

CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, KUMASI

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY



**PARENTING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WITH REFERENCE TO ELI AND
HIS FAMILY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN HOMES AND
THE CHURCH TODAY.**

**PROJECT WORK
(LONG ESSAY)**

**By
OSEI APPIAH PRINCE**

JULY, 2015.

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**A long essay presented to the Christian Service University College in partial
fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in
Theology with Administration.**

JULY, 2015.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research, except for the sections for which references have been duly made, and to the best of my knowledge, no part of it has been presented to this University College or any other institution for the award of a degree.

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Signed.....
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Date.....

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to God Almighty for His care and love, to my dear wife, Mrs. Beatrice Amponsah Darlyn and my two lovely daughters Chantelle and Michelle for their support and patience for me throughout my course and research work. I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In writing this essay, I had to rely on the assistance of a number of people. To them I deem it fair and scholarly to express my most heartfelt gratitude and appreciation.

First and foremost, I wish to express my profound gratitude to the Almighty God for the strength, endurance, knowledge and protection given me throughout my course. To Him be the glory, honor and adoration.

Secondly, my special thanks go to Rev. Mrs. Christine Adjei Glover, my supervisor, for her motherly editorial assistance in developing this manuscript, despite her tight schedule. Also to all lecturers of Christian Service University College for their various support.

Finally, my special gratitude goes to my dear wife, Mrs. Beatrice Darlyn Amponsah for her encouragement, love and prayers which has sustained me throughout my course.

May the Almighty God bless you all.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The researcher could not have agreed much better with Paul Meyer when he said ‘we expect doctors to have many years of education before they begin to practice, and we also expect those in practice to update their skills regularly¹, so we should not expect less from one of the most important and critical institution of parenting when it comes to thorough training before one is introduced into such a field. The issue of child rearing or Godly parenting knows no educational qualification, personality or status, what it does need is the experience and preparation towards it that is why every parent must prepare adequately on parental education and also improve upon their parenting skills. Gone were the days when old women in their respective household taught the girl child how to wash utensils, clothes and do some household chores and even taught young women at the age of adolescent, ready to marry, how to treat and care for her husband, take care of babies, bath them and sing lullaby to put these babies to sleep when crying and even to the extent of teaching these girls how to have sex with their partners.

I acknowledge that these practices and education still exist in some areas but not as it used to be, because more people are becoming career women who have little or no time for their children. To make matters worse is the fact that when these career women give birth they call on the elderly women or mothers from their villages and towns to do the caring of the baby for them. The question then is, when these old women are no more, how does the career woman teach her up and coming children

¹ Paul Meyer, *Foreword to Christian Child Rearing and Personality Development*{ed} (Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1988),

the act of this initial parenting because they themselves did not learn from their mothers?.

Parenting became more imperative when God gave instructions to Moses to the people of Israel in Deuteronomy 6; 1 ‘these are the commands, decrees and regulations that the Lord commanded me to teach you and your children and grand children...’ These commands were required to be obeyed by the people of Israel so that they could live peacefully in the land their God was providing for them. This is where we see parenting and that parents were responsible for the upbringing of their children in the way and manner God expected.

With all the instructions concerning parenting in the book of Deuteronomy, we read of some prominent personalities in the Old Testament who could not control their children and also lead them towards God but rather whiles they became successful in their respective public lives as priest and leaders, they performed abysmally when it came to the issue of parenting.

The focus is on Eli, a descendant of Ithamar who was the fourth youngest son of Aaron the high priest. Eli was the father of Hophni and Phinehas the two most notorious priest in the history of the Israelites who treated the Lord and His people with great contempt {1 Samuel 2; 17}. Even though Eli might have earned recognition and respect in his public life as high priest, he was classified by some scholars as good in his ministerial appointment but he performed poorly as a parent who was supposed to nurture his children in a very decent and God fearing manner. His sons brought him grief because he lacked two important qualities needed for effective parental discipline, which are firm training and corrective action. That is why the researcher agrees perfectly with David Walls when he said ‘ parenting is a

slippery kind of thing, just when you think you have it in your grasp, another bump on the road of life makes you lose your grip'².

The researcher hopes to investigate and find out why a high priest as Eli could not control his children who were also priest but watched unconcerned. Can this failure on the part of Eli be attributed to Judges 2; 10 where it is said that after the generation whom God brought out of the land of Egypt had died, another generation arose who did not acknowledge the Lord or remember the mighty things he had done for Israel, or was it Eli's own parental indiscipline that led his children to go astray.

To make matters worse for Eli, God said in 1 Samuel 2;31 that 'the time is coming when I will put an end to your family, so it will no longer serve as my priest and all members of your family will die before their time'. That was the reward Eli the high priest got for being an irresponsible parent.

Even in the New Testament it is stipulated in 1 Timothy 3; 5 that 'if anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church. This text advises and teaches Christian leaders and homes to endeavor to be responsible parents so as to bring glory to the name of the Lord.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A cursory look into the lives and history of some leaders and priest such as Eli reveal worthy achievements with respect to task assigned to them by God in their public lives but a serious deficiency and failures in their private lives as parents. Some of these prominent personalities battled with family issues in one way or the other and became public ridicule because of the poor nature of their parenting style and techniques. In 1 Kings 1: 6 where Adonijah tried to claim the throne from his father David because David had not rebuked him.

² Walls David, *Parenting by the Books* (Oregon: Vision House Publishing Inc, 1999), Dedication page.

Most importantly is Eli, who as a priest was supposed to teach people the right kind of attitude and living, and also act as a role model to the people of Israel had his own sons being scoundrels{ 1 Samuel 2;12}. Based on the facts mentioned above, the researcher seeks to investigate into:

- ✓ The attitude of some leaders in the Old Testament towards parenting, and the reasons behind such an uncooperative attitude. For example Samuel and David.
- ✓ Whether some leaders and priest in the Old Testament times really have uncooperative attitude towards the issue of parenting, if so what effort were made then, and what Christian leaders in the 21st Century are doing to educate Christian homes on parenting. Especially in the era where Christian education teaches on child psychology and believes parents, ministers and teachers tend to shape or inspire children's thought and behavior³.
- ✓ What alternative ways exist for getting Christian parents to take parenting education more seriously and thereby improve upon their attitude towards it?

1.3 Research Questions

From the discussions above, the researcher seeks to bring to bear,

- ✓ What accounted for the poor nature of parenting style in the Old Testament by some leaders and priest, evident from the fact that the children of these leaders had poor attitude and behaviors?
- ✓ Was it because these personalities were consumed in their various lines of duties so much so that they did not have time to discipline their children.

³ Rev. Mrs. Christine Adjei Glover, *Child Psychology in Christian Education* (Lecture Notes, 2014), 18.

- ✓ Whether these leaders put any corrective measure in place to discipline their children, but the children themselves failed to obey the instructions of their fathers.

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The research deals with parenting in the Old Testament as its focus, but the researcher sought to explain and bring to bear the principal intention and also other factors that aided in making the research academic.

1.4.1 Aim

The research investigated to know why Eli and some leaders excelled in their public lives but failed woefully when it came to parenting and issues concerning their children.

1.4.2 Objectives

- ✓ What kind of family life and methods did these personalities used in their various homes; did they stay out of their home for longer periods having little time for their family?
- ✓ What kind of corrective and discipline measures did Eli and other Old Testament leaders put in place with respect to their homes, or is it true that children of some priest or pastors exhibit bad character traits as compared to other children, if so what accounted for such situations and circumstances?

1.5 Scope and the Focus of the Study

The researcher looked into the area of parenting with Eli and his family or children as the focus of the study. In other words the context or scope dealt with parenting in general with some selected leaders and with Eli as the reference point.

1.6 Research Methodology

This project purely used the qualitative approach. Where the qualitative approach seeks to answer questions that cannot be answered through quantification, it also dealt with bringing a new depth and riches to data analysis. Under this qualitative approach is the mixed method approach which involved the case study tool, which is an intensive study of specific individual or specific context and the phenomenological approach which seeks to understand a phenomenon by examining the views of people who have such experience and also to examine human experiences provided by people involved.

1.6.1 Methods of Data Collection

Though the researcher used the qualitative approach, the research also employed both the primary and secondary sources of data collection to enhance the work. Participant observation was also employed since the researcher analyzed issues by observing what other people have done and continues to do. Some issues were very delicate to be discussed, especially some people who had been negatively affected by poor parenting and harbor deep seated hatred for their parents.

1.6.1.1 Participant Observation

The issue of parenting affects families, churches, organizations and the nation at large when one gives it a critical attention. In making the research more practical and original, the researcher took part in the collection of data by observing issues within families and some churches since not all issues could be discussed and probed into because of its sensitivity among the various stakeholders.⁴

⁴ People who are either directly or indirectly affected by a decision.

1.6.1.2 Primary sources

By primary source, the researcher means the employment of personal theological experiences and understanding of issues coupled with ideas generated by the help of the Holy Spirit. The use of questionnaires was also used as a means of soliciting views of major stakeholders like children who were directly affected by parenting, as well as the conducting of interviews with parents who were in the process of parenting and those who have been involved before, and had a broader knowledge and perspective on the issue of parenting.

1.6.1.3 Secondary sources

The concentration of the research work was also on research of other people who had researched into the same area and related topics as well. Thesis and journals as well as publications of experts were also used.

1.6.2 Sampling Procedure

The research had to do with parenting in the Old Testament with reference to Eli, but the researcher also assessed some prominent personalities with respect to their approaches to parenting. Since the research could not deal with every personality in the Old Testament, the researcher used the purposive or judgmental sampling under the non probability sampling because the population investigated were based on the judgment of the researcher and the purpose of the research as well.

1.6.2 Data Analysis

After reviewing literature from both the primary and secondary sources, the data gathered were analyzed and interpreted based on the quality of the data with respect to the research. That is to say that not all the data reviewed was used but the relevant portions that have direct impact and bearing on the subject matter of parenting

1.7 Significance or Relevance of the Study

After the research, the researcher anticipates that the concept of parenting would be taken much more serious in the various Christian homes, churches, the society and the world at large. Christian leaders after this research must be able to determine that the family is the first point of call when it comes to ministerial work and that success in the ministry sometimes depends on good parenting styles and techniques used at home. After all every leader is considered to be a ‘father or a mother’. Therefore failure in parental responsibility has a direct correlation to the ministry.

1.8 Literature Review

Knowledge cannot be said to be the sole prerogative of any individual that is why when it comes to issues concerning parenting, many scholars have sought to bring on board their views and experiences. The researcher has sought to analyze the various views and suggestions as well as compare what these scholars have said.

1.8.1 Parental Care and Guidance

Children are the most important gifts given to men and women in marriages and homes, therefore, Marriages and families are units that are established by adult men and women who start life as children then they grow to maturity and produce more children to keep society flourishing.

It is very sad and heart rending to see many children without any good parental care and guidance across the world. Either the parents abandoned them, were delinquent or are deceased. The children we nurture, mentor, ignore, abuse or abandon will collectively grow to replace adults for the building or tearing down of our nations⁵. Many scholars and writers have sought to bring out ideas on parenting to guide

⁵ Samuel. V. Kisseadoo, *Basic Principles of Successful Parenting* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2007), 11.

parents and yet-to be parents in various aspects, some of such views are in line with our context and others not, for instance in the case of an author when he said that ‘parenting is a slippery kind of thing, just when you think you have it in your grasp, another bump on the road of life makes you lose your grip⁶’. The researcher cannot agree with such statement because if that is the case, then, parenting seems even more impossible because one cannot determine what will happen in the process of parenting so there cannot be any meaningful antidote unless the unexpected happens.

1.8.2 Biblical Understanding and the concept of Training.

The Bible has given its readers a guide on how to train up children so that these children will grow to become useful adults to society and the nation at large. David Walls seems to be in disagreement with the biblical principles of parenting when the Bible says in Proverbs 22:6 that ‘train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it’. This text suggests that every parent who trains a child as expected or in a Godly way will live to see that the child has grown to become a responsible adult and that nothing bad will happen to such Godly parenting for one to lose his grips as suggested by David Walls.

However, Jeremiah David in his book ‘Exposing the myths of parenthood’ sought to disagree with Proverb 22:6 and argues in his background that, proverbs have been repeated and quoted for many of life’s situations and goes on to say that if it is a proverb then it must be right or wrong. He believed that what the Bible says about child raising in Proverbs 22:6 has been communicated inadequately to parents and that his understanding of this particular saying is that even though his child may be wayward now, he will come back to the Lord in his later life and will be vindicated as a parent. My question to his assertion is that what if the wayward child does not come

⁶ David, *Parenting by the Books*, dedication page.

back to the Lord? Parenting therefore to the researcher's understanding is not being practiced based on probability but a carefully thought out plan. His assertion has been seconded by a Christian psychiatrist, in his book that, a critical examination of the text (Proverbs 22:6) reveals that it is not a promise made by God to anybody but a general statement about how family relationships normally works⁷. This argument by the psychiatrist, to the researcher cannot stand the test of time because general statements made in the Bible especially proverbs do not come out of people's own intuition and understanding but those statements are triggered by the Spirit of God as stipulated in 2 Timothy 3:16, so whether general statements or promises by God, those people did not just stand up to make those statements, it definitely has a source which is the Spirit of God.

The most succinct yet comprehensive summary of a parent's calling is found in a single sentence which the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus: 'do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord {Ephesians 6:4}'⁸

1.8.3 Parental Responsibility

Larry Christenson argues that this simple outline of parental responsibility is patterned after God Himself. That is exactly how parenting should look like because God is the giver of children and if proper parenting is to be achieved then parents must go back to the giver for guidance and knowledge to train children in the manner and way He wants. What we see now in the form of parenting is that most parents are

⁷ David Jeremiah, *Myths of Parenthood* (Waco Texas: Word Books Publishers, 1986), 9.

⁸ Christenson, *The Christian Family*, 63.

using more if not all of their knowledge than dependence on God, so to many parents raising children has become confusing and frustrating task.⁹

1.8.4 The uniqueness of Every Child

Christenson in analyzing the teaching aspect of parenting quoted Glenn Clark, one of the great teachers on the life of prayer in the past generation when he said that ‘every child comes into the world with a sealed orders because every human being has a unique destiny to fulfill and part of the calling of a parent is to help the child unseal his orders¹⁰. To also discover what it is that God means to be and do. We are therefore to train up the child not simply in the way that any and every child should go but also in the specific and unique way in which he should go. This means that parents must deal with each one of their children under the creative leading of the Holy Spirit.

The researcher’s final submission is that parenting must be examined from two perspectives- which are that, children are gift from God, which is a fact, regardless of one’s faith, belief and religion and secondly, parents must be ready to account for whatever gift, in the form of children God entrust to them. If people see parenting in this light, maximum effort and attention will be given to parenting.

1.9 Organization of Chapters/ Structure of the Work

The research is organized into five chapters with each chapter having an outline of what it entails. Chapter one has the general introduction, which constitute, The background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, aims and objectives, scope or focus of the study, the methodology used literature review, significance of the study as well as the organization of the chapters.

⁹ David, *Foreword to Parenting by the Books*,

¹⁰ Christenson, *The Christian Family*, 63.

Chapter two, deals with the meaning of parenting, the nature of parenting from Biblical Perspective, the Old Testament concept of parenting and family life. The next focus is shifted to Eli and his family, parenting from the African perspective, the Christian home as well, and finally the conclusion.

Chapter three will start with an introduction to Biblical parenting and the Christian homes and then move on to the Old Testament perspective of parenting Christian family, the role of the church in Christian family development, and finally before the conclusion, the nature of Eli's family is looked at, and examined critically.

Chapter four starts with the introduction to the chapter, the responses of parents with respect to the administering of the questionnaires, analysis of the interviews conducted with the youth or children as well as the church and the Christian homes, there were also some findings made and a conclusion of the chapter.

The final chapter which is chapter five starts with the summary of the study and the conclusion of the study, and ending with recommendations from the researcher.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL PARENTING AND THE CHRISTIAN HOME

2.1 Introduction

Raising a family today is complicated. We all know that. We also know people hold great potential to significantly improve and strengthen their family dynamic - but aren't always sure how to make it happen. Christian parents face the difficult task of raising children in a world of "correctness."¹¹ In the past, children grew up in a society that clearly defined what was right and what was wrong. Parents were recognized as the primary authority figure in their children's lives. Now as the world conforms, our children react to the unprecedented immorality, anti-family, and anti-parent concepts in schools and media.

2.2 The Meaning of Parenting

Richard, Lerner cites Castellino who said Parenting is both a biological and social process.¹² Parenting is the term summarizing the set of behaviors involved across life in the relations among organisms who are usually co specifics, and typically members of different generations or, at least, of different birth cohorts. Parenting interactions provide resources across the generational groups and function in regard to domains of survival, reproduction, nurturance, and socialization.

This chapter will therefore seek to explore various meanings with respect to parenting by different scholars, the nature of parenting from Biblical perspective, as well as the Old Testament concept of parenting and family life, Eli and His family and parenting from the African perspective.

¹¹ [http:// www.allaboutparenting](http://www.allaboutparenting). Accessed April 15, 2015.

¹²Richard, Lerner, Anita, Brennen cites Castellino 1995, Adolescents as parents; A developmental contextual perspective. HTTP://parenthood.library.accessed March 25,2015 Parenting is both a biological and social process.

Thus, parenting is a complex process, involving much more than a mother or father providing food, safety, and security to an infant or child. Parenting involves directional relationships between members of two (or more) generations; can extend through all or major parts of the respective life spans of these groups; may engage all institutions within a culture (including educational, economic, political, and social ones); and is embedded in the history of a people--as that history occurs within the natural and designed settings within which the group lives¹³. Given, then, the temporal variation that constitutes history, the variation of culture and of its institutions that exist in different physical and designed ecological systems, and the variation, within and across generations, in strategies for and behaviors designed to fit with these systems, we may note that diversity is a key substantive feature of parenting behavior. Focusing on this variation, rather than on central tendencies, is necessary in order to understand parenting adequately. In addition, there are multiple levels of organization that change in and through integrated, mutually interdependent or "fused" relationships; these relationships occur over both ontogenetic and historical time.¹⁴ And such context, as well as diversity, is an important feature of parenting.

Parenting is also caring, nourishing and tending a child. To nourish is to supply and feed the person with the right quality and amount of food that provides the required nutrition and strength for the individual.¹⁵ Simultaneously that person should be attended to and other basic necessities should be provided in such a way that the care and attention will maintain the child in a healthy state for productivity and fruitfulness. But ultimately "bringing up children in the training and admonition of

¹³Ford and Learner {1992}, history occurs within the natural and designed settings within which the group lives.

¹⁴Learner {1987}; Tobach, Greenberg {1984}, there are multiple levels of organization; these relationships occur both ontogenetic and historical time.

¹⁵Samuel. V. Kisseadoo, *Basic Principles of Successful Parenting* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2007), 11.

the Lord”(Ephesians 6:4), that is to say that bringing up children to grow up physically, spiritually, socially, mentally and emotionally in any aspect of their grow

2.3 The Nature of Parenting from Biblical Perspective

Human beings, fashioned in the image of God as male and female, were given the capacity of procreation by the Creator. The instruction to “be fruitful,” alongside “fill the earth and subdue it,” teach us that parenting belongs to God’s original plan for the human stewardship of creation (Gen. 1:28). As husbands and wives within the covenant of marriage, men and women were empowered to bring forth children who also carry God’s image. Mothers and fathers were to share equally in the joys and duties of parenthood (Gen. 1:26-28; 9:1, 7). This power to procreate is one of the highest privileges given to human beings. It is to be thoughtfully considered and undertaken responsibly.

Kenneth Boa in his commentary said Deuteronomy 6: 7 provides a foundational principle for the spiritual development of children¹⁶: “and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up”. This is the "teach-talk" principle--teaching referring to formal instruction and talking referring to informal instruction. In both cases, the communication of biblical truth takes place in a relational setting.

A second foundational principle comes from Deuteronomy 6:8-9: "And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." This is the "bind-write" principle and spiritual truth which must be bound up in our actions ("hand")

¹⁶ Kenneth, Boa, *Spiritual and Personal Development*, accessed March 26 2015, <http://www.KENNETHBOA.org>

and attitudes ("head"), and it must be inscribed in our private ("doorposts") and public ("gates") lives. In short, it must move from our hearts into our homes and from our homes into our habits. When it is woven into the fabric of our lives, it affects every aspect of our character, and Christian character becomes contagious when children see it acted out every day. Joshua illustrated this principle when he said, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15b).

Proverbs 22: 6 is perhaps the most frequently used passage on the spiritual development of children: "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." The word "train up" is related to the concept of dedication or setting apart, but it also has a derivative idea of creating a taste or desire. Thus, the first part of this verse means to dedicate a child to the Lord and create within him a desire to know God. The word for "child" is used both of young and older children, indicating that this process should take place throughout the developmental years. The phrase "in the way he should go" means "according to his own way." Because each child has a unique personality, the most effective training is suited to differences in age, abilities, and temperament. Children need to be treated as individuals. In effect, then, this verse tells us to dedicate our children to the Lord and create a taste within them to know Him in ways that are appropriate to their ages and personalities, and when they mature, their spiritual heritage will remain a part of them.

Parents are constantly tempted to do too much for their children and make all their decisions for them¹⁷. Perhaps the biggest reason is that the risk is directly proportional to responsibility. Casualties and difficulties are part of the process of learning, and the parent who bails a child out of every problem deprives him or her of valuable lessons.

¹⁷Kenneth, Boa. Personal development. Accessed March 28, 2015.

As he or she progresses towards adulthood, he must gain both preventive and corrective wisdom from parents and the society at large. Much of this wisdom is attained through increasing responsibility and independence. As maturity increases, the need for rules decreases.

It is not enough to exemplify and explain standards; they must also be enforced. This is the principle of practical reinforcement. Parents are responsible to channel, correct, and control their children's behavior. One New Testament condition for Christian leadership is that a father or mother "is one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity" (1 Timothy 3; 4 Hebrews 12; 6-10). Family values and standards should be clearly reflected in rules that are enforced. In this way, children will know what is expected of them, it is best to make them as few and simple as possible; cumbersome rules are hard to maintain and lead to excessive nagging, scolding, warning, forbidding and repression. Even when rules are few it takes effort and determination to keep them consistently.

2.3.1 Old Testament Concept of Parenting and Family Life

2.3.1.1 Christian Parenting - To Instruct

In the Old Testament, Moses reminds the Israelites of their responsibility to their children and grandchildren. "Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them (Deuteronomy 4; 9-10). We would all like to believe that our children will make the right choices based on lessons taught. When we instruct our children, we are not simply presenting a list of rules to follow. We are letting our "actions speak" by training them according to God's standards. By living a righteous life, parents provide

their children with the understanding of how God's rules govern all our lives. Then, as our children mature, they develop a habit of doing right, serving God by making their own decisions.

It is the goal of every parent to see their children accept responsibility for their decisions. If our children learn from their mistakes and accept godly correction, then we are on the right course.

2.3.1.2 Christian Parenting - To Disciplines

Theories on "correct" discipline change every few years - the Bible never changes.¹⁸ If children do not obey, they must receive correction. The Bible teaches this should be done by using a rod of correction. "The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother" (Proverbs 29; 15). Often parents become weary disciplining young children. At times, a typical day seems to consist of nagging and scolding. Parents wonder if they have ruined every chance for a loving relationship with their children.

God chooses each parent with great care. "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just..."(Genesis 18; 19). God entrusts your children to your specific care. He wants you to know that, kind and firm correction will train your children to obey Him. "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord (Colossians 3; 20). Consistent, loving correction helps children learn biblical truths like self-discipline. God knew Abraham would raise godly children and God blessed him. By applying God's standards, we too can receive God's blessings as parents.

¹⁸ [http:// www.allaboutparenting](http://www.allaboutparenting). Accessed 16 April 2015

Throughout human history, the family has been the foundation of society. Within a strong, well-functioning family we can fulfill our physical and emotional needs. Strong family ties provide us the love and security we need for a happy life. Children grow into well-adjusted adults through example, instruction and discipline. Chores and responsibilities are shared for the good of all.

We believe God is the originator of the family. It was established by God in His inaugural act of the marriage between a man and a woman. The Bible further defines the family through God's instruction for married couples to have children, whether by birth or by adoption. We believe the purpose of the family is to glorify and honor God by forming the spiritual, emotional, physical, and economic foundation for individuals, the church, and any society.

It is at home that children see manhood and womanhood modeled. It is at home that moral values are taught by parents and placed into the hearts of their children. It is at home that people see the reality of a relationship with Jesus Christ modeled. It is at home that people learn to live out their convictions. Therefore, we are committed to upholding the concept of family as God's original and primary means of producing a godly offspring and passing on godly values from generation to generation. (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 78:5-7; Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

2.3.2 Eli and His Family

Eli was a descendant of Ithamar who was the fourth youngest son of Aaron, the high priest. Eli was priest and judge in Israel. He held the highest and most responsible positions among the people of God. As a man divinely chosen for the sacred duties of the priesthood, and set over the land as the highest judicial authority, he was looked up to as an example, and he wielded a great influence over the tribes of Israel. But

although he had been appointed to govern the people, he did not rule his own household. Eli was an indulgent father. Loving peace and ease, he did not exercise his authority to correct the evil habits and passions of his children, Rather than contend with them or punish them; he would submit to their will and give them their own way. Instead of regarding the education of his sons as one of the most important of his responsibilities, he treated the matter as of little consequence. The priest and judge of Israel had not been left in darkness as to the duty of restraining and governing the children that God had given to his care. But Eli shrank from this duty, because it involved crossing the will of his sons, and would make it necessary to punish and deny them. Without weighing the terrible consequences that would follow his course, he indulged his children in whatever they desired and neglected the work of fitting them for the service of God and the duties of life.

Eli was the father of Hophni and Phinehas. His sons were doubtless permitted to grow up in this manner. Their father was occupied with his duties in the office of priest much of the time, and may have felt justified in the negligence of his family; but God did not look at it in this manner. What the attitude of the mother of these sons was toward them, we have no knowledge. Whether she was tolerant toward their misbehaviour and failed to fill the place of a true mother or not, we don't know, but this did not excuse the father from his responsibility, he had to answer before God for his neglect, and the sons with him had to suffer the penalty.

These sons were permitted to defile the sacred sacrifices of God, and the people were caused to abhor the true worship. The failure of the father perhaps, was that he did not teach them in their younger years and compel them to respect and reverence the worship of God. It was his business as the very leader of worshipers to see that every man who brought his offerings and sacrifices to God did so in the most sacred and

reverential manner, and above all it was his business to see that his own household set the example for the people to follow. Eli had the authority to execute every command of God, and also see to it that, order and sacred devotion were maintained in Israel. But he failed to do this. He permitted his boys to run loose and careless and bring disorder in the tabernacle of God. The very place and spot that was to be the most sacred on earth was desecrated in this manner. He certainly knew that this was wrong, but neglected to correct and instruct his children in these necessary things. They grew up in this improper manner, and thus brought upon themselves exposures to greater evils.

Being unrestrained and unpunished in their first offenses of defiling the offerings and sacrifices, they were hardened and lost all respect for God, their father, the people of God, and themselves, and actually committed open adultery at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. The same weakness and lack of parental management that Eli had before, manifested and is strikingly noticeable now in his remonstrance with his sons in this abominable crime. He said unto them: "Why do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings by this entire people. No, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: you make the LORD'S people to transgress." Of course, the boys did not care for such a plea. They were too far gone in debauchery and iniquity, and simply scorned such correction. It would take the most sensitive and conscientious person to be affected by such soft reproof as this. These calloused-hearted sinners cared nothing for it, and went right on in their wickedness.

2.4 Parenting from African Perspective

Parenting beliefs in Africa vary depending on the culture in question and the extent to which the family has been affected by the massive social changes that have occurred in Africa since its colonization by the European nations in the 19th century. The well-

known proverb 'it takes a village to raise a child' can be applied to many different African cultures. Extended families can be found throughout the African continent, but the structure of the extended family depends on the specific culture. The proverb has been repeated so often that it has become a cliché, but it does accurately describe an attitude to parenting that could once be found all over Africa. The traditional African attitude to child rearing is that the work should be shared between multiple different people so that both children and parent are embedded in a supportive web of social connections. Parents would not be expected to have sole responsibility for their children in traditional African custom.

This is done so that every parent in the community becomes the father and mother of every child and that all male and female adults were given the authority to discipline children who go wrong irrespective of the fact that these male and female adults are not the biological parents of the child who does the wrong. Children therefore had little 'room' to misbehave even in the absence of their biological parents because there is always an elderly to take the role of the parent. The traditional saying that 'when a father dies there are so many fathers to take responsibility of the child'¹⁹ always tell the child that parenting involves the whole family and community apart from one's parent.

Notwithstanding this good point, parents also experience some bad character traits from some children to the extent that good morals that were taught children previously has lost its place recently among some sections of the youth. For instance children were taught previously not to talk to parents and the elderly anyhow but this cannot be said now of these generation. Again children were taught to relief the elderly whenever they carry a load but now some children look unconcern when older

¹⁹ Interview with Opanin Kwaku Amponsah, (Offinso- Asamankoma) 22nd March, 2015.

people are carrying load. Another sad situation is that, when one sits in the bus or in banks with the elderly, these children will not even get vacate their seats for the matured people.

2.5 The Christian Home

A home that is characterized by the presence of Christ should be attractive, not repellent. There should be an atmosphere of love, acceptance, openness, forgiveness, and honesty²⁰. The Christian home is at its best when it is a positive place of fun, constructive and creative activities, encouragement, enjoyment, and relaxed attitudes. This becomes possible when Christ is the cohesive factor in the life of a family and when parents set the example of personal commitment to Him.

When Christ like attitudes prevails in parents, each member of the household is made to feel that he or she is an important part of the family. Husbands and wives are to model before their children the qualities of mutual respect and concern for one another in the Lord. As this atmosphere extends to their relationship with their children, they will sincerely respect the worth and uniqueness of each child. This recognition of the individuality and dignity of each family member is manifested in a positive and encouraging attitude. When people are sarcastic rather than supportive, relationships disintegrate. It is important for parents to be on their children's teams, not on their backs. They should avoid favoritism and comparisons of one child with another. It is especially important for parents to openly admit their mistakes and ask forgiveness from their children when they embarrass or insult them, break a promise, or mistreat them. In this way, honesty and esteem for each individual become ingrained in the thinking of the children.

²⁰ Kenneth, Boa, *The atmosphere of the Christian home*.

2.6 Conclusion

The theory and principle of parenting has a wider effect and must be taken serious if any impact is to be made in child rearing. The traditional way of allowing children to learn by themselves is fading away gradually and that parents must take up the responsibility of training and bringing up their children in a more instructive way that is to instruct them, discipline them and also to teach them. Principles and priorities must be set in every home so as to have a more formalized way of bringing up children.

CHAPTER THREE

ELI'S FAMILY AND CHRISTIAN FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

A good Christian family or home must be one which lines up with Biblical principles and in which each member understands and fulfills his or her God-given role. The family is not an institution designed by man, it was created by God, and man has been given the responsibility of stewardship over it. The basic Biblical family unit is comprised of one man, one woman and their offspring or adopted children. The extended family can include relatives by blood or marriage such as grandparents, nieces, nephews, cousins, aunts and uncles. Family or child development must consider areas including: mental, physical and spiritual development.²¹

One of the primary principles of the family unit is that it involves a commitment ordained by God for the lifetime of the members²². The husband and wife are responsible for holding it together, notwithstanding the current attitude of our culture where men always have the final say, Although divorce is sought and granted much too easily in our society, the Bible tells us that God hates divorce. Ephesians 5:22-26 provide the guidelines for husbands and wives in a good Christian home. The husband is required to love his wife as Christ loved the church, and a wife should respect her husband and willingly submit to his leadership in the family. The husband's leadership role should start with spiritual matters and then flow to instructing and teaching both wife and children scriptural values, leading the family into Biblical truth.

²¹ Kisseadoo, *Basic Principles of Successful Parenting*, 11.

²² www.gotquestion.org, *what the Bible say about Parenting*, John MacArthur. Accessed 25th April 2015.

3.2 Old Testament Perspective of Parenting Christian Family

The concept of family is extremely important in the Bible, both in a physical sense and in a theological sense.²³ The concept of family was introduced in the very beginning, as we see in Genesis 1:28, "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" God's plan for creation was for men and women to marry and have children. A man and a woman would form a "one-flesh" union through marriage (Genesis 2:24), and they with their children become a family, the essential building block of human society.

The Bible has a more communal sense of people and family than is generally held in Western cultures today, where citizens are more individualized than people in the Middle East and definitely more so than the people of the ancient near East.²⁴ When God saved Noah from the flood, it wasn't an individual case {salvation}, but a salvation for him, his wife, his sons and his sons' wives. In other words, his family was saved (Genesis 6:18). When God called Abraham out of Haran, He called him and his family (Genesis 12:4-5). The sign of the Abrahamic covenant (circumcision) was to be applied to all males within one's household, whether they were born into the family or are part of the household servants (Genesis 17:12-13). In other words, God's covenant with Abraham was familial, not individual.

The importance of family can be seen in the provisions of the Mosaic covenant. For example, two of the Ten Commandments deal with maintaining the cohesiveness of the family. The fifth commandment regarding honoring parents (Exodus 20: 12) is

²³ Wayne Mack, *Your Family God's Way*, [www. Gotquestion.org](http://www.Gotquestion.org), accessed 25th April 2015.

²⁴ Wayne Mack, *Your Family God's Way*.

meant to preserve the authority of parents in family matters, and the commandment prohibiting adultery (Exodus 20:14) protects the sanctity of marriage. From these two commandments flow all of the various other stipulations in the Mosaic Law which seek to protect marriage and the family. The health of the family was so important to God that it was codified in the national covenant of Israel.

According to Psalm 127 3:-5, children are a gift from the Lord. They are God's possession, not for parents. He has temporarily placed them under their care; in effect, their children are "on loan" from God for the eighteen {18} or so years they are under parents roof. They have been given the task of raising them up from a state of complete dependence to a state of complete independence so that we can release them to God by the time they reach maturity.

It is urgent that Christian parents recognize this truth. Failure to do so will lead to unbiblical attitudes which can have a devastating impact on the self-image and development of children. One such attitude is excessive possessiveness. Believing that their children are their own possessions, some parents in this era do not adequately prepare them to leave the home. Because of this attitude, parents become too strict and fail to give their children the growing independence, skills, and responsibility that they need. As a result, they are not equipped for life in the outside world. Even after they marry they may be psychologically or financially dependent upon their parents, and this hinders their ability to leave, cleave, and establish a one-flesh relationship in marriage.

3.3 The Role of the Church in Christian Family Development

We believe the family and the church are interdependent. A primary responsibility of the church is to help build godly families, and godly families also help build the church. We believe the family supplies the relational rudiments of the local church. We believe the local church is the spiritual home where families should corporately worship God. It is the place where the knowledge and love of God may be communicated to fathers, mothers, and children.

Therefore, one is committed to exhorting families to support the local church through their involvement. Families are also committed to exhorting the local church to uphold the priority of helping build godly marriages and families. (1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 5:22-33; Philemon 1:2; Colossians 4:15).

The church, as an agent of socialization is the designer of the individual into a social being through ‘learning to think and behave according to the values and norms prevalent in his/ her society.’²⁵ Furthermore, norms, values, perceptions and roles that people formulate are significantly defined by society through various agents namely the family, peer group, the church. The church therefore has a significant role to play when it comes to developing the family and its members by teaching sound biblical values that can help shape individual perceptions and values.

3.4 The Nature of Eli’s Family

Eli was priest and judge in Israel. He held the highest and most responsible positions among the people of God. As a man divinely chosen for the sacred duties of the priesthood, and set over the land as the highest judicial authority, he was looked up to, as an example, and he wielded a great influence over the tribes of Israel. Although he

²⁵ [http:// www.paulbourne1.tripod.org](http://www.paulbourne1.tripod.org), *culture has three major tenets: technological, sociological and ideological*, Bourne, 2006; Thomlison, 1965, accessed 24th May 2015.

had been appointed to govern the people, he did not rule his own household. Eli was an indulgent father.²⁶ Loving peace and ease, and did not exercise his authority to correct the evil habits and passions of his children. Rather than contend with them or punish them, he would submit to their will and give them their own way. Instead of regarding the education of his sons as one of the most important part of his responsibilities, he treated the matter as of little consequence. Eli as the priest and judge of Israel was aware as to the duty of restraining and governing the children that God had given to his care. But Eli shrank from this duty, because it involved denying the will of his sons. Without weighing the terrible consequences that would follow his action, he allowed his children perhaps to do whatever they desired and neglected the work of fitting them for the service of God and the duties of life. God had said of Abraham, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." (Genesis 18:19). But Eli allowed his children to cause harm by sleeping with women who came to offer sacrifices in the temple.

The curse of transgression was apparent in the corruption and evil that marked the course of his sons. They had no proper appreciation of the character of God or of the sacredness of His law. God's work was to them a common thing. From childhood they had been accustomed to the sanctuary and its service; but instead of becoming more reverent, they had lost all sense of its holiness and significance. The father had not corrected their lack of reverence for his authority, and had also not checked their disrespect for the solemn services of the sanctuary; and when they reached manhood, they were full of the deadly fruits of skepticism and rebellion.

Robert, L. Eli and His Sons. Wwww. Biblegateway.com, accessed. 25th April 2015.

Though wholly unfit for the office, they were placed as priests in the sanctuary to minister before God.²⁷ The Lord had given the most specific directions in regard to offering sacrifices; but these wicked men carried their disregard of authority into the service of God, and did not give attention to the law of the offerings, which were to be made in the most solemn manner. The sacrifices, pointing forward to the death of Christ, were designed to preserve in the hearts of the people, faith in the Redeemer to come; hence it was of the greatest importance that the Lord's directions concerning them should be strictly heeded. The peace offerings were especially an expression of thanksgiving to God. In these offerings the fat alone was to be burned upon the altar; a certain specified portion was reserved for the priests, but the greater part was returned to the offerer, to be eaten by him and his friends and family in a sacrificial feast. Thus all hearts were to be directed, in gratitude and faith, to the great Sacrifice that was to take away the sin of the world.

The sons of Eli, instead of realizing the solemnity of this symbolic service, only thought how they could make it a means of self-indulgence. Not content with the part of the peace offerings allotted them, they demanded an additional portion; and the great number of these sacrifices presented at the annual feasts gave the priests an opportunity to enrich themselves at the expense of the people. They not only demanded more than their right, but refused to wait even until the fat had been burned as an offering to God. They persisted in claiming whatever portion pleased them, and, if denied, threatened to take it by violence.

This irreverence on the part of the priests soon robbed the service of its holy and solemn significance, and the people abhorred the offering of the Lord. The great

²⁷Robert, L. Eli and His Sons. [www. Biblegateway.com](http://www.Biblegateway.com), accessed. 25th April 2015.

antitypical sacrifice to which they were to look forward was no longer recognized.²⁸

"Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord." These unfaithful priests also transgressed God's law and dishonored their sacred office by their vile and degrading practices; yet they continued to pollute by their presence in the tabernacle of God. Many of the people, filled with indignation at the corrupt behavior of Hophni and Phinehas, ceased to come up to the appointed place of worship. Thus the service which God had ordained was despised and neglected because associated with the sins of these wicked men, were their hearts inclined to sin. Ungodliness, profligacy, and even idolatry prevailed to a fearful extent.

Eli had greatly erred in permitting his sons to minister in holy office. By excusing their course, on one pretext and another, he became blinded to their sins; but at last they reached a pass where he could no longer hide his eyes from the crimes of his sons. The people complained of their violent deeds, and the high priest was grieved and distressed. He dared remain silent no longer. But his sons had been brought up to think of no one but themselves, and now they cared for no one else. They saw the grief of their father, but their hard hearts were not touched. They heard his mild admonitions, but they were not impressed, nor would they change their evil course though warned of the consequences of their sins. Had Eli dealt justly with his wicked sons, they would have been rejected from the priestly office and punished with death. Thus to bring public disgrace and condemnation upon them, he sustained them in the most sacred positions of trust. He still permitted them to mingle their corruption with the holy service of God and to inflict an injury which years could not correct. But when the judge of Israel neglected his work, God took offence and punished such irresponsibility.

²⁸Robert, L. Eli and His Sons. [www. Biblegateway.com](http://www.Biblegateway.com), accessed. 25th April 2015.

God charged Eli with honoring his sons above the Lord {1 Samuel 2: 29}. Eli had permitted the offering appointed by God as a blessing to Israel to be made a thing of abhorrence, rather than bring his sons to shame for their impious and abominable practices. Those who follow their own inclination, in blind affection for their children, indulging them in the gratification of their selfish desires, and do not bring to bear the authority of God to rebuke sin and correct evil, make it manifest that they are honoring their wicked children more than they honor God. They are more anxious to shield their reputation than to glorify God; more desirous to please their children than to please the Lord and to keep His service from every appearance of evil.

God held Eli, as a priest and judge of Israel, accountable for the moral and religious standing of his people, and in a special sense for the character of his sons. He should first have attempted to restrain evil by disciplinary measures; but if these were not done, he should have subdued the wrong by the severest means. He incurred the Lord's displeasure by not reproofing sin and executing justice upon the sinners. He could not be depended upon to keep Israel pure. Those who have too little courage to reprove wrong, or who through indolence or lack of interest make no earnest effort to purify the family or the church of God, are held accountable for the evil that may result from their neglect of duty. We are just as responsible for evils that we might have checked in others by exercise of parental or pastoral authority as if the acts had been our own.

Eli did not manage his household according to God's rules for family government. He followed his own judgment. The fond father overlooked the faults and sins of his sons in their childhood, flattering himself that after a time they would outgrow their evil tendencies. Many are now making a similar mistake. They think they know a better way of training their children than that which God has given in His word. They foster

wrong tendencies in them, urging as an excuse: "they are too young to be punished". Wait till they become older, and can be reasoned with." Thus wrong habits are left to strengthen until they become uncontrolled. The children grow up without restraint, with traits of character that are a lifelong curse to them and are liable to be reproduced in others.

There is no greater curse upon households than to allow the youth to have their own way. When parents regard every wish of their children and indulge them in what they know is not for their good, the children soon lose all respect for their parents, or obedience for the authority of God or the elderly, and are led captive at the will of Satan. The influence of an ill-regulated family is widespread and disastrous to all society. It accumulates in a tide of evil that affects families, communities, and governments.

Because of Eli's position, his influence was more extended than if he had been an ordinary man. His family life was imitated throughout Israel. The results of his negligent, ease-loving ways were seen in thousands of homes that were molded by his example. If children are indulged in evil practices, while the parents make a profession of religion, the truth of God is brought into reproach. The best test of the Christian home is the type of character begotten by its influence. Actions speak louder than the most positive profession of godliness. If professors of religion, instead of putting forth earnest, persistent, and painstaking effort to bring up a well-ordered household as a witness to the benefits of faith in God, are lax in their government and indulgent to the evil desires of their children, they are allowing evil as Eli did, and moreover they are bringing disgrace on the cause of Christ and ruin upon themselves and their households. But parental unfaithfulness is great under any circumstances, and are ten-fold greater when they exist in the families of those appointed as teachers

of the people. When they fail to control their own households, they are, by their wrong example, misleading many. Their guilt is as much greater than that of others as their position is more responsible.

The promise had been made that the house of Aaron should walk before God forever; but this promise had been made on condition that they should devote themselves to the work of the sanctuary with singleness of heart and honor God in all their ways, not serving self nor following their own perverse inclinations. Eli and his sons had been tested, and the Lord had found them wholly unworthy of the exalted position of priests in His service. And God declared He could not accomplish the good that he had meant to do them, because they failed to do their part.

3.5 Conclusion

Parents are called not only to nurture their children to become independent and functioning adults, but to impart to them a spiritual legacy. One of the greatest fears to the researcher is that parents aren't investing the time and energy it takes to leave a spiritual legacy for their children. For better or for worse – you, as a parent – are your child's role model for faith! The average parent simply does not take a proactive role in building up the spiritual lives of their children. Parents may spend thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours on important issues, such as vacations, business plans, and home improvement; but when it comes to spiritual values, they too often allow circumstances and chance to affect how we manage our family life and especially that of our calling as parents.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS ON INFORMATION GATHERED

4.1 Introduction

The researcher sought to solicit views of the various stakeholders on the issue of parenting. The views included administering questionnaires to adults who are in the process of parenting or have significant knowledge and experience in it, and the use of interviews for the views of children who are mostly affected either positively or negatively when it comes to parenting.

Forty (40) questionnaires were administered to parents while twenty (20) children were interviewed on the experience they have encountered with the style and approach their respective parents have been using. The analysis is in four parts, where the first part deals with the response of the questionnaires by parents, secondly, the children or youth, the church and finally the Christian home.

The analysis is geared towards or connected to the research questions raised earlier on, and based on that, have an informed judgment of issues concerning parenting.

4.2 Parents

All the respondents to the questionnaires were parents, where twenty-two (22) representing 55% were single parents who are single-handedly taking charge of the parenting role, while 18 representing 45% were dual parents taking charge of the parenting role together as husband and wife. 45% were divorced, 25% were separated, while 7.5% were widowed, remaining only 22.5% married. This means that out of the 100%, 22.5% lived with their spouse as against 77.5% who do not live with their spouses and are separated, divorced or widowed.

From the statistics given, it clearly indicates that most parents do not live together as husband and wife. Majority of the respondents were divorced, that is {45%} out of the 100%. This, to the researcher is a sad and dangerous development because most at times successful parenting always requires the effort of both the husband and the wife. Parents must therefore seek to do joint parenting, in that case there should be a coordinated, collective and united effort to love, instruct and train the child²⁹.

Even though as much as 87.5% out of the 100% know and believe that parenting has a biblical background, their response to the understanding of parenting did not include or reflect any biblical view. They believe that as parents their job is to only provide for the needs of their children physically (food, cloth, shelter and security) and therefore had less knowledge on Christian spirituality of providing the child with the required training in praying, reading the bible as well as devotions. Their belief is that since they go to church, it is the duty of the church and pastors to take up that mantle of training children in a Godly manner since, they, as parents do not know what the Bible teaches and talk about good parenting. No wonder 67.5% could not give one specific biblical quotation that teaches and talks about parenting as at the time of the research, they only said they needed some time to research into such areas.

This means that these 67.5% who could not give one specific biblical quotation that teaches about parenting may not be able to bring or train up their children in the admonition of the Lord as the Bible teaches in Ephesians 6 : 4 because they consider Godly parenting as the responsibility of the church and its leaders.

On the issue of the kind of parenting style they use or adopt, four (4) alternatives were given, which were authoritarian type of parenting, where parents are in charge and

²⁹ Kisseadoo, *Basic Principles of Successful Parenting*, 11.

children have no say about how they are being treated, the permissive type sometimes called the laissez- faire where parents allow children unlimited time and opportunity, the authoritative type of parenting where parents allow children to even disagree with them³⁰, and finally a combination of the three types.

75% said they use the authoritarian type because children are less intelligent and inexperienced to be left alone to decide matters for themselves. Moreover they feel that what the bible says in Proverbs 22:6 ‘train up a child in a way to go.....’ specifically has to do with being authoritarian. Others who use this type said that when anything goes wrong with their children, they as parents will be held accountable so there is no need to give children the slightest chance to learn on their own.

There were 15% who also practice the permissive type and they believe that children must also be given the chance to learn and operate freely devoid of parental control because other people have knowledge that, they, as parents, do not have so children must be left to learn by observing from the environment. What these parents failed to recognized was that children when left freely have the tendency to go astray and learn things that are uncultured and not necessary for their consumption.

The authoritative practice was adopted by 10% who also believe that children must be given the chance to disagree with parents because parents may not always be right in their dealings with their children. None of the respondents used a combination of all three types at various stages in a child’s life, once they hold on to their preferred style, that is what they consider good till the child leaves the house on maturity. The researcher is of the view that, the three types of parenting must be applied separately

³⁰ Jeffrey and Pattie jean Brown, *A guide to Parenting* (England, Grantham, lincs: the Stanborough Press, 2003), 95.

at every stage in a child's life because of the peculiarity and the circumstance of every child. This is because there are different stages in life, where at the childhood or adolescent age, the child is directly under the authority of parents, but at the adult or marriage season, the son or daughter may not be under the authority of parents³¹. Ideally, parents must start with being authoritarian {where they are in total control} at childhood, then at the marriage stage, they become both permissive {where parents allow their children unlimited time and opportunity to learn on their own} and authoritative {allow children to even disagree with them} because children are now grown to decide for themselves, that is not to say that parenting must cease, but the entire respondents think that once they adopt one style, its enough to last a lifetime.

4.3 The Youth or Children

The youth or children have always been considered by many nations as the future and sometimes the productive segment of the economy who will always take up the administration of the economy whenever the older generation has done their part.

4.3.1 Provision of Basic Amenities (Food, Cloths, Shelter)

These categories of respondents, considered the youth or children are directly affected by parenting whether positive or negative. The interview conducted revealed that out of the twenty (20) interviewees, 15 of these children constituting 75% said that some basic necessities as food, health, clothing and shelter are not provided by their parents but by themselves. They engage themselves in minor trade like selling ice water after school, bread on the roadside near the Offinso toll booth, all these trading are done on a 'sell- share' basis where they collect these items from people and sell so they can also have their daily bread. This scenario is what the researcher consider to be 'child abuse and child labor' by parents, especially at this age when children are supposed to

³¹ Kisseadoo, *Basic Principles of Successful Parenting*, 11.

be in school, and must be encouraged to be actively involved and concentrate on their education. These children are rather made to cater for themselves at this tender age of between twelve- twenty {12-20} which is also against their rights.

They buy items they need for school and use some for food and save the rest for emergency cases. All these 75% who provide for themselves, equally revealed that they sleep with their friends not because that is what they wanted, but because their parents have proven to be irresponsible, and they feel heart- broken to be children of such parents and also regret every bit of their lives. These children are aged between 12- 20, these 75% children are all in school but cater for themselves while the remaining 15% are all school drop-outs because their parents could not care for their needs.

In conclusion, they reckon that whiles their 'irresponsible' parents make them suffer for no reason and no fault of theirs under the cover of financial problems; these same parents are able to purchase cloths for funerals and other functions each time, to the surprise of these children. These children have therefore generated some hatred for their parents because they see clearly that these parents are unhelpful and insensitive.

4.3.2 Participation in Church and Church Activities

Children are gifts from God and parents are to train these children in a special and a Godly way, so they will not depart from it when they are old as Proverbs 22:6 puts it. It was also recorded that, thirteen (13) out of the twenty (20) children interviewed constituting 65% said they do not remember the last time they went to church because their parents themselves seldom go to church. They either trade on Saturdays and Sundays or join their friends to play soccer and go on playing expedition.

However, these children acknowledged the existence of God and have some reverence for Him as their creator, guardian, helper and hope and also have the faith that one day they will come closer or in contact with their maker but for the mean time, they are helpless.

The remaining 7 children constituting 35% do go to church but not on a regular basis. They visit the church and participate in church activities every two weeks. In probing further, the researcher decided to bring some common biblical rhymes to sing with these children and it revealed that the rhyme which has Jesus' parents, birth place, baptism and baptizer are known by them, conspicuously missing were the inability of these children to name some of Jesus' disciples and certain fundamental Sunday school teachings common to a well- trained Sunday school child.

4.3.3 Mode of Training, Learning and Correction

Parenting is similar to discipleship and leadership³². Parents are therefore to train people to be disciplined followers who put their feet in the foot- holds of their mentor and influencing them to sharpen their skills for effective service. Children are therefore supposed to have training from their parents which make them learn as they grow to become useful members of society. Through these training and learning, they are corrected when they go wrong so that they will be shaped by these corrections.

As part of the interview, most of these children about 90% that is eighteen (18) out of the twenty (20), learn from their peers who are immature role models, these learners are not even sure that what they learn are right or wrong, but since they find themselves in their friend's company, failure to learn from them or engage in

³² Kisseadoo, *Basic Principles of Successful Parenting*, 11.

whatever they do, they will be isolated, so for fear of isolation, they decide to learn anyway. These learning include internet games, football, snooker, dressing as well as style of speaking and other things. This reveals the extent to which parenting has been reduced to immaturity and ignorance, where parents leave their children to learn from their inexperienced peers.

The remaining two (2) respondents making up 10% reveal that apart from these friends, they also learn from their uncles, aunts and other notable people in the society. These same 90% have also devised their own correction method which is a rebuke from older peers among them which they call 'Bossu' meaning Boss and sometimes are also being corrected by elders closer to them and from the society as well. Because society frowns on certain things, they learn from such norms and values within society and also restraint themselves from doing unacceptable things.

4.4 The Church

According to Haralambos and Holborn, 2002, socialization is the process by which individuals learn the culture of their society³³. The process is accomplished by norms, values, perceptions and rules that people formulate and significantly defined by society, through various agents: Family, Peer group, the Church (Durkheim 1950, Inkeles 1964)³⁴. The church therefore has a role to play in helping build members of society.

On the issue of whether respondents who were mainly part of the Cornerstone Chapel congregation knew Eli, 34 out of the 40 constituting 85% responded yes. The 6 % responded no. On Eli's parenting style, the same 85% of the respondents said his style

³³ Haralambos and Holborn, *Sociology themes and Perspective*, Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 2002

³⁴ Durkheim Emile, *the Rules Of Sociological Method* (New York, the Free Press, 1950),

was very poor and that the attitude of his children was also poor, while the others were not aware. The reasons attributed to such poor parenting range from little or no time on the part of Eli to his being too permissive to his children's behavior. This means that parents who have little or no time with parenting and are also too permissive are likely to impact poor attitude into the lives of their children.

Dealing with the assessment of Pastor's children and whether their behavior and attitude leaves much to be desired, 14 out of the 40 respondents representing 35% were indifferent, 10 out of the 40 representing 25% said children of Pastors are bad, 9 out of 40 representing 22.5% said they are good, 2 out of 40 representing 5% said they are very good while the remaining 5 out of the 40 representing 12.5% said they are very bad. This research has revealed a striking revelation in the sense that if only 22.5% of the respondents believe that children of pastors are good, then how will these pastors be able to teach and correct other church members' children when they go wrong. So if church members have no confidence in pastors when it comes to parenting, then where else will these people go?

This notwithstanding, people feel that parenting style of the contemporary Christian is far better as compared to the Old Testament type of parenting which were based mainly on the law of Moses which they consider deficient which is the reason why some aspects of the law of Moses were modified by Christ and that Christianity today have the benefit of both the Old and New Testament principles of parenting. 28 out of the 40 representing 70% said contemporary Christian parenting is better than the Old Testament parenting which had 12 out of 40 representing 30%

Finally, all the 40 respondents representing 100% felt that the church as an agent of socialization must be actively involved in parenting by way of organizing seminars, symposia and lectures for parents to enhance their parenting skills and knowledge.

4.5 The Christian Home

A good Christian home must be one of learning, caring and shining example for the world. There are therefore things which must be done individually in various Christian homes to help the church survive the plaque of poor parenting by its members. The research tried to find out from homes that are considered Christian to find out how they will respond to some basic practice of Christian parenting.

38 out of the 40 respondents representing 95% said children are gifts from God, 1 out of the 40 representing 2.5% consider children as burden and the remaining 1 respondent representing 2.5% also consider children as normal creatures. As gift therefore, much time must be devoted to them to avoid facing serious reprimand from God.

32 people constituting 80% go to church with their children while the remaining 20% said they do not go to church with their children because these children do not live with them.

On how often they study the word of God with their children, 50% study the word of God with their children weekly, 25% do it daily, 15% do it monthly while 10% do not study the word of God with their children at all because they are illiterates. This revelation of 50% and 15% of parents learning the word of God with their children weekly and monthly respectively is considered as a dangerous practice by the researcher because each day has its own challenges and troubles so children must be equipped each day and not on a weekly basis. Moreover children learn lots of

unhelpful things each passing day so if parents wait for a week before studying the word of God with their children, this will pave way for infiltration of unwholesome learning on the side of children, thereby making parenting very difficult.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Study

The study examined parenting in the Old Testament with reference to Eli and his family and its implications for Christian homes and the church today. It was divided into five chapters with some subdivisions where necessary. The work considered the general introduction, which focused on the background to the study, statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, significance of the study and the research methodology as well as the scope and organization of the study. Also the views of some scholars which have a bearing on the study were all considered. These views were categorized into sub headings such as, the meaning of parenting, the nature of parenting from biblical perspective, Old Testament concept of parenting and family life, Eli and his family, parenting from African perspective and the Christian home. It further focused on the Old Testament perspective of parenting Christian family, the role of the church in Christian family development and the nature of Eli's family.

Furthermore the research work collected some data from respondents to have adequate information and insight to enrich the research work. During the analysis of the data gathered some findings were made.

Some of these are

Firstly, it was realized from the data analysis that most people consider parenting to be a very difficult task which needs adequate attention and preparation before one becomes a parent but as to the form and nature of preparation, most respondents were not aware.

Secondly, it was also realized from the analysis that all respondents consider Eli's parenting style and techniques as very poor leading to the poor attitude and behavior of his two sons who were priest but defied the sanctity of God's work assigned to them.

Thirdly, the analysis also revealed that children of Pastors' turn to exhibit bad character traits because of time constraints of most of these pastors and the nature of their work as compared to other children.

Again, some people feel that when it comes to parenting, pastors perform abysmally because they cannot even control and train their children. Because of the nature of their work they have little or no time for their children.

Finally, respondents consider the contemporary Christian parenting notwithstanding its problems far better than the Old Testament type of parenting where they did not have the benefit of the bible and the teachings of Christ.

5.2 General Conclusion

The study set out to examine parenting in the Old Testament with reference to Eli and his family and the implications for Christian homes and the church today. It has been established that Eli had poor attitude to parenting because he was too permissive towards the behavior and attitude of his children which led to his death, his two children as well as that of Phinehas' wife. His entire family line was cut out from the priesthood of Israel and was made to be beggars.

Even though the study was restricted to Eli and his family, there are other Old Testament leaders such as king David who was also over permissive to the extent that

he did not reprimand any of his children including Adonijah(1 Kings 1:6), and also looked on helplessly when Tamar was raped by her own half brother Amnon.

5.3 Recommendations

The discussion has so far centered on parenting in the Old Testament and its implications for Christian homes and the church today. These recommendations have been carefully outlined in line with the outcome of this research.

The researcher wishes to propose that parenting must be taken as a serious act by the church by organizing periodic counseling session, training programs and awareness creation to prospective parents as well as parents who are already in the act to be careful in handling matters concerning children. This proposal has been necessitated by the fact that Eli and two members of his family (children) lost their life. Not only that but also God as part of Eli's punishment declared that his line of priesthood be cut off from the line of priest of the Levites. We also face the same risk if we are unable as Christian parents to teach our children to become useful members of the society.

The church must also channel enough resources into training children by employing the services of a director of Christian education who will serve as a director, a trained professional educator, and staff member of the church. The director will be responsible for giving creative guidance of a comprehensive and unified Christian youth education program for the church, appoint qualified youth teachers for the youth ministry, provide adequate and continuous leadership in all activities and also provide adequate logistics for achieving the educational objectives.

Christian homes must also make it a point to regularly teach their children the word of God daily, through the organization of periodic and continuous devotions and prayer sessions at family meetings.

Finally, leaders at the national level, community level as well as the church must see themselves as role models so everything they do must be geared towards educating children to be better future leaders so that these children can also influence generations to come.

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PERSONALITIES INTERVIEWED

Opanin Kwaku Amponsah, (Offinso- Asamankoma) 22 March 2015,

APPENDIX A

CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

This questionnaire is designed to solicit the views of people on issues concerning parenting for academic purpose. All views expressed will be considered confidential and no part of it will be exposed to the general public without prior notice of parties concerned.

Name... Age: Sex: m/ f

Nationality..... Ethnicity: Akan/ Ewe/ Fante

Marital Status: Single/ Married/ Divorced/ Separated/ Widowed

Educational Status: Jhs/ Shs/ Tertiary/ Others {specify}

Religion: Christianity/ Islamic/ Traditionalist/ Others {specify}

1. What is your parental status: {i} single parent / dual parent
2. How many children do you have : 1/2/3/4/5 above 5
3. How many have you adopted {i} all / some/ none
4. What is your understanding of parenting?

.....
.....
.....

5. Are you aware that parenting has a biblical background: yes/no, if yes {i} give some specific quotation..... {ii} cannot give readily
6. Do you know that there are styles or types of parenting: yes/ no, if yes which one do you use {i} authoritative {ii} permissive {iii} authoritarian
{a} why do you use such style as mentioned above:

.....
.....
.....

7. Do you know Eli: yes/ no, if yes {a} who was he {i} priest {ii} king {iii} no idea, if you answered correctly {i}, {b} how would you describe his parenting style: {i} good {ii} indifferent {iii} poor

8. How would you describe the behavior or attitude of his children? {i} v. good {ii} good {iii} average {iv} indifferent {v} poor

9. What accounts for the answer given above

.....
.....
.....

10. How would you generally assess children of pastors today: {i} very bad {ii} bad {iii} satisfactory {iv} very good {v} good {vi} indifferent. Give reason{s} for your answer

.....
.....

11. Is parenting a difficult task: yes/ no, if yes {a} how difficult {i} very difficult {ii} difficult {iii} normal. {b} give reasons for your answer

.....
.....

12. Must the church be involved in parenting: yes/ no, give reasons

.....
.....

13. How has the contemporary Christian parenting fared as against the Old Testament type: {i} poor {ii} average {iii} better

14. How do you consider children: as {i} gift {ii} burden {iii} normal creatures

{iv} other, specify

15. Do you go to church with all your children: yes/ no, if no why?

.....
.....

16. How often do you study the word of God with your children: {i} daily {ii} weekly {iii} monthly {iv} yearly {v} not at all.

Give reasons for your answer

.....
.....

17. How do you discipline your children: by {i} cane only {ii} cane, instructions only {iii} cane, instructions and shirking of responsibility {food, money, shelter}

{iv} none, specify

18. Are you aware that poor parenting can lead to severe reprimand from God: yes/
no, why do you give such answer?

.....
.....

19. How did you as a child received parenting from your parents:

{i} good {ii} indifferent {iii} poor

20. How do people {outside your family} feel about your parenting style:

{i} good {ii} indifferent {iii} bad

21. With your kind of parenting, do you think your children have a good future:

{i} very sure {ii} sure {iii} indifferent {iv} cannot tell