26th KZGN TV Talking Points Editorial

Today’s topic, and this is another amazing topic: Two different child raising theories: Open range and helicopter

There has been recent news about a couple with two kids in Maryland being attacked by Child Protective Services (CPS) for letting their kids walk to a local park by themselves. The children are a 10-year old boy and 6-year old girl. The parents are both scientists by occupation, and are well educated people. The park that the children walk to is apparently about 1 mile from their home. Many people are either joining in criticism of the parents, and some defend the parents. A final ruling has been handed down by CPS. They ruled (are you ready for this?), they ruled the parents were guilty of “unsubstantiated” child endangerment. How can you be found guilty of something “unsubstantiated”?

That would be like the judge in a court saying to a person in front of him with accusations of murder, “the charges of murder against you are unsubstantiated, but I’m going to find you guilty anyway.” This is unbelievable.

Let’s discuss these two different child raising theories:

1. Open range theory: this theory allows children to be more free, to be individuals, and to learn more on their own.

Critics of this theory say that this is dangerous to the children. They need close monitoring and guidance.

Proponents of this theory say it allows kids freedom to learn different things. It teaches independence and strength to survive. This one kind of sounds like the hippie theory from the 1970’s.

1. Helicopter theory: this theory, in brief, states that parents stay very close to their kids and watch over everything they do very closely.

Critics of this theory believe that this smothers the children, and doesn’t allow enough freedom for exploration. Proponents of this theory say it helps the children because the parents are heavily involved in their children’s lives, and creates solid relationships with the children.

I believe that maybe both theories have merit. But using them depends on a few issues: environment, age/maturity, and size of family.

A child’s local environment must be considered in how much unsupervised activity they partake in. In dangerous localities, they probably need to be more closely supervised than in rural or suburban neighborhoods. A child’s freedom must be determined by their age. I could see using one theory in early years and using the other theory as they get older. A child’s family size can affect the theory used. The theory used with one child in the household might change with 3 or more kids in the household. This is due to parents having to divide their time between more kids.

Anyway, back to these particular parents being found guilty of “unsubstantiated” charges of child endangerment. As a result of the determination, they have had to sign a parenting agreement with CPS with a 5-year plan on how they will raise their kids.

The parents were on Fox News TV and vowed to continue to fight CPS on the basis they have over stepped their authority. They have also stated that they believe in the open-range theory and will continue to allow their kids to walk to the park.

Now, I have not seen the plan, but how would you like the government coming in and making you actually sign a written plan on how to raise your children, and that the state is going to monitor you for the next 5 years on how you are doing? I should note that in discussing this with my wife, Shannon, she thinks letting kids at those ages (10 and 6) walk alone to a park is not good and is child endangerment. She says, “We have read too many examples of child predators lurking out there for a child to grab.” In her example, I have to agree with her. As a baby boomer child, in my early years I was raised in a rural area outside of Cleveland, Ohio.

All of my friends and I went all over with no fears. Even at young ages. I remember riding my bike for miles down a road to my friend’s house at the age of 5, and he’d do the same to come see me. Parents did not have the same fears we have today. Things are not the same today. There are too many predators out there.

In conclusion, when it comes to parenting theories, what is right for one is not necessarily right for another. Many things need to be considered in determining how to raise a child, but for parents to have been determined guilty of “unsubstantiated” charges, is ridiculous. Are the charges real or not? I’m sure this one isn’t over. We’ll be hearing more about this one for sure.

I’m Tom Wiknich, and that’s what I think. If you have any comments about this editorial, or would like to discuss or recommend a topic, I’d like to hear from you. Please email them to info@kzgn.net