

1 Samuel 2:12 (NASB)

12 Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD

Proverbs 19:18 (NIV)

18 Discipline your children, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to their death.

1 Samuel 8:1–5 (NASB)

1 And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel.

2 Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba.

3 His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice.

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah;

5 and they said to him, “Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.”

Ephesians 6:1–4 (NASB)

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise),

3 SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

The Tale of Two Fathers

The story of Eli and his sons, and Samuel and his sons, should prompt us to examine why these fathers, who held such lofty spiritual positions in Israel, were not able influence their sons to know the Lord or to walk in the ways of the Lord. These unfortunate situations require us to reexamine some important dynamics of parenting children in the context of a fallen world.

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Practical Implications

1. There is no such thing as a perfect parent. There are too many variables in this fallen world which make that impossible. Even God, who is our perfect heavenly Father, lamented over His rebellious children (cf. Isaiah 1:2-9). There are parents who use imperfect or flawed parenting patterns that trouble their household and the lives of their children (i.e. 1 Samuel 2:29).
2. In our time, it is important to teach our children that they are responsible for the consequences of their sinful choices. It is not the parent's responsibility to rescue their children from every effect that comes from bad decisions, sinful choices or unwise pursuits. It is also harmful to label their sinful choices as "syndromes" or "sicknesses" because, in doing so, we remove them from the personal responsibility of such actions (Ecclesiastes 8:11).
3. Father's Day serves as a great time for dads to reevaluate where we are with the Lord and the present condition of our spiritual lives. What are you currently doing to enhance your walk with the Lord and to provide an example worth emulating for your children? How are you currently bringing your children up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord? What conclusion would your children come to today about the priority of knowing and obeying the word of the Lord from observing you? Today is the day to take the necessary actions in order to greatly improve your role of spiritual leadership in your family.