

Guiding our Children

Tammy: (Knock knock) ...Anybody home? Oh, there you are. The vines are so thick I couldn't see you.

Carol: Hi. I'm just trying to train my vine to grow around this post, but it's pretty stubborn.

Tammy: Looks like you could use a break. I just took this bread out of the oven and brought it over to share with you. I thought it would be good with some of your strawberry jam.

Carol: You talked me into it. I'm ready for a cup of tea...

Welcome to *Women of Hope*. Would you like to join us as we share a cup of tea and some more of that lovely bread Tammy makes and my strawberry jam? I wish you could.

Mmm... Tammy, this bread is good. I'm glad I made jam last summer.

Tammy: Me too Carol, I enjoyed our visit together at your home...you have such a beautiful garden. How do you get your plants to grow so well?

Carol: I'm not always successful, but I find that if I take good care of them, they'll usually grow well. It takes time, and patience.

Tammy: Well, it pays off. I just love that vine on your front porch...and now it's grown up and has beautiful big purple flowers. How did you get it to grow around the post so beautifully?

Carol: Every time I went out there I would gently curl it around the post, and gradually it learned that that's where I wanted it! After a while it began to shape *itself* around the post! It's now a beautiful shade vine on warm spring days.

Tammy: Do you know Carol that makes me think of children. You may be their parent, their teacher or the one who cares for them in some way. It's just the same...you have to gently guide them until they understand what you're trying to teach them. And little by little they grow...just like those plants...to become obedient...and they know what you want them to do.

Carol: And before you know it you can see them taking this shape *on their own* as they get older... If they learn to obey us as parents, grandparents, or caregivers, when they're young, then they are more likely to learn to make good decisions when they get older aren't they?

Tammy: You're right there Carol. And they're more likely to learn to do what God wants them to do too. We mothers love to see our children growing up to be respectful and obedient don't we?

I had an interesting conversation with my son this very morning. We talked about God's plan for his life and how important it is to make good decisions while he's young. He didn't like it when I said he couldn't go to a party because I knew the people there would not be a good influence on him.

Tammy: Yes...I suppose our job as mothers is to use the time we have with our children to guide them, like you did with the vine... to grow in obedience. Sometimes it's not pleasant. We have to discipline our children - like cutting back and untangling those vines - but we have to be persistent.

Carol: Yes, and, like the vine, they will finally want to grow up towards the sunlight, and blossom. You know, that's a nice way to think about taking care of our children – like plants. What do all plants need?

Tammy: Sunshine.

Carol: and

Tammy: rain – well – water

Carol: ...and...

Tammy: Well...I guess they have to be planted in good soil that will give them some food.

Carol: Exactly!

This is *Women of Hope*... Let's think about those three things we need to make our plants grow: - sunshine...they need the 'sunshine' of your love – they need to know they are loved no matter what they do.

- then rain...maybe we could look at that as the guiding and discipline that our children need so that they understand how to behave and that there are consequences to bad behavior. If they are allowed to do anything they like and never be guided and shown how you want them to behave they won't know how to grow up strong and tall. They will grow wild – and all over the place.

- then of course, there's the soil...they need good nutritious food to make their bodies grow don't they? And in just the same way they need good 'food' for their hearts – plenty of talking, reading and discussing things to encourage their minds to grow. And of course to understand why they need to behave in certain ways.

Tammy: So next time you're in your garden, or looking at beautiful plants like in Carol's garden – think about your children and what they need to grow up into responsible adults who can then pass on their ways to their own children one day.

Carol: And that reminds me of the story we heard not long ago about Hannah and her little son, Samuel. She certainly taught Samuel and guided him – just like that plant...so that as he grew up he learned to be obedient.

Carol: You know my friend, you might be thinking right now – this job of being a mother is too hard. You're right...it *is* hard. But it's the most important job anyone can have. Even when you're discouraged and the children don't seem to be listening to you, your gentle words can train them to grow in the right way, to reach up to be the best they can be.

Tammy: And sometimes, the discipline is hard. You may have to say "no" or not allow your children something they want, because you know it's not good for them. They will not be happy about that, but it's very important for you to keep guiding them in the right way. And one day, when

they're grown, they *might* even thank you for it!

You're listening to *Women of Hope* and we've been talking about guiding children in the way they should go...just like Carol guided her beautiful plant to grow around the post on her front porch. Now it hangs on by itself – and is happily growing up that post and producing beautiful flowers!

Carol: Do you remember that story about Hannah and Samuel? Hannah prayed to God for a child. God answered her prayer, and she was soon expecting a son. Hannah promised that she would give her son Samuel back to God.

Hannah must have talked with Samuel the same way we need to with our children, though maybe she didn't have parties to worry about.

Tammy: No maybe not!

Carol: I'm sure she guided him gently while she had him at home. And I'm sure that even after he went to live at the temple, they talked when she visited him just once a year...at the time of the annual sacrifice...about seeking God's way for his life. After all, he was at the temple because she had promised God that her son would serve him *all* his life. She had told him when he was very small that God had a big job for him to do when he was grown up.

Tammy: Still, it must have been hard, to only see him once a year.

Carol: I'm sure it was...

Tammy: I think Samuel would have been only about 4 years old when his mother Hannah kept her promise to God and took him to the temple to work for the old priest Eli.

Carol: Let's *imagine* for a moment what it might have been like for Samuel at the temple, before I tell you the story from God's word, the Bible.

"The temple was dark, with shadows playing on the high walls. Only a faint glow of light came from the lamps burning in the room where the priests went to make the sacrifices. Samuel snuggled down into the blanket that covered his small bed and was soon asleep. It was a few years now since he came here – and he had learned many interesting things as he worked with Eli.

Samuel's day began early. Since he came to live at the temple, he had been given many jobs to do. He had to shine the golden lamp stand every day, and make sure there was plenty of oil to keep the lamps burning. He had to replace the bread on the table daily, clean the big basin and pour just enough water into it so that the priests could wash there every day.

By the time he took a small lamp to his room at night, he was exhausted. Sometimes, as he lay on his narrow bed, he felt a tear slide down his cheek. He missed his mother. How he longed to feel her arms around him and hear her tender voice call his name.

Old Eli, the High Priest, was Samuel's friend. He spent hours each day teaching him and answering his many questions. Before Samuel was twelve years old, he could read the Hebrew scrolls which Eli tenderly unrolled for him.

Samuel's favorite time of the year was the annual sacrifice, when his family traveled for many days to come and worship at the temple. His mother would bring a new tunic she had woven for him, and they would sit and talk around the evening campfires. His mother reminded him of the big job God had for him, and because Samuel loved her and loved God, he listened and was content with serving him at the temple."

Tammy: Yes I can *imagine* that's how it might have been. Let's listen to this song before we hear the story of Samuel...

You're listening to *Women of Hope* and we're about to hear the story of Samuel from God's word, the Bible (1 Samuel 3):

Carol: 'In those days, the Lord God hardly ever spoke directly to people, and he did not appear to them in dreams very often. But one night, Eli was asleep in his room, and Samuel was sleeping on a mat near the sacred chest in the Lord's house.

As Samuel was drifting into sleep, he heard a voice calling his name.

"Samuel."

Wondering what Eli wanted, Samuel slipped from under his blanket and hurried into the old priest's room. "Here I am," he answered, as he tugged at Eli's sleeve, "What do you want?" Eli rolled over, opened his eyes and looked up at the young man standing before him.

"What is it, my son?" he asked

"You called me," Samuel replied.

The old man shook his head. "No, my son, I did not call you. Go back to bed."

He crawled back under the blanket and was almost asleep when he heard the voice again.

"Samuel."

Again, Samuel left his warm bed and entered Eli's room...

"I'm sure I heard you call," Samuel said, when he had wakened him.

"No, my son. I did not call you...go back to sleep," Eli said.

God had not spoken directly to Samuel before, and Samuel did not recognize his voice. So when God called out Samuel's name for the third time, Samuel went to Eli again and said, "Here I am. What do you want?"

Deep in thought...as he looked at the tall young man before him, Eli, the old priest said, "Samuel, I believe it was God's voice you heard, not mine. Go back to bed. If you hear the voice again, you are to say, 'Speak Lord, for your servant is listening... What do you want me to do?' "

Once again Samuel went back and lay down.

The Lord then stood beside Samuel and called out as he had done before, "Samuel! Samuel!"

"Speak Lord, I'm listening," Samuel answered, as Eli had instructed him, "What do you want me to do?"

The Lord said: "Samuel, I am going to do something in Israel that will shock everyone who hears about it! I will punish Eli and his family, just as I promised. He knew that his sons refused to respect me, and he let them get away with it... I warned Eli that sacrifices or offerings could never make things right! His family has done too many terrible things.

The next morning, Samuel got up and opened the doors to the Lord's house. He was afraid to tell Eli what the Lord had said. But Eli said to him, "Samuel, my boy, come here!"

"Here I am," Samuel answered, with fear in his heart.

"What did God say to you? Eli asked. Tell me everything. May God punish you if you don't tell me every word he said!"

So Samuel told Eli everything. To Samuel's surprise Eli simply said, "He is the Lord, and he will do what's right."

As Samuel grew up, the Lord helped him and made everything Samuel said come true. Everyone in the country knew that Samuel was truly the Lord's prophet. He often appeared to Samuel now and told him what to say.'

That's the end of the story from God's word.

You're listening to *Women of Hope*... I wonder how you would feel about your child having to go off and work with the old priest, Eli? I would have found it very difficult.

Tammy: So would I...but Hannah made that promise to God didn't she. So she did what she had promised. And she must have trusted God to take care of her boy. She also must have been glad that she had taught Samuel how to obey and do what he was told to do.

Carol: Maybe you're having to face your child going away...and now you have to trust that what you taught them as they grew up will stay with them and help to guide them through their life.

Tammy: God cares a lot about this job that you have and he wants you to bring your children before him and pray for them. You can ask God to help you be the best mother you can. And you can pray for your children – that they will learn to follow your guidance and one day follow God and do the things he wants them to do.

Let's do that now...do you want to join me to pray for our children?

Loving father, thank you for our children. Help us as mothers, and caregivers, to always take good care of them and teach them how to obey us. Help us to teach them about your ways so that when they grow up they will obey you and follow you.

We pray in the name of Jesus, your obedient son, Amen

Carol: Before we go let's hear from a grandmother from Aruba, in the Caribbean, who listens to our program.

She says: *'Thanks for the program that I just finished listening to. It's of great help and we learn a lot through it...*

I'm a grandmother and have four grandchildren. My two daughters are the mothers. I do all that I can to help raise the grandkids. With God's help I want to do my part so they can grow up healthy and good. Thanks for what you offer us.'

Isn't this a good reminder to those of us who are grandmothers, and grandfathers, that we still need to help guide our grandchildren!

Well it's time for us to go now. If you want to contact us to share something in your life – or ask for any help you can do so at ...

Tammy: And let's remember what we've learned today about that vine growing up the post. As we look at the plants in our garden – or in someone else's garden – let's remember how we need to show our children love – that's the sunshine...give them good discipline – that's the rain...and feed their minds with lots of interesting things to encourage them to think – that's the good soil.

Carol: We will be here again soon to talk with you about other things. Meanwhile have a good day and most of all – let's enjoy our children!

Tammy: Bye