

FAMILY MATTERS, MATTER
Two Bad Parents & Two Bad Brothers

Written By
Martin A. Baker
© June 25, 2017



Some families are just completely out of control. Take a couple of wealthy families in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. as a case study.

Instead of teaching their children about the dangers of drinking, a group of parents got together and rented a bus so their underage children could attend drinking parties. Their goal was twofold: (1) To protect us from their drunken children driving home, and (2) To keep their children from leaving home. As one mother put it (to paraphrase), “If we didn’t permit our children to attend these parties, they might leave home.”

Can you believe that statement? I can’t. It leaves me dumbfounded, and it also tells me some difficult, unmanageable, uncooperative teens finally defeated their parents for control of the family, and they now are, like a gloating dictator, calling all of the shots.

I have a sneaking suspicion this scenario, or one of a similar nature but with a different core issue, isn’t just limited to families in D.C. proper. What is going on here is probably a snapshot of what is going on in other cities and in other families around the country. How do I know that? Because people are people, sinners are sinners, and I listen to and read the news.

Instead of being places where children are taught high, lofty moral values, families are becoming places where children are rising up against their parents (as Paul prophesied), challenging their God-given authority, and establishing their own authority, which usually knows no immoral limits. The result is always the same. Battles rage behind closed doors for who really has their hands on the controls of where the given family should go.

What about your family? Does it resemble a battle zone because the children are out of control? If this is you, what should you do? You should run to the armory of God’s Word and find wisdom and counsel for how to rectify your situation. Where exactly will you grab the spiritual weapon in this inspired book you will need to be victorious

and bring much needed peace to your family? I would say the story about one of Israel's High Priests and his two sons might be a good place to start. The man's name was Eli, and his two infamous sons were Hophni and Phinehas.

Study what happened (or should I say, failed to happen) in their family and you will find answers to the question at hand ...

How Do You Deal With Boys Being Bad Boys (1 Samuel 2, 4)?

First of all, we need to identify the father of the boys in question. His name? Eli, which means, "my God" in Hebrew. Who were Eli's sons? Were they old enough to know better? How did they act? How did they respond to the leadership of their father? What kind of sons were they? Unfortunately, these young men resembled some out-of-moral-control Hollywood stars. Instead of choosing the right, they chose the wrong. Instead of being moral they were immoral. Instead of honoring their father, they dishonored him. Instead of being selfless, they were selfish. Instead of being obedient, they were disobedient and they were priests of Israel, equivalent in our day to pastors! Amazing. Strange, too, how the most complex carnal problems can occur in a family you'd least likely expect. The High Priest should have raised sons with high morals, but that is not what happened, primarily because of a little thing called *free will*.

In any attempt to deal with difficult children like these in your quest to bring harmony to your family, you must first commit yourself to some crucial life principle.

Identify The Problem(s)

One day I took my family vehicle in for a check-up to see why it was running rough. The mechanic hooked up a nifty little hand-held computer manufactured by *Snap On Tools* to a docking port underneath my steering column. Funny, I never knew that all-important port existed. Now I do. Within a few minutes he isolated the problem.



Had he just opened the hood and started looking around, I doubt he would have found it as quickly. He might not have even found it at all. The point is, if you want to repair something which is broken or not working well, something which is dysfunctional, like a family, you must first know what the problem(s) is/are.

What were the issues in Eli's family? What would the spiritual *Snap On Tools* Computer tell us? Let's see and then seek to

learn from what we study.

The Issues With The Sons (1 Samuel 2). Here is what the Scripture tells us about those issues:

¹² Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD
¹³ and the custom of the priests with the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. ¹⁴ Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. ¹⁵ Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, 'Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw.' ¹⁶ If the man said to him, 'They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire,' then he would say, 'No, but you shall give *it to me* now; and if not, I will take it by force.' ¹⁷ Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men despised the offering of the LORD.

Here we learn about their first sinful bent. Had Bon Jovi been around back then, I'm sure these two bad boys would have identified with the lyrics of his song *It's My Life*:

This ain't a song for the broken-hearted
 No silent prayer for the faith-departed
 I ain't gonna be just a face in the crowd
 You're gonna hear my voice
 When I shout it out loud
 It's my life
 It's now or never
 I ain't gonna live forever
 I just want to live while I'm alive
 (It's my life)
 My heart is like an open highway
 Like Frankie said
 I did it my way
 I just want to live while I'm alive
 It's my life



What a perfect lyrical picture of their misguided lives.

How, exactly, do we describe their collective carnal activity? They trampled upon the holy things of God. What exactly were these two priests/pastors doing? When people brought sacrifices to the tabernacle to offer to God, these priests circumvented proper divinely ordained procedure and

took the best meat of those sacrifices for themselves, and then they would give God the leftovers. In a word they were thieves, spiritual thieves. They were so selfish and self-centered (and audacious) they thought nothing of stealing from God Himself.

Priests were supposed to choose their meat for daily consumption from what was left-over from the sacrifices (Leviticus 7:28-36), but these progressives made sure they helped themselves first, while thinking of God last. In addition, this Torah text set a definite food boundary for the priest. The breast and right thigh of the sacrificial meats belonged to them, not the other parts. They, however, “courageously” pushed the restrictive boundary and used a large three-pronged fork to pick the best pieces to suit their insatiable appetites. No wonder the Scripture labeled them as “worthless men.” “Worthless,” in the Hebrew is *b^eliya`al* (ל [; Y " + l i b .), which is composed of two words, *b^eli*, from “without” and *ya`al*, from “profit,” thus forming the meaning “without profit” or “worthless.”¹ Frequently in the Old Testament this term is used in a moral sense to denote someone who lives contrary to natural and revealed divine law. Funny how we typically call boundary pushers priceless, while God calls them what they really are, morally and spiritually speaking, worthless. Indeed they were. Do you have a child who is putting the things of God dead last, who is living, speaking, and acting presumptuously? Casting His Word, His lofty moral teachings to the scrap heap, while favoring the loving open-mindedness perpetuated on the university campus is a sure fire sign the child is engaging in godless activity.

From this quick snapshot from their sordid spiritual leadership, I think a few pertinent observations are in order.

First, Hophni and Phinehas served during the period of the Judges, when “*everyone did that which was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 21:25). There were no absolutes, and everyone just did whatever came natural. And you thought post-modernism, replete with its penchant for relative morals, was a new thing. Think again. As a sinful worldview, it has been around for ages. The only difference now is it has some cool, trendy words associated with it: progressivism, tolerance, warm and accepting and so forth. The Sophists of 5 B.C. developed an entire belief system on this type of thinking. They,

¹Wilhelm Gesenius, and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles. *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2003), 122: (comp. of בְּלִי *not, without,* and יַעַל *benefit, profit, compare* הוֹעִיל *to be useful, and Arab. وَ عَلٌ and عَلٌ i.q. شريف noble, prince; and not as said by Fischer, in Proluss. De Verss. Græc. p. 93, from בְּלִי and עוֹל a yoke, as if impatience of the yoke, contumacy) pr. *unprofitableness, worthlessness, what is useless, of no fruit* (compare Arabic غير طایل *useless, of no profit, little worth*). Hence—*

(1) *wickedness, vileness*; אִישׁ בְּלִיעֵל “a wicked man.” 1 Sam. 25:25; 30:22; אָדָם בְּלִיעֵל Pro. 6:12, and אִשׁ בְּלִיעֵל 1 Sa. 25:17 id. Pl. often בְּנֵי-בְלִיעֵל 1 Sa. 2:12, and אֲנָשִׁים בְּנֵי בְלִיעֵל, אֲנָשִׁי בְנֵי בְלִיעֵל, Deu. 13:14; Jud. 19:22; 20:13. בַּח בְּלִיעֵל “a wicked woman,” 1 Sam. 1:16; דָּבָר בְּלִיעֵל “an evil, wicked thing,” Ps. 41:9; 101:3; compare Deu. 15:9. כֵּן בְּלִיעֵל “lest there arise a wicked thought in thy heart.”

(2) *destruction*, Nah. 1:11, יוֹעֵץ בְּלִיעֵל “who plans destruction,” Ps. 18:5, נְהַלִּי בְלִיעֵל יַבְעֵתוּנִי “the streams of destruction make me afraid” a metaphor taken from waves, which is not unfrequent in the sacred writers. LXX. χεῖμαὶ ὀνομίας, i.e. enemies rushing like torrents. Some moderns incorrectly render “torrents of hell.”

(3) Ellipt. for אִישׁ בְּלִיעֵל *a wicked man* (see No. 1), 2 Sa. 23:6; Job 34:18, *a destroyer, causer of destruction*.

[“Note. Hence was derived in later usage and in New Test. the pr.n. Βελίαλ, or Βελιάρ, *Belial*, i.q. ὁ πονηρὸς, *Satan*. The English version also gives בְּלִיעֵל in the Old Test. as a pr.n. *Belial*, but incorrectly[?]. See Thes. page 210.”]

according to J. Budziszewski, taught that “man is the measure of all things, but man has no fixed nature. Man measures all things by his words, but words have no fixed meanings. Language is not an instrument for finding truth, but for changing it.”² Post-modern thinkers and philosophers have taken this type of thinking and dressed it up in a slick system they call *epistemological relativism*, which “is the view that truth is relative to one’s point of view. In other words, there is no Truth with a capital T, but only your truth (true only from your point of view), and my truth (true only from mine).”³ The main problem with the premise is there must be absolute truth with a capital T or else the philosophers, like the ancient Jews, who hold and articulate this position couldn’t even present it without the presence of at least one absolute concept, viz., their view.

What’s wrong when everyone lives as if their truth, with a little ‘t,’ is true and shouldn’t be judged, analyzed and critiqued, or condemned? Personal and societal chaos ensues. We readily see this from the negative after-effects of the sin of Hophni and Phinehas. If nothing was/is really ultimately right or wrong, then anything was/is possible, even stealing from God at church. How did the culture descend into this dark period? Simple. The priests taught and lived as if biblical and moral truth changed with the whims of the culture, and the people merely followed suit. Sound familiar? Please note that when pastors start living wickedly and justifying their wickedness, be what it may, the culture in question is on a fast track to oblivion. How many pastors have succumbed to the progressive thinking of the world and allowed it into their churches as if it is some new doctrine from God? How many are pushing divinely ordained boundaries while calling it the movement of a loving God?

Second, it is quite obvious their sinful actions weren’t just one time events, but were, on the contrary, perpetual and ingrained. This was no temporary slip up, but a way of life with them. This will become important as we continue our study.

Three, the unchecked sin of one child can easily become the unchecked sin of another child. Why? For one, sin is enjoyable for the moment.

¹⁹ “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil (John 3).

¹³ From those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; ¹⁴ Who delight in doing evil and rejoice in the perversity of evil; (Proverbs 2).

The bread of deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel (Proverbs 20:17).

Getting drunk and having a great time with your rowdy friends might give you a real rush on Friday night, but, oh, there is that price you’ll pay come Saturday morning, right? Some will even drink a beer just to get through the headache they woke up with. People sin because they enjoy the sin for a variety of twisted reasons, but there is always a

² J. Budziszewski, *What We Can’t Not Know* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 179.

³Ibid., 180.

painful price to pay because you've chosen to live contrary to God's natural and specially revealed moral laws.

For another, sin is a contagion like the zoonotic illness called the bubonic plague. It is by no means static, but highly dynamic. It is by no means progressive (though that is what is touted to rationalize it), but highly digressive (and destructive). Along these lines, G. K. Chesterton offers this keen insight, "Men may keep a sort of level of good, but no man has ever been able to keep on one level of evil. That road goes down and down."⁴ Did not David's sexual sin with Bethsheba morph into lying, deception, desertion of a loyal friend, and murder? Indeed. Such is the nature of sin. Do not be duped.

One additional concept is worth noting. In order for one son to feel good about his irrational, evil, immoral behavior he will readily seek to pull another sibling into his orbit. As the brother begins to enjoy the same sin as the other brother, together they can better rationalize their behavior. You know the arguments. "Wouldn't God want us to enjoy what He has put before us? What's wrong with living life to the fullest? What's wrong with fulfilling your desires? What's wrong with playing hard for life is short? Really, we haven't hurt anyone physically, so what's wrong with our behavior?"

Talk about sons who were out of control. Talk about sons who should have known better. But this was just their first sinful activity. There was more.

Their second sinful bent is disclosed in verse 22.

²² Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting."

Not only did they steal from God's holy sacrifice, they forced the women who served at the temple to have sexual relations with them. Translated, they used their pastoral influence to get sexual favors from female spiritual servants. Does it get any more twisted than this? When the pastor, or pastors, misuse their position and abuse the flock, be they a woman, man, boy, or girl they have not only abandoned their calling, but they are ripe for the judgment of God.

How they went about exploiting these women we can only guess. They could have said, "God has told me that he wants us to have a sexual encounter to deepen your faith." Some women might just have bought that sick line. They might have taken women who confided in them concerning marriage difficulties, and set themselves up as the quintessential men who could truly offer physical-emotional-spiritual help to these ladies through their time of trouble. Scripture doesn't tell us how they manipulated the unfortunate women, but sexual predators, especially of the clergy type have a way of getting what they want. Scripture, conversely, just wants us to know how evil these two sons were. The very ones who should have loved the sheep were abusing the sheep.

As a sidelight, don't think this doesn't happen today. Crosswalk.com offers these chilling, spine-straightening words:

"Surveys of ministers reveal the existence of a growing moral breakdown in pastors' lives. Almost one in four pastors answered yes to the question, 'Since you've been in local church ministry, have you ever done anything

⁴G. K. Chesterton, *The Penguin Complete Father Brown* (New York: Penguin, 1981), 63.

with someone (not your spouse) that you feel was sexually inappropriate?" One in five pastors confessed to sexual misconduct of some kind, with one in eight admitting adultery, and only 4 in 100 were found out by their local church. (1988 survey in *Leadership* magazine)."

Sexual sin among the clergy is just as dangerous and deadly in our day as it was in the days of the Judges. One more report brings this sobering truth home:

Many pastors say pornography is an addiction.

Fifty-one percent of pastors say pornography is a possible temptation. Nearly 20% of the calls received on Focus on the Family's Pastoral Care Line are for help with issues such as pornography and compulsive sexual behavior. And of the 1,351 pastors that Rick Warren's website, Pastors.com, surveyed on porn use, 54% said they had viewed internet pornography within the last year and 30% of those had visited within the last 30 days.

Several pastors struggle with sexual addiction.

Patrick Means, author of, Men's Secret Wars, reveals that 63% of pastors surveyed confirm that they are struggling with sexual addiction or sexual compulsion including, but not limited to, the use of pornography, compulsive masturbation, or other secret sexual activity.⁵

I think the bottom line from this is clear: Sexual sin needs to be identified and dealt with regardless of who you are, lest it destroy your church and your family. What pastors and men should do to guard themselves in this crucial area is a topic for another study on another day, but for our purposes in this study we must remember that when your family is falling apart, you need to isolate the real problems.

Take a long, hard look at your war-torn family. You will not be able to head toward peace until you make an honest appraisal of the problem at hand. The issues with in the lives of Hophni and Phinehas can't be missed. They were greedy, sexually immoral, and they were also defiant of their father's counsel as you see at the end of verse 25. No sooner did Eli finish scolding them for their godless actions, then we read:

"But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the LORD desired to put them to death."

Translated, they just blew off the old man. And he was old. Chapter four, verse 15 tells us that he was ninety-eight when he died, which wasn't long after these events transpired. This also means the two sinister sons were probably in their mid-forties, at least. They, of all people, should have known better that their actions were off the moral grid with God.

⁵ Bo Lane, "How Many Pastors Are Addicted to Porn? The Stats Are Surprising," *Expastors.com*, accessed June 22, 2017, <http://www.expastors.com/how-many-pastors-are-addicted-to-porn-the-stats-are-surprising/>.

Again, I ask you, have you isolated the problem(s) in your family? Do you know the real issue? Just perhaps your son's sexual behavior does need addressing. Just perhaps his back-talking to you and your wife needs to be laid out on a table at a family meeting. Just perhaps your daughter's rebellious actions with a boyfriend need to be pointed out. When you are willing to do this you are well on your way to heading to family health. Keeping your head in the proverbial sand will not help anyone, nor will it bring tranquility to your family. If there is an elephant on your dining room table, then say so.

We know what the issues were with Hophni and Phinehas, but what about the father? As we shall see, he was not issue free.

The Issues With The Father (1 Samuel 2). Eli, the High Priest of Israel, was guilty of being a talker and not a doer, of being one who rattled his parental saber but never took it out of the scabbard. All talk. No action. Chapter 2 tells us this much. Listen and learn.

²² Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. ²³ He said to them, 'Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people?' ²⁴ No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the LORD'S people circulating. ²⁵ If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him? But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the LORD desired to put them to death.

So much for the tolerance of God where sexual freedom was/is concerned. As these priests had crossed a sacrificial food boundary, now they willfully and arrogantly crossed a divinely ordained sexual boundary, and everyone knew it according to verse 24. Don't read too quickly over this. The culture was still God fearing enough that the people were condemning the sexual sin and making sure the High Priest knew about it. I fear our culture is further down the road of darkness because we are privately and publicly condoning all varieties of sexual sin instead of *condemning* it. We have much work to do, it is must be more radical than the verbal warning issued by Eli.

Had you been there for this fatherly reprimand, you'd have nodded your head in firm agreement and said, "Go get 'em Eli. That's exactly what your sinister sons need to hear. Put a little of the fear of God into 'em." What Eli said was true. If you sin against a man, God can and will act your arbitrator. If you sin against God, who will mediate between you and Him? No one. The bottom line is you will be the loser for God, who is intrinsically holy, will judge you Himself. Interesting. There are degrees of sin, but God will judge them all in due time.

Did they listen? No. They had no intention of listening. Obviously, they had heard speeches like this before, and they had learned to take them and then go out and do exactly what they wanted to do. Remember, their lifestyles were ones of thievery and sexual perversion. This wasn't just something they picked up in their forties. This was how they lived, and I don't think you can convince me this was the first time their father, who worked in the tabernacle and was responsible for all of the priests, was privy to information like this.

I think my conclusion is proved by God's response to Eli. According to verse 25, God wanted to put the two wicked priests to death. What? You mean God wasn't tolerant of their sexual deviation? God was tolerant for a while, but eventually His tolerance of them as men created in His image ran into His intolerance of their sexual deviancy. Our culture asks us to be tolerant of people and their life choices, be what they may. This is not true tolerance, but a clever way to rationalize and codify sinful behavior. True tolerance is measured against natural and divinely revealed moral law.

You mean God didn't want to send them for therapy first? You mean God wasn't interested in seeing if they would behave differently if they were moved to another "church?" No. God wanted to remove them from the earth for their godless actions as Israel's priests. Verses 27 through 33 underscore this conclusion, while adding some additional judgments:

²⁷Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Did I not indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in bondage to Pharaoh's house? ²⁸Did I not choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be My priests, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before Me; and did I not give to the house of your father all the fire offerings of the sons of Israel? ²⁹ Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?

Why did God send an unnamed spiritual man, a prophet, to confront Eli? Because, as I said, Eli was all talk and no action. Is this you? Are you a proverbial paper tiger when it comes to sin and discipline? Eli, being an old softie when it came to his two "beloved" boys, always honored them above God. He honored them by not putting a stop to their vile activity. God was not fooled by this tough talk, but saw if for what it really was: A whole lot of hot air which let the boys get off scot free.

Is this a picture of how you handle your "boys?" Are you a paper tiger who growls and never bites, as it were? What would radical restraint of a wayward child look like? Do you rattle the saber while never drawing out the sword, figuratively speaking? Are you content with sounding gruff and rough, thinking this will settle the family difficulty? It won't, friend. God's response to Eli shows you this much. Your Lord is sickened by a man, or a woman, who merely talks about discipline without ever giving it. If you are guilty of this, and your family is in shambles as a result, then I pray you come clean right now and be who God called you to be.

What should you do? Which way should you head? Start first by identifying the problem(s) which is tearing your family apart, but don't stop here. Don't think that just talking about the problem with the sinner is going to stop the sin. As we see in the rest of this inspired story, direct action is needed.

Implement The Spiritual Solution (1 Samuel 2)

Picking where we left off with the words from the unnamed judge of the High Priest, we catch a glimpse of the need to follow harsh words with hard, definitive action.

³⁰ Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, ‘I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever’; but now the LORD declares, ‘Far be it from Me—for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed. ³¹ Behold, the days are coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father’s house so that there will not be an old man in your house. ³² You will see the distress of My dwelling, in spite of all the good that I do for Israel; and an old man will not be in your house forever. ³³ Yet I will not cut off every man of yours from My altar so that your eyes will fail from weeping and your soul grieve, and all the increase of your house will die in the prime of life. ³⁴ This will be the sign to you which will come concerning your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: on the same day both of them will die. ³⁵ But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed always. ³⁶ Everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and say, ‘Please assign me to one of the priest’s offices so that I may eat a piece of bread.’

Because Eli merely verbally disciplined his sons, and never took it any further than this, God was eventually forced to take action because so much was at stake. Just as a fish rots from the head first and then to tail, so too does the nation. If the spiritual leaders, who are in all reality the head of the nation, are permitted to live lives of flagrant, grotesque, unchecked sin then the rot of their actions will pass to the rest of the body, thus bringing chaos and judgment. Based upon this, God moved to put a stop to the sinners.

God’s discipline was, indeed, very tough.

- The men of their family would die in the prime of life (v. 31, 33).
- Eli would live to see God’s house in distress (v. 32).
- Hophni and Phinehas would die in one day (v. 34).
- His priestly lineage would be demoted to a lower level (v. 36).

Read chapter four, plus the rest of the Old Testament, and you’ll see that God didn’t just talk tough. He carried out His word.

When the Philistines took the ark in chapter 4 of 1 Samuel, Eli lived to see this. In fact, this event was so tragic that when Eli received word of it from a runner, he dropped dead:

¹⁵ Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were set so that he could not see. ¹⁶ The man said to Eli, ‘I am the one who came from the battle line. Indeed, I escaped from the battle line today.’ And he said, ‘How did things go, my son?’ ¹⁷ Then the one who brought the news replied, ‘Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has also been a great slaughter among the people, and your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been taken.’ ¹⁸ When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate,

and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy. Thus he judged Israel forty years.”

And to think this could have been averted had he just acted like the High Priest of God. He failed to act, so God did, and he, in turn, paid dearly for his inaction for over forty years.

When the Philistines killed the two wicked priestly sons of Eli, they fulfilled God’s promise to remove them and they, in turn, served as a warning that the rest of the men of the family wouldn’t live to old age. Later in Israel’s history the priesthood passed from their priestly line (which was from Aaron’s son, Ithamar) to that of another one, the line of Zadok (who was a descendent of Aaron’s other son, Eleazar, 1 Kings 2:27, 35).

What does all of this sober language teach us? Two things.

One, *say what needs to be said after you identify the problem which is destroying your family.* Mince no words. God didn’t. You shouldn’t either regardless of the age of the child. Did you catch that? Just because he is forty doesn’t mean you can’t and shouldn’t say anything if his actions are godless and perverted.

- If your child is living with someone, you don’t have to smile and accept it.
- If your child is dating someone who is destructive not only to themselves but to your family, then it is up to you to lay down the law, to draw the line in the sand.
- If your child is wrapped up in dangerous internet web sites, then it is your God-ordained duty to address them about their sinful activity.
- If your child wants to bring their girlfriend they are living with to your home for the weekend, you need to lay down some strict rules about what will and will not happen.
- If your child is demanding that you accept the fact they are dating someone of the same sex, you need to lovingly remind them about God’s design for relationships.
- If your child is a rebellious back-talker, God wants you to stand toe to toe with them and hold them accountable. You might need to say something like, “Young man, that’s the last time you’re going to talk to your mother like that. I don’t talk to her that way and you sure won’t.” Sure, it’s hard to talk like that to a child, but if you don’t, who will?

Remember, the peace process starts when you say what needs saying.

Two, *take bold, calculated (radical?) action.*

- If the internet is problem, then purchase some software to bar your child from harmful sites and sights. Note: Currently 266 new porn sites appear every day. Every second 28,258 people go to porn sites.⁶ If a friend is a problem, then bar them from your home.

⁶ “Internet Pornography By The Numbers: A Significant Threat To Society,” *Webroot.com*, <https://www.webroot.com/us/en/home/resources/tips/digital-family-life/internet-pornography-by-the-numbers>

- If a teen moves in with a boy or girlfriend outside the bonds of marriage, you don't have to make rent payments for them. Note: 40% of those who live together will get a divorce. I guess checking out the menu before you make a formal order doesn't guarantee a long, lasting relationship. Warn you teens.
- If a child has a problem with stealing, you don't have to pay bail. I had a parent early on in my pastorate who had a criminal for a son. One day the father called me at the office to say his son had just been arrested for shoplifting at a local store. He said the police gave him, the father, two options: either let the officers take the son to the police station for booking, or allow the father to come and pick up the teen. He wanted to know what he should do. Guess what I told him? Guess what he did. He picked him up.
- If your older child or children are living completely godless lives, they don't have to be part of your living trust.
- If your child is getting into all kinds of trouble at the university, you don't have to continue to pay for tuition, do you?
- If your child constantly gambles all his hard-earned money away by visiting on-line gambling sites, you don't have to send checks to keep them going.

There is always room for grace, mercy and forgiveness; however, when you are dealing with Hophni and Phinehas, you can't budge one inch, nor can you equivocate. They will sense your weakness and continue down their dark road, smiling all the way. You'll be left with a family in tatters. Far better and wiser to say what needs to be said and to do what needs to be done. Far better to risk losing your relationship with them than watch them develop a relationship with sin.

What should motivate you to get off the couch and step up to the plate and lead as a parent? The story of Eli should be your (negative) motivation. Because he dropped the ball, God picked up the ball. I don't know about you, but I'd rather tackle my family problems without waiting for God to take care of them in His way, don't you agree?

Are you an Eli? Are you guilty of letting an evil situation go on for forty years? If so, God is calling you right now to act as He would act and to lead as He would lead. There's no more room, nor time, for talking tough. You must right now become a person of tangible action. Sure the road may be tough, but it is the only way to peace.

Are you a Hophni or a Phinehas? Are you causing your parents great grief? Do you talk back to them at will? Do you rebel against their wishes? Do you flaunt their rules? Are you walking away from God? Are you using clever cultural arguments to rationalize your bad behavior? If so, know right now God is calling you today to repentance. He is asking you to seek His forgiveness. And believe me, He can and will forgive you of the most vile sins. Further, once He has forgiven you, He can and will restore joy not just to your life to the life of the most important thing you possess: your family.