

Fear for Military Family

My brother is in the military and we just found out he has to go to Iraq. He is proud to serve his country and all, but when I see all the reports on TV about the violence over there, I get really scared for him. I pray for him a lot, but I'm hoping you can help me to not be so afraid.

What if... It's this statement that is usually the catalyst for fear. There are many "what if's" in life, and you are facing one of those right now. It's one thing to see the images on the TV screen of soldiers bravely storming potential terrorist hiding spots; it's another to imagine having one of those soldiers being your brother, son or loved one. I will not tell you that your fear is unfounded. The reality is that there is a risk, although relatively small, that your brother may be in harms way. While I realize those may not be the comforting words you had hoped for, it's important to face what's real and what's not, so you can look at the situation objectively.

Your fear is rooted in a deep concern and love for your brother, and those things are awesome. I hope you have and will continue to let him know how much he means to you. In fact, I suggest writing him old-fashioned, hand-written letters while he is away – an art that is sadly being lost in a technological world of e-mails and cell phones. There is nothing more comforting to someone who is half a world away than to get a hand-written note from someone they love. By staying in touch with your brother, you will not only be able to express your love for him, but I also encourage you to express your fears to him. But don't stop there; also express your hopes and ambitions, and help him to look forward to his homecoming.

While it's important to face your fears, it's also important to not allow those fears to consume your life. If focused on too much, fear can become your master. One of the saddest things we see is when someone lives in constant fear of what might happen. Their god becomes the "what if." Depression sets in and thoughts are filled with scenarios of potential disasters, leaving little room for other feelings like love, joy, peace and contentment. Others around them can soon be robbed of that love, joy and peace too. While it sounds like a cliché, it's important to live in the moment. For this moment, your brother is very much alive and well, and the overwhelming chances are that he will be in the future too. Celebrate it! Celebrate life – not just his, but yours and the lives of others. We can choose to celebrate the beautiful life God has given each of us, or we can choose to live in fear of when that life here on earth may be complete. Let's choose to live.

God is the God of the past, present and the future. He has it under control. Let's be real and authentic and admit that it sometimes doesn't seem like it when we see the news reports or when we are hurting. But as years have passed, when I look back on some of those times in my life where I couldn't understand or felt like God wasn't handling things the way I thought he should, I can now see how he made even the most sad events of my life into a beautiful part of my story. He has a way of doing that. It's called trust, and it's one of the hardest parts of faith.

Sometimes it's easy to think that we're a bad person for having fears, or are less spiritual for letting God or others know about our fears. But God wants us to come to him with our fears and admit them to him. Trusting God doesn't mean that things will always turn out the way we want them to. Let's face it; there are many examples in the Bible of godly men who couldn't understand what God was up to, and the same is true today in our own lives. The Psalms are great examples of how David brought his fears and frustrations to God. God can handle your questions and fears; we just need to remember to bring them to him.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." – Philippians 4:6-7

Please talk with someone about these feelings. You are not alone in this. In fact, there are many support groups for those who have loved ones in the armed services. We encourage you to talk with someone you trust in your church, like your youth pastor, to help you deal with your fears. Also, read the Psalms in the bible to help you express your fears to God.

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