



Prayer Resources

Online Articles

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How To Pray With Your Children

*And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and did let none of his words fall to the ground.
1 Samuel 3:19*

In a previous article we explored the principles of praying **for** your children as exemplified by Hannah. In this article we will explore the principles of praying **with** your children as exemplified by Eli. While Hannah was a positive example of how to pray for your children, it is through Eli's failure as a father-figure to pray with Samuel that we gain the principles of how to pray with your children. In every relationship of life, it is much easier to pray for someone than it is to pray with that person. To pray with another requires a denial of self – a letting go of personal prejudices against traits that threaten or intimidate us. Eli had allowed himself to live on such a spiritual self-centered level, that it was impossible for him to deny himself in order to pray with Samuel.

Eli failed to pray with Samuel because he failed to respect Samuel's temperament. (*Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord... But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child... 1 Samuel 2:12 & 18; And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli... 1 Samuel 3:1*) Eli was a total failure as a father to his own physical sons. Not only did he fail to lead them to a personal relationship with the Lord, he failed to oversee their continued nurturing as priests. He did not observe first-handedly that his sons were selfishly abusing their role as priests. He heard about it from others. He had neglected his responsibilities as father and as head priest. No doubt his own temperament was laid back and non-aggressive. Even when he attempted to correct his sons, he was not forceful enough to impact them. Imagine what it must have been like for this introverted priest who was not in daily fellowship with the Lord to be given the responsibility of the extroverted, precocious Samuel! Even as a child Samuel was more effective in ministering to the Lord than were Eli's sons or even Eli himself. Had Eli been faithfully walking with the Lord, he would have been empowered to overcome his own fears and to have impacted the lives of his sons for the Lord. He also would have had the maturity to deny his own introverted tendencies by reaching out to the extrovert Samuel to pray with him. Do you respect your own children's temperaments by recognizing how God has created their emotional make-up and disposition? For some parents, praying with your children will require a boldness that is outside of your personal temperament. For others, praying with your children will require patience and creativity to reach their hidden emotions. Sadly Eli would not pay the emotional price to pray with Samuel!

Eli failed to pray with Samuel because he failed to respond to Samuel's thinking. (*And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision. 1 Samuel 3:1*) Eli was in such a spiritual state that he could not hear the voice of God. God had to speak to him through a human spokesman to share with him the judgment that was to come upon his children. In his mercy, God placed daily before Eli the faithful prayer life of Samuel. Not even this example whetted the appetite

of Eli for spiritual things. His refusal to think the way Samuel was thinking prevented him from being able to pray with the young boy. Do you attempt to view life's circumstances and events from the perspective of your children? Only when you take the time to listen and perceive their viewpoints, will you be able to pray with them about their needs. Only through praying out loud together can you remove the deception and help implant the truth of God's Word into their thinking. Sadly Eli would not pay the mental price to pray with Samuel!

Eli failed to pray with Samuel because he failed to relate to Samuel's timetable. (*And it came to pass at that time when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim...that the Lord called Samuel...I Samuel 3:2-4*) For Eli, it was bedtime. For Samuel, it was his freshest time to hear the voice of the Lord! Samuel was faithful to the morning ministry before the Lord, but he had still not heard and understood the Lord's voice. It was not until the Lord came to him in the night, that Samuel comprehended. If ever Eli had a chance to pray with Samuel, it was at the repeated approach by Samuel that night. Yet Eli repeatedly sent Samuel back to his bed. Even on the third occasion when the spiritually dull Eli finally recognized that it was the Lord who was trying to speak to Samuel, he sent him back to bed alone with the challenge to respond to the Lord. For Eli, it was time for bed, not time for hearing from the Lord! Are you sensitive to capitalize spiritually upon the time when your children are physically most alert to join with you in prayer? While praying consistently with your children in the normal routines of life (mealtimes, bedtimes, etc.) is important, being willing to pray with them at a crisis time when it is physically inconve-

nient for you will have a powerful impact. Sadly, Eli would not pay the physical price to pray with Samuel!

Eli failed to pray with Samuel because he failed to recognize Samuel's tensions. (*And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision. I Samuel 3:15b*) When Samuel heard the voice of God that night, he heard the same message of judgment upon Eli and his sons that Eli had heard earlier through God's human spokesman. The message left Samuel in fear. In the morning (of course!) Eli asked Samuel to tell him what the Lord had said to him. Completely insensitive to Samuel's fear, Eli focused upon his own personal hopelessness. Had Eli had a daily relationship with the Lord, he would have been burdened for Samuel's fear to tell him such judgment. He would have had the vision to see the awesome responsibility in the future that was to come upon this young lad. He would have been moved to pray with him about his present and future tensions. Instead, Eli was overwhelmed by his own pity. Do your own personal tensions prevent you from being sensitive to and praying about both the present and future stresses of your children? Only through a disciplined act of the will can a parent deny his own stresses in order to pray with his children about their stresses. Sadly, Eli would not pay the volitional price to pray with Samuel!

Eli's failures speak powerfully to us as parents. If we are willing to pay the emotional, mental, physical, and volitional price to pray with our children, we will not be like Eli, but rather like Samuel of whom the text says the Lord *let none of his words (prayers) fall to the ground!* What a heritage we can give to our children, if only we will pray **with** them!