

ELI, THE SLACKER DAD

TEXT: I SAMUEL 3:11-13

Introduction:

1. A while back, an organization called the “National Fatherhood Initiative” did a survey. Their survey reported, “The federal government spends \$99.8 billion dollars every year on programs – such as child support enforcement and anti-poverty efforts – that support father-absent homes.”
2. Our government has run up a bind-boggling deficit of several trillion dollars. I know a good way to cut out \$100 billion (every year). We should shut down these foolish government programs that encourage father-absent homes.
3. The report said that the \$99.8 billion figure represents only the public costs of absent fathers. In other words, the personal costs in terms of broken hearts and broken homes, and human suffering and are so enormous no one could begin to put a price tag on it.
4. Absent fathers are responsible for poverty, teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, sexual abuse, drug abuse, suicide, and numerous other problems.
5. The Bible emphasizes the importance of strong fathers.
 - In Genesis 18:19, the LORD said this about Abraham, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD.”
 - Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”
 - Ephesians 6:4 says, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”
6. Our country went through a revolution of sorts in the 1960’s. Up until the 1960’s, divorce was rare. Couples living together outside of marriage was rare. Abortion was not only rare; it was illegal.
7. There were problems with alcohol and illegal drugs, and homosexuality, and pornography, but nothing like what we are seeing today.
8. Up until the 1960’s, most mothers stayed at home or perhaps worked part time.
9. There was prayer (to God, not to Allah) and Bible-reading in the public schools.
10. But in the 1960’s there was a big upheaval – with riots, drugs, promiscuity, rock and roll, etc. And those same rebellious, dope-head

- hippies that were rioting are now running the universities, and the public schools, and the media, and politics, etc.
11. Today, one in three children are growing up without their father.
 12. But it is not just absent fathers that have caused broken homes and delinquent children, it is slacker fathers and permissive fathers – fathers who may stick around, but who do not discipline their children.
 13. Who do not attend Sunday School with their children.
 14. Who do not pray with their children.
 15. Who do not read the Bible with their children, etc.
 16. Some slacker dads are church members but they are not consistent when it comes to being the spiritual head of the home.
 17. Within the past year, two old friends told me their wives left them. They had two things in common: both these wives met their new boyfriends on the Internet. And both men admitted to me they were slacking off – skipping church, not living for God, backsliding, etc.
 18. This morning I am going to preach about Eli. Eli was the high priest when Samuel was born. In addition to being a priest, he also served Israel as a judge.
 19. Eli was the immediate predecessor of Samuel, who was the last of the judges. First Samuel 4:18 tells us that Eli “had judged Israel forty years.”
 20. Eli was a judge, and a priest, and he was also a father. He had two wicked sons: Hophni and Phinehas. We are first introduced to these two sons in I Samuel 1:3, but in that verse there is no reference to their wickedness (cf. 3:13; 2:12, 22-25).
 21. Eli was a weak and indulgent father, and God held him responsible for the terrible behaviour of his sons (2:27-34; 3:10-13).
 22. The Bible teaches that God holds us responsible for the behaviour of our children.
 23. Eli received two warnings. The first came from an unnamed prophet (2:27-34). The second came from young Samuel (3:10-18).

I. ELI WAS LACKING IN SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT (1:13-15).

1. There are many men today (even preachers) who are lacking in spiritual discernment.
2. Hannah was praying fervently but Eli thought she was drunk!
3. Many dads today are lacking in discernment. They have no idea what their children are doing, whom they associate with, what they watch on television and the Internet, what music they are listening to, etc.

4. I think it is a foolish for parents to allow children to have a television or a computer in their bedroom. You might as well put a rattlesnake in there too.
5. But many fathers are unaware of what is going on. I remember when we had our Christian school. One student was very rude and disrespectful. I called the parents down and the father objected by saying, “My son is polite and well-mannered, etc.”
6. So I asked the boy a few questions and he started talking back to me in a rude manner. The parents had no more to say at this point.
7. Many dads lack discernment. The Bible teaches that spiritual discernment comes from reading the Bible and obeying the Bible (cf. Hebrews 5:11-14).
8. Psalm 119:130 says, “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”

II. ELI RAISED WICKED SONS

1. Many years ago, I heard a preacher say, “The only thing you can bring with you to heaven is your children.”
2. Eli failed in this most important job – raising his children for God. The Bible says they were “sons of Belial” (2:12). “They knew not the LORD” (not saved).
3. *Belial* is always used in the OT as a term of scorn. It is used to describe people who were worse than worthless. It means they were rebellious and lawless. In the New Testament, the word is used only once, and that is for Satan (II Cor. 6:15).
4. Wicked rebellious people were referred to as “sons of Belial” or “daughters of Belial.” Examples of “children of Belial” include idol worshippers, drunkards, homosexuals, and liars.
5. Temple orgies were part of the sensual worship of the Canaanites. Hophni and Phinehas were guilty of similar immoral practices (2:22).
6. Exodus 38:8 refers to the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
7. The Bible does not say how many of these women were seduced by these immoral priests, Hophni and Phinehas, but apparently there were enough to cause a big scandal (I Sam. 2:22-24).
8. Judges 4:19 tells us that Phinehas was married and pregnant with child. While his pregnant wife was at home he was committing adultery in the tabernacle.
9. Eli confronted his wicked sons but he should have done more to discipline them (cf. 3:13). He should have restrained and punished them.

10. He should have removed them from their position as priests (2:24, 25).
11. First Samuel 2:25 says, “Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father.” They had no respect either to his authority as their father and their judge.
12. Since Eli did not remove his sons from their position as priests, God had to kill Hophni and Phinehas for their wickedness (2:25, 34; 3:12, 13; 4:11).
13. The Bible says, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7).
14. Eli’s two sons had long hardened their hearts, and now God had no choice but to kill them.
15. “He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Prov. 29:1).

III. ELI HONORED HIS SONS ABOVE GOD (2:29).

1. If men do not honor God, they are guilty of despising God (I Sam. 2:30).
2. In Malachi 1:6, the LORD said the priests were guilty of despising His name.
3. They replied, “Wherein have we despised thy name?” (Mal. 1:6).
4. The LORD said they had offered polluted bread, and blind and lame and sick animals for sacrifice. God said it was evil.
5. They were giving God their garbage, and God said they were guilty of despising His name.
6. First Samuel 2:30 says, “Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”
7. Eli was dishonoring God by not correcting his wicked sons. He should have rebuked them sharply. Their crimes deserved a strong rebuke.
8. Proverbs 23:13 says, “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.”
9. Some children need correction. In fact, some need a good spanking, but all they get is a pat on the wrist. Then before you know it they are totally wicked and godless like the sons of Eli.
10. Apparently the softness of Eli’s admonishment only hardened them the more. Whether it was because Eli loved them that he doted on them, or because he feared them that he dealt so mildly with them, it doesn’t really matter.

11. Many times I have heard foolish parents say, “I love my child so much I could never spank him.”
12. But the Bible teaches the exact opposite! “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Pro. 13:24).
13. If Eli really loved his sons he would have corrected them, and disciplined them, and spanked them at an early age.
14. “He that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Pro. 13:24). “Betimes” means “at an early age.”
15. A young couple once asked a pastor, “When should we start spanking our children?” He said, “Girls when they turn two. Boys as soon as they’re born.”
16. Eli’s leniency was evidence of his lack of discernment and lack of zeal for the honour of God and for the tabernacle of God.

CONCLUSION:

1. WA Criswell served for many years as the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, one of the largest churches in America.
2. He died in 2002.
3. One day, when he was an old man, he was preaching about the importance of a Christian family, and at the conclusion of his sermon he said, “I have a confession to make. All through the years and the years and the years of my life, I have placed my ministry first. There’s been no exception to that any day, any night. I have placed my work as a preacher and a pastor first. A thousand times and I’m asked in these preacher conferences, ‘If you had your life to do over again, is there anything you’d change?’”
4. “And I’m beginning to reply, ‘There is. If I had my life to live over again, I would place my family first and my ministry second.’”
5. “This is God’s charge. This is God’s calling: first under His gracious and loving hands, to have a Christian home, to rear our children in the love and nurture of the Lord. And the other things in life will take their place under the hand and choice, under the supervision and surveillance of the great Almighty God.”
6. I have heard other preachers make similar statements. May God help us to learn from the lesson of Eli, the slacker dad.