



Sermon Series: Mentoring: Investing in Others

To be used with Session 3: Eli and Samuel

Sermon Title Possibilities: From Reproach to Coach

Scripture: 1 Samuel 2:22-26; 3:7-10,15-18

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study “Mentoring: Investing in Others” this sermon teaches us how to continue effective mentorship through the pain of our past. We learn through the life of Eli that unfortunate circumstances do not have to prevent solid mentorship. Eli refocused his attention on Samuel and did not withhold solid advice but provided much needed wisdom and direction staying aligned with God’s movement. Mistakes of the past do not have to sabotage the future. Maintaining integrity is an antidote for diffusing past mishaps.

Introduction: "It is not possible," said Patilla, a world-renowned baker, in response to her apprentice, Bethany, who desired to create an upside-down wedding cake. Traditionally, wedding cakes are made with a wide circular foundation and the cakes more miniature in circumference stacked on top. However, Bethany wanted to carve out her niche in the baking industry and ignored Patilla's advice. Bethany began building the wedding cake, with the smallest cake on the bottom stacking wider as she went higher. With the laws of gravity against her, the cake smashed to the ground. However, Bethany refused to relent, causing Patilla to move on to training someone willing to listen to her wisdom. In our text, we have a similar disturbing situation. Eli's sons did not heed their father's wisdom and led destructive lives. Despite numerous warnings, Eli's sons remain hardheaded and unwilling to listen. In this sermon brief, Eli's life offers three tips on how to move left from people who will not live right.

1. Not Everyone Can Receive and Obey the Message (1 Samuel 2:22-26)

For whatever reason, Eli’s sons did not follow in their father’s footsteps. They were reckless and wanted to do things their way. Part of mentorship is confronting violations and providing the kind of wisdom and advice that would lead to righteous living. In verses 22-23, Eli absorbed the devastating news about his sons. Hearing of their

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shenanigans from the people meant his sons were doing these things behind his back. However, he did not blame himself or critique his parental skills. In verse 25, he raised the standard of godliness and laid at their feet an opportunity to "turn from their wicked ways" (2 Chron. 7:14). Spiritual mentorship requires a biblical standard and a willingness to follow, but that was not the case with Eli's sons. In Luke 8, Jesus taught the parable of the sower sowing seeds in the ground. Production of those seeds depended on the ground and not the sower. Eli's seeds fell among thorns where the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life consumed his sons. However, the good ground was on the way in the form of Samuel. Eli must move on from his sons because not everyone will receive and obey the message.

2. Not Everyone Can Understand the Message (1 Samuel 3:7-10)

In 1 Samuel 3:1, the Bible made it clear that Samuel grew up in a time when the word of the Lord was rare. Something stifled communication, and anyone hearing from God needed help with comprehension. As the Lord began communicating with Samuel, there was a disconnect. Growing accustomed to Eli, Samuel reported to him, awaiting his assignment. Unbeknownst to Samuel, God wanted more out of his life at a time when divine communication remained limited. The gap between the Lord and Samuel needed to be bridged, and Eli, being the mentor, was the one person who correctly diagnosed the gap. Once Eli understood that the Lord was calling Samuel (v. 8), he now had the responsibility of communicating his understanding to his mentee. Eli plays a significant role in Samuel's life. Without proper interpretation, Samuel wanders aimlessly trying to figure out who called his name.

3. Not Everyone Can Deliver the Message (1 Samuel 3:15-18)

Filled with mutual respect, love, and passion for Eli, Samuel dreaded the news he heard from the Lord. In verse 15, the Bible indicates that Samuel struggled with hearing the message from the Lord. Often, there is an assumption that everything will be glorious when God speaks. Being used by God is not as easy as one would think. "Speak Lord for your servant is listening" (v. 14) is a great phrase, but after hearing from the Lord, many people struggle to deliver the message. Unwilling to hurt someone's feelings, God's messages stay in the containers of Christians' hearts, never seeing the light of day. However, Eli, understanding the weight of being God's chosen, prompted Samuel to resist his fears and understand that the Lord is in control and can do whatever "He thinks is good" (v. 18). Being a conduit for the Lord can be difficult at times and lonely. Individuals chosen by God to carry the message can expect difficult days. However, the mail must be delivered, so carry on.

Conclusion: The process of hearing God's word, processing God's word, and executing God's word rests in the hands of individuals willing to forsake themselves to follow God's word. Samuel, a young man in desperate need of leadership, found himself in a difficult circumstance. However, the mentorship of Eli opened the avenue for Samuel to remain obedient to God's word. The rarity of God's word was, and is, precious to humanity, and with Eli's experience and Samuel's willingness, God's words met at the intersection of grace and mercy. Eli demonstrated great character by forsaking his family ties to minister to a young man he probably wished were his sons. Samuel, a young man at this point, will have to model the behavior of Eli when he is confronted with a similar case with the anointing of young King David. May we remain true to the call of God in our lives even when others walk away. May we remain steadfast and unmovable when God speaks.

Dr. Mark Louis Johnson Sr. is a third-generation pastor with over 30 years of experience. He received a Master of Divinity and Master of Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry and Doctor of Philosophy from New Orleans Baptist Theological, where he serves as a Professor and Evangelism and Pastor Ministries.

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