

### The unconcerned one

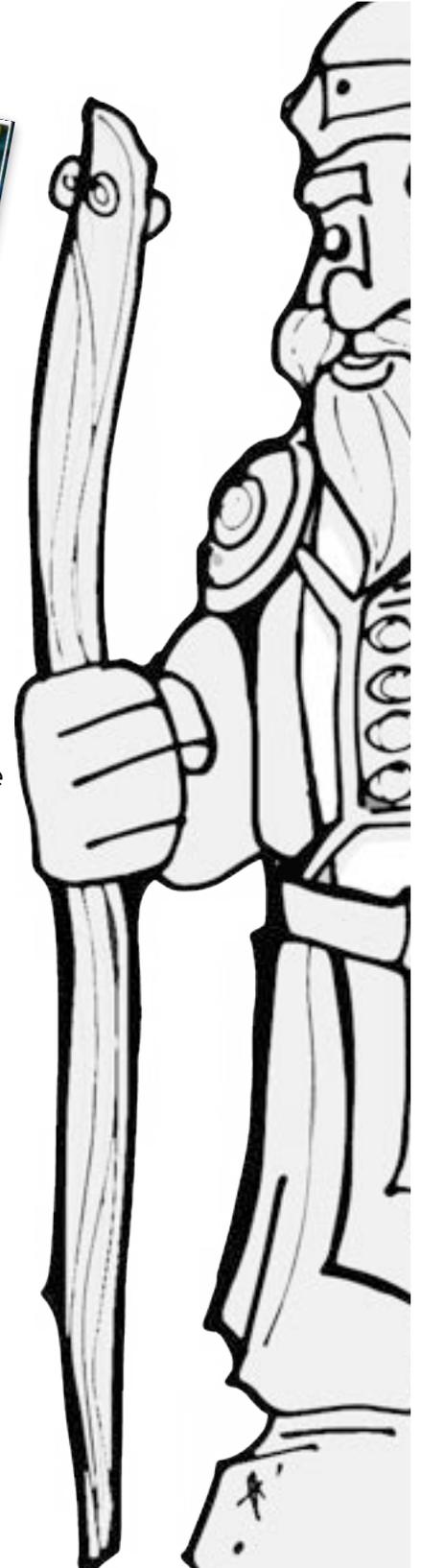
#### WHO WAS THIS PERSON?

- Eli was a priest who lived during the time of the judges and served God at the tabernacle in Shiloh (1 Samuel 1:1,3).
- Eli was a descendant of Ithamar, the fourth and youngest son of Aaron the High Priest.
- Eli was also the only one in the early history of the people of Israel to wear two crowns, for he was both Judge and High Priest.
- Eli had two wicked sons named Hophni and Phineas.
- Eli was a judge in Israel for forty years.



#### WHAT IS THIS PERSON KNOWN FOR?

- Eli is best remembered because of his involvement with Hannah, Samuel's mother, and because of his role in Samuel's first prophecy.
- His two sons also served in the tabernacle, but they did not know the Lord (1 Samuel 2:12). The bad behavior of Eli's sons was apparently well known to the people (1 Samuel 2:24). When he discovered these things, he rebuked his sons, but he was unable to stop them, thus allowing them to continue to desecrate the tabernacle (1 Samuel 2:25).
- God sent a prophet to him with a message about his house: "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 Phineas, to die on the same day!" (1 Samuel 2:31,34). This is terrible, for the Levites depended on the priesthood for their livelihood (1 Samuel 2:36). Eli's line would be given to a more faithful priest: "Then I will raise up a faithful priest who will serve me and do what I desire. I will establish his family, and they will be priests to my anointed kings forever." (1 Samuel 2:35).
- The one God sent was a boy named Samuel, who was dedicated to the tabernacle by his mother, Hannah, a once barren woman who had prayed for a child. Hannah had prayed before Eli, who had blessed her, "go in peace! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him." (1 Samuel 1:17). God answered Hannah's prayer,





and she had a son. After Samuel was weaned, she gave him to the service of the Lord (1 Samuel 1:24-28).

- Then, when Samuel was a little older and Eli's eyes had become so weak that he could hardly see, the Lord himself spoke to Samuel. In the middle of the night, the Lord "came and called as before" in Samuel's room (1 Samuel 3:10) and asked him to give Eli a message that the promised judgment was to come soon upon his family (1 Samuel 3:11-14). Eli humbly accepted God's will and Samuel became the Lord's prophet in Shiloh (1 Samuel 3:19-21).
- Shortly thereafter, in a battle against the Philistines, Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas, went to the battlefield and brought the Ark of the Covenant, thinking it would protect Israel. But God was not with them and Eli's two sons were killed along with about 30,000 soldiers of Israel. The Ark was captured by the Philistines. When Eli heard the bad news, he fell from his seat and broke his neck "for he was old and overweight" (1 Samuel 4:3, 10, 17-18). Meanwhile, Eli's daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was pregnant and in labor. She died in childbirth, but she had time to name her son "Ichabod," saying: "Israel's glory is gone." (1 Samuel 4:21). Thus, Eli's grandson, born on the day of his grandfather's death, his father's death and his mother's death, was given a significant name, "No glory".
- Eli was a priest in Israel and a judge for forty years.

### WHY DO YOU THINK THIS PERSON HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN GOD'S STORY?

- **Eli valued his sons more than God.** The Bible says that Eli "he was aware of what his sons were doing to the people of Israel." (1 Samuel 2:22). This realization was a kind of acceptance process. Even after rebuking them, his sons did not repent. Although his sons were the ones who, according to the story, were doing wrong, God said to Eli, " So why do you scorn my sacrifices and offerings? 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!" (1 Samuel 2:29). The Bible also says: "for you and they have become fat from the best offerings...". Although Eli rebuked his sons, he did not take more immediate action to prevent their sins. God saw that he honored his sons more than he did. We must be careful to honor God, even if friends do evil around us, we must continue to obey God and do good.
- **Fear God, not man. In this true story of Eli and his sons, we learn to fear God more than man.** The meaning of

"fear" may be different, but in this context it is to respect or honor. Eli's response to his sons' behavior shows that he fears them more than God. But God's response to Eli reminds us all that we should fear God even more.

- **God's promises are conditional.** We may think that when God promises something, He will do it no matter what, but that is not true. His promises usually come with conditions and, as we see with Eli and his sons, they can be withdrawn if the conditions are not met.
- **Our actions can affect others.** The actions of Eli and his sons were so serious to God that the consequences affected their descendants. They were subjected to punishment for things they had not done themselves. Some may think this is not fair. That is understandable. But if we don't question God blessing family members because of one person, we shouldn't question God punishing an entire family because of one person. Sometimes we don't see that what we have done wrong affects our parents, siblings and even our friends. We need to think about the consequences of our disobedience before we act, and with God's help, we can overcome our difficulties and obey.

### LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

**Pose the following two questions to your children, one at a time. Allow for interaction and discussion, letting them share their thoughts while you guide the conversation.**

- What life lessons can I learn from this Bible character about how I should and should not live?
- Based on what I have learned from this Bible character, how can I live in a way that is pleasing to God.

### MORE IN GOD'S WORD

Challenge yourself to find five minutes each day for a week, to quiet your spirit, finding a spot where you are not distracted, and practice just listening to God and being in tune with Him. Take your Bible to that quiet place. Use some of that time to pray, and some time to just meditate on His Word. Keep your ears and your heart open to what God is wanting to say to you. It's not a matter of IF He wants to talk to you. He does want to speak. But, He also wants you to be ready and positioned for listening, so you can actually hear in your heart what He is saying. Then, respond in obedience with a heart that is open to what God would have you to do. God called Samuel three times. How many times is He calling you? The more you spend time in His presence, the less He will have to try calling you over and over again. Maybe you will hear His voice the very first time He calls!

