It seems like some, more than others, seem to really enjoy scary movies and experiences. I remember going to the new IT: Part 1 movie in the theaters on opening weekend in a packed theater. Throughout the movie, I heard the gasps and even screams as Pennywise the Clown terrorized the small town. I enjoyed it, but not because it was scary, just because it was an interesting story. I don’t necessarily get too scared with books or movies, but, if I experienced those things in real life, that’d be a totally different story. It’s interesting how often we avoid fear in real life but seek it out by other means.
I was reading an interesting article from thecut.com called “How Scary Stories Help Kids Learn to Handle Fear in Real Life”. It showed how in many of the original fairy tales (Cinderella, Little Mermaid, etc) there were much direr, even scarier, elements to them than Disney portrayed. But we don’t read or hear those originally stories anymore, right? I mean most of us as parents probably wouldn’t expose our kids to scary stories or elements when they’re little.
But this article also points out, like the title suggests, that kids might be missing out when we don’t expose them to elements of fear when they’re younger. “’How can you feel safe and secure until you know what it’s like to be afraid?’ psychologist Emma Kenny says. ‘The world can be a scary place…. Knowing how to confront fear is a good thing.’” Just like we don’t know what freedom is unless we’ve been held captive (or quarantined!) we don’t know how to develop safety and security unless we’ve experienced fear.
And so, I’m not necessarily advocating the scaring of our children purposefully. Please don’t drop your children at my house in the middle of the night after they’ve watch a scary movie. However, I am suggesting that we need to learn to deal with our fear. We need to figure out how to feel safe and secure even though we have fear. And I think it all starts with realizing and accepting when we are really afraid.
Psalm 46 begins like this, “God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!” (NLT) How many of us could comfortably say, “Bring on earthquakes and roaring oceans and crumbling mountains, I’m not afraid!” Maybe you could. But if you can, my guess is you either have a faith that God is truly your refuge and strength OR you’re lying to yourself.
And I hope it’s the former. But either way, I pray that all of our fears are comforted by the love of God and the truth that he will take care of us. God bless.