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Problem Priests

Key References: 1 Samuel 2:12-36; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chap. 56, pp. 575-580; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 3, pp. 155-159; Our Beliefs, nos. 7, 8, 22, 23.















powertext

"They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, they seek their own gain" (Isaiah 56:11, NIV).

Have you ever chosen to be silent rather than to sing the hymns in church? Have you ever kept your eyes open during prayer or distracted others from listening to the sermon? How do your choices affect your ability to truly worship God?

powerpoint

We worship God when we focus on Him and His power.

Eli saw a man walking toward him quickly. As he got closer, Eli could see the veins in his forehead bulging and the angry look on his face.

Eli sighed deeply and prepared himself for the bad news that was sure to follow.

"Your sons have no business being priests!" the man began angrily.

Eli knew his sons had no respect for the holy things of the tabernacle, for their positions as priests, or even for God. He had tried to correct them, but nothing had changed.

The man continued. "The priests are not content with the pieces of meat that God instructed us to give them; they take even more from the meat that is ours." The man paused for a long time, glaring at Eli. "Your sons send their servants to us before the fat has even been offered to the Lord as His portion! The servants demand raw meat for the priests to roast.

"If we protest and tell them that we must wait until the fat has been offered to the Lord, they threaten us, saying they will take the meat by force!"

Eli closed his eyes and remained silent for a moment. The man was right. Hophni and Phinehas should not be priests. They had taken advantage of their positions and cheated the people. They did not care about the God they were there to serve. Eli knew, down deep, that he was also not showing respect for God by allowing his sons to continue as priests. But what to do?

Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 75.

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Sunday

READ Read 1 Samuel 2:12 and this week's story, "Problem Priests."

CREATE Draw a pair of binoculars. Write out your power text and attach it to the binoculars in some way. Place it where you can see it all week.

LEARN Begin to learn the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you keep your focus on Him.

Monday

READ Read 1 Samuel 2:13-17.

LIST In your Bible study journal, list ways you can show respect for others in your family and for the things of God—either at home or at church.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you respect and honor Him.

Tuesday

READ Read 1 Samuel 2:18-21.

THINK How did the people feel when the offerings they were trying to give to God were stolen by the priests?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Eli's sons chose to focus on their needs rather than God's power. How will you choose to worship God today for His love and power?

Slowly Eli opened his eyes. "I'll talk to them again," he promised.

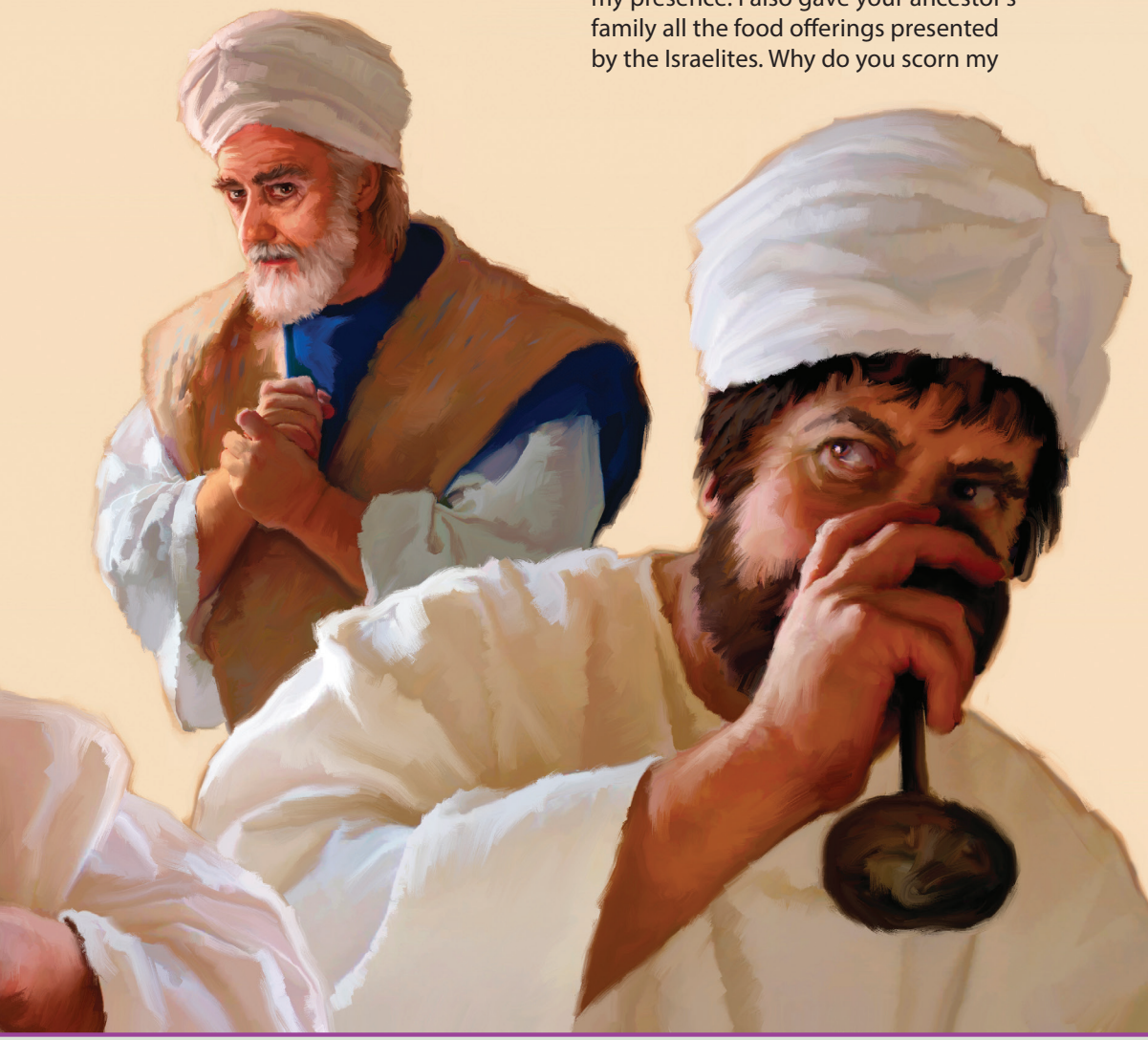
Hophni and Phinehas thought of nobody but themselves. They had forgotten who they were and why they were at the tabernacle. The Levites were a special people, set aside to serve God. Only a select few could come so close to God's presence, but Eli's sons just didn't seem to care. They failed to worship God as He instructed; instead they worshipped themselves.

Getting up from his seat, Eli went off to find his sons. If only they cared about spiritual things the way the young boy Samuel did.



"Why do you do such things?" Eli asked Hophni and Phinehas when he finally found them. "I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours" (1 Samuel 2:23, NIV). Eli went on, trying to caution his sons, attempting to convince them to change. It was as if he were talking to stones. His sons were not interested in hearing what Eli had to say. It was too late to try to correct them.

One day God sent another man to visit Eli. This man brought a message from God. "Did I not clearly reveal myself to your ancestor's family when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh? I chose your ancestor out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your ancestor's family all the food offerings presented by the Israelites. Why do you scorn my



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Wednesday

READ Read 1 Samuel 2:22-26.

THINK How was Samuel's worship and service different from that of Eli's sons?

CARE Find ways to help each of your family members.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God that you can worship Him as you focus on His character and power.

Thursday

READ Read 1 Samuel 2:27-33.

LIST Draw or write a list of things, activities, people that distract you from thinking about God's power.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you focus on Him alone.

Friday

READ Read 1 Samuel 2:34-36.

SHARE At worship, share the story of Eli and his sons with your family.

RECITE Say the power text from memory.

DISCUSS Talk with your family about ways to stop focusing on yourself and to start making God your life's focus. Think of specific ways you can accomplish that.

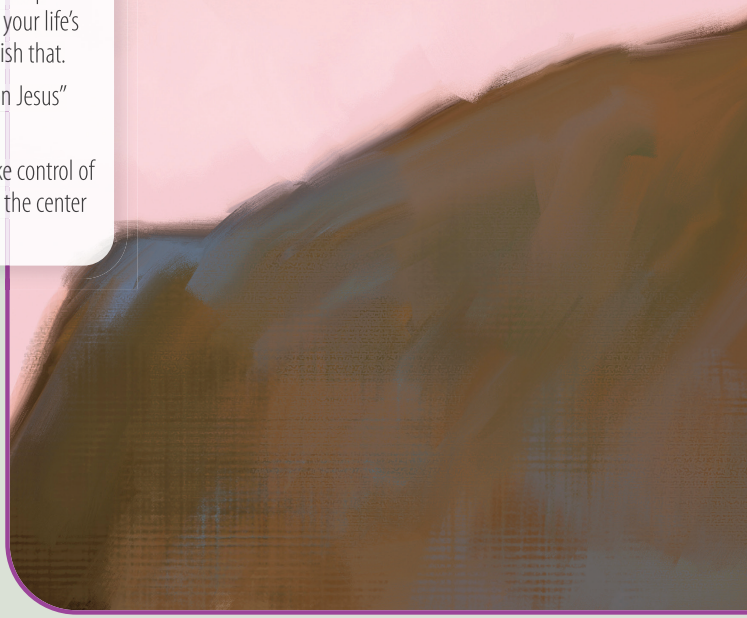
SING Sing the chorus of "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus" together.

PRAY Ask God to enter your heart and to take control of every area of your life. Pray that He may be at the center of everything you do.

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?"

Eli's eyes became very large, and he slumped on his bench. The messenger continued by telling Eli that his family would no longer serve the Lord as priests. The privilege and responsibility were being removed from them because of their carelessness and disrespect for God. Eli's descendants would not be blessed with long lives. Hophni and Phinehas would end up dying, both on the same day.

God was going to raise up a faithful servant who would serve Him as priest and would honor God in all that he did (see verses 27-35, NIV).





IN HIS SERVICE

A = 0	N = 0
B = 0	O = 2
C = 2	P =2
D = 8	Q = 2
E = 0	R = 7
F = 5	S = 4
G = 2	T = 4
H = 3	U = 1
I = 6	V = 0
J = 0	W = 3
K = 1	X = 7
L = 1	Y = 3
M = 0	Z = 2

Instructions: In the table, each number tells how often each letter is used in the puzzle. Use the letter patterns and trial and error to help you figure out this puzzle. Each letter is substituted for another; can you decipher this message? The Bible reference is given as clues.

"Riosix pys pridf ds qx zctfd glfd qx
dyx wxto hrfd rik dyx fxtwrid sz rhh"
(Grtu 9:35, ICW)
(Mark 9:35, NIV)

R	I	O	S	I	X		P	Y	S		P	R	I	D	F		D	S		Q	X		Z	C	T	F	D	
G	L	F	D		Q	X		D	Y	X		W	X	T	O		H	R	F	D		R	I	K		D	Y	X
F	X	T	W	R	I	D		S	Z		R	H	H			G	R	T	U		9	:	3	5		I	C	W

C=I (2)	O=Y (2)	P=W (2)	T=R (4)	W=V (3)
Z=F (2)	S=O (4)	D=T (8)	Y=H (3)	H=L (3)
R=A (7)	I=N (6)	F=S (5)	G=M (2)	K=D (1)
I=N (6)	X=E (7)	Q=B (2)	L=U (1)	U=K (1)