

Kamikaze Parenting

How Faith Trumps the Fear of Letting Go

Introduction

Sermon Series

Today is Mother's Day and I want to express my appreciation to all of the Mother's here with us. You are awesome. Whether you're just starting out – or you've been mothering for more than 50 years – God bless you. You inspire us.

This is week 7 of our Sermon Series – Kamikaze Hearts for God – How Faith and Action take us to the Edge. We have been using the terms Kamikaze Faith and Kamikaze hearts in this series using the original meaning of Kamikaze in Japanese – the word means “divine wind.” Kamikaze faith is faith that is moved by the Divine Wind of the Holy Spirit as illustrated in the dove in our picture - moving the sail boat towards the edge.



Last time we talked about how a 2 of Faith Trumps a King of Doubt – Every time. We also introduced a new definition of faith.

Faith is seeing the invisible
Hearing the inaudible
Touching the intangible
Accomplishing the impossible

Today we are going to look at Fear in Parenting – and how Faith trumps Fear.

Let's pray

As parents – we have lots of fears – and mothers have their share of fears. Some of our mother's fears are over the top. Like when our mothers tell us not to wear underwear with holes in it because we might get into an accident. Any of your mothers ever tell you that? What kind of message does that send to a kid? “Mom you don't seem to care about the injuries – just that we aren't wearing holey underwear.” When I was 16, our family car was hit head-on by an out of control garbage truck. My mom broke her nose in the accident and I rode in the ambulance with her to the hospital. As we are racing through the streets of Chicago – my mom was crying almost uncontrollably. “Is it really painful Mom?” I asked. She replied sobbing “I have a hole in my slip.”

Common Fear's in parenting

But not all a parents' fears are over the top. Most is very understandable. We

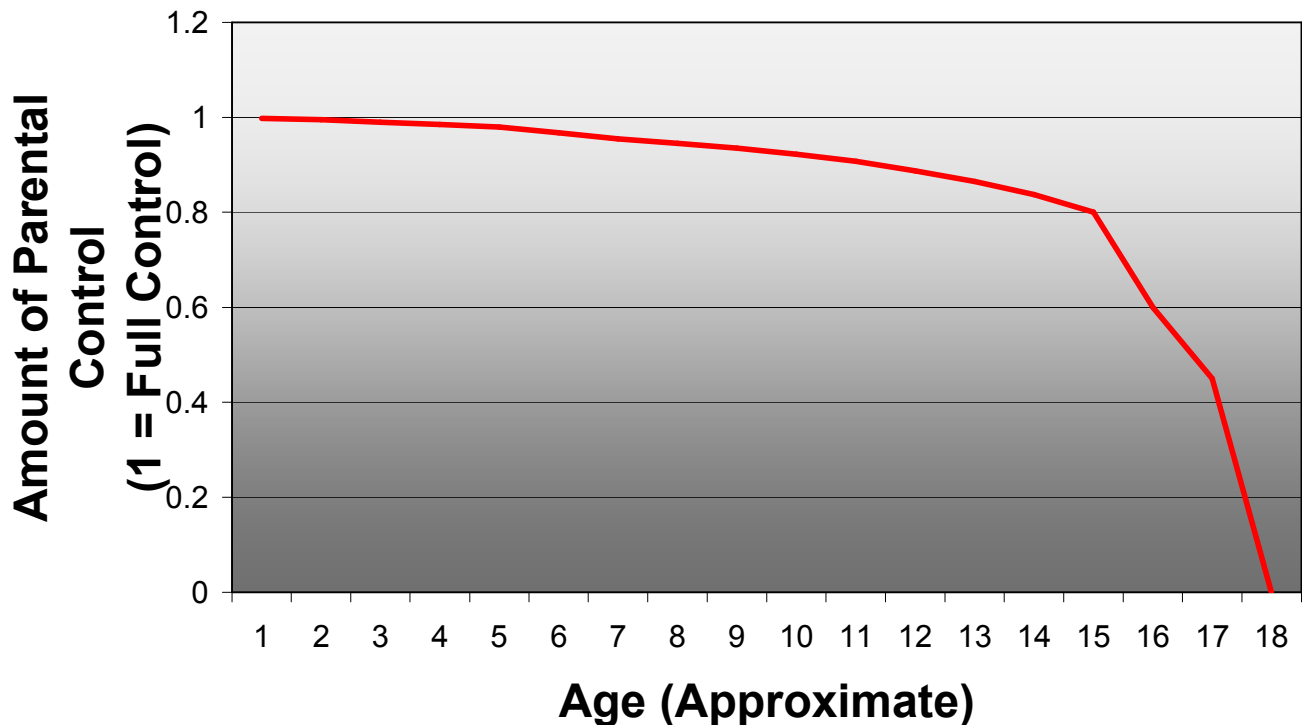
- Fear that children will make the wrong friends
- Fear that children will make wrong choices that will permanently harm them
- Fear that children will not follow the Lord

There are good reasons to have these fears – the world is a scary place – kids get hurt – kids hurt themselves. This past month’s Virginia Tech shootings can cause all kinds of fear in us as parents.

Some of us think all fear is bad. Yet instinctively we cringe when we see a teen-ager with the T-shirt that says “No Fear” – knowing that having “No Fear” can only lead to trouble. Fear is a God given survival response to take us away from trouble. Fear was given to us so that we would respond decisively and immediately to a dangerous situation. The problem is that we have made fear a life style – a state of mind. Fear was never intended to be applied to future events. And God did not make our bodies to hold fear continuously– and when we do it harms our bodies. Fear releases natural chemicals into our blood stream to move us to action. – As Judith MacNutt says - God didn’t intend our bodies to hold our issues in our tissues. God never intended our bodies to be in a state of constant fear.

As parents our fears can lead us to another kind of fear – the fear of letting go – turning our kids over to that scary world. Parenting involves a continuous but very gradual process of letting go. This chart represents how this relationship between total control and no control is supposed to look.

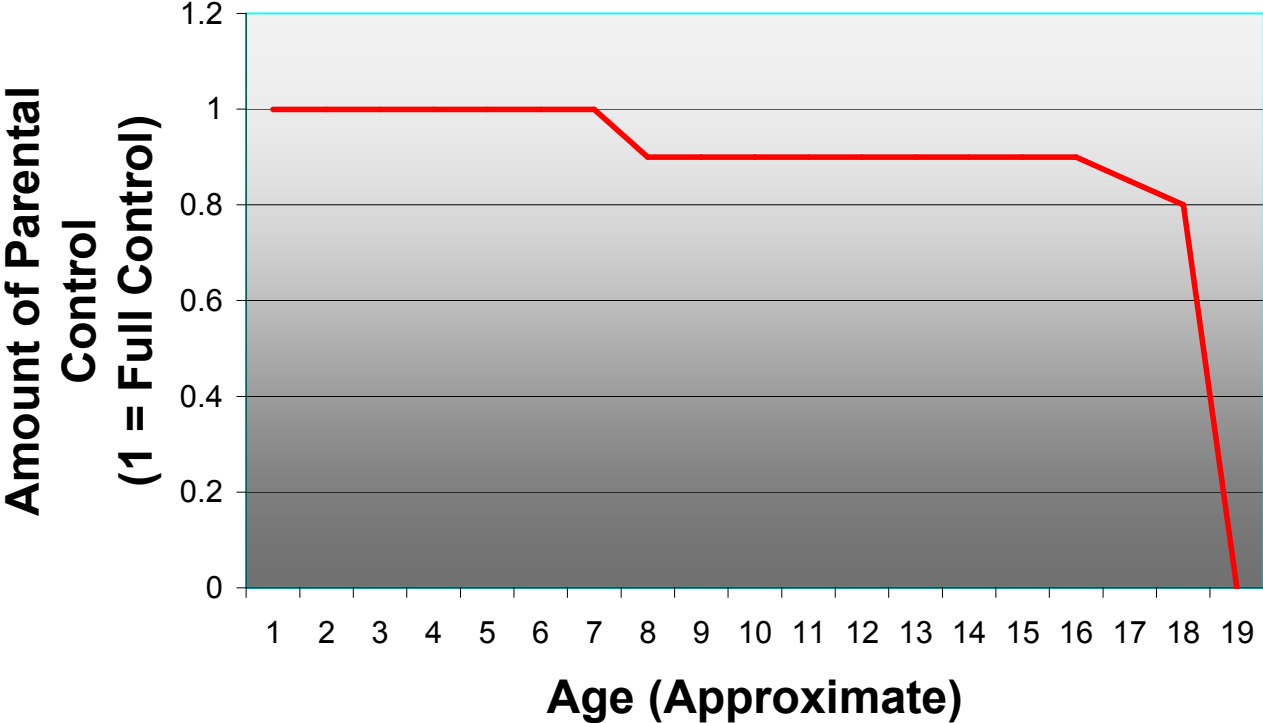
What Should Happen



From the point where the parent is in complete control of the life of the child until the point where the adult child is in complete control of his or her life. Sometimes that happens at 18 – sometimes later. And it begins very early – letting your child play outside alone – getting on that school bus – each time we lose a little bit of control – and the pace accelerates as they get closer to adulthood.

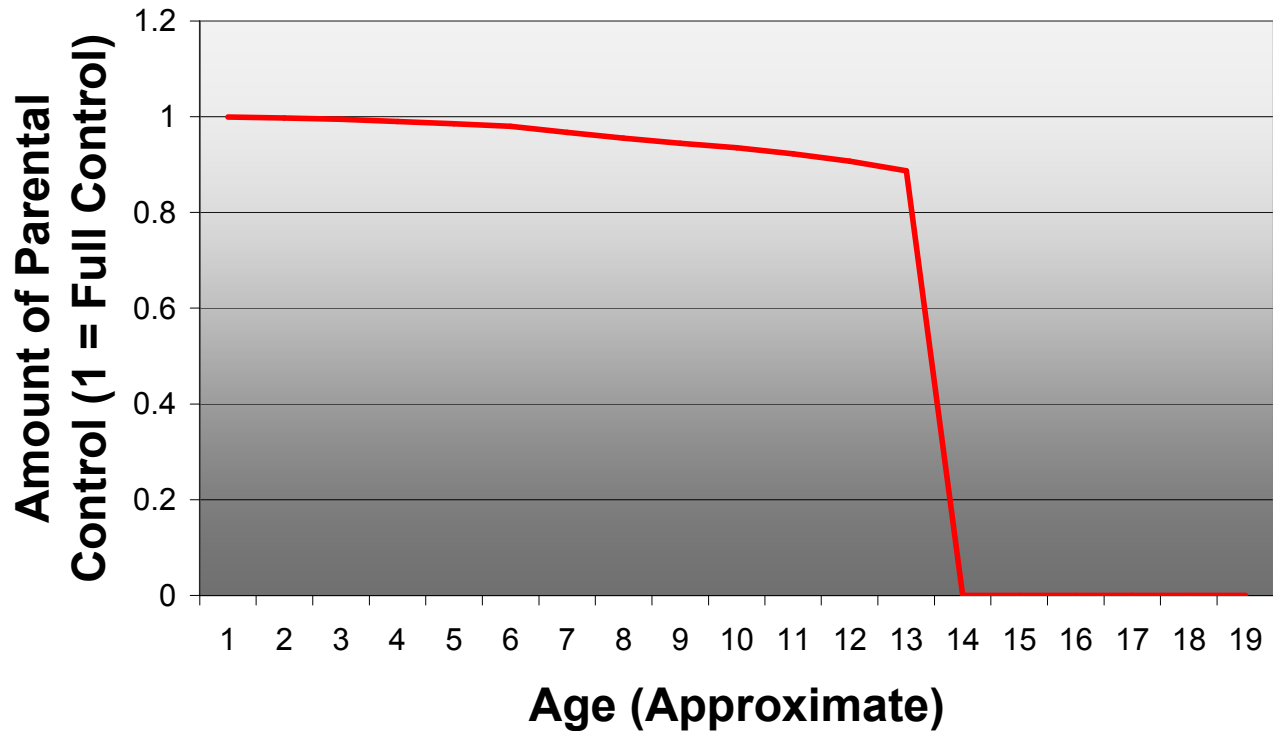
But as parents sometimes what we actually do is this

What Many Parents Do



where we maintain too much control and then release the adult child all at once. And of course our teenager wants it to look like this .

What Most Teenagers Want



Age 13 – Why can't I make all of my decisions?

As parents we need to know the right timing of letting go of control in our kids lives. But even when we exercise this letting go gradually it can still be terrifying for us.

How Fear of letting go can harm our kids

Some degree of fear is natural in parents. We love our kids so much that the thought of anything bad happening to them sends us into a panic. Yet, if we're not careful, this caution can become oppressive. When we let fear dominate our parenting, we can actually shield our kids from the very things they need to be dealing with.

There is a new term coined in the early 90's – "Helicopter parents" – continuously hovering over our teenage kids – protecting them from mistakes. It captures the image



of how our fear of letting go can become oppressive and really harm our kids.

Fear of letting go applicable to those who are not parents or no longer parenting

Although we are concentrating on parenting today – this fear of letting go is applicable to those of us who are not parents or no longer actively parenting. We all have things that we want to control and are afraid to let go of. That we hold on to too long.

It could be a job that is sucking life out of you. Yet you are afraid to let it go because you couldn't get a comparable paying job. Or a business you started that just isn't making it.

Maybe it's something less tangible – like a past hurt – we are afraid to let that go because then the other person will have gotten away with it.

Letting go is fearful – even letting go at God's direction. Most of you have heard the story of the man who fell from the cliff and holding on for dear life . He calls for help – “Is anyone up there.” and God answers – tells him to let go. The man protests. God again tells him to let go. The man asks God if that's His final answer – and God answers “Yes.” And the man asks if there is anyone else up there.

How Moses' mother exercised kamikaze faith by letting go of Moses – twice.

This morning – we are going to look at how Moses' mother exercised kamikaze faith by letting go of Moses – twice.

Scripture – Hebrews 11:23

Our scripture is taken from Hebrews 11:23. People of God hear the Word of God.

By faith, Moses when he was born was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw that he was a beautiful child and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

Set the context – Brief narrative of the text

Our setting for the text this morning is Egypt. The sons of Israel had gone down to Egypt during a famine near the end of Israel's life. 400 years had passed. The 70ⁱ that went down to Egypt had grown to over a million. Their relationship with the Pharaoh changed from one of favor to one of oppression. He made them his slaves. He afflicted them with hard labor to his build cities.

But the more the Egyptians oppressed the Hebrews, the more the Hebrews grew. Because the Egyptians feared an uprising – they made a plan to stop the explosive growth - they would have the Hebrew midwives kill all the baby boys. But the midwives feared God and refused in acts of civil disobedience. Pharaoh then issued an edict for the Hebrews themselves to throw all their baby boys into the Nile.ⁱⁱ

So that's the setting for the birth of Moses – to Amram and Jochebed and for our text this morning. They already had two older children - Aaron and Miriam. Karin's monologue wonderfully brought us into what went on.

Hebrews 11:23

Let's note some things about the text:

Was hidden ... because they saw he was a beautiful child

We find this same story three times in the Bible (Exodus 2, Acts 7, Hebrews 11) and each time the same point is made – Moses was hidden because they saw that he was beautiful. Now when God says something three times – it should get our attention. But a lot of time He gets my attention – and I still don't know what He is saying. This text is like that. What an odd reason for exemplary faith – don't all parents think their children are beautiful? Is the text saying that they wouldn't have hidden him if he wasn't beautiful.

There must be more to this. The word that is used here for beautiful is used only twice in the New Testament – both referring to this incident – and it is not the normal word used for good or beautiful – so we cannot figure out what it means from the biblical usage of the word. In classical Greek, its usage describes someone who is of the city as opposed to the country.

The city of God is one of the central themes of this chapter.ⁱⁱⁱ We are going to talk about that in two weeks. I believe that the writer of the Hebrews was connecting Moses to this theme. Moses parents saw that he was of the city – of the city of God. This wasn't a normal kind of parental doting – in all probability – God had revealed something about Moses to his parents – perhaps as portrayed in our monologue today. Remember – the starting point of all faith – is hearing the Word of God. So in some way – Moses parents knew that Moses had some special destiny. He was “of the city.”

Another question the text raises - How is protecting the life of your child an act of faith? Isn't this just a natural parental action? Isn't that what parents do? Where is the faith exhibited in Moses' parents? Clearly protecting Moses' had a higher cost for Amram and Jochebed – risking their lives. But where is faith?

The problem is that we have the wrong view of faith – we sometime over-spiritualize faith – , "If Moses' parents really had faith, they would have entrusted the child's care to God and just walked around the community with their new baby. That would have been real faith."^{iv} How would you respond to somebody like that? - people who say, "They don't trust God; they're using human ingenuity to protect their baby instead of entrusting him to God"? Real biblical kamikaze faith is not reckless or presumptuous and does not disdain the use of lawful means of overcoming danger. To needlessly expose ourselves to danger is foolish.

Much of what Christians call faith is really presumption. When our youngest daughter was little, I once found her walking down a slide backwards with her eyes closed saying “Jesus – don't let me fall.” A lot of us do that.

Our text says that Moses' parents did indeed have faith, and they hid their baby. Not killing the baby put their lives at risk and was a great act of faith and love. Hiding their baby was an act of human, but God-given, wisdom and that is perfectly compatible with kamikaze faith.

One last thing I want you to notice – the phrase “not fearing the King's edict.” It seems more logical to say – that you hide the child **because** you are fearing the Kings edict. I think this is where Moses' parents kamikaze faith really shows. God had shown them that Moses' was special – set apart – he was of the city. It required extra ordinary measures that were risky –

hiding him. They did this for three months. They applied all the human ingenuity possible. God had promised a future for Moses. God cannot allow him to die. But now they reached the edge. They could hide him no longer.

Now they had to let him go. The king's edict was that they were to cast their babies into the Nile. Not fearing the king's edict – that's what they did. They obeyed the king's edict. But they did it in faith – not knowing how God was going to fulfill His end of the bargain – Moses' had a special call on his life – God I have to trust You with his life – I have to let go of all of my schemes for protecting him and now trust you. Notice how his sister – stood at a distance – to see how God was going to fulfill his promise – they didn't know how – but they knew that God would make a way. That is a true kamikaze heart expressing true kamikaze faith.

How do we, in faith, let go of our baby?

What can we learn from Moses' mother about letting go? One thing we see is - Don't go it alone – The scripture tells us that it was not just Moses' mother – but his father and his sister were involved in this. Letting go is hard – and we need each other.

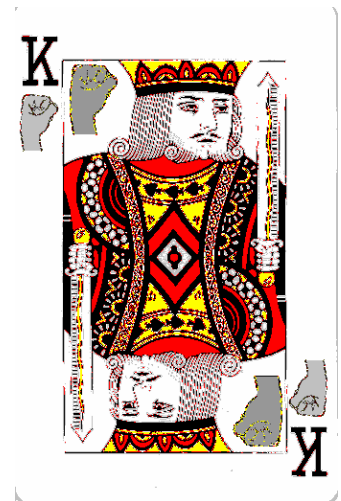
Not just letting go – but letting go with faith in God – we aren't just releasing our baby to the vast unknown – but into the very arms of God – one on whom we can put our full weight. Last time we talked about how a 2 of faith trumps a king doubt – every time! Let me tell you from experience – a 2 of faith trumps a king of the fear of letting go - every time as well.

The past couple of weeks I have faced some very fearful situations where I had to let go of some things. When I get fearful – my heart starts racing. I have found that as I have gotten alone with God – asked Him to help – and then waited for His peace to come – it has come every time. But I had to wait. Did the situation change? No – but my heart stopped racing. Hearing God's word is essential –

There is a wonderful promise in God's word that helps me **“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace – whose mind is stayed on Thee – because he trusts in Thee.”**^v Letting go is hard – and we need the very presence of God to go with us in this process. We need to learn to pray until we receive that peace – until our minds are fixed solidly on Him.

Reflection – call up worship team

What are the areas of your life as a mother, as a parent – where you are afraid to let go – where you are being a helicopter parent well past the appropriate time? If you are not a parent, you probably have your own babies – something that you are desperately trying to hold on to beyond the time – something you are hovering over because you are afraid to let go. There is a time to protect and a time to let go. Where is God calling you to let it go?



What is the equivalent of the king's edict that you are afraid of? What are the potential consequences that you fear?

We want to take some time now and ask God to reveal to us an area in our life where He is calling us to let go and where we are resisting. I want everybody to close your eyes and clench your fists – as tight as is comfortable – as a symbol of the thing that you are holding on to. I want you to imagine in your mind that which you are afraid to let go of – and see yourself holding it tightly in your clenched fists.

Father show us an area of our life where we are trying to hold on to something that you are calling us to let go. Let's take some time of quiet. [silence]

Lord – we confess that we are afraid – afraid to let this go. Father – we are afraid to trust you with this. Our fists are closed – trying desperately to hold on. But Father – they are also closed to You – As an act of kamikaze faith – I open my fists – and give to You my fears – my fear of letting go – and I express my faith and trust in You. And offer this to You.

Just do that now – open your fists – and picture yourself giving this to Him. Not knowing what He's going to do with it – but fixing your eyes on Him – not on what you are trying to control. Father – we surrender this to you – and entrust to you this child – this job – this relationship. Thank You Father for doing this. Amen

Conclusion

God's ways aren't our ways. God wanted to raise up a deliverer for His people while they were in Egypt – yet why did He make Moses' parents go through all of these extraordinary heroics? Remember - God is on a mission to grow our faith. But He also wants to reward such faith. He rewards those who seek Him. Moses' mother let go / entrusted Moses to God's care – and God rewarded her – He not only saved Moses' life – He gave Moses back to her to raise him. Not only that – she got paid to do it. That is so like God! God has more in store for us than we can imagine – remember – that's the theme for this whole year's sermon series. [Bring out the IMAGINE] God will do more than we imagine or think as we allow him to grow our faith. As we act upon it – sometimes with human ingenuity.

We are called to let go of our babies – over and over again. When he was weaned, Moses' mother had to let him go again – into the pagan court of Pharaoh. Not in abandonment or resignation – but in deep trust – entrusting him into God's care. We need His help to do that – we need one another's help to do that. Amen.

Let's rise and sign our closing song.

ⁱ Deuteronomy 10:22

ⁱⁱ Exodus 1:22 (Hebrew doesn't have "all his") – see Acts 7:19 He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our forefathers by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hebrews 11:10 – Abraham was looking for a city; 11:16 – God was preparing a city for them;

^{iv} John Piper

^v Isaiah 26:3