

Nothing to fear but...

Before Leo started preschool, we had to fill out several forms full of questions. I came to one question, “Does he have any fears?”

That’s easy, I thought. “Mr. Yuk and zombies,” I wrote.

The next question? “Do you share these fears?” No, though I will never take him to party stores right before Halloween. And I wish we had never introduced him to Mr. Yuk.

Daniel has a longer list of fears: live animals who come within two feet of him, ride-on animals of any size, his father’s mechanical Bigfoot toy, swinging on swings.



A few weeks ago I had to coax him onto a playground when he balked at stepping on mulch. About a month ago he decided to ride a carousel for the first time—after months of clinging to me in terror while watching his brother ride—and he enjoyed it.

Daniel’s fears are very real to him, and we don’t put any pressure on him to overcome them. We don’t need to since he has a big brother who is happy to demonstrate the joys of swinging up to the top of the sky or riding the Penny Pony at Shoppers. I suspect Daniel’s fears aren’t that unusual for a toddler who is still encountering so much of his world for the first time.

Some days, though, I wonder how a child who would dive headfirst off the couch or go barreling down a staircase could be afraid of a swing.

Then I had a thought. Maybe God watches me in my daily life and sees my worries and fears. And maybe to Him my concerns about paying bills and my family's health and safety and finding enough hours in the day seem as short-sighted and silly as a fear of mulch or a Bigfoot toy.



Maybe as I am reassuring my sons about their fears, I should realize that much of my own worry is needless and unproductive, as well. Not that I shouldn't be loving and supporting and calming for my sons, but that I should keep my own concerns in perspective.

It felt like a revelation.

Then one evening last week as the boys and I were driving home, a thunderstorm started. We talked about how the angels were bowling and laughed as we pretended we were driving through a car wash. When we pulled up outside our house, I called John—who was already home—and he offered to come help us into the house.

I was standing next to the van as John came out to greet us. All at once, we heard a thunderclap and saw lightning—at the same moment. John and I panicked and jumped into the van with the boys, who started crying because they could tell we were scared. We waited there until the storm eased and then ran inside together.

My mind was racing, thinking of what could have happened—though John thinks the lightning must have been at least a few hundred yards away. As we held the boys and soothed them, I felt my reassurance was inadequate. I can tell them that baby swings are safe and that a plastic, ride-on horse won't bite, but I can't promise that lightning won't hurt us.

But what I could tell them—and did—was that God was with us during the storm, and that He brought us safely home.

How great is our God that He cares about our worries—however insignificant or unfounded. And how blessed we are to be able to offer faith and comfort to our children in knowing He is with us even at times of real fear.

And, if nothing else, He'll make sure the zombies are kept at bay.

