

# LESSON 3

## ELI'S WICKED SONS

### BEFORE YOU TEACH

#### Priesthood

In the time of Moses, God chose Aaron and his descendants to be His priests. The priesthood was passed from father to son for generations. Eli and his sons were descendants of Aaron and, therefore, served as priests before God.

The duty of priests included caring for the temple, instructing the people about God's teachings, and administering the offerings. Their lives centered on the service of God, and in return, their needs were provided by God and the community of worshippers.

Unfortunately, Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas abused their status as priests and did not obey or show reverence towards God. They openly disobeyed the commandments of God in front of all the people during the Israelites' journey through the wilderness. Their bad behavior also impacted those who came to make offerings to God and ruined the reputation of God's servants before the nation.

God's anger burned against the two evil priests as they continued in their wicked ways. God rejected their service and instead selected for Himself a new priest to serve Him faithfully: the young Samuel.

#### Sacrificial Burning of Fat

When priests were consecrated, it was a custom to burn the fat of bulls (Ex 29:10-13); that is, the fat of male animals without defect that would be consumed during the burnt offering (Lev 1:1-13). The fat produced "a sweet aroma to the Lord."

All the fat of the various offerings belonged to the Lord and could not be eaten and had to be burned on the altar (Lev 3:1-17; 4:19, 26, 31, 35). The burning of the fat showed the Israelites' reverence for God and their desire to offer the best part of their possessions to God.

### UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS

Students at this age begin to notice their parents' faith in practice, as well as the labor and behavior of church workers and believers. The ranging levels of faith and biblical or spiritual knowledge in the church, combined with the trials and temptations believers encounter, can be confusing to students as they try to make sense of certain attitudes or conduct that may not closely reflect godly principles.

This lesson shows students that God is always watching, and He will repay each person according to what he does. They will understand that even workers of God are not immune to God's correction and punishment if they are unrepentant and continue in their wickedness. Motivate your students to follow Samuel's example to serve God faithfully and to ask God for guidance and protection.

#### BIBLE TEXT

1 Samuel 1-2; 4

#### BIBLE TRUTH

God punishes those who sin and won't repent, but protects and guides those who do what is right before Him.

#### LESSON OBJECTIVE

To understand that God punishes the wicked and protects the righteous.

#### MEMORY VERSE

"The way of the ungodly shall perish."

(Psalm 1:6b)

#### PRAYER

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Blessed and loving Lord, we thank You and praise You for bringing us together this week to learn from Your word. We ask Your Holy Spirit to help us learn about Eli's wicked sons, and to understand how You punish those who do wrong and won't repent but protect those who do what is right in Your eyes. Heavenly Father, we pray that You will fill us with Your love and strength so that we can practice today's lesson in the coming weeks. Hallelujah! Amen.

## VOCABULARY

- weep:** to cry
- rebuke:** to correct
- wean:** to stop a baby from breast-feeding
- fulfill:** to follow through with, complete
- wicked:** evil
- ephod:** clothing made from linen

## BIBLE STORY

### Samuel's Birth

Samuel's story begins with his mother Hannah. Before she became pregnant with Samuel, Hannah was very sad because she could not have children. Her husband Elkanah's other wife Peninnah was able to have children.

One year, when the whole family went to worship God at a place called Shiloh, Hannah wept and prayed to the Lord. She asked God to give her a son, and she promised to dedicate the child to serve God all his life.

Hannah was so concentrated and sad in her prayer that her mouth moved but there was no sound. The old priest Eli who was standing near her thought that she was drunk and rebuked her. Hannah explained her problem to the old priest. Eli replied, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of Him."

After the family returned home to Ramah, God remembered Hannah's prayer and answered it. God let her have a son. She called him Samuel, which in Hebrew means "heard by God," because God had heard her prayer.

After Hannah received the son she had prayed for, do you think she wanted to give him away to God? Imagine what it would feel like to give God what you love and care about the most. Even though it must have been very hard, Hannah kept her promise. She took care of Samuel until after he was weaned.

Then, she fulfilled her promise to God by taking her son, a three-year-old bull, flour, and wine to Shiloh. After the offering, Hannah brought little Samuel to the old priest Eli and said, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." Because of God's miracle and Hannah's answered prayer, Eli worshipped God and Hannah sang to God.

Hannah and the rest of the family returned home, but the boy Samuel served the Lord under the guidance of Eli the priest.

### The Wicked Sons of Eli

The old priest Eli had two sons: Hophni and Phinehas. Even though they were priests like their father, they were wicked and did not know God. They did not respect God

and stole from the offerings the people brought to the temple. The offerings were not for the priests to enjoy, but for God to accept.

The two wicked priests would send their servant to pick sacrificed meat from the pot using a large fork. They would use their servant to order the people making the sacrifice to give them the raw meat before the fat was completely burned off. Because the fat was the most fragrant part of the offering, the fat had to be completely burned as a sacrifice to God.

In the time of Moses and Aaron, God had commanded that all the fat be sacrificed to Him and that none of it was to be eaten by anybody, not even the priests (Lev 3:16-17).

Even though God had chosen the fat for Himself, He also provided food for the priests. The priests were allowed to eat the breast and thigh meat (Lev 7:31-32). Eli's sons didn't care about God's offering; they wanted to take the meat that still had fat, even if they had to take it by force.

Eli's two sons were so wicked and their hearts so hardened that they didn't care or feel guilty that they were seizing the offerings that were brought for God and that they were stealing from the people who came to worship God. Do you think God was happy with Eli's two sons? No, God was very angry because they did not fear God nor obey His commands, thereby setting a very bad example for the people.

### Samuel's Childhood Ministry

Samuel was very young when he started serving God. He wore clothing made of linen, called an ephod. His parents would come to visit him when they came to offer their yearly sacrifice. Eli blessed Samuel's parents, saying, "The Lord give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the Lord."

Can you guess how God blessed Hannah for offering her son to God's service? She gave birth to three more sons and two daughters. During this time, Samuel continued to grow before God.

### Prophecy Against Eli's Household

As Samuel grew up, Eli became older and older. He heard about all the evil things his sons did to all the people of

Israel. Eli said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil actions from all the people. No, my sons! I'm not hearing good things about you. You make the Lord's people sin. If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?"

Even though their father warned them to repent because of his love for them, they didn't listen to or obey Eli. Their wickedness made God angry and He resolved to punish them with death.

While God was displeased with Eli's sons, He was pleased with young Samuel. Samuel grew taller and taller, and he gained favor with the Lord and with men.

A man of God came to Eli and said to him, "The Lord says, '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?'"

The father that the man of God mentioned was Moses' brother Aaron. Aaron and his descendants had been chosen by God to serve as His priests. Eli and his sons belonged to Aaron's family, and all of them served as priests.

The man of God said, "'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?' 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 hate Me shall be hated. The days are coming that I will cut off the men in your house.'"

The man of God continued: "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."

God promised Eli that He would punish Eli's wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas, and that He would raise up and bless Samuel.

### **The Ark of God Is Captured and Eli's Sons Die**

It came to pass that the Israelites unsuccessfully went to battle against the Philistines, who defeated four thousand men from the Israelite army.

When the Israelites had come back into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why don't we bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord with us—it may save us from the hand of the enemies." So the people brought out the ark of the covenant.

At the beginning, the Philistines were very afraid of the ark of the covenant, but they decided to keep fighting against the Israelites. At the end of the battle, the Israelites were defeated, the ark of the covenant was captured and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. Israel had lost thirty thousand foot soldiers.

That same day, a man from the tribe of Benjamin ran from the battlefield and told Eli what had happened.

Eli was ninety-eight years old at the time, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see. When the man told him how his two sons had died and how the ark of the covenant had been captured, Eli fell backward off his seat by the side of the gate, fatally breaking his neck.

His daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was pregnant and due to deliver the baby. When she heard the news that the ark of God had been captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were both dead, she went into labor and gave birth to a son.

As the baby came out, she died and the midwives who helped her with the delivery named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory of God has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of the death of her father-in-law and her husband.

## CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. **What were the names of Samuel's parents?** Elkanah and Hannah.
2. **How did Hannah become pregnant with Samuel?** She prayed to God and He answered.
3. **What promise did Hannah make about her baby?** She would bring him to serve God all his life.
4. **How did God bless Hannah for keeping her promise?** He gave her three more sons and two daughters.
5. **What kind of boy was Samuel?** He served God in his youth and gained favor with God and men as he grew.
6. **What were the names of Eli's two wicked sons?** Hophni and Phinehas.
7. **What evil did Eli's sons do before God?** They stole the raw meat and fat that had been brought as offerings to God.
8. **How did Eli react when he heard about what his sons were doing?** He rebuked them for sinning against God.
9. **What did the man of God prophesy about Hophni and Phinehas?** They would both be killed in one day.
10. **What did the man of God prophesy about Samuel?** God would raise him up to serve as a faithful priest that would obey Him and walk in His ways.

### MEMORY VERSE PRACTICE

Please reinforce the memory verse every week.  
You can practice the memory verse with your students anytime during class.

**"The way of the ungodly shall perish." (Psalm 1:6b)**

### SPIRITUAL TEACHING & LIFE APPLICATION

#### **God punishes those who sin and won't repent, but protects and guides those who do what is right before Him.**

Eli's sons Hophni and Phinehas were wicked priests who didn't know God, stole meat from burnt offerings, and slept with women at the door of the tabernacle. "Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the Lord" (1 Sam 2:12). "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'" (1 Sam 2:16). "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" (1 Sam 2:22). They were priests, but they had no fear of God. Not only did they take advantage of their position, they even took part of the sacrifices before they were offered to God on the altar and before the fat was burned off, which was against God's laws (Lev 3:3-5).

Eli talked to his sons about it and tried to get them to change their ways. "Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the Lord desired to kill them" (1 Sam 2:25b). Before the two sons were killed, God sent a man of God to tell Eli that God would consume his eyes, grieve his heart, and make sure that all of his descendants would die young (1 Sam 2:27-33).

Then, just in case the first message didn't get through, God sent another message to Eli through the boy Samuel.

And it was the same horrifying message: God would make everyone's ears tingle by punishing all of Eli's unborn descendants for the sins of his sons (1 Sam 3:11-13).

Samuel delivered the message to Eli, but Eli didn't do anything more to warn his sons. He just let his sons continue to do wicked things and ignore the duties of a priest. This was a serious sin in God's eyes. Therefore, God took the necessary action of punishing them that Eli would not. The Bible said that Eli honored his sons above God by letting them continued in their wicked ways.

And that's where the Philistines came in. God used them to kill Eli's sons, along with 34,000 Israelite soldiers.

In the first battle, the Israelites lost 4,000 men (1 Sam 4:2). The Philistines defeated Israel, "and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers" (1 Sam 4:10). The ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were killed (1 Sam 4:11).

Eli should have disciplined his sons early on. It was unfortunate that Eli's family perished, but there was a shining light in that era. The Bible said that Samuel grew in favor with God (1 Sam 2:18-21). Samuel was set apart and dedicated to God since birth. His mother was a godly mother who had dedicated Samuel to God. Samuel remained faithful and obedient to the calling God placed on his life. Like Samuel, we need to be faithful and obedient in serving the Lord in the house of God.

#### **Question**

When our parents or teachers try to correct us when we have made a mistake, how do we react? What helps us to listen and change? What keeps us making the same mistake again?



**Testimony: Fit to Throw Out the Trash**

A brother in Danshui Church in Taiwan was in charge of taking out the church trash twice a week, among other church duties. He would go to church two evenings a week and make sure that all the trash bins were emptied and that all the garbage was ready to be collected at the preset times.

He had been serving church for a while and had grown confident in his position at church and in all the holy work he was assigned to do. During this period of time in his life, he had started secretly doing things that would not please God. He thought that nobody knew what he was doing, so he could continue doing holy work like he always had.

One night, he arrived at church and realized that he had forgotten his church key at home. Since there was nobody around, he decided to just jump over the fence to get into church and take out the trash.

He got on top of the fence and was ready to jump into the church yard. Suddenly, he felt a strong force push him off the fence away from the churchyard and he fell on his face. For two hours, he could not move or get up because the force would not allow him.

The brother spent those two long hours thinking about all the secret things that he had done to displease God. He realized how much he had saddened God, and his eyes filled with tears. In his heart, he prayed to God, repenting wholeheartedly and asking for forgiveness. Even though nobody knew what he had been doing, God knew. He understood that if he continued to sin against God, God would not even allow him to carry out a simple church duty like throwing out the trash. God wants noble vessels that are pure and willing to serve with humility and love. It was because of God's love and mercy that the brother was being disciplined so that he could realize his mistake and correct it.

After two hours of praying, repenting, and weeping, the force disappeared and the brother was able to get up. From that day on, he changed all his bad habits and testified about this lesson to other believers. He had learned that we must fear, honor, and obey God even in the smallest duty we do for church, and even when nobody else is watching.

**Review Questions**

1. What were some of this brother's mistakes?
2. How do we know God was watching him when nobody else was watching?
3. How did this brother correct his mistakes?
4. How is this brother's experience similar to the story of Eli's sons?

**HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY**

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. False; Elkanah and Hannah                                   | 6. B  |
| 2. True  | 7. A  |
| 3. False; she would bring her child to serve God all his life. | 8. C  |
| 4. three, two  | 9. B  |
| 5. served, favor   | 10. A |

**ACTIVITIES****1****Offering the Fat of Sacrifice****Materials**

- 1 small bag of crackers (or other small-sized crackers) per student
- 1 large chocolate bar per student, and two or three extra chocolate bars
- 1 small disposable bowl per student
- 1 small bag per student (preferably dark so the contents are hidden)
- 1 large pot with a lid

**Preparations**

1. Fill each disposable bowl with the bag of crackers.
2. Top each bowl with one large chocolate bar.
3. Label the large pot "Altar."
4. Place the two or three extra chocolate bars into the pot and cover it with the lid.
5. Place the pot outside the classroom on a table or chair (close to, but not visible from, the classroom).

**Instructions**

1. Distribute one bowl of crackers and chocolates and one small bag to each student.
2. Review what Eli's wicked sons did wrong when it came to God's sacrifices and what should be the correct attitude.
3. Ask the students to think of their bowl of treats as a sacrifice to God and the pot as the altar.
4. Tell the students that they will all go out of the classroom one at a time.
5. At the pot, each student gets a chance to make one of three choices without anybody observing them:
  - a) They can place a part of their treats into the pot.
  - b) They can keep the treats they have.
  - c) They can take treats out of the pot.

After they've made their selection, they must cover the pot again and either eat what remains in their bowl or put the bowl away in their small bag.
6. Once they're done, they must go back into the classroom. Then, the next student goes out to the pot.
7. The students who remain in the classroom must keep quiet and work on their memory verse until all the students have had their turn at the pot.
8. When every student has finished the exercise, bring the pot back in and review the results with the students. Ask students for feedback about what could motivate them to make each of the three choices.
9. Let the students brainstorm specific ways they can "offer their best" to God at home, at school, or at church during the upcoming week.
10. Distribute the remaining crackers in the pot among the students.

**2****Who Are You?****Materials**

- Index cards
- Marker
- Bell

**Preparations**

Using the marker, label the cards with each of the characters in this lesson's story (Hannah, Elkanah, Eli, Hophni, Phinehas, the servant, Samuel, man of God). There should be enough labeled index cards to match the number of students.

**Instructions**

1. Distribute the identity cards among the students. Students must not share their assumed identity with other students.
2. Divide the class into two even groups and line them up facing each other.
3. Students can ask the student standing across from them three questions to find out which character the other student is. The answering student can only respond with a "Yes" or a "No."
4. The student who correctly guesses the other student's identity makes a tally on their own identity card.
5. Ring the bell every 30 to 40 seconds. When the bell rings, the students in one row must move one space to the right (down the row) to face the next student (even if they have not finished asking or guessing).
6. The student(s) who guesses the most identities correctly (and therefore has the most tallies) wins.

E1 Year 2 Book 1 Lesson 3—Eli's Wicked Sons

# Homework Assignment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Bible Truth:** God punishes those who sin and won't repent, but protects and guides those who do what is right before Him.

**Lesson Objective:** To understand that God punishes the wicked and protects the righteous.

**Bible Reading:** Please put a checkmark in the space when you complete the reading each day.

**Prayer:** Please put a checkmark in the space provided on the days you prayed to God.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Bible Reading							
Prayer							

## Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse.

(Psalm 1:6b)

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## What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Homework Assignment

*Understanding What You Have Learned*

## True or False

1. Samuel's parents were called Abraham and Sarah. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Eli met Hannah when she was praying to God for a child. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Hannah promised that she would keep her baby and take good care of him. \_\_\_\_\_

## Fill In the Blanks

4. God blessed Hannah by giving her \_\_\_\_\_ more sons and \_\_\_\_\_ daughters.
5. Samuel \_\_\_\_\_ God since his childhood. As he grew, he gained \_\_\_\_\_ with God and with men.

## Multiple Choice

6. \_\_\_\_\_ : Eli's two wicked sons were called \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Aaron and Moses
  - b. Hophni and Phinehas
  - c. Cain and Abel
7. \_\_\_\_\_ : Eli's wicked sons sinned against God by stealing \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Raw meat and fat
  - b. Bulls and lambs
  - c. Incense and oil
8. \_\_\_\_\_ : When Eli heard what his sons were doing, he \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Praised them
  - b. Ignored them
  - c. Told them to turn back from their evil ways and repent
9. \_\_\_\_\_ : The man of God prophesied that Hophni and Phinehas would \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Get more meat offerings
  - b. Die on the same day
  - c. Be stoned by the people
10. \_\_\_\_\_ : The man of God prophesied that Samuel would \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Serve as God's faithful priest
  - b. Become Hophni's servant
  - c. Help Eli the priest