

PROPHETS & JUDGES

IN THE PROMISED LAND

“God is infinite; in Him are ‘all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.’ Colossians 2:3. And to all eternity men may be ever searching, ever learning, and yet never exhaust the treasures of His wisdom, His goodness, and His power.”

{*Steps to Christ*, p. 109}

WEEK 9 - LESSONS FOR (FUTURE) PARENTS

It’s always easier to pass judgment on others than to apply something to myself. As you study this section, you may be tempted to find fault with your own parents and mistakes they may have made. But instead, think about how you will apply these principles when you are given responsibility over children at various times and places. And keep these things in mind for the future so that you may be a wise, successful parent yourself.

I. The Father’s Duty

1. How important is the work of the mother? How important is the father’s work?

2. Do parents have a duty to their children besides teaching them from God's Word and being a good example to them?

3. If I as a parent have a desire to work for God, perhaps as a missionary in China or India, what should I do?

4. What can be the results for good from one child rightly trained by his parents? What are the results of neglecting parental duty?

5. What is the foundation of the great amount of misery, crime, self-indulgence, dissipation, and profanity we see in the world today?

II. God's Word the Parent's Guide

1. What is Satan constantly trying to make us believe? How does this apply to parenting?

2. What is natural for parents to do regarding the faults of their children? Why is this a problem?

3. Why should parents begin to discipline their children early?

4. What things should I as a parent remember as I discipline my children? What do parents need to learn in order to discipline successfully?

5. Why is perseverance and endurance necessary in parenting?

6. What often takes up so much time that parenting is neglected?

7. What will be the result if I as a parent am “too busy” to have real devotions and worship?

The Father's Duty**November 10, 1881**

The history of Samuel, the pure, noble-hearted prophet, and of Moses, the holiest of men, the most illustrious of leaders, shows how great is the mother's power to mold the character of her child, even in its earliest years. During this period her influence is paramount to all other. Even the infant in her arms will catch her spirit, and copy her deportment. It is important that mothers understand their duty, and that they seek wisdom and grace from God to perform their sacred work to his acceptance. {1.1}

But great as is the work of the mother, it should never be forgotten that the father also has a part to act in the education and training of his children, and that he is under the most solemn obligation to perform that work with fidelity. Especially as the children advance in years is the father's influence needed, in union with that of the mother, to restrain, control, and guide. Parents little realize the harm done by withholding from their children needed and wholesome restraint, and allowing them to grow up with uncontrolled passions, and selfish, debasing habits. {1.2}

The course of Eli—his sinful indulgence as a father, and his criminal neglect as a priest of God—presents a striking and painful contrast to the firmness and self-denial of the faithful Hannah. Eli was acquainted with the divine will. He knew what characters God could accept, and what he would condemn. Yet he suffered his children to grow up with unbridled passions, perverted appetites, and corrupt morals. {1.3}

Eli had instructed his children in the law of God, and had given them a good example in his own life; but this was not his whole duty. God required him, both as a father and as a priest, to restrain them from following their own perverse will. This he had failed to do. His sons were impatient of control, and he weakly resigned the reins to them, and suffered them to pursue their evil ways at pleasure. The fond father overlooked the faults and sins of their childhood, flattering himself that after a time they would outgrow these evil tendencies. He did not regard his children as a sacred trust which God had committed to his care, to be returned with interest; but he looked upon them as his own. Hence, instead of seeking guidance and help from God, and following the instructions given in his word, Eli chose his own way of management, that most agreeable to his ease-loving disposition. Had he taught his sons to obey their father, they would have learned to obey God; but by permitting them to disregard his commands, he taught them to disregard the commands of their heavenly Father. Thus their evil habits strengthened with their years, and when they reached manhood, they were ready to defy all authority, both human and divine. {1.4}

God requires every parent not only to give his children right instruction and a good example, but with promptness and decision to restrain their inclination to do evil. The fact that Eli stood in holy office, cause his lax discipline, and the selfish, irreverent, licentious course of his wicked sons, to exert a corrupting influence upon the whole nation. All parents should strive to make their families patterns of good works, perfect Christian households. But in a pre-eminent degree is this the duty of those who minister in sacred things, and to whom the people

look for instruction and guidance. The ministers of Christ are to be examples to the flock. He who fails to direct wisely his own household, is not qualified to guide the church of God. {1.5}

Christian parents, if you desire to work for the Lord, begin with your little ones at home. If you manifest tact and wisdom and the fear of God in the management of your children, you may be intrusted with greater responsibilities. True Christian effort will begin at home, and go out from the center to embrace wider fields. A soul saved in your own family circle or in your own neighborhood, by your patient, painstaking labor, will bring as much honor to the name of Christ, and will shine as brightly in your crown as if you had found that soul in China or India. {1.6}

The Lord will not pass unpunished the neglect of parents to train their children for his service. By kind and judicious management, fathers as well as mothers should bind their children to them by the strong ties of reverence, gratitude, and love, and should kindle in their young hearts an earnest longing for righteousness and truth. While the mother seeks to implant good principles, the father should see that the precious seed is not choked by the growth of evil. His sterner discipline is needed that his children may learn firmness and self-control amid the allurements to sin which must be on every hand. {1.7}

Let parents beware how they undervalue or neglect their work. Great is the reward of fidelity, terrible the penalty of unfaithfulness. One child wisely educated—trained to love and practice the right because it is right, may impart to thousands the blessings which he has received. Through his influence and example, the lessons of uprightness, purity, and devotion that shaped his own character, are permitted to shed their precious light far and wide. {1.8}

How many faithful and honored workers for God and humanity have been given to the world as the fruit of a godly training in childhood. It was said of Timothy, the beloved co-laborer with Paul, that he knew the holy Scriptures from a child, and that the faith which dwelt in his mother and grandmother, was revealed also in him. The influence of faithful Christian parents can never lose its power. A young man when about to be ordained as a Christian minister, stated that at one time he had been well-nigh led to adopt the principles of infidelity. "But," he added, "there was one argument in favor of Christianity which I could never forget, and that was the consistent conduct of my own father. Through that I was at length won to the Saviour." {1.9}

By neglect of duty, parents exert a far-reaching influence for evil. One ungodly, disobedient son, may lead many souls in the path of iniquity. Each of these will corrupt others; the evil traits cherished will be transmitted to posterity; and thus iniquity is constantly increasing and multiplying, and all because parents choose the way which is easiest at the moment, the way of gratification and indulgence, and look not to the misery in store for themselves, their children, and their children's children. {1.10}

The solemn warnings contained in the word of God, the judgments visited upon the indulgent father, and his rebellious sons, should arouse parents from their stupor, and lead them to see and feel their duty to give to their children,

by right education and discipline, correct habits and sound principles. Christian father, labor kindly, patiently, for the welfare of your children. Seek to turn their hearts to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Teach them by precept and example, that the spirit of Christ is the spirit of doing good. {1.11}

To every father and mother is committed a little plot of ground before their own door. It is their work to clear it from noxious weeds, and to mellow the soil that the precious seed may take root and flourish there. To do their work faithfully will be far more pleasing to God than to go on a mission to some foreign land, leaving the home field neglected. The work of Christian ministers and parents, should begin with their own children. Present to the church and to the world a well-disciplined family, and you present one of the strongest arguments in favor of Christianity. {1.12}

If parents who are following Eli's example of neglect could see the result of the education they are giving their children, they would feel that the curse which fell on Eli would assuredly fall on them. The sin of rebellion against parental authority, lies at the very foundation of the misery and crime in the world today. In his holy law God himself speaks to children: "Honor thy father and thy mother." Again, by the pen of an apostle he commands them, "Children, obey your parents." The Old and the New Testament alike teach respect and obedience to parents, and also admonish all to reverence and honor the aged, to tenderly protect and cherish those whose heads are white, and whose steps are feeble. If children were trained according to the teachings of God's word, they would manifest a deference for superiors, a propriety of deportment, and a beauty of character that would make them beloved by their associates, and beloved of God. {1.13}

There is a cause for the spirit of insubordination that exists in the family and the State, and that threatens to overthrow the very foundations of government. It is to be found in the growing disregard for the law of God. In ancient times parents were commanded to diligently teach its sacred precepts to their children, that they might thus become acquainted with the character of God, and his claims upon them. But men have become wiser, in their own conceit, than their Maker. Many have set aside the law of God, and have followed their own judgment in preference to his revealed will. How terrible have been the results of this teaching upon the youth! Self-indulgence, dissipation, profanity, and even greater crimes prevail to an extent that is frightful to contemplate. {1.14}

The Lord holds parents and guardians responsible for the children under their care. He has not left us in uncertainty concerning the characters that he will accept. Nothing less than purity in thought, word, and deed, will meet the divine standard. The word of God sets forth in unmistakable language the duties of parents. If they will faithfully perform these duties, his Spirit will crown their efforts with success. Those words of holy writ are as true now as when first uttered by the wise man, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." {1.15}

God's Word the Parent's Guide**November 24, 1881**

Our great enemy is constantly seeking to make men believe themselves wiser than their Creator. Like Eve, many follow the dictates of human wisdom, in preference to the commands of the Omniscient One. Such was the sin of Eli; and terrible indeed were its results—disaster and death to himself, ruin to his wicked sons, and ruin to thousands in Israel. {2.1}

Yet there are many today, standing like Eli in holy office, who are making the same mistake. They read his mournful history, but fail to profit by the warning. In their self-confidence they think they know a better way of training their children than that which God has given us in his word. The earnest, anxious prayer does not ascend from their hearts, "Teach us, how shall we order the child, and what shall we do unto him?" With all their learning and intelligence, the results of their training show the vaunted wisdom of these persons to be but folly. Fond, indulgent parents, they allow their children to grow up from babyhood without restraint; and thus their forward, selfish, disagreeable ways become confirmed habits, rendering them unloving and unlovable. {2.2}

God himself established the family relations. His word is the only safe guide in the management of children. Human philosophy has not discovered more than God knows, or devised a wiser plan of dealing with children than that given by our Lord. Who can better understand all the needs of children than their Creator? Who can feel a deeper interest in their welfare than He who bought them with his own blood? If the word of God were carefully studied and faithfully obeyed, there would be less soul-anguish over the perverse conduct of wicked children. {2.3}

Eli was quick to see and rebuke the sins and errors of the people, sometimes, as in the case of Hannah, even administering unjust reproof; but the sins of his own sons seemed to him less offensive than the sins of others. In his undue affection he was ever ready to find excuses for their perverse course. All this was dishonoring God and misleading the people. To just such an extent as he permitted or excused sin in his children, did he become a partaker in their guilt. As sons of the high priest, they were connected with the work of God, and thus the evil and the sin were greatly heightened. {2.4}

It is very natural for parents to be partial to their own children. Especially if these parents feel that they themselves possess superior ability, they will regard their children as superior to other children. Hence much that would be severely censured in others is passed over in their own children as smart and witty. While this partiality is natural, it is unjust and unchristian. A great wrong is done our children when we permit their faults to go uncorrected. Many foster wrong traits of character in their children, urging as an excuse, "They are too young to be punished. Wait until they become older, and can be reasoned with. They will outgrow many of these evil tendencies." Thus their wrong habits are left to grow and strengthen until they become second nature. Sometimes the father and mother are united in this error. Sometimes one would gladly pursue a wiser course; but when that one attempts to enforce obedience, the other takes the part of the child, and will not allow it to be brought into submission. The sad results of such

a course can be fully seen only in eternity. They can never be estimated in this life. {2.5}

But great as are the evils of parental unfaithfulness under any circumstances, they are tenfold greater when they exist in the family of those who stand in Christ's stead, to instruct the people. Ministers of the gospel, who fail to control their own households, are, by their wrong example, misleading many. They sanction the growth of evil, instead of repressing it. Many who consider themselves excellent judges of what other children should be and what they should do, are blind to the defects of their own sons and daughters. Such a lack of divine wisdom in those who profess to teach the word of God, is working untold evil. It tends to efface from the minds of the people the distinction between right and wrong, purity and vice. {2.6}

When ministers and people will exchange their natural pride of heart and independence for a child-like, teachable spirit; when, instead of trusting to their own understanding, and conforming to the maxims and customs of the world, they will sit at the feet of Jesus, and earnestly inquire, "Lord, what will thou have me to do?" then his wisdom will direct them, his Spirit work with their efforts, and we shall see the youth who now drift into the ranks of Satan, serving under the banner of the Prince of Life. {2.7}

Oh that the Elis of today, who are everywhere to be found pleading excuses for the waywardness of their children, would promptly assert their own God-given authority to restrain and correct them. Let parents and guardians, who overlook and excuse sin in those under their care, remember that they thus become accessory to these wrongs. If, instead of unlimited indulgence, the chastening rod were oftener used, not in passion, but with love and prayer, we would see happier families and a better state of society. {2.8}

We have no sympathy with that discipline which would discourage children by hard censure, or irritate them by passionate correction, and then, as the impulse changes, smother them with kisses, or harm them by injurious gratification. Excessive indulgence and undue severity are alike to be avoided. While vigilance and firmness are indispensable, so also are sympathy and tenderness. Parents, remember that you deal with children who are struggling with temptation, and that to them these evil promptings are as hard to resist as are those that assail persons of mature years. Children who really desire to do right may fail again and again, and as often need encouragement to energy and perseverance. Watch the workings of these young minds with prayerful solicitude. Strengthen every good impulse, encourage every noble action. The Lord, through an apostle, admonishes parents, "Provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." The word of God is your guide, Christian parents. Depart not from it to gratify any impulse of passion or of affection. {2.9}

If parents desire to teach their children self-control, they must first form the habit themselves. The scolding and fault-finding of parents, encourages a hasty, passionate temper in their children. Love and justice should stand side by side in the government of the household. Let prompt obedience to parental authority be invariably enforced. God has given parents their work, to form the characters

of their children after the Divine Pattern. By his grace, they can accomplish the task; but it will require patient, painstaking effort, no less than firmness and decision, to guide the will and restrain the passions. A field left to itself produces only thorns and briars. He who would secure a harvest for usefulness or beauty must first prepare the soil and sow the seed, then dig about the young shoots, removing the weeds and softening the earth, and the precious plants will flourish and richly repay his care and labor. [2.10]

The work of parents is continuous. It should not be laid hold of vigorously for one day, and neglected the next. Many are ready to begin the work, but are not willing to persevere in it. They are eager to do some great thing, to make some great sacrifice; but they shrink from the unceasing care and effort in the little things of every-day life, the hourly pruning and training of the wayward tendencies, the work of giving instruction, reproof, or encouragement, little by little, as it is needed. They wish to see children correct their faults and form right characters at once, reaching the mountain-top at a bound, and not by successive steps; and because their hopes are not immediately realized, they become disheartened. Let all such persons take courage as they remember the words of the apostle, "Be not weary in well doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not." [2.11]

Satan has prepared his snares for parents, tempting them to extravagance in dress, to an unnecessary outlay of time and money in the preparation of food, and to needless indulgence in many other forms. The demands of fashion so fully engross the time and attention that little room is left for communion with God, self-discipline, or the training of children. Thus too many parents let slip from their shoulders the responsibility of family government. It requires earnest heart-work to repress evil tendencies, strengthen weak principles, develop good and lovely traits of character, and direct all the powers of mind and body in the right channel. Fathers and mothers, will you not lay hold of your work with energy, perseverance, and love? Sow the precious seed daily, with earnest prayer that God will water it with the dews of grace, and grant you an abundant harvest. The Son of God died to redeem a sinful, rebellious race. Shall we shrink from any toil or sacrifice to save our own dear children? [2.12]

By precept and example, let the young be taught reverence for God and for his word. Many of our youth are becoming infidels at heart, because of the lack of devotion in their parents. The law of God should be the law of the household. Let fathers and mothers kindly and patiently instruct their children, both from the inspired word and from the book of nature, leading them to understand the character of God. Let them show in their own lives that they are continually seeking to know and to do his will. To secure the approval of their Heavenly Father is the great motive to be ever kept before the minds of children. The service of God should be presented, not as an irksome task, but as a precious privilege, by which they may enjoy an honored, useful, and happy life here, and infinitely greater honor, usefulness, and joy in the life hereafter. [2.13]

God has permitted light from his throne to shine all along the path of life. A pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night, is moving before us as before ancient Israel. It is the privilege of Christian parents today, as it was the privilege

of God's people of old, to bring their children with them to the promised land.
{2.14}

Answer Hints

Section 1: | 1) 1.1, 1.2 | 2) 2.4, 1.5 | 3) 1.6, 1.12 | 4) 1.8, 1.10 | 5) 1.13, 1.14 |

Section 2: | 1) 2.1, 2.2 | 2) 2.5 | 3) 2.5 | 4) 2.9 | 2.10 | 5) 2.11 | 6) 2.12 | 7) 2.13 |

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