

The Secret Partner to Parenting Mistakes

Our children are professional mistake makers. They are all on a learning journey. When we are afraid of their mistakes or their sins, our anxiety controls our responses to them and the spirit of fear becomes the “master teacher” in our home.

Even though 2 Timothy 1:7 clearly tells us that we have not been given a spirit of fear from God, we often partner with that spirit to train our children toward the goal of obedience and compliance.

For many, like it was for me, intimidation is our only real parenting tool. We have various levels of intimidation. We try to convey to our kids that we are in control of their lives from the time they are tiny. Once again, the problem with that lesson is that heaven is not trying to control your life. God doesn't want to control you.

Remember, in the presence of the Lord there is freedom, not control (2 Cor. 3:17). We sing songs all day long about how God is in control. He does not control you, and neither does your wife, your boss or your children. No one controls you. As a matter of fact, we've been given a Spirit of power, love and self-control (2 Tim. 1:7, BBE). You cannot blame your life on God.

So who is in control? You are. But if you have never learned to control yourself, then it is no wonder you are so scared. If we don't control ourselves, then we are out of control, and being out of control is a very powerless feeling. Have you ever been in the car with someone who is not driving the way you would like? You want control. You either want that steering wheel or you want out of the car.

Many parents believe that when their children present failure,

rebellion, disrespect, irresponsibility, or other willful or sinful actions, they must gain control by intimidating their children into changing their minds.

As Christians, we need to understand that fear is our enemy. Many of us admit this to be true but find fear much harder to get rid of. So many of us have had our paradigms shaped by a fear of punishment to the degree that we actually believe we need the threat of punishment to stay on course. "If I don't have a really bad consequence for making this poor choice, I'm choosing it. You can't stop me, so you better put a gun to my face."

We believe that we need to be controlled from the outside. I imagine that Timothy laughed when he first read the letter in which Paul said, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind [self-control]" (2 Tim. 1:7, NKJV). Paul's direct exhortation that Timothy had not been given a spirit of fear implies that Timothy was afraid. He needed to leave behind the fear that he most likely learned at home. So he said, "You have not received a spirit of fear. Timothy, what God has given to you does not produce fear. God is not trying to intimidate you, and neither am I."

When I talk about training your children from the inside out, in freedom, I am talking about removing fear—specifically, the fear of punishment. Removing the training instrument of punishment is not a new concept.

First John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, *because fear has to do with punishment*. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (NIV, emphasis added).

It means that all the fear leaves your life when love comes in. There is *no* fear of punishment in love.

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