

Developing a Sense of Security

When I was in my twenties I did a little bit of rock climbing and bouldering. Bouldering is rock climbing at low heights typically without gear. I wasn't any good at it, but it was a fun sport to dabble in. Rock climbing is risky business. You don't have to get very high off the ground before you run the risk of getting seriously injured. While some risks are foolish and unnecessary, some are acceptable. For instance, you drive your car all the time full-well knowing that people get hurt in car wrecks all the time. Climbers take risks, but they try to take risks that are acceptable. Just as you may climb a 12 foot ladder without a helmet or rope, a climber may scale a 12 foot wall without a rope or helmet.

A person who scales a 100 foot sheer face cliff without a rope is foolish. On the other side of the issue, when a person is too scared to stand on a chair to change a light bulb, that doesn't seem quite right either. One person is over confident, and the other person is crippled by fear.

When it comes to parenting, I want my kids to be cautious risk takers. They need to grow into bold men and women of faith who are willing to take chances. It's not like I want them to participate in the running of the bulls, but I want them to make hard choices for God, share their faith with others, or even move to a foreign country for God. They need to have daring courage. They need guts.

They also need wisdom. I don't want them to run off into harm without weighing the risk. I don't want them to be impulsive or to jump at every opportunity that comes along just because it is exciting or novel. Some risks are worth taking and some are not. *Ultimately, they need to be led by God and not just a sense of adventure.*

There is a balance. Much of that balance is affected by their sense of security. In climbing, insecurity can keep you from climbing a ladder, or it can make you get into a dangerous situation because you are trying to prove yourself to others. In life insecurity can make you too scared to share your faith. It can also make you sign up for a mission trip that you are not equipped for because you have something to prove, or render you ineffective in building healthy, authentic relationships in the church because you are afraid of being open and vulnerable.

So how is that sense of security established in our kids?

1. Training

In rock climbing a climber is going to take risks that he feels prepared to take. Different climbs have different ratings, and a climber knows if he had the training and experience to do a particular climb, or if it is right at the edge of his experience. He will have confidence on any climb that his training has prepared him for. In parenting we must foresee the dangers and challenging situations that our kids will face and train them how to handle them. For example, it scary to share the gospel with someone, but it is terrifying if you are not prepared. When our kids are ten-years-old we start teaching them how to share their faith, because we want them to be able to overcome those fears and insecurities that they are bound to have.

Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

2. Support

Most of the climbing I did was bouldering and was done without ropes. If I got too high or in a precarious position I would get absolutely terrified, and rightly so. I needed something to fall back on just in case I fell. I needed a rope. For your kids to be confident they also need something (or someone) to fall back on. If they walk into an unfamiliar situation and get picked on or made fun of they need someone to turn to after the situation is over. Parents need to be there for their kids when they need their support. When parents can't be there during a difficult situation they need to be available afterward to help their kids process through how to handle the situation differently next time. When they are learning to walk toddlers need someone there to pick them up, encourage them, and cheer them on. College students need the same thing when they move from home, fail a test, or blow all their money. It's not that we need to come to their rescue in every situation, but they need to sense support, whether they are 2 or 22. If your kids know that you love them and that you are going to be there for them through thick and thin, it will give them great confidence in life.

Romans 8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

3. Encouragement

Although I never became a good climber, there were some pretty tough climbs that I conquered. I would have thought some of them were impossible if it wasn't for the example of others and their encouragement that I could do it. Kids need your encouragement. You need to be able to assess what they can do, and what they can't, and encourage them to keep stretching the boundaries of what they can do.

Hebrews 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

4. Honesty

We also need honest input into our lives. You don't want someone to tell you that you won't get hurt when you might, or that you can do it when you can't. As a 200 pounder, I sure wouldn't want someone to tell me that a 100 lb test rope would hold me. This builds a false sense of security *before* things go wrong, and a disappointment *after* things go wrong. We try to be real with our kids. If you run this race you might lose, but you might win. If you share your faith with someone you might get made fun of, but you might change their life. Let your kids know the risks of life, but help them develop the courage to take the risks that are worth taking. Be real with your kids about their faults as well. Self esteem is a great thing, but arrogance is ugly. I remember my mom putting me in my place a few times growing up. I would make fun of some other kid and she would be quick to point out that I had my own share of faults. That was good for me. It didn't crush me because I knew she was for me, but it did put me in my place.

Proverbs 24:26 An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.

As long as you live your children will look to you for these things. However, as they become adults they should look more and more to God for their security. He will become their mentor and primary support system. God loves your kids even more than you do, and as they grasp this it will build a self-confidence that is not so based in "self". This will free them up to live for God and His will, instead of for the approval of others—and that takes guts.