

Parenting Fearful Children | the realities of fear

I. What is fear?

- [dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) defines fear as “*an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat.*”

II. Emotions are chemical responses to stimuli that can influence our minds.

- Our emotions are a unique bridge between the physical and the spiritual. But we make the choices we make because we believe what we believe.
- If you choose to believe that faith is some nebulous, spiritual concept that has no place in the real world, you're missing out on the foundational, most seminal reality in the human life.

III. Some chemical responses *can* be interpreted as fear.

IV. However, too often we call things fear which are not. Adrenaline responses and wisdom are not fear. Fear is the meaning we cram into the situation through our interpretation.

- The fact that you use oven mitts to remove something from your oven doesn't mean you're afraid of it. You know the inherent danger, and you make wise provision for it.
- This goes for nearly all rational expressions of fear.

V. Fear, then, is the understanding and interpretation of danger. It can be rational or irrational.

- Perceived danger may not actually be dangerous, and real danger is dangerous regardless of what you think.
- Fear is a question of danger, but — like everything else — we need to make sure God is allowed to dictate what is and what is not dangerous.
- It's really a question of degrees of comparison. But, we absolutely must never subtract God from the equation.
 - The Apostle Paul was never so safe as when he was obeying God. Sure, he was shipwrecked, and bitten by a poisonous snake, and stoned and left for dead, and beaten, and more.
 - But Jonah ran from God's command because he was afraid of the dangerous Ninevites. But he was infinitely safer in the heart of that wicked city than he was running from God.
 - Acts 5:29, in the midst of angry men who wanted to kill him, Peter said, “*We must obey God rather than men.*” And he was beaten for it.
 - But he was far safer having experienced that than having disobeyed God by refusing to preach the Gospel.
 - So, what is real danger?

VI. But just like everything else in life, we must allow God's Word to define what is truly dangerous.

- The ability to correctly determine whether something is legitimately dangerous requires accurate information about God, His will for my life, and my own sinful nature.

VII. It is always safest to obey God and always dangerous to disobey God.

- There is no need to fear sharing the gospel in a public school. There is no reason to be afraid of a bully when you are doing right. There is no reason to be anxious over the state of our nation if you are living a life pleasing to God.
- The Lord is sovereignly in control of all things and is actively working in them all to glorify Himself and benefit you.

VIII. Therefore, in order to correctly identify danger, we must draw our thinking and our children's back to the mind of God.**IX. But even when we and our kids have the right information, fear is a question of trust**

- If I'm afraid, it's because I don't trust that I'll be "safe" in the situation. I've concluded that the situation is too dangerous for me to escape intact. And I've likely interpreted "dangerous" to mean uncomfortable for me.
- But is that true? How can I know for sure?
- This is why this concept is so hugely important for you to understand. Fear and anxiety are rampant in our world. Your kids struggle with it. They need you to help them focus their minds on Christ.
- There is good, Christ-honoring fear. We'll talk about that next time.
- But there is also sinful fear. We'll discuss that the time after.

X. When it comes to fear, we must understand that the best thing we can do for our kids is bring them back to a correct understanding of themselves and God. Only then can they learn to respond correctly to the fear in their hearts.

- So, why was your child hiding under his bed? He believed the situation he was in was dangerous. It may have been. It may not have been. But he didn't hide under the bed because he had an adrenaline response. He hid under the bed because he believed it was the safest thing for him to do.
- And it may have been. Or not. Our job, as parents, is to help our kids understand how they can best glorify God regardless of how they feel.
- And — let's be fair — that may have included hiding under the bed.