

Parents: What is your disaster plan?



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When the power goes out at home what do you do? What about a tornado headed your way? How do you clean up a flooded basement? For many of us that have faced such disasters, we understand how important it is to have a disaster plan. How you deal with disaster in the moment and the days to follow will determine survival and surely how you will address disaster in the future.

Serious question, **"What do you do when disaster strikes at home?"**

Your child lets out a horrific scream, so you hurry into the kitchen to see what has happened. You find they have cut their hand very badly while trying to open one of those impossible plastic boxes that contain their favorite toy inside. The cut is deep and there is blood everywhere. How do you react? What do you do? In shock, you turn and run full speed out the front door, slam the door, get in the car and drive away from home... without your child. Wait. No! That's ridiculous and bad parenting. Parents would never respond to a situation like this, but unfortunately many do when other types of disaster hit the home.

You and your spouse discover one of the following things about your teenager:

- You find a picture of them on social media drinking at a party.
- You see a text message on your son's phone from their girlfriend, "*I'm pregnant*"
- You found evidence of illegal drugs in the house.
- You discovered they are looking at pornography.
- Your child recently _____.

Teenagers do stupid things but the same can be true about parents...

be honest with yourself, you aren't perfect either. Perhaps reacting to a flesh wound or a child throwing up comes second nature to you or your spouse, but how about when you react to your child's rebellious choices? How you respond and react to these disasters will highly impact your relationship with them, both now and in the future.

Do you and your spouse have a disaster plan for the family?

The gravity of this question is real, because it's not a question of if, but when and where will this disaster take place? Here are some things to consider in preparing for the worst so you can react with your best. Discuss and answer these questions with your spouse (or most trusted friend if you are a single parent):

- When disaster strikes, how could you as the parent best react to the worst, but possible scenarios? What will you say, how will you listen?
- Who will you discuss the matter with first? It is important to recognize who your support group will be during a time like this while also respecting the child's privacy.
- Who will you go to for advice on handling this disaster? Will you go to a pastor, a best friend, another parent. A better question to ask is, who do you respect or look up to that would give sound advice?

- What phrase(s) will you use when you find your child in one of these disaster situations? (i.e. *There is nothing you can do that will stop me from loving you. I want to walk through this with you. I want the very best for you.*)
- What kind of consequences will be set in place and for how long?
- What sort of professional help will the parent need and your child need? Is there counseling available through your church?
- What life patterns/schedules in the home will need to change to accommodate this recent disaster? Bedtimes, curfews, phone and internet privileges, a door on the bedroom (privacy parameters). Think beyond consequences, there are simple lifestyle choices and patterns that can be altered to address the disaster.
- How will trust be regained? What does your child need to do or display to regain your trust? How long will that take? You need to make these things known to your child so they understand the gravity of the situation.
- What specific types of disaster do you see impacting your family in the next few years? Take a good look at your child's friend group and other families that have children slightly older than yours, what are they going through?