

## **PARENTAL ROLES IN CHILD UPBRINGING IN LIGHT OF 1 SAMUEL 2: 12-17**

### **Introduction**

Parenting/child upbringing is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, financial, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. Parenting refers to the aspects of raising a child aside from the biological relationship.<sup>1</sup> It is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social and intellectual developments of a child from infancy to adulthood. It entails providing safety, shelter, clothes, nourishment, protection and physical development by introducing the child to exercise thereby inculcating good health habits in him.

The best period for commencement of the upbringing or training is the childhood of the student. Childhood is the most impressionable period in the life of a person. At this delicate and responsible juncture the parents can play a very crucial role. But upbringing of small children is not an easy and simple function and requires deep thought of identification, knowledge, experience, determination and perseverance in the mentor or the parents. It is sad that most parents are found ignorant of the art of upbringing of the children. This is the reason most children are not receiving upbringing on desirable lines and they keep growing like self-sustained saplings. Therefore, the researcher will discuss the various styles of parenting. And the exegetical analyses of 1 Samuel 2: 12-17 will be use as a medium to deserminate parental role in upbringing of the child.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Davies, ed., *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Work* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 245.

## Parenting Styles

A parenting style is the overall emotional climate in the home.<sup>2</sup> Developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind identified three main parenting styles in early child development: **authoritative**, **authoritarian**, and **permissive**.<sup>3</sup> These parenting styles were later expanded to four, including an uninvolved style. These four styles of parenting involve combinations of acceptance and responsiveness on the one hand and demand and control on the other.<sup>4</sup>

1. **Uninvolved Parenting:** An uninvolved or neglectful parenting style is when parents are often emotionally absent and sometimes even physically absent. They have little or no expectation of the child and regularly have no communication. They are not responsive to a child's needs and do not demand anything of them in their behavioural expectations. If present, they may provide what the child needs for survival with little to no engagement.<sup>5</sup>

There is often a large gap between parents and children with this parenting style. Children with little or no communication with their own parents tended to be the victims of another child's deviant behaviour and may be involved in some deviance themselves.<sup>6</sup> Children of uninvolved parents suffer in social

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<sup>2</sup> C. Spera, "A Review of the Relationship among Parenting Practices, Parenting Styles, and Adolescent School Achievement," *Educational Psychology Review*, vol. 17 No. 2 (2005): 135.

<sup>3</sup> D. Baumrind, "Child Care Practices Antecedent Three Patterns of Preschool Behavior," *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, vol. 75 (1967): 43-88; D. Baumrind, "Current Patterns of Parental Authority," *Developmental Psychology*, vol. 4 No. 1, Pt. 2 (1971): 1-103; D. Baumrind, "Parental Disciplinary Patterns and Social Competence in Children," *Youth and Society*, vol. 9 (1978): 238-276; M. McKay, "Parenting Practices in Emerging Adulthood: Development of a New Measure" (Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> J. W. Santrock, *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Lola Brown, Shrinidhi Iyengar, "Parenting Styles: The Impact on Student Achievement," *Marriage and Family Review*, vol. 4 No. 3 (2008): 14-38.

<sup>6</sup> D. Finkelhor, R. Ormrod, H. Turner and M. Holt, "Pathways to Poly-Victimization," *Child Maltreatment*, vol. 14 No. 4 (November 2009): 319.

competence, academic performance, psychosocial development and problem behaviour.

2. **Permissive Parenting:** Permissive or indulgent parenting is more popular in middle-class families than in working-class families. In these family settings, a child's freedom and autonomy are highly valued, and parents tend to rely mostly on reasoning and explanation. Parents are undemanding, so there tends to be little, if any punishment or explicit rules in this style of parenting. These parents say that their children are free from external constraints and tend to be highly responsive to whatever the child wants at the moment. Children of permissive parents are generally happy but sometimes show low levels of self-control and self-reliance because they lack structure at home. An example of permissive parenting would be the parents not disciplining their children.
3. **Authoritarian Parenting:** Authoritarian parents are very rigid and strict. They place high demands on the child, but are not responsive to the child. Parents who practice authoritarian style parenting have a rigid set of rules and expectations that are strictly enforced and require rigid obedience. When the rules are not followed, punishment is most often used to promote future obedience. There is usually no explanation of punishment except that the child is in trouble for breaking a rule.<sup>7</sup> "Because I said so" is a typical response to a child's question of authority.

This type of authority is used more often in working-class families than the middle class. In 1983 Diana Baumrind found that children raised in an authoritarian-style home were less cheerful, more moody and more vulnerable to stress. In many cases these children also demonstrated passive hostility.

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<sup>7</sup> A. C. Fletcher, J. K. Walls, E. C. Cook, K. J. Madison, and T. H. Bridges, "Parenting Style as a Moderator of Associations Between Maternal Disciplinary Strategies and Child Well-Being." *Journal of Family Issues* vol. 29 No. 12 (December 2008): 1724–1744.

An example of authoritarian parenting would be the parents harshly punishing their children and disregarding their children's feelings and emotions.

4. **Authoritative Parenting:** Described by Baumrind as the "just right" style,<sup>8</sup> it combines a medium level demands on the child and a medium level responsiveness from the parents. Authoritative parents rely on positive reinforcement and infrequent use of punishment. Parents are more aware of a child's feelings and capabilities and support the development of a child's autonomy within reasonable limits. There is a give-and-take atmosphere involved in parent-child communication and both control and support are balanced. Research shows that this style is more beneficial than the too-hard authoritarian style or the too-soft permissive style. An example of authoritative parenting would be the parents talking to their child about their emotions.

There is no single or definitive model of parenting. With authoritarian and permissive (indulgent) parenting on opposite sides of the spectrum, most conventional and modern models of parenting fall somewhere in between. Parenting strategies as well as behaviours and ideals of what parents expect, whether communicated verbally and/or non-verbally, also play a significant role in a child's development.

Recent research has found that parenting style is significantly related to children's subsequent mental health and well-being. In particular, authoritative parenting is positively related to mental health and satisfaction with life, and authoritarian parenting is negatively related to these variables.<sup>9</sup> However,

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<sup>8</sup> Baumrind, "Current Patterns of Parental Authority," *Developmental Psychology*, vol. 4 No. 1, Pt. 2 (1971): 45-47.

<sup>9</sup> M. Rubin and B. M. Kelly, "A Cross-Sectional Investigation of Parenting Style and Friendship as Mediators of the Relation Between Social Class and Mental Health in a University Community," *International Journal for Equity in Health*, vol. 14 No. 87 (2015): 1-11.

parenting styles are only a small piece of what it takes to be a "good parent". Parenting takes a lot of skill and patience and is constant work and growth.

## Parenting Skills

Research<sup>10</sup> shows that children benefit most when their parents:

- communicate honestly about events or discussions that have happened, and when parents explain clearly to children what happened and how they were involved if they were;
- stay consistent, as children need structure: parents who have regular routines benefits children incredibly;
- utilize resources available to them, reaching out into the community;
- take more interest in their child's educational needs and early development; and
- keep open communication and staying educated on what their child is learning and doing and how it is affecting them.

Parenting skills are often assumed to be self-evident or naturally present in parents. That this is a very much oversimplified view is emphasized by Virginia Satir, a pioneer in family therapy:

In some ways we got the idea that raising families was all instinct and intent, and we behave as if anyone could be an effective parent simply because he wanted to be, or because he just happened to go through the acts of conception and birth. This is the most complicated job in the world...<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/LessonsInLearning/Dec-13-07-Parenting-styles.pdf> (accessed February 13, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Virginia Satir, *Peoplemaking* (Mountain View, CA: Science and Behaviour Books, 1988), 202–203.

Parenting skills vary, and a parent with good parenting skills may be referred to as a *good parent*.<sup>12</sup> The English pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott described the concept of "good-enough" parenting in which a minimum of prerequisites for healthy child development are met. Winnicott wrote, "The good-enough mother...starts off with an almost complete adaptation to her infant's needs, and as time proceeds she adapts less and less completely, gradually, according to the infant's growing ability to deal with her failure."<sup>13</sup>

Views on the characteristics that make one a good or "good-enough" parent vary from culture to culture. Additionally, research has supported that parental history both in terms of attachments of varying quality as well as parental psychopathology, particularly in the wake of adverse experiences, can strongly influence parental sensitivity and child outcomes.<sup>14</sup>

## Exegetical Analysis of 1 Samuel 2:12-17

Verse 12

בְּנֵי עֲלִי בְנֵי בְלִיעַל לֹא יָדְעוּ אֶת־יְהוָהוּ

*Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.*

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<sup>12</sup> Johri Ashish, "6 Steps for Parents So Your Child is Successful," [www.humanenrich.com](http://www.humanenrich.com) (accessed February 19, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> D. W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 34 (1953): 89-97

<sup>14</sup> D. S. Schechter and E. Willheim, "Disturbances of Attachment and Parental Psychopathology in Early Childhood," *Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Issue*, vol. 18 No. 3 (2009): 665-687; J. Grienenberger, K. Kelly, and A. Slade, "Maternal Reflective Functioning, Mother-Infant Affective Communication and Infant Attachment: Exploring The Link Between Mental States and Observed Caregiving," *Attachment and Human Development*, vol. 7 (2005): 299-311; A. F. Lieberman, E. Padrón, P. Van Horn, and W. W. Harris, "Angels in the Nursery: The Intergenerational Transmission of Benevolent Parental Influences," *Infant Mental Health Journal*, vol. 26 (2005): 504–520.

The word Belial (בְּלִיעַל) is used here and 1 Samuel 1:16, as though Belial were the name of some pagan deity, but it simply signifies “worthlessness.” It is a common term in these records of Samuel, being used some nine or ten times. It is rarely found in the other historical books. “Sons of Belial” signifies, then, merely “sons of worthlessness,” worthless, good-for-nothing, yokeless, lawless, impudent, one of the most wicked, vilest, and most profligate men. The use of Belial in the English Version here, and in other places in the Old Testament, might be due the contrast drawn by St. Paul between Christ and Belial, as if Belial were the name of an idol or the personification of evil (2 Corinthians 6:15).

They knew not the Lord, thus implying that the whole conduct of these high priestly officials showed they were utter unbelievers. They used their sacred position merely as affording an opportunity for their selfish extortions; and, as is so often the case now, as it was then, their unbelief was the source of their moral worthlessness (see 1 Samuel 2:22). Hophni and Phinehas (the two sons of Eli) are, for students of ecclesiastical history, eminently suggestive characters. They are true exemplars of the grasping and worldly clergy of all ages.

It was the sacrificial feasts that gave occasion for their rapacity. It was the dances and assemblies of the women in the vineyards and before the sacred feast that gave occasion for their debaucheries. They were the worst development of the lawlessness of the age, penetrating, as in the case of the wandering Levite of the Book of Judges, into the most sacred offices. But the coarseness of these vices does not make the moral less pointed for all times.

Verse 13

מִשְׁפַּט הַפְּהָנִים אֶת־הָעָם כָּל־אִישׁ זָבַח וְזָבַח וּבָא נֶעַר הַפְּהָן כְּבָשָׁל הַבֶּשֶׂר וְהַמִּזְלֵג שְׁלֹשׁ־הַשָּׁנִים בְּיָדָיו

*And the priest's custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand;*

The temple was built in such a way that there were certain rooms in the court of the people, wherein they had liberty to boil the flesh, in order that they might feast with God at his own house. And such rooms, no doubt, there were in the outward court of the tabernacle. The priest's custom here is the custom or practice introduced under these robber-priests, who were not content with the modest share of the offerings assigned to them by the Law of Moses (See Leviticus 7:31, 35; Deuteronomy 18:3.). The law directed the worshipper to present to the priest the fat of the victim along with the breast and shoulder (Leviticus 7:29-34). The fat was to be burned on the altar to Jehovah (Leviticus 3:3-5): the breast and shoulder, after being 'waved' and 'heaved,' a ceremony of dedication to Jehovah, became the priest's portion.

The sacrifice brought is peace-offerings to be offered at the altar. When persons wished to present a sacrifice of peace offering on the altar, the offering was brought in the first instance to the priest, and as the Lord's part was burnt, the parts appropriated respectively to the priests and offerers were to be soaked. But Eli's sons, unsatisfied with the breast and shoulder, which were the privileges appointed to them by the divine law (Exodus 29:27), not only claimed part of the offerer's share, but greedily seized them previous to the sacred ceremony of heaving or waving (see Leviticus 7:29) in that they did this while the flesh was still boiling. As the Lord's part of the peace-offerings was burned upon the altar, so the priests' and offerers' parts were to be boiled.

Verse 14

וְהָכָה בְּכַיִּיזָר אוֹ בַדוּד אוֹ בַקְלַחַת אוֹ בַפְּרוּר פֶּלֶאֲשֶׁר יַעֲלֶה הַמִּזְבֵּחַ יִקַּח הַכֹּהֵן בּוֹ כֶּכֶה יַעֲשֶׂוּ לְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
הַבָּאִים שָׁם בְּשִׁלָּה



*And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.*

The offeror made use of whatever vessel, larger or lesser, to boil the flesh for himself and friends, according to the quantity. The priest's servant struck the fork brought with him into the container and all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself as his own property whereas no part of it at all belonged to him, he having had the breast and shoulder delivered to him in the first place. By this method, he claimed as the priest's own all that he could drag up with this three forked instrument. This might be much because the flesh would hang upon the three teeth of the fork and each of them would bring up a pound of flesh, and perhaps more.

The priests were to burn the best part of the sacrifices on the altar as offerings to God, but Eli's sons demanded for themselves raw meat that was not cooked at all (vv. 15-16). Meat was luxurious food in Israel's economy, so Eli's sons were living off the fat of the land. They were worthless men (i.e., wicked in God's sight). They did this in Shiloh, where all the Israelites come to offer their sacrifices, being the proper place for them due to the presence of the tabernacle and altar there. Men of all ranks and degrees, princes and people, rich and poor, and all sorts of men, were treated alike.

Verse 15

גַּם בְּטָרִם יִקְטְרוּן אֶת־הַחֶלֶב וּבָא נֶעַר הַפֶּהֶן וְאָמַר לְאִישׁ הַזֹּבֵחַ תִּנָּה בָּשָׂר לְצִלוֹת לִפְהֶן וְלֹא־יִקַּח מִמֶּנּוּ  
בָּשָׂר מִבְּשָׂל כִּי אִם־חַי

*Also, before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.*

To take the flesh of the sacrificial animal and roast it before this offering had been made, was a crime which was equivalent to a robbery of God, and is therefore referred to here with the emphatic particle **gam** (גַּם), as being the worst crime that the sons of Eli committed. A contemptuous insult was here offered to the Lord. This fat was not to be eaten or taken by anyone; it was God's portion, to be burnt by the priest on the altar (Leviticus 3:16; 7:23, 25, 30-31).

Moreover, the priests could not claim any of the flesh which the offerer of the sacrifice boiled for the sacrificial meal, after burning the fat portions upon the altar and giving up the portions which belonged to them, to say nothing of their taking it forcibly out of the pots while it was being boiled. It is likely that they wanted to take this raw meat quickly so they could sell it in the marketplace before it spoiled. This was a source of income for Hophni and Phinehas, a way to line their pockets off the people's desire to worship.

#### Verse 16

וַאֲמַר \*לוֹ [לֹא] כִּי עָתָה כָּאֲשֶׁר תִּצְוֶנָה נִפְשׁוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הַאִישׁ קֶטֶר יִקְטִירוּן כִּי־וּמ הַחֵלֶב וְקַחְדֵּל  
תִּתֶנּוּ וְאִם־לֹא לִקְחֹתִי בְּחֹזֶקָה

*And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.*

The solemn ritual of the sacrifice was not only transgressed by these covetous, greedy, ministering priests, but the worshippers were compelled by force to yield to these new lawless customs, probably introduced by these sons of the high priest Eli. This was the very height of haughty impiety. That such submissive language did not prevail with them to have so much respect for God, as to permit his portion to be presented to him in the first place, especially as they offered to the priest more than his share afterward, manifested excessive profaneness and contempt of things sacred.

Verse 17

וַתְּהִי חַטָּאת הַנְּעָרִים גְּדוֹלָה מְאֹד אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה כִּי נֶאֱצְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אֶת מִנְסַת יְהוָה

Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

This conduct Eli's sons and their servants was a great sin in the sight of the Lord, as they thereby brought the sacrifice of the Lord into contempt, providing occasion for blaspheming (as in 2 Sam. 12:14). The robbery which they committed was a small sin in comparison with the contempt of the sacrifices themselves, which they were the means of spreading among the people. This disregard applies not only to the meat-offering as the accompaniment to the slain-offerings, but to the sacrificial offering generally, as a gift presented for the Lord.

In other words, the sin of the priests was a great one because it put a stumbling-block in the way of the people. Religion was being brought into general disrepute through the conduct of its leading ministers. It is unlikely that piety, justice, and purity would be honoured and loved in the land of Israel when the whole ritual of the sacrifices was openly scoffed at in the great sanctuary of the people by the chief priests of their faith.

The sin of the young men was very great; because they violently took away both man's and God's dues, and this before their time, and that with manifest contempt of God and men; and all this merely for the gratifying of their sensual appetite. They did this before the Lord, i.e. even in the place of God's special presence, where He saw and observed all their miscarriages; which argues the height of impiety and imprudence.

Therefore, men abhorred the offering of the Lord; they neglected and abhorred the practice of carrying up sacrifices to be offered, which they knew

would be so grossly abused. They assumed the sacrifices would be rejected and abhorred by God himself and they would not contribute to the priests' sin, and the corruption of God's worship. They felt it better to neglect the thing, than to expose it to the priests' depravation.

The sons of Eli were the ringleaders who set these bad examples which other priests followed, and therefore the sin is ascribed to them. They took what was not their own in a forcible manner, before the Lord had his part in the offering, and all this done in the tabernacle, in the presence of God. This plainly showed that they did not the fear of God, nor have any sense of His omniscience and omnipresence, any more than of His holiness and justice.

Men abhorred the offering of the Lord because it was irritating and disagreeable to them to bring their sacrifices, when they saw the law of God was not attended to, and the rules of sacrificing were not observed. Their contempt of God, abuse of sacrifices, injury done to the sacrificers, covetousness and sensuality as priests did set the people against sacrifices, made them loath them, and neglect to bring them. And this aggravated the sin of the young men, though the sacrificers were not excused hereby (1 Samuel 2:24). Corruption in the priesthood results in profanity in the people (cf. Malachi 2:8-9: "They made it vile in the eyes of the people by shewing how vile it was in their eyes").

Nothing brings religion so much into contempt with the people as the open profaneness of those that are ministers of it. The validity, however, and efficacy of God's ordinances, do not depend altogether on the piety of those that minister in them. So that it was a sin in the people to neglect divine institutions because of the wickedness of the priests. But it was a still much greater sin in the priests to give them occasion so to do.

### **The Application of the Text to the Contemporary Parents**

When praying before the LORD in chapter 1, Hannah feared that Eli considered her a 'worthless woman' (v. 16). Now we meet two men who really

are 'worthless' – Eli's own sons (2.12). They are, literally, 'sons of Belial', just like the ghastly men of Gibeah in Judges 19.22; 20.13. The sins of Hophni and Phinehas were both ceremonial (2.13-17) and sexual (2.22-25). Eli's sons served God the way they chose (cf. Korah's behavior in Num. 16). Eli was quick to judge another man's child as ungodly whereas he hesitated to deal with the ungodly actions of his own children. This is similar to many parents today who are quick to correct and discipline children of other parents for certain behaviours and actions but excuse such in their own children

Eli's sons were not only evil in their personal lives, but they flagrantly disregarded the will of God even as they served as leaders of Israel's worship. They neither knew the Lord (in the sense of paying attention to Him, v. 12) nor treated His offerings as special (v. 17; cf. Mal. 1:6-14). The writer documented these evaluations with two instances of their specific practices (vv. 13-14 and 15-16). The Law ordered the priests to handle the offerings in particular ways to respect God's holiness (cf. Lev. 3:3, 5; 7:34; Deut. 18:3). In like manner, many children take what doesn't belong to them, either by hook or by crook (by force or by fraud) and their parents won't nip this behaviour in the bud. This is indirectly encouraging such children to become hardened thieves.

Payne observed that: "To this day, arrogant assertiveness and self-seeking are temptations to all those in positions of great power in society."<sup>15</sup> As noted by Heater, their sin was particularly egregious since they were supposed to be teaching morality and representing the people of God (2:22-25; cf. 2 Chron. 17:7-9).<sup>16</sup> Hophni and Phinehas were guilty of a double sin:

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<sup>15</sup> David F. Payne, *Daily Study Bible: I & II Samuel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 18.

<sup>16</sup> Homer Heater, Jr., "A Theology of Samuel and Kings," *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 120.

- (a) They robbed the people: not content with the share assigned them, they sent a servant to interrupt the preparation of the sacrificial meal, and seize a further portion.
- (b) They insulted Jehovah by demanding their share before the parts consecrated to Him had been duly burned upon the altar (1 Samuel 2:15). This was a high and profane contempt of God, and an additional injury; for they took such parts as they liked best while it was raw, and before that which belonged to God had been offered to him.

The text makes it clear that these sins were not one-off lapses of otherwise godly men – they were habitual (notice the use of the word ‘custom’ in 2.13; the tense of the verbs also emphasises the regularity of their crimes). Eli himself knew what was happening (2.22) and got as far as lamenting their behaviour (2.23-25), but ultimately he did nothing to ‘restrain’ their blasphemy (3:13), and so he too is guilty before the LORD. God had ‘revealed’ Himself to their house, ‘chosen’ them, and ‘given’ them so much (2: 27-28); but they had treated the LORD with contempt (2:29) – why? Ultimately, Eli chose to honour his sons ‘above’ the LORD. The ‘yourselves’ of 2:29 suggests that Eli himself also fed on the stolen sacrifices. Many parents have also compromised due to the accrued ‘benefits’ of their children’s misdemeanour.

The sons of Eli are condemned by the narrator (v. 12) and by their father (vv. 23-24), but ultimately the whole family is condemned by the ‘man of God’ in verses 27-34, and also by God Himself, speaking through His prophet Samuel, in 3: 11-18. The sins of the Eli’s are so great that their family will be decimated and excluded from the priesthood forever. To be clear, this is not the end of the priesthood per se. God had promised Aaron that the priesthood would remain with his sons by statute forever (Exodus 29:9); he reiterated the same promise to Aaron’s grandson Phinehas (a different one!) in Numbers 25: 11-13. This promise remains and is inherited by Zadok in 1 Kings 2, but from this moment on

the house of Eli is permanently excluded from it (cf. Abiathar in 1 Kings 2: 26-27).

Eli shunned trouble and exertion. This led him to indulge his children, without using parental authority to restrain and correct them when young. He winked at the abuses in the service of the sanctuary till they became customs, and led to abominations; and his sons, who should have taught those that engaged in the service of the sanctuary what was good, solicited them to wickedness. Their offence was committed even in offering the sacrifices for sins, which typified the atonement of the Saviour! Sins against the remedy, the atonement itself, are most dangerous, they tread underfoot the blood of the covenant. Eli's reproof was far too mild and gentle. In general, none are more abandoned than the degenerate children of godly persons, when they break through restraints.

Eli was the *high priest* of Israel, the spiritual leader of the twelve tribes. His potential to influence the nation for good was incredible because three times a year all adult men went to Shiloh to celebrate the holidays commemorating the Exodus. During these times, Eli could have taught the people *how* to walk with God. But from what we read about him, it seems he'd grown lazy and had become little more than an office-holder.

His laziness extended beyond his role as high priest to his role as father. His sons are described as corrupt, worthless, without moral value, in light of their nature and inner disposition. They weren't mostly good kids who occasionally got into trouble but thoroughly nasty; rotten to the core! As the sons of the high priest of Israel, of course they'd heard of God but they didn't know God – meaning they lived without any reference to Him. They knew Israel's history: they'd heard of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob, their bondage in Egypt, the Exodus, crossing the Red Sea, and the Conquest of Canaan. But it was all just a story to Hophni and Phinehas. They made no connection between the God of Israel's past & the reality of their daily lives. And what they lived for was enjoying the perks of the

family business – being priests. They'd watched their father Eli long enough to know they could go through the motions of their office without any reality behind it.

As the story of Eli unfolds we discover that while he was far from the ideal of a high priest, he did believe in God. It's just that his own comfort was more important to him than God's glory. While believing in the Lord, Eli allowed his decisions to be shaped more by what was convenient and fashionable (trendy), than what was right before God. We see this in the names he chose for his sons. Hophni and Phinehas are Egyptian, not Hebrew, names. At this moment, the Egyptians were once again exerting their influence northward into Israel. After years of internal trouble, they'd regrouped and were once more flexing their economic & cultural muscles. Eli was attracted to the luxuriant Egyptian culture and goods the caravans traded throughout the land. Enamoured with Egypt, he gave his sons foreign, or we could say worldly names. Since names were often descriptive of a parent's wishes for his/her child, it's not surprising Hophni and Phinehas grew up to be **ultra-worldly!**

It has oft been said that when it comes to raising children, values are more often **caught** than **taught**. Parents can profess faith in God and go to church. But what children see and put more stock in is what **values** shape Mom's & Dad's **choices**. Kids watch their parents when they make decisions regarding business or work and how God does affect those decisions. They observe the choices of their parents' TV programs, movies and songs.

It's unfortunate but true that while it takes months & sometimes years to build a **good reputation**, only a moment of failure can destroy it. So it's crucial that parents be **honest** with their children about their **struggle** to live a godly life in the midst of a corrupt world that makes sin easy. Their children are going to see them fail. If they're prompt in their repentance and resist the temptation to cover up or deny their sin, even their failures can be turned to good in training their children.



## Conclusion

Considering the life of Eli's children as a case study for parental upbringing of their children, the researcher realizes that the best approach in child upbringing is discipline (formative and corrective) produced by love. Someone has said that "discipline without love equals cruelty" but that "love without discipline" is not love at all. Discipline without unconditional love will lead to crushed, bitter, angry children. "Love" without discipline is love mis defined because children will become spoiled and reckless with life. Such may also develop anger for a different reason. Their parents did not care enough to take the responsibility of setting safe and beneficial limits for behaviour.

The Apostle Paul exhorts parents to avoid exasperating their children, but to bring them up instead in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:1-4). Many parents hesitate to discipline their children because they are not sure how much discipline is enough for raising children in the instruction of the Lord, and what is practically assumed. As noted earlier, Bible verses that speak about the deeds of the flesh and the consequences of it do not apply only to adults, but also to children. Therefore, parents must instruct their children to know what the Bible says about it. Some Bible passages clearly distinguish the deeds of the flesh from the deeds of the Spirit (Romans 6; 8:5-8; Galatians 5:19-21, etc.).

Parents have to be on guard for their children and protect them from secular influences that might separate them from God and encourage them toward living in faith (Col. 2:6-10). Christians know that the Word of God is the best guide for life, and believe the best outcome of raising children comes with the help of the Holy Spirit. But parents must not get disappointed if it requires much time, energy and investment. It is worthwhile to come before God without fear, knowing that one has done everything possible. God's principles guarantee children a good future and fulfilment of God's promises (even as an inheritance

for future generations), because God's promises are eternal and undying, just as is his Word.

The absence of discipline can create insecurity and ultimately disrespect in children. They need guidance, and initially they know it. The limitations imposed by parental discipline cause security and actually give a sense of freedom to develop within "safe" parental boundaries of behaviour. If discipline is an expression of love, it is just as much an expression of faith. Parents discipline not because it emotionally feels good, but rather because they believe in God's wisdom for the home. He tells us what is wise and best. It is an expression of faith to follow His leading. The order of material in this paper reflects the conclusion that unconditional love must precede discipline and that caring enough to protect a child from evil is part of the definition of love.

Dangerous behaviour (putting hands under a lawn mower or getting into the medicine cabinet) simply must not happen. Corporeal discipline seems wise for behaviours that are dangerous. In addition to danger, we simply would not tolerate lying, stealing, or the attitude of defiance to parents. Long-term parental concession to lying, stealing, and defiance would have allowed habits that destroy children. Such commandments as prohibition of stealing, lying, and dishonour to parents really involve enforcement of God's core commandments, not just parental preferences.

A child should be able to communicate anything including views that parents have made mistakes. However, they must do so with a tone of respect, not defiance. During the pre-school years, children might hit parents in a tantrum about being buckled into a car seat. Though this "violence" caused no harm, yet if such were tolerated, the long-term effect would be a first-rate discipline problem. Therefore, parents who beat such child have established a no-tolerance policy of the children hitting their parents or any other adult. Through the use of corporeal discipline for this offense the attempt was tried once, but never again.

Parents are not perfect, but tolerating defiance in children brings harm to them. Balance is in order. The Proverbs clearly teach a general principle of its value, but the situations in the original context are far more serious than splashing water over the edge of a tub or forgetting toys in the backyard before it rains. Long-suffering and mercy are also godly characteristics. Somewhere between never spanking and always spanking is parental wisdom.

Situations involving danger or breaking any of the Ten Commandments (lying, stealing, dishonour to parents, etc.) give prudent guidelines for nipping attitudes and actions that bring grief later in life if not prevented in childhood. Even with corporeal discipline children are still raised with sin natures. Thus, few applications of spanking are necessary. It virtually stops the worst behaviours early in life.

Children should not have to misbehave to obtain their parent's attention. Often verbal praise alone is sufficient to ensure the repetition of good behaviour. Sometimes a tangible reward may be appropriate, but the main reward should simply be the happiness of fathers and mothers. It can be easy to reinforce negative behaviour that might be amusing. For example, if parents laugh at a food fight, they might have another food fight. Parents should avoid reinforcing bad behaviours by words and extra attention.

## **Recommendations**

So far, the researcher has tried to exhaustively, within the limits of the discourse, analyse child upbringing and its effects. Therefore, the researcher recommends the following means of child upbringing to every parent who desires to achieve proper upbringing of their children:

1. **Exemplary Lifestyle:** Parents constantly instruct their children by example. Unspiritual parents can unknowingly teach their children about complaining, backbiting, slander, lust, cheating, anxiety, unhappiness, etc. Parents who never admit to mistakes might also rear children who always feel they are

right. Parents who must have their own way in everything might also raise children with similar expectations.

It is ironic that some parents wonder why their older children no longer attend church. If children hear talk of joy in the Christian life and yet listen to their parents incessantly grumble about the miseries of life or the defects in the local church, then it should not be too surprising that they obtain a negative view of Christianity and churches. If these same parents are materialistic, it is even easier to understand why the children reject Christian values. If a home school mother who teaches Sunday School later commits adultery, gets an abortion to cover it up and divorces her husband, all her teaching is worthless. Example makes a deep impression.

Children will tend to adopt parental values and lifestyles. If parents are giving, kind, pure, persistent and disciplined, punctual, honest, dependable, appreciative, courteous, and concerned about others, they tend to instill these traits in their children. It is difficult for a non-motivated parent to teach a child to be persistent in finishing tasks. It is hard for a spendthrift to teach stewardship, for a tardy person to teach punctuality, or for an unethical father to teach morals, or for a cold-hearted mother to teach about Christian love for others. Children echo the language of their parents. To prevent the use of rude or vulgar words, responsible parents should use pleasant terms, as children generally tend to imitate their parents.

Parents do not need to be perfect, but they should realize that consistency and credibility are among the best teaching tools, and more importantly are required by God. Wise parents will want their children to observe them in prayer (including prayers for the children), Bible study, acts of charity and/or outreach, and service in the church. It is also instructive to have parents admit mistakes and sins when they occur, and for the parents to express affection for each other in front of the children.

God is a Heavenly Father. If children have good parents for a model, they will find it easier to relate to the God of the Bible. If their own parents are unlike God, they will have a harder time understanding God or even desiring a relationship with Him. A story goes that someone asked which translation of the Bible is the best. The answer was, "my mother's translation." She lived it.

Examples of honesty, generosity, service in the local church and fidelity/love in marriage will influence deeply and must accompany verbal teaching. The main purpose for God creating the family seems to be a deeper experience of His character. Parents will only imperfectly reflect God's attributes. They cannot measure up to God's infinite degree of perfection but must at least live in the direction of godliness. Children need to see the admiration and imitation of God in their parents even before reading about God's nature in the Bible.

2. **Conversation:** Life presents teachable moments. If parents have the presence of mind to realize and use such occasions, they will increase the chance of a child understanding and retaining truth. It is probably true that most effective instruction can be done informally and can occur in the normal course of life's activities. Whenever a Christian teaching applies to a situation a child faces, wise parents will teach the Christian perspective.

A young person's life is full of opportunities for the application of Christian beliefs and behaviour. There are many moral choices. Times of fear, sickness or need provide occasions to teach faith, prayer, and the attributes of God. Times of prosperity and blessing give occasions to teach gratitude. Confrontations with death can be the ideal situation in which to teach about eternal life. Holidays should be used to celebrate Christian truths. Parents should in general be continually thinking about how the Christian faith applies to their children's experiences.

The Bible envisions that often instruction for children will not occur in a classroom or formal lesson period. Parent-child discussions take place along

the road, at home, morning to night. Instruction can take place even in home décor with Christian symbols and Bible verses (see Deuteronomy 6:6-9 and 11:18-20) and in the explanation for holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

- 3. Formal Studies:** Modern times bring animated and visual instruction for children. Children should be exposed to memorable music, poetry, and particularly books of a spiritual tone. Examples of the latter might be a book that goes through the alphabet with a Bible verse for each letter. Another might include the beatitudes or Ten Commandments. Even in a media-filled world small children still love to read with a personal parental presence. Books appropriate to children's age level allow for instruction in the Bible with a graduation to actual Bible reading from an easy-to-understand translation.

Other ideas would include a bulletin board with missionary prayer cards; an excellent opportunity to learn geography. A prayer book with pictures of relatives, the local church, the flag, the school, and so forth can be used as an aid to prayer. Beyond the Bible itself, books on creation science, Christian biographies, and exposure to travelling students and missionaries can be helpful instruction. We must remember that Christian instruction also involves limiting exposure to false teaching and evil through television, the Internet, or printed material.

- 4. Church Setting:** The Bible gives primary responsibility for teaching to parents. However, it requires parents to assemble in a local church (Hebrews 10:25) and gives pastors responsibility to equip all for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). Wise parents will view a local church as reinforcing their own efforts to teach children. If a church no longer teaches the Scriptures, parents should find one that does. Children need relationships with people their own age for a good kind of peer pressure.

They also need to have older church family of "uncles," and "aunts," and "grandparents" to endorse parental example and instruction. It helps them to see the true scope and size of Christianity and, thus, its importance.

Sometimes children grow inattentive to parents, and the same truth taught by others in a church will gain acceptance.

Parents should teach about God by all means: personal example, conversations, formal lessons at home, and involvement in a church, including its children's ministries.

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