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Ministry

# EMERGENCY PREPARATION

“Behold, I have told you in advance.”

Jesus of Nazareth (Matthew 24:25)

A BIBLE-BASED PERSPECTIVE ON

## DEEP SURVIVAL

## PREPARING MENTALLY

## TO ENDURE DURING EMERGENCIES

A Study for Church Leaders

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# Deep Survival

## A STUDY ON MENTAL PREPARATION

**Man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net... so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them** (Ecclesiastes 9:12).

### REFLECTION

An emergency runs a usual course, regardless of how serious it may be, through six different stages:

#### 1. The WARNING Stage

An *emergency-in-the-making* is usually preceded by *warning signs*:  
The *Titanic* had been warned of icebergs in their area.

#### 2. The CRISIS Stage

This is when the emergency is actually *occurring*:  
From the time the *Titanic* hit the iceberg until it sank beneath the waves the crisis was occurring.

#### 3. The DISASTER Stage

The *outcome* of the emergency occurs — or is avoided (DISASTER-AVERTED):  
From the time the *Titanic* sank until the arrival of the rescue ships was the disaster; this is the period when most of the *Titanic*'s passengers died by being exposed to the frigid waters of the North Atlantic. Note that those in the lifeboats avoided that outcome.

#### 4. The CLEAN-UP Stage

This is the *immediate aftermath* (even an averted disaster can have some clean-up):  
This began with the saving of the *Titanic* survivors by the rescue ships, continued during their safe return to first New York harbor and then ultimately to their homelands, and also included the recovery of the *Titanic*'s dead who were found floating (for weeks afterward) and their return for burial.

#### 5. The RESOLUTION Stage

This is the *long-term aftermath*:  
This is also called the Recovery Stage. It often overlaps with the later phases of the Clean-Up Stage. For the *Titanic* disaster this began with the newspaper stories, already searching for, or beginning to assign, blame, and continued through the inquiry hearings, which were doing the same thing. This phase ended with the release of the official verdict and the payment of the last insurance claim. (With the continued interest in the *Titanic*'s sinking, there are those who would argue the Resolution Phase is still on-going.) Note that this stage includes the Post-Emergency Analysis where the causes (and blame) are recognized.

#### 6. The NEXT EMERGENCY PREPARATION Stage

This is the *useful aftermath*:  
The Post-Emergency Analysis is now used to identify future warning signs, and thus avoid similar, yet-to-come emergencies, or to confirm new techniques learned from the past emergency. In the case of the *Titanic*, it was agreed that slower speeds were better for trans-Atlantic ships during iceberg season, and that the Marconi wireless (radio) proved excellent for ship-to-ship communications during emergencies.

## ANALYSIS

Even for those who prepare for future emergency — by seeing the warning signs of what is to come— misfortune can still strike. One should work to resolve it and restore order:

### 1. IDENTIFY THE EMERGENCY

- Things have changed: *What is the new reality?*  
People on the *Titanic* lived in the “old reality” if they still saw the ship as a “luxury passenger liner” taking them to New York; the “new reality” was that it was a “sinking ship” in the middle of the deadly North Atlantic.
- Identify the Pivotal Crisis: *What is the main thing that is wrong? Where is it? Who is affected?*  
For the *Titanic* this was that the ship had hit an iceberg slicing through its hull and it was taking on water. Everybody on board was affected: Those living in the “old reality,” however, were probably worried about other things, such as, with the ship dead in the water, not getting to New York on time.

### 2. STABILIZE THE EMERGENCY

- Identify the level of danger: *What is the extent of the Crisis?*  
The *Titanic* was taking on water—at an alarming rate.
- Act on that information: *What would be useful for me to do **right now**?*  
For the *Titanic*’s officers and crew, closing water-tight doors would be useful (it would at least slow the sinking); for the passengers, *getting to* a lifeboat would be useful.
- Keep the Crisis from spreading (“isolate” it): *Have I intervened (done) enough?*  
The crew of the *Titanic* started pumps to drain the water (to “isolate” the water to only those sections already flooded); they started to *seriously* load lifeboats. For passengers, getting *into* a lifeboat and being set free from the sinking ship now removed (isolated) them from the most immediate danger.
- Don’t get pulled into diversionary paths, i.e. sidetracked: *What is **most** useful now?*  
For the *Titanic*’s crew, to continue serving meals, making beds, disposing of trash, etc., was valueless; all efforts should be at “life-saving.” For the passengers, turning back to get that I-can’t-live-without-it trinket would prove deadly.

### 3. MANAGE THE EMERGENCY

- Always remember: *A Crisis is a Battle!* Treat it accordingly  
The *Titanic* crew *fought* to save the ship.
- Seize control *swiftly*, especially to isolate (keep from spreading) the Crisis  
The *Titanic*’s water-tight doors were shut almost immediately after hitting the iceberg
- Calculate the most direct route to resolving the Crisis  
Closing water-tight doors and starting draining pumps would have usually saved the *Titanic*.
- Always work toward resolving the Crisis, i.e. “returning to normal,” even if you have to change your initial plans (but don’t get sidetracked on less important issues)  
The *Titanic* crew made a valiant attempt at “saving the ship”; when that became impossible and they saw disaster was inevitable, they valiantly attempted to save as many lives as possible (Disaster-Averted); the living would have a “normalcy”—life—that the dead would not have.

## APPLICATION

A person actually willing to respond during an emergency requires a Survivor's Mentality. It has two aspects:

- (1) PREPARATION, actions taken to prevent, or lessen, the impact of an emergency
- (2) CRISIS RESPONSE, actions taken to limit the harmful outcome(s) of an emergency

### PREPARATION

- Preparation is always dependent upon a person's *viewpoint*
  - ♦ The main barrier to overcome is denial
    - Our current and previous experiences tell us that our world will continue as it always has: "It hasn't happened before, therefore it cannot happen."
    - No one wants to think their life is about to come apart before their eyes: "It makes no sense."
    - We cling to what is called *Intentional Blindness*: "It may happen to others, but it *won't* happen to me."
    - There is the rigid know-it-all in all of us, that "voice within" that is so rock-solid certain it knows-all-it-needs-to-know, and *firmly* believes that *nothing* can go wrong
  - ♦ Those who cling to any of these viewpoints rarely prepare: "Oh, *maybe* one day..."
- Surprisingly, emergencies usually don't "just happen"; there are *pre-event cues*
  - ♦ Emergencies usually grow out of a chain of errors and mishaps *over time* (rather than striking like a bolt out of the blue)
  - ♦ Staying attuned to the world you live in assists in identifying those "chains of events" as they occur, thus warning you of the coming emergency; military and law enforcement agencies refer to this "staying aware" as *intelligence* operations
  - ♦ Persons who see their world clearly, see it changing for the worse, then begin to see the "new reality"
  - ♦ Those who actually adapt to the new reality are willing to change their behavior, and thus prepare for the emergency they see looming in the near distance.
  - ♦ Those who choose intentional blindness or otherwise ignore warning signs are at peril.
- Preparation requires an *Emergency Plan*
  - ♦ When systems start to fail, causing an emergency – especially an emergency leading to a catastrophic disaster – there is usually little, if any, time to work up a plan; *pre-planning is a must*
    - Ask, "What is the worst thing that could happen?" and then plan accordingly for that "unthinkable" emergency
    - Always remember Job: There is no law of the universe that says one bad thing cannot be followed immediately by several more, and even worse, things – think *worse* case scenario
    - Those who do not plan accordingly probably won't "know what hit them" when the emergency arrives
  - ♦ Preparation should be physical (pre-positioned supplies), psychological (mentally braced), and spiritual (there *is* a God, and you'll one day have to give an account of your actions; start to trust Him *now*)

### CRISIS RESPONSE

- The usual first reaction to an emergency is *fear*
  - ♦ Fear affects you because it causes a chemical reaction in the brain
    - the chemicals stop "regular thinking," which is done through electrical currents among brain cells, causing confusion, hesitation, surprise
    - you have the terrifying notion that the world no longer makes sense
    - your thinking becomes, at best, "clouded"; in the extreme, you can't think at all
    - you react under the influence of the chemicals: "emotionally" – without thinking (What *was* I thinking?)...
    - if you think at all, you will "subconsciously" fall back on any previous "training," i.e. preparation for an emergency
    - if you do, you become very focused, but unaware of what is happening beyond that focus (i.e. on the "sides," the periphery)
  - ♦ It takes mental energy – concentration – to overcome these chemicals and get the brain to act "electrically" – to begin *thinking*
  - ♦ Life or death often hangs in the balance depending on how quickly you can go from "chemical" to "electrical"
  - ♦ It has been found a "quick prayer" offered up – getting the focus off of you – gets those electrical impulses started!
  - ♦ Survivors are not fear-less; they are just individuals who have been able to bring their fear under control

- Once fear is controlled, a survivor ***adapts***
  - ◆ Survival is adaptation to change, adjusting to the “new reality”
  - ◆ The secret is to meet adversity head-on, which usually requires a previously gained mental toughness, (*at the least*, an awareness of the material presented in this study).
  - ◆ The best survivor spends no time getting upset about the change; there is no complaint about “what has been lost,” or whining, “Why me?”
  - ◆ Survivors are attuned to subtle cues, the whisper of intuition – *that still, quiet voice of the Holy Spirit* – which might be saying, *You are not safe here*, or *You should go **this** way*; a cue that requires spiritual preparation
  - ◆ There are many ways of adapting in hazardous situations. *Training* is one of them: That one has previously anticipated an emergency means he or she is not paralyzed when it occurs.
  - ◆ It has been found “rule followers” don’t do as well as the independent minded; rigid people can be dangerous people.
  - ◆ Similarly, if you try to make reality conform to your expectations rather than see what is really happening, you will most likely get hurt, or in the extreme, die – or cause it to happen to someone else
- At the moment of crisis you need to ***act*** – but not hastily
  - ♣ ***Stop*** for a moment (or longer, if you have the luxury to do so; possibly offer up a prayer) – don’t act on emotion!
  - ♣ Actually take time to ***observe*** what is going on around you; even under extreme conditions you can do this in milli-seconds – gathering information will allow your *thinking* process to begin to override your emotions
  - ♣ As you begin to think, to the best of your ability – based on your current, immediate information – develop a ***plan***
  - ♣ ***Act*** on that plan – *decisively* – fully believing you *will* succeed
    - at least 75 percent of people freeze, wander in a daze (acting incorrectly), or go into denial
    - their chances of being hurt – or dying – are high
    - acting decisively means the only thought you can allow yourself concerns your next correct action
- Throughout the emergency you have to maintain a ***positive mental attitude***
  - ◆ Your “survival kit” is really inside of you at the moment of emergency; the crisis will bring out the true you, therefore...
  - ◆ Count your blessings: You are still alive! So *always* continue to trust in God – build up that trust *before* the crisis
  - ◆ See the glass as half-full: That attitude doesn’t magically appear under stress; it has to be developed beforehand
  - ◆ Always remain calm: giving in to your emotions will *not* resolve the problem; it will probably make it worse
  - ◆ Celebrate any success, no matter how small; it will create an attitude of motivation and will dispel hopelessness
  - ◆ Maintain a sense of humor, which, again, needs to be developed before the emergency begins; it keeps you humble
  - ◆ Learn how to play (games, crosswords, music, etc.): a “playful” mind finds release from strain – and stays positive
  - ◆ Also, when you get a chance, take refuge in happy past memories; it mentally helps you regroup and gain energy
  - ◆ Pray often.
    - It has been shown that successful survivors pray – even when they didn’t believe in God!
    - There is something of value in offering up your needs, worries, sins, and goals in a focused prayerful attitude
    - And it helps keep one humble
  - ◆ Look at the emergency as a time to minister: you are now a rescuer, not a victim
  - ◆ A survivor must bind in his heart the Rock of Hope: *With Jesus **anything** is possible!*
  - ◆ Recognize survival as ultimately the celebration of choosing life over death, regardless of the crisis’ difficulty:
 

Therefore, stand firm [and be content] in the knowledge you have done your all in the face of such adversity (Ephesians 6:13b, paraphrased) – and in doing so, you have chosen life!