

## *Eli, A Failure to both God and Family*

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**Introduction:** Why do we see many children of Christians fall away from the Lord?

A. While there are many reasons, many will make the same mistakes of Eli in the Old Testament.

1. Eli was the next to the last judge in Israel. In many ways Eli was a "good man."
2. But Eli was rejected because of his relationship with his sons.
3. Eli's sons violated the Mosaic sacrificial system, committed fornication, and showed disrespect for their father. **(1 Sam 2:12-17,22)**

B. How often does disrespect for worship lead to moral compromise?

### ***I. Eli's Character and Influence***

A. Eli did not hate sin.

1. Eli was personally a good man but tolerated sin in his sons.
  - a. Some people live right for the wrong reasons. **(1 Sam.15:30)**
  - b. Children are quick to pick up on your feelings about sin.
  - c. They want to know what you are willing to stand for -- especially regarding them.
  - d. Don't you know that Isaac never forgot his dad's (Abraham) loyalty to put God first.
2. Some people make excuses and overlook sin in "special friends" or in their families.
  - a. Some "good people" get irrational when it comes to their parents or children.
  - b. Eli loved his sons more than the truth. **(1 Sam.2:27-36)**
3. If we don't abhor evil in every area we are in great spiritual danger. **(Rom 12:9)**

B. Eli lacked moral courage.

1. When person doesn't have strong abhorrence of sin it leads to spiritual cowardice. **(2 Pet 1:6-8 NASV)**
2. What was Eli's responsibility toward his sons? **(Lev. 21:6-7)**
  - a. Eli should have removed from their offices and tried them. **(Lev. 20:10; 21:6-7, 17, 23)**
  - b. Unfortunately there are "good people" who know what their duty is but fail to do it.
  - c. I have seen some turn away from other Christians because of their own children. They would accuse those who teach the truth as trouble makers. **(1 Kgs 18:17)**
3. Eli could have stood up and said I am coming to this late but I am going to stop this SIN!
  - a. Remember when you opt for easy route now it will always be hard later.
  - b. Sometimes you get a wake up call that will at least save your own soul.
5. Moral courage requires several things:
  - a. A deep sense of right and wrong.
    - i. You must let your knowledge of right override the "moments" of an emotional outburst.
    - ii. How many have completely surrendered their convictions on divorce and remarriage?
  - b. A determination to keep the conscience clear **(Acts 23:1)**
    - i. If you get use to accepting sin in your life then lessons will not have same effect upon you as with others. Because you have developed an attitude that does not take truth seriously!
    - ii. Destruction of the conscience begins very slowly. Eli's sons probably did not begin as blatant law breakers and fornicators! But when parents begin accepting sin either in their own lives or their children, they start losing courage!

- c. A determination to do right in spite of difficult circumstances and sufferings.
  - i. From the start children will challenge our standards. We better have moral courage!
  - ii. Better not be easy going in regard to this!
  - iii. When children grow into young adults they must be determined to do what they know is right! What have they seen?
  - iv. I heard of a father who stood at the door and turned away a boy who was to date his daughter! This may bring embarrassing moments but parents must fight for their children.

C. Eli did not restrain them.

- 1. Eli did reprimand them but they did not pay attention to his warnings. **(1 Sam 2:22-25)**
  - a. Eli had no Influence for good with his own sons!
  - b. Perhaps, Hophni and Phinehas reacted the way Lot's sons-in-law did. **(Gen.19:14)**
- 2. We can not manipulate or trick our children into obeying us.
  - a. Please do not say: "Oh, I do not want to alienate them, so let them do...."
  - b. As long as we have authority and influence over our children we must see to it that they do right. No doubt Eli wished he could turn back time.

***II. Hophni and Phinehas: Their Character and Influence***

A. They tarnished their father's good name.

- 1. Hophni and Phinehas practiced immorality and lawlessness. **(1 Sam.2:12-17, 22)**
- 2. Our children must first do right because of their loyalty to the Lord, not to us. However, children need to know that their lives reflect upon their parents - whether they like or not.
- 3. I have known of those who waited until their father or mother died and then they left their mate.

B. Eli's sons deeply hurt him, both spiritually and emotionally.

- 1. The Prodigal son acknowledged this. **(Luke 15.18)**
- 2. Please tell your children that no matter who loves you in life you always will.
- 3. Can you imagine Eli suffering thinking about his sons? I used to think my parents were "crazy" about all their worries!
- 4. When children grow to the age of accountability they begin to make their own decisions. They must also remember that when they chose sin their good parents suffer greatly.

C. Hophni and Phinehas promoted Eli's terrible end. **(1 Sam 3:11-14)**

- 1. By refusing to follow their father's example and advise, they contributed to his terrible death and perhaps his spiritual one as well. **(1 Sam 4:16-18)**
- 2. How many parents have followed their children into apostasy? Children have responsibility to influence their parents for good too.

**Conclusion:** Eli and his sons comprise is a very sad story. Later much of Israel was led away from the Lord.

A. No doubt there were many bad influences throughout Israel.

- 1. Today there are many bad influences that surround us.
- 2. We might want to say, at times, "Who can really do right?"

B. But remember, even in Eli's day one young man grew up to be respected by both God and man: Samuel. **(1 Sam.2:26)**

(Sermon adapted from David Hartsell)