







Did you notice that in the Bible stories, neither man really understood what was going on at first? Samuel needed Eli to explain to him that it was the voice of God he was hearing and he needed Eli to be incredibly brave and humble to listen to the message Samuel had been given and to accept it as the word of God, even though it was bad news for him-Eli- and for his ministry. (There is not a lot of that level of humility in religious circles.)

Nathanael needed Phillip; first to show excitement and conviction about his faith, rather than keep quiet and be embarrassed about it; he needed Phillip to refuse to be put off by his initial sarcastic response and keep encouraging; he needed Phillip to introduce him Jesus, but then allow Jesus do the talking.

If the true romance and passion of faith are to be restored to our society, then even God is going to need help and now is not the time for Christians to keep quiet or to be high on self-preservation.

Who knows, perhaps one of us is called to be a “Samuel,” a leader, prophet and pioneer for this generation. Or a “Nathanael,” one of a group who will join together in sticking their necks out for Jesus Christ.

We don’t know but the mere fact that we are here today is proof enough that each one of us has encountered God at some point in our lives; that something has stirred in us; something has inspired us to search for a greater power, a greater truth, and a greater love than we have found elsewhere in life. And all that is needed now is a commitment to that searching; a belief in what we are searching for; a trust in the person of Jesus Christ to lead us, as he promised Nathanael, to greater and greater things.

Samuel’s response to God was just the beginning. *Speak to me, Lord. I am listening.* And everything else went on from there.

Nathanael’s response to Jesus was just the beginning. *You are the Son of God.* And everything else went on from there.

If we reach out to God, then God will be reaching back, taking our hand, and moving us on.

At the end of *Casablanca* we see Rick walking away into the darkness. We don’t know whether he lives or whether he dies. We don’t know whether he succeeds in any plot against the Nazis or whether he is thwarted every time. We don’t know whether he is there when the Nazis are finally overcome or whether he has had to leave the battle by then for others to carry on. We don’t know what comes his way to enjoy and we don’t know what he is called upon to suffer. It does not really matter. All we know is that here is a man who lives, who was “dead” and is now gloriously alive again. And so be it for each one of us from this day forward and for evermore. Amen.