

Sam I Am
Thinking Lightly of God
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TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

1 Samuel 2:12-17 (NLT)

12 Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels who had no respect for the Lord 13 or for their duties as priests. 13 or for their duties as priests. Whenever anyone offered a sacrifice, Eli's sons would send over a servant with a three-pronged fork. While the meat of the sacrificed animal was still boiling, 14 the servant would stick the fork into the pot and demand that whatever it brought up be given to Eli's sons. All the Israelites who came to worship at Shiloh were treated this way. 15 Sometimes the servant would come even before the animal's fat had been burned on the altar. He would demand raw meat before it had been boiled so that it could be used for roasting. 16 The man offering the sacrifice might reply, "Take as much as you want, but the fat must be burned first." Then the servant would demand, "No, give it to me now, or I'll take it by force." 17 So the sin of these young men was very serious in the Lord's sight, for they treated the Lord's offerings with contempt.

1 Samuel 2:18-21 (NLT)

18 But Samuel, though he was only a boy, served the Lord. He wore a linen garment like that of a priest. 19 Each year his mother made a small coat for him and brought it to him when she came with her husband for the sacrifice. 20 Before they returned home, Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, "May the Lord give you other children to take the place of this one she gave to the Lord." 21 And the Lord blessed Hannah, and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord.

1 Samuel 2:27-34 (NLT)

27 One day a man of God came to Eli and gave him this message from the Lord: have been praying out of great anguish and sorrow." "I revealed myself to your ancestors when they were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. 28 I chose your ancestor Aaron from among all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer sacrifices on my altar, to burn incense, and to wear the priestly vest as he served me. And I assigned the sacrificial offerings to you priests. 29 So why do you scorn my sacrifices and offerings? Why do you give your sons more honor than you give me—for you and they have become fat from the best offerings of my people Israel! 30 "Therefore, the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I promised that your branch of the tribe of Levi would always be my priests. But I will honor those who honor me, and I will despise those who think lightly of me. 31 The time is coming when I will put an end to your family, so it will no longer serve as my priests. All the members of your family will die before their time. None will reach old age. 34 And to prove that what I have said will come true, I will cause your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, to die on the same day!.

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Have you ever been part of a church that had a scandal where a pastor had an affair or stole money or did something immoral? How did it make you feel? How did the church handle the situation?

Start **thinking**. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- **Read 1 Samuel 2:12-17.** What made Eli's sons' sin so wicked? How was Eli culpable in their sin?
- **Read 1 Samuel 2:18-21.** Samuel grew up in this evil household and served God in the same tabernacle. How did he avoid being compromised by the same sins?
- Have you ever been part of a family or business where evil was tolerated and even celebrated? Did you act like Eli or Samuel? Why? What advice would you give to someone who finds themselves in that environment?
- **Read 1 Samuel 2:27-34.** What does it mean to think lightly of God? Have you ever been guilty of thinking lightly of God?

Start **sharing**. Choose a question to create openness.

- What does it look like to honor God above everything else? What one change could you make in your life to honor God more completely?
- Our society is full of distractions and temptations that continually challenge us to keep our focus on God. What tools do you use to ensure God remains your top priority?
- We are all sinners and as such have all likely been guilty of taking God lightly at some point in our lives. How did you/can you overcome this?
- Compare/contrast Hannah's relationship with God to Hophni's and Phinehas's responses. What can you learn from them and use in your own life?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Seek where in your life you might be thinking lightly of God, and commit this week to think rightly of God.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Father, please convict our hearts to repent and turn away from those things that dishonor you, and please help us to honor you and think of you rightly, above all else. -Amen

Start **digging**. For further study.

- Read the 2nd page and discuss it.

Question: "Who were Hophni and Phinehas?"

Answer: First Samuel offers much important information about the sins of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas. The summary of their lifestyle is given in the introduction to these men in 1 Samuel 2:12: "Eli's sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD."

Because Eli's sons did not know or regard God, they acted in wicked ways. First, we are told that Eli's sons took a three-pronged fork and ate whatever meat they brought out of the pot when sacrificing an animal. This was in contradiction with the law for priests, who were commanded to eat the breast and upper thigh of the animals (Leviticus 7:30–34). Second, Eli's sons were sleeping with the women who were dedicated to the service of the tabernacle (1 Samuel 2:22). This was against God's law forbidding adultery (Exodus 20:14).

A "man of God" came to Eli and revealed the judgment that would come upon Eli's sons for these actions. The sign that the judgment was divine was included: "What happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day" (1 Samuel 2:34).

Soon after this time, Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, took the Ark of the Covenant out to battle against the Philistines. The Israelites were defeated, and judgment befell Eli's sons, as 1 Samuel 4:10–11 states: "The Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died."

Worse, when Eli heard the news, he fell backward from his seat, broke his neck, and died on the same day. The pregnant wife of Phinehas heard the news, and she went into labor and died while giving birth (1 Samuel 4:19–21). The son was named Ichabod, a name meaning "the glory has departed."

While these judgments may seem harsh to today's reader, the holiness of God's priests was demanded in the Law of Moses, along with the judgments that come upon those who disregarded God's ways. In fact, two of Aaron's sons were struck dead for presenting unauthorized offerings in the early days of the tabernacle's use (Leviticus 10:1–2). Eli's sons would have been aware of what happened to Aaron's sons, yet they directly disregarded the warning in pursuit of personal satisfaction.

In the aftermath of these judgments, Samuel became the spiritual leader of Israel, serving as judge, priest, and prophet and anointing both Saul and David as Israel's first two kings. Even in these most difficult of times, God was at work to continue His plan to lead His people.

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