

Elkanah

A Pious Father (1:1—2:21)

The role of “father” is burdened with heavy obligations. The father’s role has been shown by sociological studies to be a major influence upon the family unit. The child’s emotional, social, and religious well-being is often determined by the father’s role in the family. The child’s eyes look to the father with awe and confidence. The child brags, “My father can do anything!” Such a childish vision is a full commentary on the importance of the father. The following poem adds further emphasis:

If I went shopping for a man to be my Dad,
here’s what I’d buy:
One who would always stop to answer a little
boy’s “Why?”
One who would speak kindly to a little girl or
boy,
One who would give a bit of sunshine and joy.

I’d pick a Dad that followed the Bible’s Golden
Rule,
And one who went regularly to church and
Bible School.
I’d buy the finest Dad to place in our family
tree—
And then I’d try to live like him, so he’d be proud
of me!

When God placed man as the “father” and gave him the subsequent duties of fatherhood, He intended for the father to possess “piety.” One has stated, “True piety is a principle of order in the soul—a strong and beautiful axis by which it is ever borne up and on which it turns in

harmony with the music of the spheres. It is like a great law that keeps one slowly circling around the throne of God.” A pious person is a godly person. In every activity the pious person places God first! It is this quality that is essential in fatherhood!

Elkanah illustrates piety well. No other term is more fitting to describe him than “piety.” His faith was strong and governed and measured all of his life’s actions. He was the kind of daddy any child would love to have.

Historically, the following is known about Elkanah. He was among the fifth generation settlers in Canaan. He was of the Levitical tribe and had lived in the province of Ephraim at Ramah. All that the Scriptures reveal about him is found in 1:1—2:21. He had two wives, a relationship which was permissible under the old laws (Deuteronomy 21:15). This fact, along with the generous offering at the tabernacle (1:24), indicates that he was a wealthy man. Although polygamy was licensed by the law of Moses, it was never generally accepted, was not commanded by God, and led to the ruin of family affections wherever it was practiced!

Elkanah was a man with a great character that was established upon a strong faith in God. This is significant because he lived in the days of the judges when devotion to Jehovah was extraordinary. From the quick revelations about this pious father we are able to gain

insight into the piety which was so impressive in his life.

THE FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS PIETY

First, Elkanah's daily lifestyle displayed religion before his children (1:3). Here was a man who worshiped Jehovah instead of the pagan gods (cf. 7:4). Elkanah realized that there was only one God, and he sought to serve Jehovah. Because of his faith in God, Elkanah's life challenged his children to "live up" to his standards (cf. Job 1:15). He was a father who talked about spiritual matters in his home (1:23; Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Can you imagine the impact such a father would have upon his family? Happy indeed is the family who has the blessing of a pious father like Elkanah! (Genesis 18:19).

One father lived on the banks of the Mississippi River. The world called him rich. One day his oldest son was brought to him unconscious, for a terrible accident had happened. The doctor was quickly called. The father asked if the son would recover. The reply was this: "No, he is dying and cannot recover." The father said, "Can you bring him to so that we might tell him? I don't want him to die without knowing that he is dying." The doctor tried, and the boy did briefly regain consciousness. The father cried, "The doctor says you are dying. I couldn't let you die without telling you." The son said, "Father, won't you pray for me?" The father was speechless, but finally softly confessed, "I can't pray, my boy." The boy fell unconscious and soon died. The saddest part of the tragedy is that the father had been with his son for many years and had never once prayed for him!

Second, Elkanah was careful to teach his children the necessity of keeping one's word with God (1:21). The period of the judges was an age of "vows," and here is another example. This vow was probably connected with Hannah's request. Elkanah's family was surely aware of the promise he had made. As they saw their father first make the promise to God and then keep the promise, little had to be said. By his act, Elkanah had preached a mighty lesson. Fathers, have you considered the importance of showing your children that you keep promises to God? Your example is a powerful sermon. Genuine piety is connected to honesty in the agreements you make with God. (Read 1 John 2:6; Psalms 1:1, 2; 116:17, 18; 2 Kings 15:1-3; and Ecclesiastes 5:2-6.)

Third, Elkanah encouraged his family to attend and participate in worship (1:4, 21). Here was a father regular in his worship! Persuaded of his obligation and privilege, he was eager to go. He did not forsake (Nehemiah 10:39; Hebrews 10:25). He had to travel a distance, but the trouble did not hinder him. Notice that he also made sure his entire family went with him. "All" went unless hindered (1:21). Worship was considered a family time, and he encouraged family unity in worship. His going with all the family required planning; his provisions for sacrifices required preparations. He, as the father, took the lead in making sure all was ready for the family to worship God! He was a father whose attitude was to do what was necessary to be prepared. His worship consisted of adoration, confession, petitions, and thanksgiving. To him worship was important!

There is an indication that as he returned from worship, piety still ruled his heart (1:19). Elkanah was not weary of devotions but was still eager to take advantage of *all* opportunities. Do you see the marvelous message his attitude was communicating to his family? Fathers would do well to consider the manner in which they return home from worship (with their families); such will influence the children (Luke 11:28).

There is an indication that Elkanah encouraged his children to participate in worship (1:4). The offering would be made, and then a portion would be given to the worshiper. A feast would be held, and the returned portion of the sacrifice would be eaten. At these meals God commanded the Levites, the poor, and the widows to be invited (Deuteronomy 16:11). Those who participated were to view their acts as worship to God. Thus, at these times Elkanah was training his children in the approved ways of worship (Ephesians 6:4). Fathers today would do well if they would take time and train their children to worship in a mannerly practice. Too often children receive no training in worship manners, and consequently their worship is shallow and vain!

THE FRUITS RESULTING FROM HIS PIOUS CHARACTER

Elkanah's piety is observable, not only in the way he interacted with his family, but also in the character traits he demonstrated.

First, he was understanding (1:23). He granted concessions because he was understanding. Fa-

thers who are exact, unrelenting, and immovable will never enjoy the fullness of love in their homes that Elkanah did. Many homes would be far better if the father's piety had led him to the gentle understanding of Elkanah. Domestic harmony is possible *if* the father will relent, guard himself from stern, unyielding authority, and recognize individuality in all matters.

Second, he was deeply concerned about spiritual matters (1:21). Every year it was certain that the trip would be made. Here was a father who had communicated to his family a deep concern about God. In all matters in which Elkanah was concerned, the spiritual took priority!

Third, he became dependent upon God (1:23, 28). As he looked upon the baby Samuel, he prayed that God would preserve his son, cause him to grow, and would make him a blessing (1:23). He knew it was all in God's hand, and he willingly depended upon God (2:11). The desire of Hannah (1:28) was certainly that of Elkanah. As long as their baby boy lived, they would depend upon God to protect him.

Fourth, he received blessings (2:20). The principle of sowing and reaping (Galatians 6) is applied here. Just as the righteous man of Psalm 1 received much because of his devout faith, Elkanah also reaped blessings from his piety. Fathers who sow a similar piety will reap similar blessings as well.

CONCLUSION

Men, what kind of fathers are you? Are you the kind of daddy your children would choose to buy? Elkanah possessed one quality which directed his fatherly concern—piety. He was overwhelmed by his responsibility to cooperate with God and to train his children in righteous ways.

Use this example of Elkanah to help you become a pious father. Display religious convictions before your children on a daily basis. Be careful to show your children the necessity to keep all promises made to God. Encourage your family to participate in sincere worship to God.

Elkanah fades from sight after 2:21. But visualize his later years. Perhaps when Samuel moved back to Ramah his parents were still living. If so, he would live nearby. Samuel's sons would come to know Elkanah as a pious grandfather! What a splendid thought! May each father strive to be as Elkanah was and be known for his pious fathering!

—John Kachelman

Elkanah, the Son of Jeroham (1 Samuel 1:1-28)

1. A devoted religious man (1:3-6, 21)
2. A father interested in his children's religious development (1:4, 22, 23)
3. A husband who found division at home because he had disobeyed God's marriage laws (1:2, 6)
4. A man who was determined to keep his word to God (1:21)
5. A man who demonstrated love and devotion to his wife in word and deed (1:8)



Elkanah, a Pious Father (1 Samuel 1:1—2:21)

1. He was a father who lived religion before his family (1:3).
2. He was a father who taught his children the necessity of keeping one's word with God (1:21).
3. He was a father who encouraged family religion (1:4, 21).
4. He was a father who demonstrated to his children true love for a wife (1:8).
5. He was a father who sought spiritual service for his children (1:28).



Elkanah Loved Hannah (1 Samuel 1:5)

1. His love was demonstrated (1:5).
2. His love was a source of strength in her time of trial (1:5, 6).
3. His love was verbalized (1:8).
4. His love enabled him to "listen" to his wife when her plans did not fit his plans (1:22).
5. His love prodded cooperation with his wife (1:23).

“His Name Was Elkanah” (1 Samuel 1:1)

To the ancient Hebrews one’s name was significant. “Elkanah” literally means “God has possessed.” How aptly this name suits this man.

1. God possessed *his person*. All he did indicated he was mindful of God. One had only to observe him, and this becomes clear.
2. God possessed *his parenting*. He was careful to train his children and instill within them a like faith and duty.
3. God possessed *his marriage*. His relationship with Hannah was kind, courteous, understanding, caring, and loving.

What Makes a Father Respected (1 Samuel 1:1-28)

1. Respect and reverence for God (1:3)
2. A regular and habitual spirituality (1:3)
3. A demonstration to family of piety (1:4, 21)
4. A demonstration of love for his wife that is visible (1:5, 8)
5. Cooperation and communication with his wife (1:23)
6. Explicit trust in God’s Word (1:23b)
7. A willingness to dedicate his children to God (1:28)

Family Worship (1 Samuel 1:4)

From this ancient family, the importance of families being united in their worship practices can be observed.

1. Note *the beginning* point of family worship—“Elkanah sacrificed.” Parents must be willing to let go of worldly objectives and pursue the godly.
2. Note *the training* necessary—“would give portions.” Children need instruction and parents have a duty to provide this.
3. Note *the scope*—“to all.” All children, from youngest to oldest, must be involved in this training. None should be excluded for “all” can participate.

Three Priorities for Men Today (1 Samuel 1:1-28)

1. Be a man who trusts God, worships God, and keep one’s word to God.
2. Be a husband who encourages your wife in word and deed (1:5, 8).
3. Be a father whose goal is developing in children a religious zeal and dedication to God (1:4, 21, 28).

Devotion Exposed (1 Samuel 1:3)

Elkanah’s devotion to God is revealed not only in his religious practice but in daily habits. This man’s devotion was exposed by . . .

1. His regular, consistent, conscientious, and knowledgeable religious practices (1:3, 4, 21)
2. His extreme care to educate and train children in God’s ways (1:4, 21)
3. His deep love and affection for Hannah (1:8)
4. His sensitivity, caring, and concern for those who hurt (1:8)

All of these actions characterize one who is truly devoted to God seven days a week. Thus there is the need to urge all saints to “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts” (1 Peter 3:15).

“Husbands, Love Your Wives!” (1 Samuel 1:5)

The Bible nowhere commands wives to love their husbands, but it does command husbands to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25, 28). Why? Because the wife’s love is reciprocal. She loves as the husband loves! From Elkanah we learn how a husband should love his wife.

1. Love her generously (1:5).
2. Love her with visible affection (1:5).
3. Love her when she is irritated (1:6).
4. Love her when she is despondent and emotional (1:7, 8).
5. Love her when she does something that seems irrational (1:8).