CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
OCTOBER212023

Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 2:12-36.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 56.

Eli's bad, bad boys



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"There is no greater curse upon households than to allow the youth to have their own way. When parents regard every wish of their children and indulge them in what they know is not for their good, the children soon lose all respect for their parents, all regard for the authority of God or man, and are led captive at the will of Satan" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 579).

keytexts

"Eli's sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD."

(1 Samuel 2:12, NIV)

"Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it."

(Proverbs 22:6, NIV)

what do you think?

Rank the following authority-figure roles in order of importance for the different stages in life:

Formative years (birth to age 8)

____ Teacher ____ Caregiver
____ Role model ____ Friend
____ Disciplinarian ____ Parent/Guardian

Primary school years (ages 9 to 15)

____ Teacher ____ Caregiver
____ Role model ____ Friend
____ Disciplinarian ____ Parent/Guardian

Youth through young adult (ages 16 to 25)

____ Teacher ____ Caregiver
____ Role model ____ Friend
____ Disciplinarian ____ Parent/Guardian

Why did you rank the above roles differently at different stages?

What do you think is the most critical stage for character building?

did you know?

The best test of the Christianity of a home is the type of character begotten by its influence. Actions speak louder than the most positive profession of godliness. If professors of religion, instead of putting forth earnest, persistent, and painstaking effort to bring up a well-ordered household as a witness to the benefits of faith in God, are lax in their government and indulgent to the evil desires of their children, they are doing as did Eli, and are bringing disgrace on the cause of Christ and ruin upon themselves and their households."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 579.

INTO THE STORY

"Eli's sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD. . . .

"Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. So he said to them, 'Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. No, my sons; the report I hear spreading among the LORD's people is not good. If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender; but if anyone sins against the LORD, who will intercede for them?' His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the LORD's will to put them to death. . . .

"Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, . . .

" 'Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: "I promised that members of your family would minister before me forever." But now the LORD declares: "Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained. The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your priestly house, so that no one in it will reach old age, and you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, no one in your family line will ever reach old age. Every one of you that I do not cut off from serving at my altar I will spare only to destroy your sight and sap your strength, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life.

" ' " 'And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day. I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house, and they will minister before my anointed one always. Then everyone left in your family line will come and bow down before him for a piece of silver and a loaf of bread and plead, 'Appoint me to some priestly office so I can have food to eat.' " ' "

(1 Samuel 2:12, 22-25, 27, 30-36, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

As you read this story, what key facts or insights did you notice that are especially important?

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_____

What part of this story challenges your view of God? your view of spiritual leaders?

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Who are the main characters mentioned in this passage, and what are some of their weaknesses this story exposes?

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What other biblical stories does this passage remind you of? Why?

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Read 1 Samuel 2:13-17. These verses give more insight into the sons of Eli.

Why do you think this story is in the Bible? What basic truth does it convey about God? What does it say about people?

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What do you think it means when the Bible says that Eli's sons "had no regard for the LORD"? What would this story look like today?

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What lesson emerges from this story that is particularly relevant to your life now?

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punch lines

"Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" **(Hebrews 12:11, NRSV).**

"For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" **(Genesis 18:19, NIV).**

"Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it" **(Proverbs 22:6, NIV).**

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" **(Ephesians 6:4, NIV).**

"Discipline your children, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to their death" **(Proverbs 19:18, NIV).**

"Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged" **(Colossians 3:21, NIV).**

further insight

"Those who desire to control others must first control themselves."—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 247.

"Let the child and the youth be taught that every mistake, every fault, every difficulty, conquered, becomes a steppingstone to better and higher things. It is through such experiences that all who have ever made life worth the living have achieved success."—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 255.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Proverbs 22:6.

The ranking activity in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson challenges you to think about how parents impact children throughout the different stages of growth. What are some examples of ideal training?

What are some ways that your parents fulfilled some of these roles in your upbringing? How did that training impact your life?

Sunday

Read Matthew 6:1.

Read the passage in *Into the Story* and answer the questions listed in the *Out of the Story* of this week's lesson. What do you think should be highlighted: Eli's breakdown in parenting or his sons' (Hophni and Phinehas) hypocrisy and the impact it had on Israel? What other story in Scripture does this story bring to mind? What do you think is the message God has for you in this story?

Monday

Read 1 Samuel 2:12 and Proverbs 22:6.

First Samuel 2:12 is one of this week's *Key Texts*, introducing a brief summary of the whole story: "Eli's sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD." It is clear from *Patriarchs and Prophets* that the problem with Eli's sons was a gradual and continual rebellion that went unchecked and eventually spun out of control. Hophni and Phinehas served as religious leaders but were openly belligerent and careless about their calling. Perhaps you have friends or relatives who have steadily built a wall between their heart and God's Spirit. Pray for an awakening in their heart to see the destructive patterns in their life and respond to God's urging to experience a genuine walk with Christ.

Tuesday

Read Matthew 7:17.

Read the *Flashlight* quote for this week and reflect on the truth contained in such a pointed warning to parents. Think of a moment when your parent(s) held you accountable or refused something you wanted that upon later reflection you realized was probably a good thing for them to do. Do you know someone—not your parent—who models a fair and thoughtful approach to disciplining their children? What specific behaviors do you want to adopt when you have children?

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* listed in this week's lesson and choose the verse that seems to speak to you most today. Why did you choose that verse? Which verse seems to capture the message of this week's story of Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas? Maybe this week you will encounter someone who, like Hophni and Phinehas, has no regard for the Lord. What will be your response to such a person? You might encounter a parent who feels regret about their parenting choices. How could you be a source of encouragement to them?

Thursday

Read Ephesians 6:4.

Make a list of five qualities you want to have as a parent.

Of the five qualities you have listed above, which do you think will be the most difficult challenge and why?

Invite someone you respect to help you develop this quality in your character.

Friday

Read Titus 2:7.

Reflect on the impact that spiritual leaders had on Israel's morale and effectiveness as God's chosen people. Who are some spiritual leaders in your life that have made a positive difference in your relationship with God? What specific stories or events have shaped your perception of them as godly leaders?

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 56.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.