

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 SAMUEL 1-3

The life of the Prophet Samuel was a stream of unbroken faithfulness to God.

Plot Samuel's years on a timeline, and you'll find no breaks for rebellion - no seasons sowing wild oats - no lapses of spiritual laziness – no bouts with moral compromise. Samuel's mother dedicated him to God from his infancy, and Samuel remained devoted to the Lord for the remainder of his long life.

Samuel's life is an example of *compound godliness*.

When you open a money market account at the bank you expect to benefit from compound interest. The money you make – makes more money. The interest rolls back into the investment. It feeds on itself. It builds and grows and snowballs.

And the same principle applies to spiritual investments. The person who lives for God receives compound benefits. A *heart* devoted to purity grows increasingly pure. A *mind* fixed on heavenly thoughts becomes more and more elevated in its thinking. A *will* bent toward God grows in the direction of the bend – it leans out further towards God. A *spirit* willing to muster faith adds muscle to that faith.

Jesus says in Luke 8:18, “Whoever has, to him more will be given...”

This was Samuel. Years of compounded purity, loyalty, faith, and listening to God – all added up. It compounded into a

man of character, integrity, and spiritual stature. His years of godly living bestowed on Samuel an authority that enabled him to hold the nation in check, and usher in a new age of Israel's history.

In Jeremiah 15:1 the Lord is bemoaning the sin of a future generation when He makes the statement, “Even if Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My mind would not be favorable toward this people...” Notice God Himself lumps Moses and Samuel in the same category – both were powerful intercessors.

Here's why young people need to live for Jesus – faithfulness compounds like interest. A life devoted to Jesus at an early age, not only benefits you now - but the years of godly living grow into a stature and authority God will use mightily.

Make too many withdrawals from God – don't give godliness an opportunity to accrue – create too many lapses on the timeline – and you'll lose out.

In the days of Samuel, God needed a man of stature and influence to lead the nation through a transition. Samuel was *the last judge, and the first prophet*.

The prophets were men God raised up to speak His word to the kings of Israel.

Samuel was the prophet who oversaw the beginnings of Israel's monarchy. He anointed the first two kings, Saul and David – and gave them needed instruction.

Samuel's ministry was similar to the ministry of John the

Baptist – both were lifelong Nazirites - and both were forerunners of Davidic kings. Samuel served David - *first in the divinely appointed lineage*. Whereas, John served Jesus, *the last of the lineage* – and heir to all the promises God had made to David.

Samuel is often called “*the prophet of prayer*”. On several occasions he rallied the nation to pray. As we read in Jeremiah 15, He was a mighty intercessor.

When he died the entire nation gathered to Samuel’s home in Ramah to mourn his death? The people of Israel loved Samuel, because they knew he loved them.

The story of Samuel begins in chapter 1, “**Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.**

And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.”

Once, Mark Twain was challenged by a polygamous Mormon to quote a verse prohibiting bigamy. He answered, “**That’s easy... *no man can serve two masters.*”**

God’s ideal was one man and one woman in a lifelong marital relationship. God tolerated polygamy – as He does divorce today – but it was never His intention.

Recently, Middle East archaeologists have unearthed a cuneiform tablet entitled, “*The Top Ten Reasons No Man In His Right Mind Would Want Two Wives...*” Here’s the translation from the ancient Semitic Chaldean...

10) Twice as many birthdays and anniversaries to remember.

9) You have to pick who gets the second garage door opener.

8) By the time two wives take a shower there's no more hot water.

7) Who can afford *two dozen* roses on Valentines Day?

6) When it comes to choices... it's now two against one.

5) Your one drawer, and half a foot of closet space - gets cut in half.

4) Two honey-do lists.

3) Do you really want to decide who gets the master bedroom?

2) Two mother-in-laws.

1) PMS twice a month.

Apparently, Elkanah never read this Top Ten List. If he had he would've added one more reason why two wives are not a good idea... *they might not get along...*

Polygamy can spawn fierce competition. It didn't take long for *brides* to become *rivals*. The husband and kids ended up caught in the *middle of a wifely warfare*.

Verse 3 “This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there.” Elkanah and his family made an annual pilgrimage to the Tabernacle. They went to observe the Jewish feast.

“And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all

her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the LORD had closed her womb.” What a provocative comment... God is sovereign over all things - and that includes human conception. The Lord can close a womb, or open a womb. And at times His will does both. Child bearing couples need to trust God.

Hannah loved the Lord. She was a godly woman. If all Hannah had to cope with was God’s will, she probably wouldn’t have been so upset. Hannah trusted the Lord exclusively. But it was Peninnah that created the storm in her life.

Verse 6 “And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the LORD had closed her womb.” The phrase “to make her miserable” could be translated “to violently agitate”. Literally, it refers to “a thunder crash.”

In other words, Hannah was an emotional storm.

In ancient times, barrenness was the heaviest burden a woman could bear. It carried the stigma of a *curse* – but the digs from her rival made it all *worse*.

There’s no doubt, Peninnah was a jerk, but Elkanah had exacerbated the problem. He loved Hannah, and hated to see her suffer – so to compensate Elkanah gave her special favors. At the Tabernacle it was a double portion of the sacrifice - but I imagine Elkanah gave Hannah twice as much of everything...

Twice his time... Twice the grocery money... Two weeks of vacation to Peninnah’s one... Double the mad money... One

of those mini-vans with two sliding side doors, instead of Peninnah's traditional model...

And how do you think Peninnah reacted to Elkanah's extra shows of affection?

She hated it, and she retaliated by bombarding Hannah with *cutting comments*, and *biting barbs*. Peninnah would brag about her children in front of Hannah, then make a comment like, **“And what about your kids, Hannah... *Oops, I forgot!*”** *I'm sure it was all poor Hannah could do to keep from slapping the girl silly!*

“So it was, year by year (It was a perpetual problem), when she went up to the house of the LORD, that she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat.”

Hannah could steer clear of Peninnah around the house. She lived a separate life. Her daily routine avoided contact with her rival. But once a year the two wives shared a common space. Every year Elkanah loaded up his family in the mini-van, and made his pilgrimage to Shiloh where he worshipped God at the Tabernacle.

And this was where the sparks flew between Hannah and Peninnah.

Every chance she got Peninnah stuck it to Hannah... *another dig, another slap, another poke*. Hannah loved God, but she hated these trips. The conflict between her and Peninnah spoiled her worship. It distracted her focus from the Lord. What should've been a joyous *celebration* was a miserable time of *exasperation*.

I'm sure Peninnah would've preferred to stay *home alone*.

But the Tabernacle was God's house. It was Hannah's duty to meet with others and worship at Shiloh.

Staying home sounded appealing, but it wasn't an option acceptable to God.

Here's a lesson for us. We too are liable to meet a Peninnah at God's house. People at church can get jealous of your fruitfulness. They can become a source of irritation and aggravation. *And our temptation is to just stay home alone...*

But staying home is never an option acceptable to God. Hebrews 10:25 every believer is instructed to **"not forsake the assembling of ourselves together."**

Guys, don't let a Peninnah rob you of the fellowship, and encouragement, and worship, and opportunities to serve we glean when we all meet together. God knows all about Peninnah, yet He still wants us to be involved in our church.

In verse 7 Hannah is so upset she won't eat. She's sulking during supper.

Elkanah tries to cheer her up in verse 8, **"Her husband said to her, Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"** He loved his wife. He hated to see her upset.

"So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh..." She went to the Tabernacle to pour out her soul to the Lord... **"Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the LORD. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish.**

Then she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You

will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

Hannah asks the Lord for a baby boy, and makes a two-fold VOW...

First, if God answers her request she'll see to it the little boy serves the Lord. She'll turn him over the priests, and enroll him in the Tabernacle ministry.

Second, she'll also see to it that he becomes a lifelong Nazirite. Remember, a Nazirite was a walking billboard for the values and virtues of God's kingdom.

He stayed clear from the grape soda – *he found pleasure in the spiritual not the physical*. He never cut his locks – *attractiveness is found internally not externally*. He avoided contact with death – *his life stood for eternal not temporal pursuits*.

Samson was also a Nazirite - but he had too many lapses on his timeline – too many withdrawals. Godliness failed to accrue, and turn into character. As a result in times of testing Samson yielded to temptation and violated his vow.

Samson and Samuel were alike *outwardly*, but were opposites *inwardly*.

I love Hannah's prayer, "Remember me, and not forget your maidservant".

For two years Kathy and I tried to have a child, but to no

avail - and I witnessed firsthand the passion that went into the prayers of a barren woman.

Kathy latched onto Hannah's words, and kept praying "*Lord, remember me...*"

In May, 1982 we attended a pastors' conference where Kathy asked the wives to pray for her to have a child. As they prayed, the Lord spoke in a prophecy, "**By this time next year you will have a child.**" To make a long story short our first son was born the very same weekend exactly one year later. We were blessed.

In light of the prayer *Kathy and Hannah* prayed we named our son, "*Zachary*", which means "*remembered of the Lord.*" The power of passionate prayer!

James 5:17 is true. "**The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.**" Pour out your soul to God, and He'll pour out blessings on you.

Verse 12 "**And it happened, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli watched her mouth. Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk.**" Hannah's prayer was so passionate, so raw, so emotional... Eli thought she was drunk – *she was tipsy.*

Her lips moved, but she prayed in her heart. Unlike most folks - Hannah came to the synagogue - not to impress the bystanders, but to do business with God.

You've got to think it was no accident that the man who was called "*the prophet of prayer*" had a mother who put it to practice. I have no doubt Samuel gained his *passion for*

prayer – and his *power in prayer* – from his godly mother, Hannah.

Guys, there's a difference between *saying prayers* and *praying prayers*.

Too many people have turned prayer into a performance. It's a point on the Sunday program where a man stands and prays to the people – not God.

Once, a man stood in church who shouted his prayer. A little boy told his mom, "Wow, if that man lived closer to God I bet he wouldn't have to shout so loud."

Hannah prayed like her prayer mattered. Is that how you pray? *Prayers that don't matter to you, here on earth, will certainly not matter to God in heaven!*

"So Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!"

And Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now.

Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him." Nine months later God will do just that!

"And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight."

So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no

longer sad.

Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked for him from the LORD." "*Samuel*" means "*heard by God*".

"Now the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "Not until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may appear before the LORD and remain there forever."

And Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him. Only let the LORD establish His word."

So the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him. Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh. And the child was young. Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli."

"And she said, "O my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to the LORD." And I love Hannah's beautiful words in verse 27, "For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD." So

they worshiped the LORD there.”

I'll never forget the Sunday morning when everyone had left church except my wife, my kids, myself, and one other little boy. We looked around for Kyle's parents, but they were nowhere to be found. Eventually we learned that mom and dad had driven separate cars, and each parent thought the other had Kyle. It was funny.

Like Hannah we all really do need to give our kids to the Lord. Not literally, but we need to follow in the spirit of her action. Hannah realized that her son didn't belong to her – he was God's property. Samuel had been given to her on loan.

Parent, your child is also a loaner. If I borrowed a car I'd take extreme care to keep from damaging what doesn't belong to me. Likewise, it's vital how we treat our children. Though you're footing the bill, they still don't belong to you.

Keith Green use to sing a song of devotion, “I pledge my head to heaven for the Gospel.” The second stanza got harder, “I pledge my wife to heaven for the Gospel.” But for me, the third stanza was the toughest of all, “I pledge my son to heaven for the Gospel.” It's okay for me to take on the risk, and trust the Lord, and go to a foreign country to share the love of Jesus, but what's my reaction when my son or daughter wants to go? *Have we dedicated our kids to God?*

Parenting is really a process of giving back to God the gift He's given to you. From day one, you're turning loose of your child a little at a time.

Author, Alfred Torrie, writes, “It needs courage to let our children go, but we are trustees and stewards and have to

hand them back to life – to God. As the old saying puts it: ‘What I gave I have.’ We have to love them and lose them.”

This Wednesday, our third born left for college - we’ve *missed him already*.

But he doesn’t belong to us - *never has*. He was given to God on the day he was born. God has a plan for Nick’s life. We gave him to God again this week.

In chapter 2 Hannah prays again. This time she *praises* God for granting her request. Hannah’s praise could be entitled, “*The Triumph of the Underdog*”.

“And Hannah prayed and said: “My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn (An animal’s horn is his strength. “My horn” is “my strength”) is exalted in the LORD.

“I smile at my enemies (You know she’s speaking of Peninnah. Her assailant’s ammunition has been taken away.), because I rejoice in Your salvation.”

“No one is holy like the LORD, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God.” In verse 3 surely she addresses Peninnah, “Talk no more so very proudly; let no arrogance come from your mouth, for the LORD is the God of knowledge; and by Him actions are weighed.” God alone is the all-knowing judge.

We make assumptions. We jump to conclusions over mere speculation.

“The bows of the mighty men are broken, and those who

stumbled are girded with strength.” In other words, God has turned the tables. “Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, and the hungry have ceased to hunger. Even the barren has borne seven, and she who has many children has become feeble.

The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up.

The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory.”

"For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and He has set the world upon them." A poetic way of saying, "*God laid the earth's foundation. He is in charge!*

“He will guard the feet of His saints, but the wicked shall be silent in darkness. For by strength no man shall prevail.” Trust in His strength - not your own.

In verse 10 Hannah's *prayer* becomes a *prophecy* of the end times.

“The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces; from heaven He will thunder against them. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. "He will give strength to His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed."

Later in Israel's history God will promise His people a future king who'll rule the earth for all eternity. The Hebrews called Him the "*Messiah*." A word that means "*Anointed One*". Here God promises strength and exaltation to His anointed.

Verse 11, “Then Elkanah went to his house at Ramah. But

the child ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest.” As a young boy Samuel is given back to God.

In verse 12 the scene shifts from Hannah’s family to the family of Eli, the high priest. “Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD.”

It’s sad when men who supposedly represent God, don’t even know Him.

And remember from Judges... what happens to an ungodly person? *They eventually become immoral. Ungodliness produces unrighteousness.*

And the next few verses expose the crimes of Eli’s family.

“And the priests’ custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest’s servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.

Also, before they burned the fat, the priest’s servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, “Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw.” And if the man said to him, “They should really burn the fat first; then you may take as much as your heart desires,” he would then answer him, “No, but you must give it now; and if not, I will take it by force.”

Remember when an animal was brought to the Tabernacle to be sacrificed it was divvied up. The fat was burned to the

Lord - the right breast and thigh went to the priest - the rest of the sacrifice was eaten by the family that brought the beef.

Eli's boys were strong-arming the people. They were demanding more than their share – even taking it by force. Thugs had invaded the Tabernacle.

It reminds me of the pastor who described to some fellow pastors how he dispersed the Sunday offerings, “I take all the money and throw it up in the air. What God wants He keeps, and what comes back down I take for myself.”

It's sad when a pastor becomes a rip-off. He's only out to pad his pockets.

And here's the great tragedy. Verse 17, “Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.”

People resented giving to God because they knew the money was being used foolishly and selfishly. Guys, if you don't give that's between you and God - *but I don't want it to be because of me* – or our management of the church's funds.

We account for every penny, and try our best to spend every cent wisely.

Verse 18 “But Samuel ministered before the LORD, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.” The ephod was an apron - the uniform of a priest.

“Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring it to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "The

LORD give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was lent to the LORD."

Then they would go to their own home.

And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

And note the contrast... Samuel grew before the Lord, while the sons of Eli sinned more and more against the Lord. "Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting." It was blasphemous.

Eli's boys were not only *pick-pockets* - they were *perverts*. Verse 22 tells us they committed adultery in the door of the Tabernacle. There was no shame.

And I'm sure they gave their sexual perversions a spiritual justification.

Not long ago the Atlanta paper profiled the promiscuity and abuse of Bishop Earl Paulk. Here was a pastor with a long track record of illicit affairs – and he justified his adultery by calling it "*kingdom relationships*". He explained to the women that God had given them a special ministry to the man of God.

That makes me want to puke! It's a gross example of spiritual abuse, and religious malpractice. Eli's boys probably conjured up similar justifications.

"So (Eli) said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons!

For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD's people transgress. If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?"

The one thing worse than the boy's sin, was their father's weakness. Eli hears about their perversity, but all he gives the boys is a proverbial *slap on the wrist*.

Eli exercises no discipline - levies no punishment - takes no action. Hophne and Phinehas are turning people off to God, and all Eli offers is a mild rebuke.

It reminds me of the man who said to his wife, "You better watch out, you're making me mad. You're going to bring out the beast in me." His wife snickered, "Who's afraid of a mouse?" This was the boy's reaction to Eli's wimpy words.

Verse 25 tells us how perverse the boys had become, "Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them."

Yet in the midst of all this priestly corruption, and unhealthy tolerance, we're told in verse 26, "And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men." Samuel is growing and prospering under the care and tutelage of Eli. Other than his mom's once a year visit he's being reared by the old priest.

And this boggles my mind! Why would God entrust the upbringing of a child like Samuel, who will play such a pivotal role in the future of the nation, to a father who had failed as miserably as Eli? And here's the answer... *His amazing grace!*

God gives Eli a second chance at being a parent.

Maybe you've blown it as a parent. You've made mistakes rearing your kids, but the Lord has blessed you with another opportunity... *You find yourself part of a blended family, and kids are again under your roof... You've had a child late in life and you're starting over... Perhaps you now have input in a grandchild's life.*

Or maybe your kids are still home. You've blown it... they know it and you know it - but God is calling you to humble yourself, and ask for forgiveness.

If God gave Eli a second chance at parenthood, He'll do the same for you.

Even though Eli was afraid to discipline his boys, God was not. Verse 27...

"Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me?

And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?'

"Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: 'I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before

Me forever.' But now the LORD says: 'Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house.' Notice, God is taking the High Priesthood and He's about to give it to another man and his family. God is changing his mind. *God can do that!*

God's character is immutable. But His plans can be altered and changed.

“And you will see an enemy in My dwelling place, despite all the good which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house forever.

But any of your men whom I do not cut off from My altar shall consume your eyes and grieve your heart. And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age. Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them.

Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever. And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and say, "Please, put me in one of the priestly positions, that I may eat a piece of bread." Here's a promise that's not fulfilled for at least another 120 years.

1 Kings 2:27 tells us, “Solomon removed Abiathar from being priest... that he might fulfill the word of the LORD which He spoke concerning the house of Eli at Shiloh.” Abiathar was a descendent of Eli. Here the priesthood was taken from the house of Eli and given to another priestly family – a man named Zadok.

Both were descendents of Aaron - but God fulfilled His judgment on Eli.

Chapter 3, “Then the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.”

Notice in a day of widespread secularization, Eli encouraged and instructed Samuel to minister to the Lord. He maintained a spiritual emphasis in his life. Eli was not going to make the same mistakes with Samuel he made with his sons.

All parents need to stay active and involved in their child’s spiritual training.

“And it came to pass at that time, while Eli was lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the LORD where the ark of God was, and while Samuel was lying down, that the LORD called Samuel.

And he answered, "Here I am!" So he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." He said, "I did not call; lie down again." And he went and lay down.”

Notice, God calls Samuel, but he mistakes the *voice of God* for the *voice of Eli*.

Parents should realize all kids are liable to make this

mistake. Our earthly dad is usually our first impression of our heavenly Father. A dad's influence is colossal.

This was hammered home to me one night when I was praying with Mack.

In his prayer he kept going back and forth - referring to the Lord as first "God", then "Dad" – "God" then "Dad" – and on and on it went. I realized how closely in his mind he associated his heavenly Father with his earthly dad.

A good parent will always remember they are an *ambassador* of God.

Christian musicians, Philips, Craig, and Dead, have a song that puts to music a father's prayer. It has a memorable line, "God, I want to be like You, because he wants to be like me." Dad, always remember you represent God to your child.

"And the LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." And he answered, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." (Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor was the word of the LORD yet revealed to him.) And the LORD called Samuel again the third time.

Then he arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you did call me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD had called the boy." It dawns on Eli what's going on. His *eyesight* may be deteriorating, but evidently his *insight* was still sharp.

He was *aware* of what was happening in his child's life.

Here's another key to being an effective parent. Look for insight into what's happening in your child's life. If God is

speaking... encourage them to listen. If they're confused... try to explain. If they're weary... provide some comfort.

I've heard it said, "The key to being a good parent is to grow antennae not horns." Often a behavior we'd like to gore is really just a cry for help. With your kids be sensitive and perceptive. Be on the lookout for a teachable moment.

Eli finally realizes God has been calling the boy. "Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.' " So Samuel went and lay down in his place."

Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears."

Verse 11 "Then the LORD said to Samuel: "Behold, I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle (this will be shocking news).

"In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows..." and here's God's grievance with Eli in a nutshell, "because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them."

We all need to realize a parent's primary purpose is *to restrain their kids*.

We can pay their bills – educate – entertain - be their buddy – but a parent's top job is discipline. I've responded to rebellion with a belt on the bottom. I've used a bar of soap to wash out a foul mouth. I've taken away car keys and cell

phones to get their attention. I've corralled aimless energy by requiring on-the-spot push-ups. I'm called by God to address raunchy attitudes and deliberate defiance.

There are times when a *parent's place* is in his *kid's face*.

Hey, the Word of God - *and just one night in our preschool class* - reveals that kids are sinners by nature. It's a parent's job to curb that rebellion, while insisting on their child's obedience and respect... Never forget, because Eli failed to restrain his kids God brought judgment on his house forever.

“Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.” Judgment was already decided.

Verse 15 **“So Samuel lay down until morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision.**

Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son!" And he answered, "Here I am." And he said, "What is the word that the LORD spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said to you." Then Samuel told him everything, and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him." Apparently, nobody was more aware of his painful failures than Eli himself.

“So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba (From north to south - everyone in Israel.) knew

that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the LORD.

Then the LORD appeared again in Shiloh. For the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.”