

connect 360

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Character and the
CROWN

A STUDY OF
1 Samuel

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Ronnie & Renate Hood
Meredith Stone
Patrick Wilson



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Character and the Crown (A Study of 1 Samuel)—Connect 360 Bible Study Guide

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How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

Do all of the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. Here are some suggestions to guide your lesson preparation:

- A. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on pages 9–10 and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
 - If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
 - Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org under the “Teacher Helps” menu.
 - Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.
- B. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.
- C. After you’ve studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- D. Teaching resource items for use as handouts are available free at www.baptistwaypress.org under the “Teacher Helps” tab.
- E. Additional Bible study comments on the lessons are available online. Call 1–866–249–1799 or e-mail baptistway@texasbaptists.org to order the *Premium Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website, www.baptistwaypress.org. The price of these comments for the entire study is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Commentary* free. Call 1–866–249–1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org to purchase or for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

- F. Additional teaching plans are also available in electronic format (PDF) by calling 1-866-249-1799. The price of these additional teaching plans for the entire study is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Teaching Plans* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.
- G. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

Do you use a Kindle?

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Character and the Crown

A Study of 1 Samuel

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Introducing

Character and the Crown

A STUDY OF 1 SAMUEL

What do people look for in their leaders? Physical attributes? Prestigious educational credentials? Oratory skills? Experience? Courage? Are they seeking someone who can build consensus and inspire confidence in others? How often is character a consideration? How high does integrity rank on the list of qualifications?

It seems that we live in a culture that often confuses character with celebrity. People become famous for being famous, and if someone is well-known, their familiarity somehow engenders a level of trust and affirmation. But what kind of leaders is God looking for?

The Book of 1 Samuel reveals a wide range of character qualities in its featured personalities as the Israelites transitioned from the period of the judges to the era of the kings. People such as Hannah, Samuel, Eli, Saul, David, Jonathan, Abigail, and Nabal fill the stories as Israel makes the move from a theocracy to a monarchy.

As the people pressured Samuel to give them a king, the Lord told him, “Listen to all that the people are saying to you: it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king” (1 Sam. 8:7). Aren’t we tempted to do the same? In the same way, as we search for leaders we should keep in mind the Lord’s instructions to Samuel when he was seeking Saul’s replacement, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7).

All of us are called to be leaders in our homes, jobs, churches, and communities. What sort of character are we bringing to these roles? What is the condition of our heart?

Each spring our Connect 360 Bible Study series focuses on a book from the Old Testament. For a complete list of our studies see www.baptistwaypress.org.

Background on the Book of 1 Samuel

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel were combined in their original form, but the translators who put together the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) separated them. Originally, because of their length, Samuel and Kings were divided into two books each: 1, 2, 3, and 4 Kings.

1 Samuel traces the transition from the period of the judges to the era of the kings. In describing the rise of the monarchy, the book answers a couple of questions:

1. What is the acceptable nature of the Israelite monarchy?
2. Who can suitably serve as king?

As demonstrated in the Book of Judges, the loose confederation of Israelite tribes focused on the priesthood and the tabernacle at Shiloh proved to be an unsuccessful model, as the nation continued to repeat the cycle of idolatry, judgment, repentance, and deliverance. Eventually Samuel, who disdained the idea of a king, saw the monarchy as necessary and followed God's leadership in establishing it.

God's plan and desire was that there would always be a close relationship between the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of God. Perhaps the hardest question was this: How was the human king to relate to the divine king (God)?¹

As Bill T. Arnold writes,

The real king was the deity, while the human king was just a representative or viceroy. The human king was chosen by the deity to fulfill his wishes in the human kingdom. The kingship of Saul was

thus limited as a conditional appointment or covenant. As long as he served under the inspiration of the spirit of God and as long as he avoided violation of the ancient tribal legal traditions, he would serve as Yahweh's viceregent.²

While the shift to the monarchy contained many sociological changes, the Book of 1 Samuel is most concerned with the theological significance of this change. Here are some of the theological themes found in 1 Samuel:

1. **Israel's belief in an ideal anointed leader**—this gradually emerges as the holy place (ark of the covenant/tabernacle), and the priesthood are failing to fulfill their responsibilities. The result will be the emerging concept of a “Messiah,” with David serving as a prototype.
2. **The use and abuse of power**—this is evidenced in people such as the priest Eli and his sons, Samuel, Saul, David, Nabal, etc. 1 Samuel shows the consequences of power that is used properly versus authority that is abused.
3. **The nature of confession and repentance**—this is revealed as the prophet Samuel condemns Eli's wicked priesthood, and his later call to the nation to repent at Mizpah (1 Sam. 7). Saul displays insincere repentance as he reluctantly admits his poor choices in 1 Samuel 15, where his words of contrition are self-serving. In essence Saul confessed, but he never moves to the needed repentance.³

The Book of 1 Samuel in Our Day

Monarchy for Israel becomes a reality in 1 Samuel. Their desire for a king was not inappropriate, in and of itself. The issue was that they wanted, “a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles” (1 Sam. 8:20). Their sin was their willingness to trade their faith in the God who had always led them, protected them, and provided for them, for the protection and power of a human monarch and military leader.⁴

As evidenced in the life of Saul (and later in the life of David), human leaders come with human frailties and the propensity to make foolish and selfish decisions. It is the same in the world today. People seek leaders who

will protect them and provide for them, but the quality of the character found in these leaders is often lacking. Perhaps one of the great lessons from a study of 1 Samuel is the need to place our greatest loyalty, trust, and allegiance in the God who loves us and gave his Son for us (John 3:16).

Regardless of our vocation, we are also called to be leaders and ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are to be leaders in our families, with our friends, in our churches, and in our communities. For each of these roles we need to develop a godly character that matches our assignment. People are looking for leaders with selfless character and integrity. Demonstrating such qualities can point them to the only crown that matters.

Note: Since the time of the first release of these materials includes the Easter holiday, an Easter lesson is included to meet the needs of churches who wish to have an emphasis on Easter at this time.

**CHARACTER AND THE CROWN
A STUDY OF 1 SAMUEL**

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Lesson 5	A Rash Decision and a Stinging Rebuke	1 Samuel 13:1–14
Lesson 6	Obedience is Better than Sacrifice	1 Samuel 15
Lesson 7	The Lord Looks at the Heart	1 Samuel 16
Lesson 8	Faith to Face a Giant	1 Samuel 17:1–11, 26–32, 38–51
Lesson 9	The Bitter Root of Jealousy	1 Samuel 18:1–16; 19:1–10
Lesson 10	The Best of Friends	1 Samuel 20:1–17, 30–42
Lesson 11	Extending Grace to an Enemy	1 Samuel 24
Lesson 12	A Foolish Man and a Wise Woman	1 Samuel 25:1–34
Lesson 13	A Sad Ending	1 Samuel 28:3–20; 31:1–6
Easter Lesson	I Have Seen the Lord!	John 20:1–18

Additional Resources for Studying *Character and the Crown* (A Study of 1 Samuel)⁵

- Bill T. Arnold. "1 & 2 Samuel." *The NIV Application Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003.
- Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary—Abridged Edition: Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994.
- Joyce Baldwin. *1 and 2 Samuel*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988.
- Bruce C. Birch. "1 and 2 Samuel." *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Volume II. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Walter Brueggemann. *First and Second Samuel*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990.
- Tony W. Cartledge. *1 & 2 Samuel*. Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, Georgia: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2001.
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- Ralph W. Klein. *1 Samuel*. Word Biblical Commentary. Volume 10. Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1983.
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- Ben F. Philbeck, Jr. "1 and 2 Samuel." *The Broadman Bible Commentary*. Volume 3. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1970.
- Spiros Zodhiates and Warren Baker. *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible, New International Version*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996.

Notes

1. Bill T. Arnold, "1 & 2 Samuel," *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003), 32–33.
2. *Ibid.*, 33.
3. *Ibid.*, 35–40.
4. Kenneth L. Barger and John R. Kohlenberger III, "1 Samuel," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Abridged Edition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 379.
5. Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writers or BAPTISTWAY PRESS® with all of its comments.

lesson 1

A Desperate Plea from a Faithful Follower

MAIN IDEA

Hannah made a desperate plea to God and fulfilled her vow.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

What do you desperately need from God?

STUDY AIM

To trust God to meet my desperate needs.

QUICK READ

God loves us and wants what is best for us. When we cry out to him, he hears us. Regardless of whether he grants our requests, he is worthy of our trust and faithfulness.



Introduction

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm first depicted the *Cinderella* story that later became a Disney classic. It told of the father of a beautiful young girl named Cinderella, whose mother, from her deathbed, encouraged the teen maiden to remain good. When Cinderella's father remarried, two stepdaughters entered the family. Their evil hearts led the wicked stepsisters to mistreat Cinderella.

With the help of their mother, the two rivals stripped Cinderella of her beautiful clothes, putting her in a gray servant's smock. They forced her to do all the chores while mocking her incessantly. Thankfully, the story did not end there. Birds prepared a beautiful golden dress and matching slippers for Cinderella. She went to a festival at the palace and captured the heart of the prince. After much searching, the prince found his true love when Cinderella's foot perfectly fit the slipper she had lost at the festival.

How do we respond when our rivals speak and act unkindly toward us? In this lesson, Hannah faced a similar challenge. Like Cinderella, she remained focused on what was good and continued to worship God. Instead of seeking revenge or attacking her accuser, Hannah pleaded with God. He heard her cry and came to her aid. God hears our cries too. He loves us and wants what is best for us.

The Book of Judges ends just as the events of 1 Samuel begin (with the events in the Book of Ruth taking place during the time of the Judges). The final verse of Judges sets the tone for what follows in 1 Samuel: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit" (Judges 21:25). The events that unfold in the opening chapters of 1 Samuel occurred in a time where faithful devotion to God was scarce among the Israelites. Most of society did as they saw fit. They acted with little or no concern for God. As in the time of Noah (Genesis 6:8), God found and blessed those who remained faithful. God uses his faithful servants, especially in times when immorality abounds.¹

1 Samuel 1

1 There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. **2** He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

3 Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. **4** Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. **5** But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. **6** And because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. **7** This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. **8** Elkanah her husband would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

9 Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. **10** In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. **11** And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

12 As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. **13** Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk **14** and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine."

15 "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. **16** Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

17 Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

18 She said, “May your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

19 Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. **20** So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, “Because I asked the LORD for him.”

21 When the man Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vow, **22** Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, “After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always.”

23 “Do what seems best to you,” Elkanah her husband told her. “Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the LORD make good his word.” So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

24 After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. **25** When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, **26** and she said to him, “As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. **27** I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. **28** So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.” And he worshiped the LORD there.

Faithful in Marriage (1:1–8)

The Book of 1 Samuel begins by introducing us to Elkanah, a man whose name was a compound of *el*, the general term for God, and the verb *qanah*, which means “to create or acquire.” Thus, his name was a constant reminder that God was the great Creator and provider for Elkanah, his family, and his people. The opening verses of 1 Samuel list four generations of Elkanah’s lineage, which may suggest prestigious heritage. (1 Chronicles 6:26–27 and 33–34 also mention his ancestry, further indicating that Elkanah, and

Samuel after him, were from the Levitical tribe and that Elkanah was a leader in worship in the tabernacle.)

Unlike modern customs in the Western hemisphere, Elkanah was married to two wives: Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah, whose name means *grace*, had no children. Much like Sarai (Gen. 11:30), Rebekah (Gen. 25:21), and Rachel (Gen. 29:31) before her, Hannah felt extreme disgrace because of her inability to conceive. The severity of the stigma of infertility was much harsher in the ancient world, where women rarely worked outside of the home. For many women in ancient Israel, the ability to bear children was a sign of significance and contribution to her spouse and the family lineage.

The harsh treatment by Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, intensified Hannah's pain. While it was painful enough to watch as "Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none" (v. 2), it was even more excruciating as Peninnah "kept provoking her in order to irritate her" (v. 6). According to verse seven, the venomous taunting continued for years.

Hannah was deeply wounded and felt like a failure. She wept and was often so depressed she went without eating (v. 7). Stop and consider a time when you grieved with such intensity that it affected your ability to eat, sleep, or care for yourself.

Despite her intense pain, notice Hannah's devout faithfulness and loyalty in her marriage. The text does not suggest that Hannah lashed out at Elkanah, or even at Peninnah. In fact, Elkanah loved Hannah deeply (v. 5), and even tried to console her by giving her an extra portion of food (v. 5) and reminding her of his endearing love and devotion (v. 8).

When your spouse is going through troubled times, how do you respond? Consider how you can faithfully demonstrate love to those in your family. Sometimes, a small gift and kind words go a long way in helping someone cope with a challenging situation.

Faithful in Misery (1:9–18)

Hannah was miserable. Not only was she crying and without an appetite, but she also had "bitterness of soul" (v. 10). The word translated *bitterness* is the Hebrew word *mar*. It speaks of something that has soured. Hence, it was

The Nazirite Vow

The Nazirite Vow that Hannah made on behalf of Samuel was a covenant of consecration and commitment. Numbers 6 explains such a vow as the outward expression of behavioral changes, which reflected an inward devotion to God. These included abstaining from wine (even grapes/raisins), vinegar, or other strong drink; avoiding any cutting of the hair on the face or head; and ceasing to go near a dead body. These actions seem odd to us today, but in ancient times, they demonstrated a deep commitment to God. How do you outwardly demonstrate your commitment to God?

not that Hannah was angry with Elkanah or Peninnah, but that the circumstances of being barren wounded her deeply. However, notice her response: she went to God in prayer. In her sorrow and misery, she turned to the Lord for aid.

In verse eleven, Hannah acknowledged God as the “LORD Almighty” (or literally “Yahweh of hosts”). This divine name speaks of the infinite power at God’s disposal. He is the sovereign God of all of creation. There is nothing beyond his ability to provide for his people. Hannah confessed her misery to God. She pleaded with him to remember her, and to demonstrate his love by providing her with a son. Should God answer her plea, Hannah made a conditional covenant. She vowed to dedicate her son to God’s service through a special Nazirite oath, outwardly symbolized by no razor ever cutting his hair.

When misery comes your way, where do you turn? God is faithful. Consider 1 Corinthians 1:9: “God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.” We serve a faithful God. He is always there for us—in both the joyous and stressful times of life. He hears our cries and is eager to come to our aid when we recognize our dependence on him. When miserable things happen, do you go to God or fall away from him? He is a God whose arms are open wide, ever-ready to embrace you.

As Hannah prayed, she did so silently and from her heart, but she still moved her mouth in an expression of her prayer to God. Eli, the priest, witnessed her behavior and thought she was intoxicated. Eli was not in tune

with God in the same way as Hannah. She was not drunk; she was “. . .praying here out of [her] great anguish and grief” (v. 16). As he came to understand the circumstances, Eli blessed her, and Hannah returned home.

Notice the change in Hannah after having trusted God with her misery. According to verse eighteen, she went her way, ate, and was no longer downcast. God did not grant her request immediately, but he gave her peace about the situation, regardless of the outcome. Can you trust God regardless of the outcome? When you do, you will find peace and contentment, knowing that his will is best.

Faithful in Motherhood (1 Samuel 1:19–28)

When Hannah relinquished control over her troubles to God, he elected to grant her request. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son, whom she named Samuel. Although theologians differ in the exact correlation, the baby’s name is strikingly similar to the Hebrew verb *shama*, which means *to listen deeply*. Thus, Hannah applauded God, not primarily because he gave her a son, but more so because God had heard her cry and met her in her time of distress. He listened to her, and he is always available to hear your cries as well.

Hannah nursed Samuel until it was time for her to wean him. Then (probably between the age of two or three years), Hannah followed through with her vow. She took Samuel, along with the provisions for sacrifice, and presented him to Eli. She told Eli, “For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord” (v.28).

In many Protestant churches today, parents dedicate their children to God while the children are young. Although we do not give our children to our pastors to raise (as Hannah did), we express our desire for the lives of our children to be devoted to the Lord. It might seem unthinkable for us to give up our children, especially at such a young age. However, regardless of the age of one’s children, it is important for us to demonstrate faithfulness to God through the way we raise them, to teach them about the Lord, and to model for them a God-honoring life. Notice that just as Samuel’s parents had faithfully worshiped God (v. 3, 7, 19, and 22), the chapter ends

When God Does Not Do What You Ask

In Hannah's situation, God heard her cry and fulfilled her request. However, God does not always respond in this way. When God denies a request, it may cause you to question his concern for you. However, in these crises of faith, it's vital to turn to God for strength rather than away from God in frustration. Here are some suggestions to consider whenever disappointment comes when God does not do what you ask.

- God has a better perspective. God knows all things past, present, and future. He even knows the condition of the heart and the motivation of all people. His perspective is far wiser and greater than our limited human perception.
- We live in a broken world. Sin exists and sinful people fill this world. The free will of humanity accounts for much of the wrongdoing and suffering that exists.
- God's timing is best. What may at times appear to be a "No" from God may simply be a "Not now." We need to realize God knows the most opportune timeframe, and he acts in the best way, which is not always right away.
- God is the only true source of fulfillment and faithfulness. Everything and everyone in this world will, at one time or another, prove unfaithful. Our fulfillment, significance, and mission center on our relationship with the Lord.
- God's plan is eternal. Although we may wish for things in this temporal world, God's ultimate plan is for our eternal best with him in heaven.

with this young toddler also worshiping God (v. 28). The examples we set as fathers and mothers affect the lives of our children for generations to come (Exodus 20:6).

Implications and Actions

God calls us to be faithful in our relationships. Following Hannah's example, we strive for loyalty in marriage and parenting in spite of any misery we may

