

A Different Kind Of Fear

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Have you ever stared death in the face? Anyone who has had that experience undoubtedly can also relate to the word “fear.” Just about anyone who has lived past their teens has had at least one, perhaps multiple, brushes with death; how many “close calls” have you had when you became a new and fearless teenage driver tempting fate as you put the pedal to the metal racing your friend in an adjacent lane down the highway? It seems that young people are especially easily convinced into thinking that they are somehow invulnerable to injury or death, at least until they hear of their best friend wrapping their car around a tree thereby ending their life prematurely. For some it only takes one such incident to wake them up to reality, for others, well they simply never learn. Not all brushes with death are a result of the stupidity as described above; I once had a huge Black Bear appear out of nowhere just 30 or 40 feet in front of me while on a camping trip! I was by myself at the time, and although the bear showed no interest in me, he was “way too close!” This bear was not only very large for a Black Bear, but he was also skinny, which is usually a bad combination in these situations. Generally, it is recommended to stay at least 75 yards from such animals, not 30 or 40 feet. A few more seconds of unawareness of that bear on my part, could have turned into a real bad day for me, because I was just about to set off in his direction, which would have made the encounter even closer and a surprise to both me, and the bear! Yes, fear came over me, and I felt a shot of Adrenaline, but I knew enough not to run; the bear had its eyes fixed on an extra cooler in a small clearing adjacent to the trail and had apparently knew there should be food in it, so it didn’t pay much attention to me... Thank You Lord! The bear went for the cooler, and I locked myself in my truck that was parked a few yards away at the trailhead! By the way, the cooler contained only extra ice; nevertheless, the bear immediately went for it. Many people mistakenly associate fear with being a coward; this is false! Fear, may not be a pleasant experience, but more often than not, it will keep you from doing things that may have serious consequences, it may even save your life.

The Spock Generation

Spanking a misbehaving child is a good illustration of how this works. I was a young parent through what is often referred to as the “Spock Generation.” Dr. Benjamin Spock was a pediatrician and a political activist during the 1960’s and 70’s who wrote a book entitled, “Baby and Child Care” that peaked in popularity just as I became a young parent myself; I was also a relatively new Christian. Spock’s philosophy on raising children challenged many generally accepted principles including those found in the Bible. A couple my wife and I were close to at the time, although they too were Christians, bought into Spock’s philosophy 100% as they raised their own child who was just two or three months younger than our child. As to how closely this other couple adhered to the details of Spock’s philosophy I cannot say for sure, but I do recall, they never spanked their child, thereby letting their child do anything she wanted, whenever she wanted. They never disciplined her no matter what she did! I remember they had to “childproof” their house because their daughter would continuously take things off shelves that could cause her harm; she just threw them on the floor; all the while, her parents did nothing to correct her behavior! As I recall, one of Spock’s recommendations was to talk to and reason with the child. That would work as well as me trying to reason with that bear as to why it shouldn’t eat me! One time my wife and I met this couple in a supermarket and their daughter was standing in the shopping cart taking things off the shelves while we were talking and putting them in the cart. The mother didn’t say a word to the child but behind her daughters back, simply put the things back where they were taken from, making no attempt to stop her. This went on for over five minutes when as the child reached for another item, I hit the edge of the shopping cart startling the child and said NO! The child immediately started crying and her mother, startled me

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by quickly cuddled her daughter saying, “did that *mean man* scare you!” I assume that according to Spock, it was a “NO-No” to even raise your voice when a child misbehaved! For the record, that child went on to a life of drug use and was in jail at least twice that I know of... so much for the “Spock Philosophy.” Of course, there were other contributing factors to that outcome, but I am sure the “Spock Philosophy” was a huge contributing factor as the child never learned about accountability for her actions.

The Bible teaches the following: **Proverbs 13:24 (NKJV)** ²⁴ He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly. **Proverbs 22:6 (NKJV)** ⁶ Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it. **Proverbs 22:15 (NKJV)** ¹⁵ Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

Spanking is not child abuse!

I have heard many people equate *spanking* with child abuse! Is that what the Bible is advocating... of course not! In actuality the fear of the spanking eventually becomes more effective than the spanking itself, even after just a few actual spankings. Ironically, it seems that people spend more time training and disciplining their cats and dogs than their children even though the Bible gives clear teaching concerning our children, and how important disciplining them really is! For example, you get a young puppy and you are training it to go outside to “take care of business.” The first few times you “catch your dog in the act,” in the living room, you shout a stern warning... NO as you rush to carry it outside! If that proves ineffective, a rolled up newspaper and a quick strike to their backside will get their attention. Does the rolled up newspaper injure the animal... of course not, but it does instill fear in them, which in this case, is the goal. Dogs and cats both respond quickly to loud noises, (just like when I hit the edge of the shopping cart scaring my friend’s daughter) especially when there is even the slightest physical contact involved. Therefore, why do you think God gave young children soft and tender *bottoms*? It would take an excessive amount of force to cause injury to a child by spanking their bottom! Yes-it stings, but there is no actual injury. However, children do tend to remember that intense stinging sensation. When my children were young, unlike our friends, our house was not “childproofed” except for harmful items or chemicals. My wife collected expensive crystal and Hummel figurines back then, yet our children never touched them! They might take a close look at a new addition to the collection, but they never touched them... we trained them to look but not touch. Sometimes that involved a slap on their hand with a stern warning, but that usually only happened once, and no, we didn’t break their hand in the process! Most of the time, an ominous sounding, “Don’t touch or you’ll get a spanking,” was all it took to stop their hand from making contact with anything they were not supposed to touch.

Fear can be our Friend

So far, we have explored two types of fear, fear brought about by knowledge, and fear brought about by experience, but how are these related; and how do they play into our relationship with God? In the first illustration involving the bear encounter, the fear I experienced was based entirely on what I had heard or learned about bears. I was never previously confronted or attacked by a bear; but I had learned about the possible results of such an encounter from other people’s experiences and warnings. I knew that I stood little chance of coming out on top if that bear decided to make a meal out of me. The fear I experienced was based

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solely on knowledge, not experience. Therefore, in this illustration, knowledge had a direct affect on the outcome without me experiencing the various possibilities of a bear encounter. The second illustration involving how spanking a young child can have a positive effect on them throughout their lives illustrates how a bad or painful experience can have the same result. To recap, this all illustrates that fear simply based on knowledge, can prepare you for situations that may arise thus avoiding them, likewise, a negative experience resulting in physical or emotional pain such as being spanked as a child, will help you avoid situations that may possibly result in *much more serious* physical and emotional pain in the future. The bottom line in these illustrations is that they both resulted in respect, even though the respect came about through different means and with different timing. The fear a child has of a spanking, is a result of defiance, thereby resulting in physical pain that the child now associates with disobedience. The question now is, "Which would you prefer?" Many people have a distorted image of the character of God. One of the dominant impressions people have is that God is an angry disciplinarian just waiting for an opportunity to put us in our place for breaking His rules. In actuality God is madly in love with all of us and does not want to see harm come to any of us! The Bible teaches that God has our lives all planned out even before we were born, yet He doesn't force us to follow His plan!

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 (NKJV) ¹⁵ "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, ¹⁶ in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong *your* days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; ²⁰ that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

The passage above shows that God sees the beginning and the end; He knows what the results of our actions will be before they even come to our minds. God is constantly guiding us towards the path that is congruent for the fulfillment of His plan for us; in other words, what is best for us. Do you have respect for God's Word? Do you "fear God?" Does your respect for God come from heeding the warnings and experiences of others depicted in God's Word that came before you, or does your respect for God only come after the fact when you knowingly go against God's warnings in His Word and then pay the consequences of your actions? If I had ignored the knowledge I gained from others concerning bear encounters, my experience during my bear encounter may have been much different. Likewise, had I ignored the teachings in the Bible concerning raising and disciplining children, my parental experience could have been much different, and my children could have turned out much different, lacking respect for others and more importantly lacking respect for God.

¹⁹ **I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life...** Read and Heed God's Word to see God's plan for your life, and how to avoid many disappointments and dangers; not only for you, but your family as well.