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### Written Assignment #2- Eli in the Old Testament

In the book of Samuel, Eli was a high priest of Israel who served as a judge for 40 years. Eli's job was to protect, lead and judge the people of Israel and prepare his children to take the same position in the future. Eli was a good man but did not have good actions upon the Lord's commands. The Lord blessed him with the power of leadership over His people, and Eli did not use this gift properly.

Although the Bible and scriptures perceive Eli as a bad man, he did some good things that led to positive outcomes. For one, he was considerate of Hannah during her time of agony and gave her a blessing, which ones can say worked because she received what she prayed for. He also must not have been a horrible person if he had raised Samuel, Hannah's son, in stature and righteousness as a follower and minister of the Lord. Eli knew how important Samuel was, primarily because Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli did, according to 1 Sam 3:1. This chapter of the Bible also states that Eli helped Samuel listen to the Lord when the Lord was speaking to him. What stood out to me from this chapter and helped me see the good in Eli is the conversation between Eli and Samuel after Samuel's first prophecy. There was no surprise that Eli was eager to know the prophecy Samuel received from God, but I was surprised to read how understanding he was of the Lord's words. Eli says, "It is the Lord, Let Him do what

seems good to Him.” This shows that he was not angry or offended by what the Lord had to say about him. Part of Eli may have understood why the Lord felt this way and knew what was best for Israel and Samuel.

Although parts of the story perceived Eli as a good man, he did many bad things as well. In the second chapter of Samuel, we learn that Eli's sons are quite the opposite of their father in that they do not follow God's teachings and completely disregard God's laws. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, had no regard for knowing the Lord, mistreated the sacrificial offerings to the Lord, and slept around with women of Israel who “...assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting” (1Sam 2:22). Chapter 2 also points out that Eli did try to speak to his sons, telling them that their behavior was unacceptable, but that is merely all he did. He took no further action or gave his sons any consequence for all they did to God and Israel. Because of this, the Lord tells Eli that He would cut off the leadership of Eli's family line because Eli was participating in the acts of mistreating the offerings, and he was putting his sons before God. In 1 Sam 2:29, the Lord asks, “Why do you kick at My sacrifices and My offering...and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel, My people?” There was so much Eli could have done to avoid any wrongdoing from him and his sons, and he could have tried harder to put his sons back on the right path of God.

The lesson I learned from this story that helps me reflect on my Christian walk is to try your best to do right by the Lord and his plans for you. Reading this story reminded me a lot of the quote, “If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.” In the case of Eli, as a leader, he did not put himself in any position to find

solutions in both Israel and his own home. This means he is part of the problem if he is incapable of solving issues for God. For example, If Eli wanted to be part of the solution, which was God's goal for him, he had to do much more than just a "slap on the wrist" conversation with his sons. He would have to present the problem and take the following steps to fix it rather than accept that his sons do not respect God. In my life and my Christian walk, the way to be part of the solution is to strive to be a good person and trust God and His teachings. The problem with society today is that many people have lost faith and are not good people. If I do nothing to encourage others to walk with God and do right by Him, I do nothing to improve the circumstances.

Eli was not necessarily a bad character, but he did have his flaws, doing nothing to help the Lord as he should have. If the Lord seeks you and your family to represent him amongst the people, you must abide by His rules and respect Him. Eli was far from a good leader to his people and in no way encouraged his sons to be any better than him. There is no way Eli could have expected one of his sons to be the next high priest, making Samuel the best for the job. I think it was great of him to raise Samuel on the right path, but that could not fix all the harm already done to Israel and his relationship with God.