

Leader Guide

Here I Am

Winter 2025 | Week 5

Message Date 2/9/2025

THE GOAL

This week we are continuing in the series *Here I Am*. We're going to be unpacking some of the downfall of Eli and his family. The goal this week will be to search for principles in the midst of the story that can be applied to our lives. Pastor Craig pointed out that the hardness of these men's hearts made something sacred common, and we will explore that idea in greater detail.

MY STORY

- 1) If you had to replace one of your fingers with a tiny functional gadget (like a flashlight, mini whisk, or laser pointer), which gadget would you choose and why?
- 2) If you had to invent a completely useless but mildly entertaining superpower, what would it be and how would you use it?

QUICK REVIEW

- 3) What caught your attention from Sunday's message?

DIGGING DEEPER / TAKING IT HOME

1 Samuel 2:12-26 (NLT)

¹² Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels who had no respect for the Lord ¹³ or for their duties as priests. Whenever anyone offered a sacrifice, Eli's sons would send over a servant with a three-pronged fork. While the meat of the sacrificed animal was still boiling, ¹⁴ the servant would stick the fork into the pot and demand that whatever it brought up be given to Eli's sons. All the Israelites who came to worship at Shiloh were treated this way. ¹⁵ Sometimes the servant would come even before the animal's fat had been burned on the altar. He would demand raw meat before it had been boiled so that it could be used for roasting.

¹⁶ The man offering the sacrifice might reply, "Take as much as you want, but the fat must be burned first." Then the servant would demand, "No, give it to me now, or I'll take it by force." ¹⁷ So the sin of these young men was very serious in the Lord's sight, for they treated the Lord's offerings with contempt.

¹⁸ But Samuel, though he was only a boy, served the Lord. He wore a linen garment like that of a priest. ¹⁹ Each year his mother made a small coat for him and brought it to him

when she came with her husband for the sacrifice. ²⁰ Before they returned home, Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, “May the Lord give you other children to take the place of this one she gave to the Lord.” ²¹ And the Lord blessed Hannah, and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord.

²² Now Eli was very old, but he was aware of what his sons were doing to the people of Israel. He knew, for instance, that his sons were seducing the young women who assisted at the entrance of the Tabernacle. ²³ Eli said to them, “I have been hearing reports from all the people about the wicked things you are doing. Why do you keep sinning? ²⁴ You must stop, my sons! The reports I hear among the Lord’s people are not good. ²⁵ If someone sins against another person, God can mediate for the guilty party. But if someone sins against the Lord, who can intercede?” But Eli’s sons wouldn’t listen to their father, for the Lord was already planning to put them to death.

²⁶ Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew taller and grew in favor with the Lord and with the people. ⁱ

- 4) What does this passage teach us about God’s holiness? What were the sons of Eli doing that dishonored God?

We need to remember that we’re dealing with the Old Testament. There were purity laws and rituals for the people to be cleansed in order to approach God and have sin washed away. God’s holiness is demonstrated because these things are required to even enter His presence. God’s holiness is definitely a real thing. The sons of Eli were not allowing the sacrifice to happen in the prescribed way. They were demanding raw meat, forcing the Israelites to sin by not being able to complete the ritual according to God’s direction. This is making light of His holiness.

- 5) How does Samuel’s behavior contrast with that of Eli’s sons?

While Eli’s sons abused their priestly duties, Samuel served the Lord faithfully, even as a young boy. He wore a priestly garment and grew in God’s favor.

- 6) What did Eli do in response to his son’s behavior, and what didn’t he do? What was Eli’s sons’ response to him?

He heard the report that his sons were acting this way, told them about it—calling them out—but he did not remove them from their duties. The sons responded by ignoring their father’s correction.

- 7) Are there things in our lives that we know are sacred but that we treat as common? Are there things that we know represent God’s holiness, but we treat as less than?

Let’s be real: we don’t live under the law, so we don’t have the same purification rituals that they did in the Old Testament. That does not make God’s holiness any less holy. We also have Jesus who stands in our place, who took our punishment upon Himself. Because His sacrifice was perfect, we no longer need to offer sacrifices for our cleanliness. I think sometimes we take sin as a light thing or a small thing because of that sacrifice. I know I have. I think another thing we take not as seriously as we could is just the Bible itself. It teaches us about the heart of God and His character, and sometimes I don’t spend the time that I could with it. I treat this as common, not as sacred.

- 8) How can giving be considered a modern-day sacrifice?

We are not commanded to sacrifice animals for sin. But we are responsible to give our time, talents and treasures and step into the calling that God has given us. When I give to the church, I am partnering with the church's mission that God has given us for the world. This is a modern-day sacrifice.

- 9) What steps can we take to cultivate a heart like Samuel's rather than like Eli's sons?

We can seek God daily, respect His commands, be accountable in our actions and surround ourselves with godly influences to encourage faithfulness.

CHAIR TIME TOOLS

Reflection questions for Chair Time. Think about the following questions and pray through them with Jesus.

- 1) Is there something in your life that God considers holy that you have treated as common?
- 2) How can you cultivate a relationship with God that is more like Samuel?
- 3) Who can you encourage this week? I encourage you to call them and do it.

ⁱ Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), 1 Sa 2:12–26.