

ELI AND HIS WICKED SONS

1 SAMUEL 2:12-36

MEMORY VERSE

1 SAMUEL 2:30

“For those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Enough paper plates to have two for each child in your class, glue, tongue depressors and markers or crayons.

Bags made up before class having small prizes (stickers, erasers, pencils, etc.) and a basket to hold all the bags.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Gold Star

As you begin your class time give these instructions to the children in your class. Have each child's name written on the chalk or whiteboard in columns. Explain to the children that you are going to encourage the children to “tell on” each other. The catch is that they can only report to the teacher the “good” things they observe in others.

Have the children look for examples of serving others throughout the class time. Maybe it is an act of kindness, or serving the teacher by being exceptionally quiet. Allow the children to point out examples to you as well as noticing a few yourself. When they tell you or you see someone doing the right thing, praise them aloud by saying something like, “Great Sam!” Then put a star (chalk or dry erase) beside his or her name.

Explain that how we serve others is very important to the Lord. It is not enough to just serve others, but we need to do it in the right way; in love, etc. Good deeds flow out of a heart that is right with the Lord. At the end of the class, you may refer back to some of the lessons learned from those you caught doing something good. **Our service to God must be with a right heart.**

LESSON TIME!

Elkanah and Hannah brought Samuel to Eli the priest to be raised by him in the ways of the Lord. When his parents went back home, Eli began Samuel's training. Samuel then "grew in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men" (vs. 26).

Now, although Eli trained Samuel in the ways of the Lord and to be a godly man, he failed in that same area with his own two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. In a time when it was said, "In those days Israel had no king, everyone did as he saw fit" (Judges 21:25), even the priestly sons of Eli were corrupted by the world.

In today's lesson, we will learn about the disobedience of Eli's two sons. They did not care about their responsibility to serve God and His people. We will learn a valuable lesson as we consider the consequences of their rebellion. God is very concerned about how we serve Him and His people. **Our service to God must be with a right heart.**

1 SAMUEL 2:12-17

Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD.

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."

Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

Eli's sons were called "sons of Belial," or worthless men. Why? They did not know the Lord. Walking with the Lord is truly a choice. Even if our parents are saved and train us in the Lord, we still have a choice to either walk with Jesus or away from Him.

Eli's sons turned their back on their father's God. What was the result in their lives? They misused the offerings of the Lord, turning it into a way to satisfy their own lusts.

God told his people to bring sacrifices to Him in a certain way: They were to remove the fat from the meat and burn it separately; then, the priests were to receive a portion of the meat for themselves and their families. (This was how God provided for the priests and their families.) However, Eli's sons twisted the beautiful intent of sacrifice. Before the fat portions of the meat sacrifice had been placed in the altar-fire for the Lord, the priest's servant

came and demanded that they be given meat from the sacrifice. They would put a big hook into the meat and take more than they were supposed to. And if anyone complained, they would take it from the people by force.

How little they cared about God and His people whom they had been given responsibility to serve! They broke God's law and robbed His people. Their actions were so bad that people did not want to come and sacrifice to the Lord any more. They had misrepresented God to the people, destroying the beautiful picture of what God provided for us in Jesus Christ—forgiveness of sins. This was a terrible thing in the eyes of the Lord.

It is important that we, who say we know the Lord and serve Him, not misrepresent God. If we treat others poorly, they may decide they do not want anything to do with the Lord. The word "minister" means servant. Whether a priest in Old Testament days, a pastor, a teacher, or a Christian, our lives need to be about serving others in such a way that they will be attracted to Him and not pointed away from Him. **Our service to God must be with a right heart.**

1 SAMUEL 2:18-21

But Samuel ministered before the LORD, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.

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 given 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.

In the midst of this sad story comes the mention of Samuel's devotion to the Lord. He served as a boy before the Lord next to Eli's evil sons. Samuel values the priestly clothes he wears while Eli's sons have no regard for it whatsoever. God always has those who are faithful and desire to serve Him with all of their hearts, even in the midst of a rebellious people. Samuel continued to grow in the Lord and was being prepared for a very special service to the Lord.

What is the Lord preparing you for? He is working in your life right now in order to prepare you for His special purpose. Now is the time, while you are still a child like Samuel, to decide to follow Jesus all of the days of your life. Learn everything you can about the Lord and the Bible. Love and respect the things of the Lord and His people. You will find a life of blessing awaits you if you commit your life to following Him.

Though Samuel's mother had given Samuel to the Lord, she still was his mother and came to visit him each year bringing with her the clothes she made for him. Eli blessed his parents for having given up the boy to the Lord. Eli's blessing of Hannah was fulfilled in that she had five more children! When we give what is most precious to us to the Lord, He always gives back to us more, more than we could ever imagine.

1 SAMUEL 2:22-26

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.

So he 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?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them.

And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men.

Here we see Eli's treatment of his sons. He is old now and his children are grown. He rebukes his sons with harsh warnings because of their sins. Unfortunately, they would not listen to him. They just continued to get worse. They began to treat the women who would come to the tabernacle in a sinful way. They had no regard for God's Word or desire to serve the people in a way that would please the Lord. **Our service to God must be with a right heart.**

It is also unfortunate that Eli, with the infirmities of his old age, did nothing further to prevent these horrible things from happening. The only action he took was to say to his sons, "Why do you according to sayings, which I hear, sayings about you which are evil, of this whole people?" He talked to them, but never did anything about removing them from office or making them stop. Could he have been a better father? Do you think if his sons had been disciplined and attended to when they were younger, it could have prevented their rebellion later?

Sadly, Eli's sons refused to listen to his warning for "the Lord would slay them." Their hearts were hardened; it was too late for their father's reproof to make an impression on them.

How important it is for us to listen to our parents and to those in authority over us. Had Eli's sons only listened to him, even at this time, and changed, God's judgment would not have had to come upon them.

Samuel's heart was soft to the Lord. We see Samuel continuing to grow in stature and favor with God and man. Because his heart was soft toward the Lord, he will be blessed and greatly used by God. May our own hearts remain soft that we may be blessed and usable.

What Face?

Sometimes we can seem to be so nice as we pray to God, exhibiting our best manners. Then we turn to other people and are rude or act like we do not care. This craft will help us to remember to serve with the right attitude towards others.

Get two paper plates for each child. On one plate draw a happy face and on the other draw a grouchy face. Have the children color the faces if they like and then glue them back to back. Insert a tongue depressor at the bottom of the faces.

Next come up with five or six statements about serving others; some with the right attitude and some with a bad attitude. Have the children hold up the face that reflects the attitude of the service that you are describing. Remind the children of the importance of serving the Lord and His people with a right heart.

1 SAMUEL 2:27-36

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.

'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."'

God prepared to judge the sons of Eli for their wickedness. Before the Lord judged Eli's house, He sent a prophet to warn Eli of the judgment coming upon them.

In order to prick Eli's own conscience, he pointed out to him the grace manifested in the choice of his father's house (the house of Aaron). The Lord then described the terrible way that Eli's sons had abused that privilege. The choice of the family of Aaron was still there, but disgrace would come upon those that hated the Lord.

The prophet went on to explain that the strength of Eli's house would be broken; and all the members of his house would die early deaths. They were not, however, to be removed entirely from service at the altar (verses 31-34). But the Lord would raise up a faithful priest and cause him to walk before His anointed, and from him all that were left of the house of Eli would be obliged to beg for their bread (verses 35-36).

The fulfillment of the faithful priest came in Zadok, of the family of Eleazar, also from the line of Aaron. He became the high priest in the beginning of Solomon's reign (several years after this). He was faithful in serving the Lord properly--all of the high priests that followed Zadok came from his line as long as the priesthood continued. The failure, evil, and sin of those who minister, though it will destroy them, cannot destroy the ministry. God's work will never fail because of a lack of hands to carry it on.

What a sad story of two hardened young men who, unable to heed warnings from their father, were destroyed. What a sad story of a father who could not control his sons. However, what an encouraging story of a young man, Samuel, whose heart was soft toward the Lord. He stood as a bright light shining in the darkness.

God has called us to love Him and serve Him with all of our heart. When the Lord calls us to serve Him, we must not serve ourselves. May we never be guilty, as were the sons of Levi, of misrepresented Him. May our hearts be soft toward the Lord, as Samuel's heart was, and may our lives shine to the glory of God. **Our service to God must be with a right heart.**

An Opportunity to Serve Others

Make individual prize bags for each child. Put whatever you want into the bags but keep the amount of items small. Place all of the bags in a basket.

At the end of your class, refer back to the opening activity. Some children will have more stars than others. We learned, today, that it is important to serve God in the right way. One of the ways we serve the Lord is by looking out for the interests of others rather than ourselves (Philippians 2:3,4). Let each child get one bag from the basket and "serve it" to another child. Allow all of the children a chance to serve. They must all wait for everyone to be served before they open their bags.

Remind the children that they have served “rightly” by serving others and by waiting for others before they begin.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to serve the Lord and His people with a right heart. Also, pray and ask the Lord to help the children obey the Lord and their parents. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.