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# Center for Biblical Counseling Newsletter

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## *How Will We Walk in the Face of Tragedy*

By Rick Polachek Roberts, MA L.P.C.

How many of us ever find ourselves overwhelmed by the waves of life that come crashing over us. Often, we feel we're doing well just to keep them from tearing down all we've worked long and hard to build and maintain - good things like solid families, healthy relationships, rewarding careers. We commit ourselves to living in community and cultivating ground for spiritual growth, trying to give and receive life wherever we can. Then, somewhere out of the blue and without any warning we're hit by a tsunami.

This happened to a friend of ours last week - a hard-working single mom raising her three children as best as she can. The eldest, an 18-year-old daughter, played with fire. Trying to

make some sense of a lonely existence she's lived for years, she ended up making a multitude of foolish choices. The direction she went in led her to people that care as little of life as would some suicide bomber.

It was in the early hours of the morning (a time when many of us are enjoying our most restful sleep). Our friend awoke to clamoring on the door. When she opened it she was hit with words that have the power to steal away one's last breath. "Do you have a daughter; and is her name Jessica ... ?"

Our friend tried to brace herself for what was coming next. Though she knew of nothing that would have held her up under the crushing weight of the devastating news she received. "I'm sorry, ma'am; but your daughter was shot and killed, tonight. She was mixed up in a drug deal that went down a couple of hours ago."

More words followed; but is there anyone that wouldn't go deaf after that? "*Your little girl is dead.*" The shock, the pain, the disorientation - are like a giant wave that comes from behind and sweeps you off your feet, tosses you around and slams you back down on the surf. She's left with her head pounding with confusion, her heart tortured by an unbearable agony and her legs trembling beyond control. What has just washed over her in just a few brief minutes will change the course of her entire life, and that of her younger son and daughter - that she still has to raise.

How we choose to walk the next mile or two with our friend will say a lot about what it is we believe, why we believe and how that belief has shaped our lives.

If our belief, our faith, is not forged in the fires of suffering and hope, pain and joy, death and life - then what we'll have to offer will be no more sustaining than the sand castle washed away by every incoming wave. But if our belief and conviction have been tested, tried and shaped by these fires then it has the capacity to yield both a strong and tender compassion and a hope that can embrace her pain and, yet, see beyond.

How we choose to walk with our friend will depend on what we have done with the pain in our own lives. Has it been an instrument that has drawn us into intimacy with the One that knows all pain, and pain beyond our comprehension? Or has it merely been a mechanism that drives us to bolster our commitment to work even harder and to draw even deeper from the wells of our depleting resources?

In tragedy, God sheds light on the hopeless state of our diminishing resources and on our absolute and unreserved need for Him. Our wells are continually drying up. In his mercy, God shows us how inadequate we are to handle life on our own; especially when the waves come crashing in.

And as He did with His Son, He sends his Spirit to speak hope into our suffering, joy into our pain, and life into our death.

Tragedy, like no other experience, will always invite a heart to awaken to one of its deepest and most profound needs - compassion.

Tragedy has found its way to our friends door. However we choose to walk with her, I sincerely hope that what we embrace her with leaves her tasting and wanting, all the more, that compassion that's found in the warmth of our Father's arms.



## Immediate Response to Trauma

(Adopted from Dr. Marten at Dallas Theological Seminary, 2008)

### For the Victim:

- Have periods of appropriate physical exercises, alternated with relaxation, alleviating some of the physical reactions
  - Structure your time-keep busy
  - You are normal and having normal reactions- don't label yourself crazy
  - Talk to people-talk is a big part of the healing
  - Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol, you don't need to complicate this with a substance abuse problem
  - Reach out- people do care
  - Maintain as normal a schedule as possible
  - Spend time with others
  - Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing
  - Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others
  - Keep a journal, write your way through those sleep-
- less hours
  - Do things that feel good to you
  - Realize those around you are under stress
  - Don't make any big life changes
  - Do make as many daily decisions as possible which will give you a feeling of control over your life
  - Get plenty of rest
  - Reoccurring thoughts, dreams, or flashbacks are normal- don't try to fight them-they'll decrease over time and become less painful
  - Eat well-balanced and regular meals
  - Listen to your favorite music
  - Do something creative- draw, arrange flowers, saw, etc.
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear if they have not asked for help
  - Reassure them that they are safe
  - Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, minding children
  - Give them some private time
  - Don't take their anger or other feelings personally
  - Don't tell them that are "lucky it wasn't worse"- traumatized people are not consoled by those statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them
  - Allow them time to heal. Don't rush them

### For Family Members and Friends:

- Listen carefully
- Spend time with the traumatized person

To schedule a consultation with one of our trained counselors call 214.585.4859 or email us at [info@cbcmckinney.com](mailto:info@cbcmckinney.com).

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**Romans 14:8** "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."

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## Parenting Tip of the Month

As the beginning of school approaches, many parents begin to adjust their children's sleep schedule so that their children are ready for school hours. Often, a parents ask me how much sleep their child needs. Here is a guideline:

**Ages 5 - 9 require about 10 to 11 hours of sleep**

**Ages 10-14 require about 9 to 10 hours of sleep**

Although every child is different, parents are often surprised at the amount of sleep their child needs. For instance, if school begins at 8:30, and it takes one hour to get ready in the morning, a 7 year old child should be **asleep** by about 8:30pm.