



Emergencies & Our Children - May 2007

Last week I was invited to be on a radio program from Minnesota with a host that was terrific. (I really enjoy being on the radio.) However, it was the day after the terrible shooting at Virginia Tech and he asked me a question that was difficult to answer. He asked me how the students should have been better prepared and what could the school officials have done to have prevented such a horrible tragedy. What could their parents have told them to prepare them for such a disaster?

Have you ever been asked a question that triggered a memory from the past? That's what happened during that interview.

There is no way that I could read the minds of the school officials. What a horrible experience to live through. However at that moment I remembered a talk that I had with my then, 14 year old son Josh as he was getting ready to go to San Francisco with his dad and grandfather to see a Giants Baseball Game.

I realized that I had never sat down and talked with him about what to do in case of an emergency if he was away from home. Up to that point in his life he had always traveled with family members, and although he was still going to be with his father and grandfather, his grandfather was very old and weak from a recent stroke. It was a gut feeling that I needed to follow.

I explained to him that from that day on, he needed to be aware that emergencies happen when we least expect them and that he must learn how to think his way through it and not give up. It's also just fine to be afraid, but not let the fear keep you from getting help and getting home. What I told him did not alarm him because he already knew that San Francisco was known for earthquakes. His great-grandparents lost everything in the 1906 earthquake.

During our 15 minute discussion I mentioned that in case there was a car accident, earthquake, fire, or any other type of incident, if he could walk, talk and use his brain, he could get home safely. How simplistic was that! I explained to him that some day he might face a situation where Dad and I were not around and as long as he was not injured, he could use his brains to think and his feet to walk or run for help and get to a safe place.

My son is now 28 years old and if you bring up that "talk" he still remembers what happened, and is amazed at the timing of that conversation. You see, he went on the trip to Candlestick Park with his dad and grandfather. They had a great time and there were no concerns for his safety at all. In fact he came running into the house and immediately told me that I really had "nothing to worry about". However, that following week he and I were watching the World Series on TV and all of a sudden the screen went dark. There had just been an earthquake in San Francisco.

When the television station finally came back up and the news announcer explained about the earthquake, my son's face went white and he looked at me and said "Mom, how'd you know that was going to happen"? I just told him that Mom's have a direct line to God and to this day I hope he still believes that is true! (smile)

After living through the 50's and the monthly air-raid sirens and drills, I suppose I have grown up knowing that emergency planning is important. Both of my children have told me in the recent past that I scared them to death, talking about nuclear war and emergency preparedness. I'm a good mom... just a bit overzealous at times, hahaha! But my kids have forgiven me and yet in case of an emergency, I know they will use their brains, use their feet, and find a way to survive.

Last month I gave you the link to "How To Build a Getaway Bag". I believe that everyone in your family needs to pack a bag...even your children. The directions are in a PDF file at: <http://www.mylifeinabox.com/getaway.pdf> Introducing children to planning their "Getaway Bag" is simple. Make it a part of your family plan. If they learn early, it will become a part of their normal adult life. Then, every three months, mark your calendar and have the whole family change the clothing in the bags according to the season.

Now, for you college kids and any young adults. I suggest that you pack a bag and make sure that if you hear any news about shooting on you campus or in your apartment complex or neighborhood, be safe, think, and get out of the area as soon as it is safe.

I daily pray for those families in Virginia and know that God will meet them in their grief. Also this week, after hearing about the gasoline tanker blowing up part of the Bay Bridge near San Francisco, I sent up a prayer of thanks that no one was injured.

If you have heard me on the radio, I always try to say the following words...and I seriously mean it....

I am not Chicken Little, running around telling everyone that the sky is falling. I love my life, and wake up happy every morning. I can do that because I know that I am prepared for just about any type of disaster or emergency and I can get out of my home in five minutes with everything I need to rebuild my life.

Contact information for Laurie Ecklund Long
AGL Publishing
Email: aglpub@mylifeinabox.com
Website: www.mylifeinabox.com
Telephone: 559-325-6679

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