**In Today's World A Parent's Biggest Fear For Their Child**

   "...Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned  you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you..."  Isaiah 43:1,2

  There are many of us these days that are living in fear because of all the things that are going on around us. The economic times, the changes in weather patterns, wars and rumors of wars are just a few of the things that biblical experts expound upon because of the latter times that we live in.  And those things can cause us to operate in a spirit of fear and anxiety.
   But one of the most common fears that I come across each day is a mother's fear that something will happen to her son or a father's stressful anxiety over the poor decision making of his daughter. The fear that if we as parents don't do something to protect and/or control our child, they will end up in prison or worst than that be injured or killed. What an oppressive weight we must carry in light of that kind of circumstance. It's these fears that can cause not only chaos  in a family but unhealthy stress on a marriage.  Many times this storm develops for a parent when the child is actually an adult and off on their own.  (Or at least they are old enough that they should be out on their own.)

   So what can we do? How do I handle this out of control child (Prodigal Son/Daughter) and do the right thing? And what is the right thing? Here are five things that will help you in dealing with your troubled child:

  1.  It's not your fault (2 Kings 14:6)

  2.  Stop telling them what to do; make them decide  (Eph.6:4)

  3.  Stay unified in all decisions even if divorced  (Prov. 10:17)

   4.  Let sin run its course (Prov.19:21) and learn to TRUST God with your child (Luke 11:11-13; John 14:1)

 5. What is it God that you are trying to teach me? (Ps.25:4-7)

   First, lets look at the fact that God created us all with a free will and that we must all make our own choices in life no matter what has happened to us in our past. The choices that our children make once they are of age are based on their desires and motives in life. We can shape that to some degree when they are young but their bad choices are not your fault.  Jesus picked twelve disciples and one of them turned on Him.  There is sin in the world and it can cause our children to make poor choices. So the fact that you child is struggling with very poor decision making is not your fault.

Second, at some point you have to stop telling them what to do and start sharing with them what **you** are willing to do.  If they are going to continue in a life style that is wrong and harmful, that is their choice and you really can't control that. What you can control is what you are willing to do and what Godly boundaries you are willing to set.  Let the child make a choice and let the consequences of that choice be the result of their decision.  A married couple can only really control their domain; their home. Set boundaries about what is acceptable in your home. You can control that.

Third, whatever decisions you may arrive at for dealing with your rebellious child, you need to make sure you are unified in that decision.  If you can't agree on it then don't do anything, wait and pray about it, sleep on it and then act only when you are together. This can even be applied to a divorced couple dealing with their child. Don't let the wrong choices of a child destroy or cause strife in your marriage or parenting relationship. Also don't let the child manipulate the outcome by playing mom against  dad. Next to finances, I see more marital issues arise out of the strife caused by our children than any other problems.

Fourth, one of the hardest things we have to learn to do in trusting God with our children is to *"****let sin run its course****."* If your adult child is not willing to look for help, then we really have no recourse other than to let them go. Just as the father did in the prodigal son story, so too do we need to let out child go. Our role in their life at that point is to become prayer warriors on their behalf. The bible tells us that the prayers of a righteous man availeth much. I believe that.

Finally and most critically, we need to ask the hard question, "God what is it that I'm to learn from this experience?  What are you trying to show me and teach me in the middle of this storm?" Hebrews 12:7 says, "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons..." In God's sovereignty nothing happens by chance and He is in control! The truth is found in Corinthians 10:13 where Paul writes, "...God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted(tested) beyond what you can bear..."

  So when the storms of trials come your way, what God the Father may be teaching you is a whole new level of ***Trusting Him in all your ways.*** Even when the mountains of circumstances around you speak fear and doubt about your child's well being, God would say, ***"Fear Not"!***

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