



## A Mom's Greatest Fear

*The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?  
The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?  
Psalm 27:1*

A father's greatest fear is usually that he won't be able to provide for his family. A mom's greatest fear is typically that something will happen to one of her children. Fear is a funny thing. It sometimes provides healthy caution, but more times than not it seems to produce undue stress and anxiety regarding things over which we have little to no control.

The Bible has a lot to say about fear. According to one Bible text search, "fear not," or the equivalent to that, is said 365 times. Let's see, how many days of the year are there? Well, that means we have a verse to hang on to every day of the year. Here are some of my favorite verses on fear:

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."  
(Isaiah 41:10)

"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; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." (Isaiah 43:1-3)

One day I was fretting over having allowed one of my children to go to the lake with another family. I totally trust this other family, and I had no real reasons to feel anxious, but this gnawing feeling of what-if seemed to be my constant companion. I kept having little flashes of her getting injured or worse. I went to Art and asked if by any chance he was having these same feelings. He simply said no.

I couldn't help but dig a little deeper and question him further. "You mean, you haven't thought about any what-if scenarios regarding our daughter's safety today?" "No, I really haven't," he calmly replied.

"You've got to be kidding," I said, not believing that he could go a whole afternoon and never have just one of my same fearful thoughts. My curiosity piqued, I just had to ask more questions. "Do you ever get scared when the kids ride in cars with other people? I mean, do you ever see them ride off and lift up urgent pleas for their safety? Or what about when the boys went on that missions trip this summer? Were your senses on high alert until they were once again safe under our roof? What about when the girls flew to see their grandmother this

summer? Did any fearful thoughts of past plane crashes flash through your mind? What about all the times I fly to speaking engagements? Are you fearful for my safety?" He simply said, "Of course I want you all to be safe, and of course I pray for that. But afraid? No, I can't say I'm afraid."

Suddenly, a profound thought hit me. I think this is why I am so mentally spent by the end of the day. My mind is constantly on the go where my kids are concerned. Most things are small, everyday concerns, such as: Did they brush their teeth? Are they cold? Did they have enough breakfast? Did they study their spelling words? But then I have flashes of fear that pierce my heart and make my pulse quicken. Mostly this happens when I hear of bad things happening to other children. A terrible car accident, a brain tumor, a heart defect, a drowning, a child choking—this list of what-if's goes on and on. No wonder I'm so tired!

I studied my husband quizzically and wondered how he could live above the fear of possible tragedy. Then the perfect analogy came to me to help him understand how exhausting these fears can be. "Honey, I think about the well-being of our kids and ponder their health and safety as much as you think about sex! Does that help shed light on how much this consumes my mental energy?" He just smiled and shook his head.

It's okay for us moms to be protective over our children and watch out for their well-being. That's one of the most important aspects of our job. But it's not okay for the fear of the unknown to paralyze us and stifle our kids in the process. The reality is that God has assigned a certain number of days to our children, and nothing we do or don't do will add to that number. "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (Matthew 6:27).

I do not speak of this topic lightly. I know that bad things really do sometimes happen to children. When I was 18 years old, my mom gave birth to my beautiful sister, Haley. Because of our vast age difference, she was more like my child than my sister. I loved Haley so deeply and completely. But tragedy struck when she was only 16 months old. She survived a liver transplant, but complications set in during a routine follow-up surgery. Despite all our pleas for the Lord to spare her, His answer was no. Haley passed away.

I was certain that after my family walked through a tragedy of this magnitude it could never happen to us again. But when my Ashley was only six weeks old, she became gravely ill. My husband and I heard words from a doctor that no parent ever wants to hear: "We aren't sure she can make it through the surgery. You have five minutes to tell her goodbye." Though my voice was paralyzed and silent, my soul screamed out, "Nooooo, You cannot take her. I will not let You take her." How do you tell a lifetime of dreams all wrapped up in one child goodbye?

As they wheeled her away, I collapsed into my husband's arms. He gently led me out to the parking lot of the hospital. Outside, he cupped my face in his hands and asked me who Ashley really belonged to. Whose child is she really? With each of his questions, I kept saying she was my child. Through his own tears, he kept asking these same questions until, finally, I answered him with the truth. "She is God's child."

"That's right. She is God's child. He gave her to us, and if He chooses, He might take her. But whether He leaves or takes her, we have to stand here today and say we love Him no matter what. We're not saying we love what He might allow to happen, but we must love God for who He is, not what He does." I knew Art was right, but I could not stand the thought of losing my daughter.

At the same time, I couldn't stand the thought of letting my soul become vulnerable to walking away from God if His answer was no. I had walked away from God when we lost Haley, and it was the darkest time of my life. I could not do that again.

So in the middle of our tears and pain, Art and I mentally lifted up our daughter and released her back to God. Though my tears did not cease, the panic in my heart did. I felt the most amazing peace wash over me and fill up every hurting crevice in my soul.

Ashley's crisis ended differently than Haley's. God's answer was to leave her with us and she was healed. Why did God spare Ashley and take Haley? I'll never know. But the motherhood lesson I learned that day in the parking lot will stay with me forever.

When I fear for my children, I have to relive this exercise. I have to go back to that parking lot and lift my children up to God. I have to state that they are His first and foremost. I have to proclaim my love for God no matter what. Yes, I ask for them to be kept safe. Yes, I believe in the power and provision of prayer. But, I have to realize that I cannot control my children's safety. Not by my prayers, not by my worries, and certainly not by my fears.

Maybe you have never walked through this exercise. Close your eyes and lift each of your children up to the Lord. Pray for their protection and provision. Tell God that you trust Him. But, let the deepest cry of your heart be for the courage to tell God you will love Him no matter what.

#### **Application:**

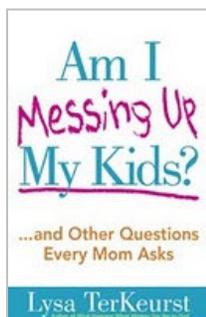
Are you allowing false expectations to appear real in your life? Are there chronic fears that Satan uses to distract you from accomplishing God's purpose for you?

Learn to recognize when fear is running away with you and don't go down that path. If you are struggling with fear, copy Psalm 27:1 on an index card and post it somewhere that is visible throughout your day. Do a word study using your Bible concordance to find other verses that speak to your heart about fear. Here's one that I really like:

In righteousness you will be established: tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear. Terror will be far removed; it will not come near you (Isaiah 54:14).

#### **Prayer:**

Dear Lord, please help me to make the right choice when fear threatens to invade my life. Help me not to react to fear, but to turn to You. Thank You, Lord, for being the stronghold of my life.



For more information on this topic, read Lysa's book, *Am I Messing Up My Kids?*

**Lysa TerKeurst** helps everyday women live an adventure of faith through following Jesus Christ. As president of Proverbs 31 Ministries, Lysa has led thousands to make their walk with God an invigorating journey. For more information, visit [www.LysaTerKeurst.com](http://www.LysaTerKeurst.com)

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