

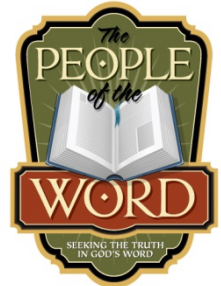
## A Passive Father...A Promoted Child

*1 Samuel 2:12-3:21*

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Memory verse: 1 Sam. 3:21, *The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel thought his word*

Let me begin by asking a question, “Who or what is having the greatest influence upon your family?” That is, if you’re married and you have a family. If you’re not, don’t check out on me. I came to Christ when I was a junior in high school. I grew up in a broken home. My mom was married three times before my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. I never knew my father. The collapse of our home didn’t make headlines, but its impact sure shaped and changed the lives of my two brothers and three sisters.



We all have choices. Christ revealed to me a better way. I soaked up everything I could on God’s intent for marriage and the family way before I was married and had a family. If you’re single, I’d ask you to do the same in the time we have together.

This morning I take the case study of the Old Testament High Priest, Eli. My hope is that we will learn something about parenting from this case.

### THE DETAILS

Being High Priest was a high and noble job. The High Priest was second in authority to the King. But Eli lived before there was a King in Israel. Consequently, he was known not only as the High Priest, but also as the Judge (or leader) of Israel. He was **God's man**. His job was to share God's word with the people and to share the problems of the people with God. The High Priest served for his lifetime and it was often a position he passed down to his children. He was a man esteemed highly. He wore ornate clothing and was treated with honor and respect.

One of the reasons we know anything about Eli, is his relationship with Samuel. Samuel was born under extraordinary circumstances. His mother, Hannah desperately wanted a child. She came to the temple and prayed that God would bless her in this way. She promised that if God would answer her prayer she would give him to the Lord to serve him all his life. When Eli saw her praying at the temple he thought she was drunk! When he learned the true story he said, *"Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."* (1 Samuel 1:17).

At the appointed time Samuel is given over to Eli. Samuel was most likely around three years old at this time. Eli raises this child and in effect, becomes Samuel's mentor. As we know, Samuel went on to become the last Judge and the first Prophet of Israel.

While Eli may have been doing a good job with Samuel, he was failing with his own sons. At the time of our account Hophni and Phinehas are young men (no longer boys). We are told that "*Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord.*" God had made provision for the priests to be generously taken care of. In Deuteronomy 18:1-5 we read that specific parts of a sacrifice were to be given to the priest for their own consumption. Apparently this practice had been altered some. The accepted practice was for the priest to wait for the sacrifice to be offered, then as the remaining meat was being boiled they would stick a fork in and pull a piece out.

But Eli's sons didn't like even this practice. Before the sacrifice was even offered (when the fat was offered to the Lord) the sons of Eli would determine the cut of the meat that they wanted. They were not content with this boiled meat . . . they wanted something they could cook on the grill. Since this was before the sacrifice, there may still have been fat on the meat. So, they were not only ignoring God's commands, they may have been eating that which was to be sacrificed to God!

Unfortunately this was not the end of the corruption. Verse 22 tells us that these boys slept with the woman who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. This is a practice strictly forbidden.

1. First, no Israelite was to engage in such temple prostitution (Deuteronomy 23:17).
2. Second, this was a practice usually associated with idolatry (Numbers 25:1-5).

The people were upset and they talked to Eli. God was upset and He talked to Eli. Eli talked to his sons and...*nada*, nothing changed. In time, God put the sons to death (1 Sam. 4:11).

So, we beg the question: what happened to Eli's sons? Why did they turn in the wrong direction? We don't have many specific statements but I think we can make some intelligent suggestions.

### **Eli Spent TOO MUCH TIME At The Office, On The Jobsite, On The Road.**

Eli had an important job with many demands. Generally the High Priest was at the Tabernacle from morning to night. I wonder how many times Eli came home well after his children had gone to bed. Maybe he regretted not being able to spend time with his boys . . .but he had a job to do. Perhaps he had hopes that he would have some time in the future . . . maybe he was surprised by how fast his boys became men.

Children need time with their parents. This time together is where values are passed on, and where love is demonstrated. Eli's situation is not unique. We live at a time when both parents are outside of the home for long hours because of their jobs.

It is not uncommon for a parent to work two or more jobs to try to provide for their family.

salespeople don't make money unless they keep working,  
overtime is good pay,  
people who serve the public need to be available when the public needs their services.

And it doesn't have to be a job.

- It may be a hobby,
- a sport,
- a volunteer activity.
- It may even be the church.

Anything that keeps us away from home takes us away from our kids.

Now, let me meddle a little bit. We've switched the price tags. We value that which will ultimately mean very little and devalue that which we ultimately esteem.

We have a great drive for success. We want to achieve, we want to advance, we want to work our way up the corporate ladder. We want to drive nice cars, have a beautiful home, take vacation that are Facebook and Instagram worthy.

I'm reading a book right now by David Brooks called, *The Road To Character*, he writes,

*“Recently I've been thinking about the difference between the résumé virtues and the eulogy virtues. The résumé virtues are the ones you list on your résumé, the skills that you bring to the job market and that contribute to external success. The eulogy virtues are deeper. They're the virtues that get talked about at your funeral, the ones that exist at the core of your being—whether you are kind, brave, honest or faithful; what kind of relationships you formed.*

*Most of us would say that the eulogy virtues are more important than the résumé virtues, but I confess that for long stretches of my life I've spent more time thinking about the latter than the former. Our education system is certainly oriented around the résumé virtues more than the eulogy ones. Public conversation is, too—the self-help tips in*

WE NEED TO CARE  
LESS ABOUT WHETHER  
OUR CHILDREN ARE  
ACADEMICALLY GIFTED  
& MORE ABOUT WHETHER  
THEY SIT WITH  
THE LONELY KID IN THE CAFETERIA.

*magazines, the nonfiction bestsellers. Most of us have clearer strategies for how to achieve career success than we do for how to develop a profound character.”*

Eli did not realize that the most important job given to him by God was to “*fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.*”(Neh.4:14)

Perhaps the two most powerful and convicting words you can to those closest to you are: “Follow Me”. *Imitate me as I imitate Christ* – 1 Cor. 4:16.

## **Eli May Have Been Guilty Of An ISOLATED Faith**

It is certainly possible that Eli and his family spent so much time engaging in temple ritual that they forgot what it was all about. It is possible that Eli was so used to the routine that worship was his "job" rather than his privilege. Maybe this is why Hophni and Phinehas had such disregard for the temple service. They saw it only as a way to "make a living". They forgot that they were serving God.

We all know it is true: faith is more caught than taught. If our Christianity is a Sunday-only affair, our kids will quickly conclude that God is irrelevant to daily living. If they hear us change our vocabulary on Sunday morning but hear our abusive, critical speech the rest of the week, they will conclude that Christianity is just a mask we wear . . . a game we play.

For Christians, we have *a call to the Great Commission AND the Great Commandment*. We model for our children a call that goes beyond our skills and talents and shows them how to use their gifts to further the cause of Christ.

One of the greatest moments we have the privilege to witness is when a father baptizes his children.

I love how The Message translate the Matthew 3:17 passage, “*This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life.*” In those words, the Father communicated what every son and daughter needs from their dad, “This is MY Son (a sense of belonging), chosen and marked by my love (a sense of affection), delight of my life (a sense of pride).

In the ceremony we say, “You’re buried with Christ.” But what does that mean? We rise up out of the water to what?

TEXT MESSAGE EXCHANGE – I had emailed Josh the prologue to the book, “The Hole In Our Gospel” by World Vision president Richard Stearns.

It’s a challenge to live simply so others can simply live in so many words.

Josh texted me, “I read the email attachment. Really good. Thanks DAD.

I replied, “Thanks Josh. So much of the challenge I’ve had is to know how much to budget for our family’s needs and wants and how much to invest outside of us in the greater kingdom of God. It hasn’t been easy. I am so affected by the plight of the poor. I wish I could give it all away but that wouldn’t be fair. I so appreciate your patience and love through the times when I felt led to say, “we can do without that.” One can only do so much, but that much we must do.”

He wrote back, “Dad it’s been a blessing to grow up in a home that serves God before all. We’ve experienced so much and we have each other which is awesome.”

### **Eli Was Guilty Of TOLERATING Sin In His Children**

Eli knew what his sons were doing. He was told by the people and he was told by God. But Eli seems to be reluctant in his confrontation. He told them that what they were doing was wrong . . . but he never followed through. He should have taken his sons out of the priestly rotation. He should have made them confess and apologize. He should have banned them from the priesthood. Instead, he did nothing.

In fact, chapter 2:29 we read these words, "*Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?*"

Two things jump off the page:

#### **I. Discipline is an ACT OF LOVE. (Hebrews 12:7-11)**

*Heb. 12:7, Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

The ancient Greeks used the word “discipline” to refer to the training of a child. It signified whatever parents and teachers did to train, correct, cultivate, and educate children in order to help them mature properly.

Leon Morris, “Discipline comes to all; it is part of life, but it is not easy to bear. Yet it is not quite so bad when it can be seen as meaningful. The writer points to the importance of discipline and proceeds to show that for Christians it is rightly understood only when seen as God’s fatherly discipline, correcting and directing us. Discipline is evidence, not that God does not love us, but that he does. Believers are sons and are treated as sons.”

*Prov. 3:11-12, My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.*

## **2. Eli's Toleration May Have Led To His Own COMPROMISED FAITH.**

The Lord says that they were "fattening themselves". Eli must have been either engaging in or approving of their practice of indulgence by eating of this meat himself. In 1 Samuel 4:18 we read that Eli was a very heavy man. He was enjoying the "good life". Once we begin to turn our heads to the wrong in our children's life, it is easy for us to rationalize those behaviors in our own lives. Whenever we compromise the truth, we weaken it's influence. If we will not be the strong party in the parent child relationship . . . we will be the weak party. Instead of being an influencer, we will be the influenced.

Notice one more thing. In verse 25b we read these words, *"His sons, however, did not listen to their Father's rebuke, for it was the Lord's will to put them to death."*

These are sobering words. Principle: Discipline must be administered early.

James Dobson, *"when your children are young they will test the limits. If you tell them not to cross a certain line, they will cross it, to see what will happen. At this point you children are looking for a fight . . . and you ought not disappoint them!"*

We need to teach our children that for every choice there is a consequence. And the only way to teach this is to let our children live with some of the consequences.

- If they get a speeding ticket, make them pay the fine.
- If they get in trouble in school, confront the behavior, not the teacher.
- If you child neglects their responsibility at home...don't give them an allowance.
- If you child forgets an assignment, don't do it for them.
- If your child hurts another person, make them apologize.

## **Let Take An Inventory Of Our Lives**

1. How would our children rate the congruency between our words and our actions? Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Often / Very Often / Always
2. Can we give more time to our families? i.e. Informal instruction. Spontaneous conversation. Dr. Billy Graham said this, “If I had to do it all over again, I would read more, preach less, and spend more time with my family.”
3. Can we give BETTER time to our families? i.e. in what way can we be more strategic with our children? Formal instruction.

**BreakPoint** with Charles Colson  
 Commentary #021205 - 12/05/2002

### **Who Made Superman ‘Super’?**

*Smallville* and Fathers

*Smallville* tells the story of the young Clark Kent, who is caught "between the boy he thought he was and the man he is destined to become."

As his powers emerge, he is tempted to use them for personal gain, like being a football star or impressing the beautiful girl next door. Instead, he comes to understand that his "gifts" are tied to his true calling in life: to serve others through those gifts.

Where does he learn this? From his father. As Alex Wainer, who teaches film at Georgia State University, tells us, Clark’s father, Jonathan Kent, understands that "a superman unanchored by virtuous character" is something that should terrify us.

So, Jonathan takes every opportunity—when doing chores or while standing in the kitchen—to teach his son the "principles he needs to steer through the treacherous shoals of adolescence." He teaches Clark to **postpone gratification** and to **make sacrifices**. His goal is that Clark becomes the kind of man who can worthily wield the power with which he has been entrusted.

**As *Smallville* reminds us, the best way to produce a hero is to have him raised by someone who teaches him the meaning of word *hero*—his dad.**

For all the mistakes Eli made with his family, he still had a heart for God. Chapter 3: 18-21 tells us when he heard the rebuke from God through Samuel’s lips, his reaction was one of acceptance and submission. “He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes.” The foundation of truth Eli had instilled in Samuel in his growing years bore fruit as Samuel was acknowledged throughout the land as a prophet of the Lord. And as the

memory verse for this lesson declared: The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his Word. He is still doing that for us today. Let's pray.