



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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JUMP START # 255

1 Sam. 2:12-“Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the Lord.”

Few words could cut to the heart of a parent as much as those that are found in our verse today. Eli had served as a priest. He was old. Now, his two sons were priests. They were grown. They were adults. The expression “did not know the Lord” indicates a lack of reverence and respect for God. Intellectually, they knew there was a God. But they had no respect for what God had done in Israel and no respect for the law of God.

A few verses later we find: “thus the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for the men despised the offering of the Lord” (v17). Eli, their father heard all that his sons were doing, including having sexual relations with women. It seems that most everyone knew how vile and corrupt these sons were. Finally, God speaks. He tells Eli that he is removing them from the priesthood. They will both die and God will restore the sacred office of his priesthood.

We find in this passage men who were serving God but do not respect God. Unique? No. Have you ever taken a Bible class offered by a major university? Anymore, the teacher has little regard for inspiration and no respect for the authority of God. The class butchers what the Bible teaches.

Being called “worthless” by God has to be the strongest of rebukes. Something that is worthless is worth nothing, it has no value. Today, we’d say “it’s a piece of junk.” Strong, strong words for those who defile God’s worship and his ways.

Many parents can relate to ole’ Eli here. You love the Lord and try to teach your children what is right. You have taken them to Bible classes, VBS, church services since they were young. All seems fine. They grow up, move out, marry, start a career, a family and somewhere along the way, toss God out of their life. They don’t think about it and they definitely don’t want to talk about it. They get weary of ole’ Mom and Dad preaching to them about getting back to church services. And Mom and Dad? Well, they hurt. The kids never realize it. Mom and Dad feel like a failure. Sometimes it is hard for Mom and Dad to go to church services, when they see generations of families worshipping together. Not theirs. It seems the faith has stopped with Mom and Dad. Mom’s cry silently about this. Dad’s are clueless as to what to do.

I have seen this picture over and over, in so many different places. I have preached the funeral for Mom and Dad. Tons of family show up. Never seen them before, especially at church services. Nice people. They seem to love each other. They just have no place for God in their lives. I’ve talked to some of these grown children. They’ll admit that they ought to start coming but they never do. Promises are made, but never kept. And life goes on.

My heart breaks for these parents. I know God's does. Is there anything that can be done? First, pray. Prayer should be our first choice. Take it to the Lord in prayer. God is good. God is powerful. He can open closed doors. He can break through hard hearts. Next, bring it up, but be careful how you do it. Grown kids don't like to be preached to, about anything. Talk to them. Generally, not always, something way down deep is a problem. Was the congregation too judgmental? Do they feel the Bible is too strict? Do they feel that they have done too many bad things? Maybe they just don't understand or even know the Lord. They might talk. They may not know themselves why they gave up on the Lord. Habits are easy to get into. The habit of just ignoring God is an easy habit. Live for today. Live for Friday, payday, the weekend, fun and then just keep repeating that over and over again.

It may be good to just try to get them back into the word of God. Getting them to start reading the Bible is a great step. Faith comes from the word of God. Well, how do I do that? Bring up last Sunday's sermon....share what you have been reading.....pass along one of these Jump Starts. Put your energy into finding what connects with your child. Don't give up. I think Eli gave up. We can't. We won't.

My heart breaks for such parents. God loves you. Keep trying.

Roger Shouse

Some additional thoughts:

Monday- Eph. 6:4

Tuesday- 2 John 4

Wednesday- Prov.22:6

Thursday- 1 Cor. 15:33

Friday- Deut. 6:6,7

Saturday- 3 John 4

Raising children that are faithful to the Lord, will be the hardest thing you can ever do, but also will be the most rewarding. JS