



Are You A Fear-Driven Parent?

Knowing when to protect our children and knowing when to let them guard themselves can be difficult. What's harder is identifying fear-driven parenting that can destroy trust in the relationship between parent and child. Fear-based parenting can also prevent us from allowing our children to make mistakes and grow from them. My job, and yours, is to guide, nurture, and raise self-disciplined children who know how to make good decisions. It's not our duty to smother, control, or overprotect them. While some fears are valid and require parental action, others are not justified and need to be trusted to God's care. Until you and I seek and trust the guidance of God and His counsel, we won't be able to discern between the two. Our decisions will be based on fear instead of faith. When this happens, the results can be dire.

My eldest, Mitch, is a born leader with his own ideas about things. Although submission is hard for him, he had always been respectful and obedient to our wishes as his parents. Then he turned eighteen and got a tattoo.

What did his dad and I do? We did what most parents do. We panicked and responded in fear. I was worried that a tattoo would prevent him from getting a good job. I was concerned what others would think. I was anxious about where he got the tattoo and if the equipment was sanitary enough. I was terribly disappointed and heartbroken so I condemned and judged his decision. In turn, Mitch packed his clothes and left home, taking my heart with him.

For two weeks I didn't know where he was or who he was with. His dad and I left messages on his cell phone demanding that he return our calls, but he never did. Overwhelmed with fear, I turned to prayer. I was desperate for God's wisdom and guidance. My eyes were opened as I read, "Fathers [or mothers] do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

I had overreacted in fear. My disapproval and accusations only infuriated my adult son and caused him to flee. It was fear that caused me to mistrust and misjudge the situation. Fear-driven parenting does just that. It can also drive a child down the path we are so fearfully trying to avoid. This is not God's plan.

To prevent fear-driven parenting, you and I must examine our fears before we act. We should evaluate our concerns with reasoning. To do so, ask yourself these three questions:

1. Will my child's decision bring harm to him/her or others?
2. Will my child's actions affect him/her spiritually?
3. Is the child's behavior, goal, or desire age appropriate?

If our concerns cannot be validated we need to cast our concerns on God and trust Him with the outcome. This counsel is not my own. It comes from Peter. "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). This is the way we parent by faith instead of by fear.

Sure, the child may end up stepping into a pit as a result of his choice, but allowing the teen to step in the pit is the only way he'll learn to avoid it in the future.

My son, who I thought was made in my own image, actually had dreams and a God-given purpose of his own. I had to let go of my own dreams, expectations, and fears and accept him as he was, tattoo and all. Once again, I phoned Mitch. This time it was to ask his forgiveness. When the machine answered, I poured out my heart. "Mitch. It's Mom. I love you. Will you forgive me?" Mitch picked up the phone and the restoration of our relationship began.

Fear-driven parenting is never a good thing. Our children will make mistakes just as we do. The key is letting our children know we have faith in them even after they've made a mistake or a decision we don't agree with.

The surest way to defuse fear is by living according to God's plan. Take note of this promise. "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain" (Psalms 127:1). God becomes the Master-builder of our home when we trust Him to do what we can't. He's the only builder who guarantees His work.

This confidence in God draws us away from our own excessive works and anxious cares. Realizing our fragile state and our inability to secure the family by our own accomplishments shouldn't cause fear. It should point us toward the Faithful One who is able to keep our family. God bestows His blessing on those who trust Him and seek His favor and guidance. What is that blessing? It's a household of faith built and kept by God.

Micca Campbell helps women live carefree in God's care. As a national speaker and author, Micca has touched and transformed the lives of thousands across the US. For more information visit www.miccacampbell.com