

Kid-Pain

For a long time I thought I loved our kids more than my husband did. I came to this conclusion because he didn't hurt like I did when the kids struggled with life. Their struggles bothered me a lot more than they bothered him. I hated kid-pain. I rushed to fix it. My husband seemed much more composed. Why didn't their pain tear at his heart the way it tore at mine?

If my husband loved our kids as much as I did, wouldn't their pain tear at his heart the way it tore at mine? I got my first clue that I was missing something when I read about Eve's and Adam's pain in the third chapter of Genesis. The fall brought Eve pain in different areas then it brought pain to her husband. Her pain was more intense relationally; his pain was more intense occupationally. Eve's relational pain surely affected both her child rearing and her relationship with her husband. It must also have impacted their parenting. I know it impacts our parenting today.

Each woman and man carries within them the legacy that started in Eden. What looks like a difference in love turns out to be a difference in pain. I didn't love our kids more; I just felt kid-pain more intensely.

My husband and I both wanted to lessen their pain. The problem was that I also desired, perhaps even more intensely, to lessen *my own* pain, and that desire clouded my judgment. On one level, I wanted to save them pain, but more deeply, I wanted to save *myself* from pain. Sometimes I found myself undermining my husband's parenting choices. I didn't do it in front of the kids (at least I don't think so), but as I look back on their earlier years I know that my resistance to my husband's fatherly-style love was costly both to them and to him.

Over the years, as my husband and I have talked through parenting, we've learned from each other. He's learned from me to see issues of the heart that he used to miss. And I've learned from him that at times the better choice is not to interfere with a child's pain, because pain, wisely allowed, can help them mature.

Our different responses have helped us to parent more effectively and balance each other. My sensitivity to kid-pain makes me more aware of their hearts. And that's a good thing. My husband's lesser discomfort with kid-pain allows him to see more easily benefits of letting them deal with the consequences of their choices. And that's a good thing. We each love our children, but we love them differently. And in spite of - actually because of - our differences, we've gradually grown in our ability to love them well.