

A parent's greatest fear

I don't know much about parenting. What I do know is that I have been given two basic responsibilities.

First, I must help our sons get to heaven.

Second, I must keep them safe and healthy so that, if possible, they only go to heaven after leading full, wonderful lives of service to God and humanity. Ultimately their lives are in God's hands, but I will do my best to help our sons live long, rich, selfless lives on Earth.

Yesterday's shooting at Perry Hall High School made me stop and think.

It made me think of safety.

I can keep all the outlets covered and use safety gates at the top of the stairs. I can warn our sons not to jump off the couch or to open the stove. I can even insist that they drink only organic milk.

But I can't protect them from every danger. I can't assume they are safe if they go to see a movie with their friends. And I can't trust that they will be safe when they go to school.

Other dangers are more abstract—and much scarier to me.

The danger of responding to the allure of evil.

The danger of falling into depression or despair.

The danger of whatever it is that could lead someone to direct violence against other people, people created by God.

And that is an even greater worry.

What can I do as a parent to help our sons choose the right path, even when another

one might be more tempting—or might seem like the easier option?

How can I give them courage—so they will try to fight against evil—and humility—so they will realize others' lives are valuable?

How do I ensure that they will always, always, always value life?

As a parent, I worry about our boys' safety. But when I see the evil in the world around us, I worry just as much—maybe more—that they will make bad decisions that will hurt others deeply. It's my job to help them make good ones, to live lives of truth, to grow ever closer to Jesus, and to love and serve him.

Don't get me wrong. I know that there is also an abundance of good in the world, and that God is everywhere.

I see him in our sons' smiles and in the late afternoon sunshine.

I hear him in the crickets chirping in the mornings and in my son's voice singing "I've Been Working on the Railroad."

And I felt God with me as I left my boys at preschool this morning, waving goodbye to the greatest treasures I've been given, and praying they would be safe and well.

Today I am praying for the student who was injured in the shooting and for his family. I am praying for the other students who witnessed the shooting and their families. And, hard as it is sometimes, I am also praying for the student who has been charged with the crime and for his family. It is not my job to defend or condemn. It is not my job to understand why or how this happens.

Instead, my job is to raise my sons to love and serve God—and to make sure they grow to be steadfast advocates for good, for life, and for love.

It's an enormous challenge. I hope and pray that, with God's grace, John and I are up to it.