

### Mentoring

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One of the most powerful things we do in youth work is to mentor, to train and to pass on the reins to the next generation, working with them, helping and guiding them, working by the power of the Holy Spirit (and with parents and those who look after them where possible) so that they are the best version of them that God has made them to be!

In practice we know this can be quite difficult and it's messy and random at times. But I can't think of anything better than to leave a good God-legacy and make a difference in the lives of young people and others of all ages.

This is just a very short guide with a few points to encourage us all.

### Biblical Basis

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There are loads of training type relationships throughout the Bible. Aside from the family situations of father and son, mother and daughter etc we see different types of training relationships. These include Elijah and Elisha, Samuel and David, Jesus and the disciples, Paul and Timothy etc.

In this, we'll intentionally take a look at another training relationship that wasn't at all perfect but that we can learn from - Eli and the young Samuel (found in 1 Samuel 1 and onwards funnily enough!)

#### 1. Eli agreed with Hannah in prayer

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In 1 Samuel 1, when Eli realised that Hannah was upset about not having children, he effectively agreed with her in prayer. Eli said to Hannah, "Go in peace and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

There's power where 2 people meet in the Lord's name. (Matthew 18.20). So the encouragement is to be a person of prayer and to work with parents and those who care for young people, where possible. If they're Godly parents and even if they're not Christians but really want the best for their children, we can work with the parents many times.

Just think of the legacy of God's answer to prayer with the birth of Samuel - one of the greatest prophets ever. Your prayers can see things happen that you could never imagine. I wonder how Eli felt when 4 years after he spoke to Hannah, she re-appeared with her son who she gave to Eli, dedicating him to God. And both Eli and Hannah were part of a chain reaction that ultimately led to Samuel and his incredibly Godly influence in the nations of the earth.

## **2. Eli wasn't a great prophet and priest in some ways - be a good one!**

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Eli didn't do this brilliantly well to be fair and isn't a great role model in every way. But today, all followers of Jesus are a royal priesthood, according to 1 Peter 2.9. This means we have a responsibility in prayer and intercession before God for those around us, those we work with etc. The responsibility for a father and mother is also great. Let's be faithful in this role in our prayers and our lifestyle - and be good Godly role models as much as we can.

Eli didn't deal effectively with his children. We learn from 1 Samuel 1 that his sons were priests in the house of the Lord. We learn in 1 Samuel 2 that his sons were wicked and did evil. They were terrible witnesses for God. Despite Eli telling them off, they ignored him and were ultimately put to death.

The lesson we learn from this - especially those who are parents - is not to sacrifice the life of your children or family. Too many pastors and Christian workers have lost respect for their parents or fallen away because of lack of time - parents too busy 'serving God' rather than being servants of God. Don't lose out on your family for the sake of 'ministry'!

We can also learn to work with the Holy Spirit so that every area of our lives line up with God's word and God's will. It's easy to let areas slip and they can impact other areas of our life and work. So we just need to spend time with God, not just serve God, have rest and have good people around us.

## **3. Eli took in Samuel**

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We looked briefly at the fact that Hannah brought her son to the house of God and gave him to Samuel. Hannah didn't forget about her son, he was effectively being 'lent' to the Lord - this is the word used in some translations. Hannah visited Samuel regularly and every year bought him a robe like Eli's robe (1 Samuel 2.19).

But we must also give credit to Eli who took in Samuel. I don't know what the rules were but the fact is that Eli did take in Samuel and helped look after him. If we look forward to the awesome and Godly life of Samuel, we must give some credit to Eli, despite the things that could be questioned about him. And of course huge credit must go to Hannah - and to her husband Elkannah as well !!

In 1 Samuel 3, we also see that Eli played a part in helping Samuel hear the word of God. Today we have the Holy Spirit in us as believers but we can still play a role in helping young people to know, understand, hear and rightly divide (1 Timothy 2.15) the Word of God and the voice of God by the Holy Spirit.

We also live in a world where there is a need for foster parents, for people to care for the children, for the refugee and to be a mentor.

One church in the inner-city in the USA was dying. The neighbourhood had changed and become tough, lots of immigrants had moved in. The church asked the community what they wanted and they said there was a need for an after-school club for kids. The church is now flourishing with people from 17 nations in that church (told by Danielle Strickland on 'In Depth' on GOD TV, 25 Jan 2016).

Be welcoming to the visitor, the refugee, the stranger - because this can be God's gift to us – Mary and Joseph were refugees twice effectively!