

Jesus and His mother Mary. These are words that not only apply to our parental and child relationships, but I would suggest could be applied to any relationship.

There is concern. Genuine concern is not simply worry and filled with anxiety, but is attention, care, compassion and love. Concern is an expression of love for someone. When we show concern for another we are expressing our love. Of course it is right for a parent to show concern as an expression of love.

The second word is responsibility. One of the great gifts we can give to our children and to one another is responsibility. We not only help them to grow, but we honor them when we give them responsibility and when we hold them responsible. I love that in the first miracle story Mary does not tell Jesus what to do. She presents the problem and then says to the servants do what He says. She leaves the solution up to Jesus. She honors her son with responsibility.

Teaching responsibility is a process that we must start when our children are young. They learn it as we model it and we praise it and we teach consequences and rewards from being responsible. When we give to others responsibility we honor them as a person. We allow them independence and keep them from being dependent people. We grant to them a truth gift.

The third word is trust. The family ultimately trusted Jesus or at least they trusted God and learned to trust Jesus. Maybe that is where most of us are as parents. We are learning to let go of our children or of others who have been dependent upon us and as we do, we remember that there are three persons involved in this relationship. In the Christian home Christ is always there. Not simply a welcomed guest, but the center of the home. We learn to trust our children as we learn to trust God. We learn to let them go as we learn to hold on tighter to the promises of God.

However, there is another side of this relationship. That is children, teens and adults must also learn to be trustworthy. Do you feel that you are one of those people that others do not trust with responsibility? Let me close by looking at Jesus as our model for being one who is trustworthy. If we look at these three stories in Jesus' life we discover three important qualities. First, Jesus was seeking God the father. The first story is of Jesus being in

the Father's house, listening and seeking understanding. If we want to be those who others trust we can begin by seeking God with all of our hearts. Second, Jesus is found doing God's purposes and showing compassion for others. In the turning of water to wine, Jesus is beginning His ministry, which is to fulfill God's purpose for His life. He even remarks my time has not yet come. That is, there is a plan for my life. If you want to be trustworthy not only seek after God, but also choose to be obedient to God's plan for you. Thirdly, Jesus surrounded Himself with the community of faith. Notice Jesus said who are My mother, brother and sister? The one who does the will of God is my family, my community. Surround yourself with those who are also seeking God and will help you continue to grow, who will hold you accountable and allow you to seek after God with all your heart.

Today whether you are a parent of an adult child, a teen or infant there is a challenge to learn to let them go. However we are not letting them go alone. We are letting them go with God. Some of us have others in our lives that we need to let them go and trust God. Here is what we know from these three stories:

Concern and compassion is an expression of love. Responsibility is a gift we can give that gives the other person dignity and honor. Trust is an expression of not only trusting the other, but also trusting God.

Let them go...let them go with God.



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## Let Them Go - Go With God

Mark 3:20-35

**R**afi and Dvora Meitiv recently were walking through their neighborhood when adults confronted them. However, it was not a gang or a predator but the local police. You see Rafi and Dvora are 10 and 6 years old and their parents practice what is a growing trend in the United States called Free Range Parenting. The children were questioned and then put in the squad car and taken home. When they arrived home, the parents were fearful that something horrible had happened or that the kids had done something horrible, only to learn that their horrible action was walking home. Social Services were called in and of course you know that this family, as well as others, have become a part of a national debate on parenting and supervision.

Free Range Parents believe that the risk of letting kids go unsupervised in their neighborhoods and walking to and from school is worth it to let them grow up to be responsible adults. Most people my age and older, when we first heard this story, commented to one another that we did not know our parents were free-range parents. We called this childhood when we were younger. Most of us, who are baby boomers, grew up with free-range. We walked to and from school without supervision. We spent hours after school playing in a neighborhood and going from house to house and yard to yard. We would play until we heard the call... the call of our parent's voice saying it was time for supper. Others of us grew up latch key kids. We came home on our own. We had our own key to the door. We spent several hours in the house by ourselves until our parents returned home from work.

Much of what I just said sounds incredibly irresponsible these days. It is true that the world has changed. It does seem that the world is a scarier and more frightening place. Partly because we hear of the horrible stories that are not the norm, but we think is the norm. Partly because in our suburban living we have lost

the sense of neighbor and connections with community. Whatever the case, what we use to call childhood has now become free-range parenting and a national debate.

On the other extreme of course is the other term we use for parenting these days and that is the helicopter parent. This describes the parent that is constantly hovering over the child. Some call this overparenting. In an article entitled "What is Helicopter Parenting?" author Kay Bayless describes it this way:

Who is a helicopter parent? Although the term is most often applied to parents of high school or college-aged students who do tasks the child is capable of doing alone (for instance, calling a professor about poor grades, arranging a class schedule, manage exercising habits), helicopter parenting can apply at any age. "In toddlerhood, a helicopter parent might constantly shadow the child, always playing with and directing his behavior, allowing him zero alone time," Dr. Dunnewold says. In elementary school, helicopter parenting can be revealed through a parent ensuring a child has a certain teacher or coach, selecting the child's friends and activities, or providing disproportionate assistance for homework and school projects.

Why do parents hover? Helicopter parenting can develop for a number of reasons. Here are four common triggers.

Fear of dire consequences - A low grade, not making the team, or not getting a certain job can appear disastrous to a parent, especially if it seems it could be avoided with parental involvement. But, says Deborah Gilboa, M.D., founder of AskDoctorG.com, "many of the consequences [parents] are trying to prevent--unhappiness, struggle, not excelling, working hard, no guaranteed results--are great teachers for kids and not actually life-threatening. It just feels that way."

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Feelings of anxiety - Worries about the economy, the job market, and the world in general can push parents toward taking more control over their child's life in an attempt to protect them. "Worry," Dr. Daitch says, "can drive parents to take control in the belief that they can keep their child from ever being hurt or disappointed."

Overcompensation - Adults who felt unloved, neglected, or ignored as children can overcompensate with their own children. Excessive attention and monitoring are attempts to remedy a deficiency the parents felt in their own upbringing.

Peer pressure from other parents - When parents see other overinvolved parents; it can trigger a similar response. "Sometimes when we observe other parents overparenting or being helicopter parents, it will pressure us to do the same," Dr. Daitch says. "We can easily feel that if we don't immerse ourselves in our children's lives, we are bad parents. Guilt is a large component in this dynamic."

What are the consequences of helicopter parenting?

Decreased confidence and self-esteem - "The main problem with helicopter parenting is that it backfires," Dr. Dunnewold says. "The underlying message [the parent's] overinvolvement sends to kids, however, is 'my parent doesn't trust me to do this on my own,' [and this leads] to a lack of confidence."

Undeveloped coping skills - If the parent is always there to clean up a child's mess--or prevent the problem in the first place--how does the child ever learn to cope with loss, disappointment, or failure? Studies have found that helicopter parenting can make children feel less competent in dealing with the stresses of life on their own.

Increased anxiety. A study from the University of Mary Washington has shown that overparenting is associated with higher levels of child anxiety and depression.

Sense of entitlement - Children who have always had their social, academic, and athletic lives adjusted by their parents to best fit their needs can become accustomed to always having their way and thus they develop a sense of entitlement.

Undeveloped life skills - Parents who always tie shoes, clear plates, pack lunches, launder clothes, and monitor school progress, even after children are mentally and physically capable of doing the task, prevent their children from mastering these skills themselves. (What is Helicopter Parenting? By Kay Bayless. Parents. Com 2013)

Interestingly, in our culture we find both parenting styles and a national debate. On this Graduate Sunday as we think about transitions and moments of accomplishments and new beginnings, I think it might be good for us to look at a brief sketch of the relationship between Jesus and His mother Mary.

There are three passages that give us some insight into this relationship. The first passage is from Luke Chapter 2 when Jesus at the age of 12, which would have been His first time to go to Passover and considered a man. He would have been given certain rights and responsibilities in the family and the culture at 12. They go to the Passover and you remember Mary and Joseph and their family begin to make their way home to Nazareth. When they stop for the evening to make camp they discover that Jesus is not with them. It seems that they were practicing some free-range parenting and now Jesus was missing. They had thought that Jesus was with their extended family and friends that were traveling with them. They return to Jerusalem the next day and search all day looking for the boy Jesus, only to find Him in the Temple listening and in conversation with the teachers. When they found Him you can hear the relief, frustration and concern in Mary's question to Jesus. Mary says to Jesus "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been searching for You." Now you can nuance that all you want, but here is the beautiful truth of the scripture. Mary is frustrated, hurt and does not understand Jesus' actions. Notice that for Mary this was about her and Joseph and not about Jesus. Son, why have you treated us this way? Jesus' answer to His parents is almost a sense of surprise. Why were you searching? If you understood Me, you would know I would be right here. I would be in my father's house. Just to make sure we understand that this was not rebellion and disobedience, Luke continues and Jesus went with them to Nazareth and was obedient to them.

The first word I want us to consider is concern. As a parent it is never wrong to have legitimate concern. As a loving parent we are always concerned for the well being of our children. We want them to be safe. We want them to be fulfilled. I am not going to say happy because that is an emotion, but we do want them to know a sense of joy in life. We want them to have a sense of purpose. So, concern is the first term we hang onto.

The second passage where we get a glimpse of Jesus and Mary's relationship is in the gospel of John. In John's gospel one of the first events is the turning of water to wine. Jesus and His disciples are attending a wedding and the wine has run out and is causing a social disgrace to the host family. It seems that Mary is connected or at least feels responsible to this host family to help them.

She comes to Jesus and asks for help. Jesus' first response is how does this involve me. Mary's responds by saying to the servants "do whatever He tells you to do." It seems at this point Mary walks away leaving Jesus with the responsibility. We know that Jesus turns the water into wine and it is the best wine of the feast. Now to be sure there are some deeper theological interpretations to this text, but just on the surface what we have is a son responding to a mother's request and a mother trusting her son with responsibility.

The second word I want us consider is responsibility.

The third scene is our text from Mark 3. Mark gives us insight into a family dynamic that the other gospels do not. Mark's account tells us that not all is well in the household of Joseph when Jesus chooses to pick-up and go away at the age of near 30. Jesus, the eldest son, has chosen to do what people did not do. He has left home. That sounds fine to us, but it was not the norm. In our western culture people moving from home, living a life away from family is most the time almost the norm these days. However, in Jesus' day and in many places the bond of family is so strong that to leave family was just unheard of or at least frowned upon. Jesus did not run away as a young man, but was in mid-life and now after all this time He had decided to turn from carpenter to preacher. The setting is Jesus in a home with His disciples and so many people have come to hear Him that there is no room. There are two groups who respond to Him being at the house. The first were the teachers of the law who have come to discredit Jesus. He had growing popularity and His teaching was not accredited or approved. They went to accuse Him of being demon possessed.

That is what we do when we don't agree with someone or don't understand something. It must be wrong and of course it must be evil. So we begin the name-calling and the labeling and that is exactly what happens to Jesus. Yet, Jesus does not respond in like kind. In fact, Jesus just points out their flawed thinking. How does Satan oppose Satan? That does not make any sense. Jesus tells a parable that only a stronger man can bound a strong man. Someone stronger than Satan and evil has come and it is Jesus. Jesus also reminds them that there is but one sin that cannot be forgiven and that is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Which simply means the one sin that cannot be forgiven is the constant rejection of God's plan of salvation through Jesus.

There however is a second group who had come to Jesus that day. It was His mother and brothers. The crowd tells Jesus Your mother and brothers are outside and they are looking for You. Do you notice the similarities? I wonder if for a moment Jesus recalls that moment nearly two decades before when He was sitting in the Temple and His parents came looking for Him? Here is Jesus again, and His mother and family have come searching for Him. Why have they come? Well Mark tells us the startling reason. In verse 21 Mark writes "When His family heard of this, that is Jesus teaching in the home, they went to take charge of Him for they said He is out of His mind."

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When His family heard that He had gathered disciples and had taken up preaching, they conclude Jesus had lost His senses or more commonly stated, "He is out of His mind." The word means to stand outside oneself. Don't sugar coat this. Jesus' family did not understand Him and they were worried either about Him

or their reputation and they went to take charge of Him. Notice the force in that phrase. They went. They had intention. They had their minds made up. They were not there to listen and consider, they were on a mission. To take charge of Him means to arrest by force. They went with the intention to force Jesus to come home.

Jesus responds, "Who is my mother and my brothers?" Then looking at those who were following Him he said, "here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God are my mother, sister and brother." N.T. Wright comments that if you read that verse and are not shocked, you have missed the point. Jesus, misunderstood by those who loved Him is setting forth a new way of thinking about family and community. What was important was the relationship with God and being on mission and being obedient to God together.

Now what do we know after this episode. We know that Mary would follow Jesus to the cross and the tomb and witness the resurrection. We know that one of the brothers, James, would become the leader of the church in Jerusalem following the resurrection. We know that His mother and brothers would become followers of Jesus. There is a point when they let Jesus go to fulfill God's purpose for Jesus' life. Thus, here is the third word... trust. Yet, not only trust in Jesus but also trust in God.

I would suggest they let Him go, but they let Him go with God.

Three words that can describe the relationship between