

## **Are you an Eli or a Hannah?**

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Have you ever taken the time to keenly analyze the story of Samuel as recorded in the first three chapters of 1 Samuel? If not, I would really encourage you to read it. It will open your mind to its spiritual implications for teachers as mentors.



In 1 Samuel 1 and 2, we are introduced to Samuel for the first time when his mother Hannah, who was barren, begged God to bless her with a male child. And indeed He did, for she gave birth to Samuel. In recognition to God for His blessing, Hannah decided to keep her promise by dedicating her son to the service of God at the temple in Shiloh under the leadership of Eli the high priest.

The second time we are introduced to Samuel is in 1 Samuel 3 where, while living with Eli, the high priest, and ministering with him at the temple, Samuel hears the voice of God for the first time.

We will also see how “poor leadership or mentoring” in the person of a high priest of the Sanctuary at Shiloh can lead to disaster. Let’s look at it:

*“Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was. The LORD called to Samuel, who answered, “Here I am.” Samuel ran to Eli and said, “Here I am. You called me.”*

*“I did not call you,” Eli said. “Go back to sleep.” .....At that time Samuel was not familiar with the LORD, because the LORD had not revealed anything to him as yet.” (1 Sam 3:3-5).*

Now let me ask you, how could it be possible that Samuel, a young boy living in the temple of the Lord and under the foster parentage of the High Priest, was “not familiar” with the Lord? Can you ponder on that a bit? I can hear the little voice in your mind saying: Come on, he is but a young boy! Here is my response to that little voice: *Well, he is old enough to speak with Eli, to hear and heed Eli’s instructions, but yet unfamiliar with the voice of God! Amazing, eh!*

Has Eli told him anything of the Lord? It would seem so. Ah, but you say, the text has indicated that Samuel knew nothing because the Lord had not yet revealed anything to him.

The text seems to root the cause of Samuel’s unfamiliarity in the Lord rather than Eli, right? But Eli is still without excuse for God most often reveals himself to us, not as a voice in the night, but rather, through parents, pastors, teachers, and religious people.

For a young and already-talking Samuel to be unfamiliar with the Lord while living under the care of the High Priest, supposedly ministering in the very house of the Lord, is unfathomable. It is a dereliction of duty. Eli has failed thus far as a mentor and as a priest. If you want to know more about the downfall of Eli in regards to his son, please read that story as recorded in 1 Samuel 2:12 -36.

How did it all happen? All of this is a result of poor parenting and an unfaithful priestly ministry! In failing to raise his children in the fear of the Lord and in failing to punish wrongdoing, Eli has brought grave harm upon himself, his family and his sons. In addition, when Samuel was placed in his care, he continued with his pattern of failing to uplift the standard of the Lord.

Are you like Eli, so busy doing the ministry of the Lord that you neglect the Lord of the ministry? Are you so busy teaching the requirements of the Ministry of Education to that you neglect to emphasize the lessons from the book of life, the Bible? Are you too busy ministering to others that you have no time to minister to your own? Do your children know the Lord?

Like Hannah, how many times do parents bring their children to us as teachers at the beginning of the school year, hoping that placing them in a Christian school will help their kids stay focused on heavenly things?

Like Eli, how many of us teachers fail to leading these children to be familiar with the voice of the Lord while under our care? Can we identify ourselves with Eli? Are we guilty for not assuming our role as mentors?

I like the statement echoed by E.G. White, in the book *Education*, page 19: “He who co-operates with the divine purpose in imparting to the youth the knowledge of God, and molding the character into harmony with His, does a high and noble work. As he awakens a desire to reach God's ideal, he presents an education that is as high as heaven and as broad as the universe; an education that cannot be completed in this life, but that will be continued in the life to come; an education that secures to the successful student his passport from the preparatory school of earth to the higher grade, the school above.”

I am happy to know that, in spite of Eli's failure to positively influence his own children to do what was right in the sight of God, he did, eventually, help little Samuel to know the voice of the Lord. What can we learn from his mistakes? Can we think of ways to help the children under our care know the voice of God so that they can respond like Samuel: Speak Lord, for your servant is listening? You can start with Kids in Discipleship.