

# Faith Amidst Fears



BY AMY STARR REDWINE

When I was pregnant with my children, there were many things I was told to fear. Books and articles—not to mention well-meaning friends and my doctor—all warned me not to eat soft cheeses or certain kinds of fish, not to stand too long or exercise too strenuously, and to avoid stress. I diligently worked to heed such warnings (although less successfully with each subsequent pregnancy), believing that if I could just make it to full term and deliver a healthy baby, the worry would be over.

How naive I was! As my children age, the list of things to worry about has grown with them.

Bullying. Cyber bullying. Child molesters. Cancer. Diabetes. Not making the team. Not making the grade. Driving. Sex. Sexual assault. Texting. Texting while driving. What they do online. . . . The list goes on.

Sometimes, the fears feel paralyzing—especially at night. My children's sleeping faces reveal glimpses of the fragile babies they once were, the fragile beings they still are. And I can no longer protect them the way I could when they were smaller, when I dictated (or tried to dictate) what they ate, when they slept and with whom they interacted. The older they get, the less control I have. And this cold, hard truth of parenting can be terrifying.

Fortunately, in his ministry, Jesus had quite a few opportunities to respond to his followers' fears. And fear seems to have been a frequent sentiment for those who found their lives turned upside-down by the decision to follow Jesus.

When the disciples, in a panic, wake Jesus up because a storm is pummeling the boat they are in, Jesus says, "Why



*Meredakan Angin Ribut (Calm the Storm) by Ketut Lasia (Bali)*

are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" (Mark 4:40). On the first Easter morning, when the two women leave the tomb, having encountered an angel that fills them with "fear and great joy," they meet Jesus, and he says, "Do not be afraid" (Matt. 28:8–10).

If fear is the opposite of faith, then what are we to do with our fears for the children in our lives? Especially the fears that threaten to consume us? For all the times he counsels his followers not to be afraid, Jesus doesn't give them a fool-proof strategy to rid themselves of fear. But he does offer two possibilities: faith and action. When the disciples are afraid of the storm, Jesus reminds them to have faith. When the women meet him at the tomb and are terrified, Jesus tells them to go to Galilee and tell people what they have seen.

So what meaningful actions will help our children as they confront the world? We can share with them what we have learned from our lives, our mistakes and

our faith. We can make sure they know that we are always there for them, ready to hear what troubles them, and that we love them no matter what—just as God loves us.

In the meantime, especially in those nights when the fears paralyze us, we fall back on our faith. We have faith that these children are a gift to us from God, that God knows them even better than we do and that God loves them more deeply and fully than we can. May we all take comfort and solace in God's love, the "perfect love" that "casts out fear" (1 John 4:18).

Amy Starr Redwine is the pastor of the Church of the Covenant in Cleveland, Ohio. She lives with her husband and three children.