen to you life. Listen to your heart. Listen to what is going on, and how you are responding to what is going on. Listen to God. Sometimes you can jot down what you hear, or you can just enjoy listening.

The problem of many people is that they lost the ability to hear. They are so wrapped up in their own problems. Sometimes they are too lazy. Sometimes they think they know it all. These things do not allow us to truly hear. And many times, we hear many distorted voices.

Open Your Ears

Let us live this year with ears that can hear. Fear closes our ears. Greed blocks our ears. Our pride and arrogance hinder our ears. Scattered thoughts obstruct our ears.

Let us open our ears and hear. God will speak to you and when you hear that voice, you will change. And it requires discipline. It doesn't just come overnight. Let us pay attention to our life. What time is it? What do I need to hear at this point? What do I need to do? Where do I need to be? Is it time to experience forgiveness? Time to speak? Time to start something new? Let us think about it and listen to the voice of life and voice of God.