

# 1 Samuel 2:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.

## Analysis

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The narrator's characterization of Eli's sons is devastating: 'sons of Belial' indicates complete worthlessness and wickedness. More shocking: 'they knew not the LORD.' These are priests, officiating at Israel's central sanctuary, yet they have no personal relationship with the God they supposedly serve. The Hebrew *yada'* (to know) implies intimate, experiential knowledge - they performed religious duties without genuine faith. Institutional position provides no substitute for personal covenant relationship. Many who serve in religious roles may be equally devoid of true spiritual knowledge.

## Historical Context

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The title 'sons of Belial' appears throughout the Old Testament for thoroughly wicked individuals (Deuteronomy 13:13; Judges 19:22; 1 Kings 21:10). Its use for priests at the central sanctuary represents the ultimate indictment of institutional corruption.

## Related Passages

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. How can people be deeply involved in religious activity while not truly knowing God?
2. What is the difference between religious performance and genuine relationship with God?

## Interlinear Text

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Now the sons	of Eli	Now the sons	of Belial	they knew
H1121	H5941	H1121	H1100	H3045

אֲתָּה יְדַעַּת לֹא בְּלֹא עַל יְהוָה:  
not the LORD

H3068

## Additional Cross-References

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**Jeremiah 2:8** (References Lord): The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

**2 Corinthians 6:15** (Parallel theme): And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

**Judges 2:10** (References Lord): And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

**Romans 1:21** (Parallel theme): Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

**John 16:3** (Parallel theme): And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

**John 8:55** (Parallel theme): Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

**John 17:3** (Parallel theme): And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

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