

## Fatherhood: Godly Dads Intentionally Raise Their Kids

### A. We can learn how to be godly dads by avoiding the tragic example of Eli, a passive father, and Hophni and Phineas, his wicked sons.

1. Eli's sons were rebellious PK's who didn't respect God, His people, or sincere worship.

"Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels who had no respect for the Lord 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, 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... 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 2:12-17 (NLT)

*Note:* It's very possible for our kids to grow up participating in religious activities without having a personal relationship with Jesus. "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'" Matthew 7:21-23 (NLT)

**Life Application:** Godly dads tell their children about God and help them begin a relationship with Jesus.

"Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant... I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him."  
Philippians 3:8-9 (MSG)

2. Eli told his sons they were doing wrong, but he never disciplined them.

"Now Eli was very old, but he was aware of what his sons were doing to the people of Israel. He knew, for instance, that his sons were seducing the young women who assisted at the entrance of the Tabernacle. Eli said to them, 'I have been hearing reports from all the people about the wicked things you are doing. Why do you keep sinning? You must stop, my sons! The reports I hear among the Lord's people are not good. If someone sins against another person, God can mediate for the guilty party. But if someone sins against the Lord, who can intercede?' But Eli's sons wouldn't listen to their father..."  
1 Samuel 2:22-25a (NLT)

**Life Application:** Godly dads discipline their kids because they love them.

"Those who spare the rod of discipline hate their children. Those who love their children care enough to discipline them." Proverbs 13:24 (NLT)

**Life Application:** No one is born with godly character and godly habits. Godly dads help their kids develop them.

"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far away."  
Proverbs 22:15 (NIV)

3. God sent terrifying prophecies of judgment to warn Eli twice!

"One day a man of God came to Eli and gave him this message from the Lord: '**...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!** ...I will honor those who honor me, and I will despise those who think lightly of me. 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... 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!'" 1 Samuel 2:27-34 (NLT)

"Then the Lord said to Samuel, '...I am going to carry out all my threats against Eli and his family, from beginning to end. **I have warned him that judgment is coming upon his family forever, because his sons are blaspheming God and he hasn't disciplined them.** So I have vowed that the sins of Eli and his sons will never be forgiven by sacrifices or offerings.'" 1 Samuel 3:11-14 (NLT)

**Life Application:** Godly dads love the Lord more than they love their kids.

“If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life.” Luke 14:26a (NLT)

4. Eli and his sons suffered terrible consequences for their rebellion and passivity.

“At that time Israel was at war with the Philistines... The Philistines attacked and defeated the army of Israel, killing 4,000 men. After the battle was over, the troops retreated to their camp, and the elders of Israel asked, ‘Why did the Lord allow us to be defeated by the Philistines?’ Then they said, ‘Let’s bring the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from Shiloh. If we carry it into battle with us, it will save us from our enemies.’ So they sent men to Shiloh to bring the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, who is enthroned between the cherubim. Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were also there with the Ark of the Covenant of God... the Philistines fought desperately, and Israel was defeated again. The slaughter was great; 30,000 Israelite soldiers died that day. The survivors turned and fled to their tents. The Ark of God was captured, and Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were killed. A man from the tribe of Benjamin ran from the battlefield and arrived at Shiloh later that same day... The messenger rushed over to Eli, who was ninety-eight years old and blind. He said to Eli, ‘...Israel has been defeated by the Philistines... the people have been slaughtered, and your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were also killed. And the Ark of God has been captured.’ When the messenger mentioned what had happened to the Ark of God, Eli fell backward from his seat beside the gate. He broke his neck and died, for he was old and overweight.” 1 Samuel 4:1-18a (NLT)

**Life Application:** Godly dads teach their kids the importance of repentance.

“...’Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don’t tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead.’ Return to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He is eager to relent and not punish. Who knows? Perhaps he will give you a reprieve, sending you a blessing instead of this curse.” Joel 2:12-14a (NLT)

## **B. Godly dads pray for their kids.**

“God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart by spreading the Good News about his Son.” Romans 1:9 (NLT)

“Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.” Proverbs 22:6 (NLT)

John Schmidt • 06-19-22 • [john@centeringlives.com](mailto:john@centeringlives.com)

## **Connect Group Questions:**

Read 1 Samuel 2:12-34 & 4:1-18. Then discuss the following questions:

1. What do you appreciate most about your dad?
2. Why do you think Eli was so passive in his dealings with his sons? He was the High Priest of Israel. So, why didn’t he have Hophni and Phineas removed? (See Luke 14:26)
3. How would you respond if a prophet came to see you and told you that God was going to punish you severely for not disciplining your kids? (Read Joel 2:12-14)
4. Why did the Israelites think carrying the Ark of the Covenant into battle would guarantee victory? Why didn’t it work? In what ways do Christians get superstitious today?
5. What do the following passages teach us about the importance of parental discipline?
  - Proverbs 12:11, 13:24, 19:18, & 22:15
  - Ephesians 6:4

How well did your dad handle discipline? What can you learn from his successes and mistakes?

6. Spend some time praying for any dads in your group. Before you begin, discuss the biggest challenges facing dads today. Pray for any specific needs or concerns they express about their families.

7. Discuss the following quotations:

"A father's responsibility is not to make the child's decisions, but to let the child watch him make his." Ed Cole

"When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years."  
Mark Twain