

## 1 Samuel 4 – Mother’s Day

1. 1 Samuel 4 is not a typical Mother’s Day passage, yet it contains a powerful spiritual message.
  1. The chapter is dark, sobering, and filled with loss rather than celebration.
  2. Even so, in the middle of the darkness, a mother speaks one of the clearest theological truths in the passage.
  3. Main idea: nothing else matters if the glory and presence of God are gone.
2. Broader context of the chapter within 1 Samuel.
  1. The opening chapters highlighted Hannah’s prayerfulness and Samuel’s emergence as a faithful leader.
  2. This chapter shifts attention to what happens when spiritual leadership is weak and people act according to their own judgment.
  3. The contrast helps frame the disaster that follows in Israel.
3. Israel suffers defeat and immediately responds the wrong way.
  1. The Philistines defeat Israel and thousands die in battle.
  2. Instead of asking what is wrong in their own hearts, the people ask why the Lord allowed the defeat.
  3. The sermon emphasizes the human tendency to blame God rather than examine personal sin, pride, or disobedience.
4. First major lesson: defeat should drive people to self-examination, repentance, and renewed dependence on God.
  1. Proverbs 19:3 - show that human folly often ruins life while the heart rages against the Lord.
  2. Mothers often teach responsibility, honesty, and accountability.
5. Israel’s deeper problem is exposed: they want victory without submission to God.
  1. They desire freedom from their enemies but not obedience to the Lord.
  2. They move toward battle without seeking God’s will, while also carrying unrepentant sin.
  3. The sermon stresses that many defeats are tied to self-will, pride, and neglected repentance.
6. Second major lesson: outward religion cannot substitute for a right relationship with God.
  1. Israel sends for the ark as though possessing the symbol will guarantee divine help.
  2. The people treat the ark like a tool, charm, or mechanism for success.
  3. The warning is that religious noise, religious symbols, and religious confidence do not equal God’s favor.
7. The significance and misuse of the ark.
  1. The ark represented God’s covenant presence, but it was not God Himself.
  2. Israel confused the symbol of God’s presence with the reality of walking with God.
  3. This becomes a warning against trusting church culture, traditions, appearance, or religious accessories while neglecting holiness and obedience.
8. Modern application: people still try to use God without truly knowing Him.
  1. Warning against trying to reduce God to a controllable object rather than honoring Him as Father and Lord.
  2. The central issue is not ritual, but relationship; not appearance, but obedience.
9. The consequences are severe and far-reaching.
  1. Israel loses far more soldiers in the second defeat.
  2. The ark is captured, and Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, die.

3. Sin and failed leadership never affect only the sinner; families, communities, and nations suffer as well.
10. Eli's fall underscores the tragedy of compromised leadership.
1. The messenger returns with devastating news from the battlefield.
  2. When Eli hears that the ark has been captured, he falls backward and dies.
  3. This moment signals the collapse of a leadership era already marked by compromise and neglect.
11. A mother whose insight becomes central to the sermon.
1. Phinehas's wife is pregnant and near delivery when she hears the news.
  2. Her suffering reflects the painful reality that life does not always unfold according to hopeful expectations (Story: Welcome to Holland).
  3. This point creates a bridge to mothers who carry disappointment, grief, altered dreams, or heavy burdens.
12. Phinehas's wife recognizes the deepest tragedy of all.
1. As she dies in childbirth, she names her son Ichabod, meaning the glory has departed.
  2. Though she has lost her husband, her future, and her own life, she identifies the departure of God's glory as the greatest loss.
  3. Her discernment stands in contrast to the spiritual blindness of the men around her.
13. Central theological truth: the worst possible loss is the absence of God's presence.
1. The message is not merely that hardship is painful, but that life without the presence of God is the true disaster.
  2. A person may retain comfort, success, reputation, or possessions and still be empty if God's glory is absent.
14. Third major lesson: symbols, systems, and activity are empty without God.
1. The ark without God is just a box.

2. Church activity without God becomes noise.
  3. Religious identity without repentance becomes spiritual deception.
15. Application to the church and the home.
1. Believers must not ask only for God's blessing on their plans but must first seek His will.
  2. Homes, marriages, ministries, and churches must guard against pride, ritualism, and tolerated sin.
  3. The call is to humility, repentance, prayer, and genuine dependence on the Lord.
16. Application to mothers in particular.
1. A mother's highest calling is not merely to raise successful, respectable, or happy children.
  2. Her deeper calling is to help form children who know God, love His Word, and long for His presence.
  3. This honors the spiritual influence of mothers while grounding that calling in eternal priorities.
17. Conclusion: call the congregation to treasure the presence of God above every lesser gift.
1. Nothing matters if the glory of God is gone.
  2. We need self-examination regarding pride, blame shifting, ritualism, and disobedience.

### **WELCOME TO HOLLAND By: Emily Pearl Kingsley**

*I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with special needs- to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this...*

*When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guidebooks and make your wonderful plans--the Coliseum, Michelangelo's sculptor of David, the gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.*

*After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, however, the plane lands. The flight attendant comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."*

*"Holland!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy." But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.*

*The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a terrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.*

*So you must go out and buy new guidebooks. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.*

*It's just a different place. It's slower paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills, Holland has tulips, Holland has Rembrandts.*

*But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy, and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say, "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I planned.*

*The pain of that will never, ever, ever go away, because the loss of that dream is a very significant loss.*

*But if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things about Holland.*

*It would be naïve to think that everybody here today ended up at the destination they would like to have chosen.*

*Just as Emily Kingsley describes, life often leaves us disillusioned.*