

# *Beyond Disaster*

## A SURVIVOR'S GUIDE FOR SPIRITUAL FIRST AID

*Beyond Disaster* is a booklet developed by the Trauma Healing Institute. It contains many of the concepts used in *Healing the Wounds of Trauma: How the Church Can Help*, but it was created for a specific purpose. It is a stand-alone booklet designed to encourage people who are currently going through a crisis or have just recently gone through one. This could be an epidemic like a coronavirus, other natural disasters such as an earthquake, tsunami, hurricane, flood, or fire, or even events caused by people.

The booklet contains an introduction called “Start Here” and six chapters. All seven sections contain helpful information, Scripture passages, and reflection questions. Several of the lessons also contain activities that can be done as a group or individually during the week before the next meeting.

### HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET?

You can read this booklet and **reflect on it on your own**, but the experience will be even more helpful if you are able to go through it with a friend or small group.

During this time of “shelter in place” (staying at home), you can study it in family these lessons which will be offered to you once a week for 7 weeks.

The first needs that are usually met in a crisis are physical—such as having enough food, clean water, shelter, and, in epidemics, face masks, disinfectants, and medical care. However, people’s emotional and spiritual needs are just as important and also need to be addressed. This booklet is designed for Christians to begin addressing their fears, doubts, and emotions. That is why we call this “spiritual first aid.” Using this booklet can help people begin to recover emotionally and spiritually from trauma they have experienced.

If you have survived a disaster, this booklet can help you with **practical ways** to care for yourself and your loved ones. It also can help you recover emotionally and spiritually from the trauma you experienced.

*The Bible passages in this booklet can be a source of comfort and hope as you go through the process of healing.*

### **If you’re feeling overwhelmed and not ready to interact with this booklet,**

Start with the practical tips in the very first lesson, the introductory one (Lesson 0). These are the best ways people have found to deal with shock. Save the rest until you are ready.

*Prior to reading lesson 0 together, share the following section:*

**Say ( Group leader)**—I’m going to read a list of some normal reactions to trauma.

Each person responds to traumatic experiences differently. Here are some normal reactions you may have. They will often go away with time:

- You may find that your heart begins to pound fast and you breathe fast. You may have headaches and stomachaches. You may feel shaky or exhausted.
- You may have trouble sleeping or have no appetite.
- You may be confused and not be able to concentrate or make good decisions.
- You may feel anxious, overwhelmed, or depressed. You may blame yourself for what happened. You may be irritable and angry.
- You may want to be alone.
- You may try to avoid how you are feeling (for example, spend too much time on social media, use alcohol, work non-stop, overeat, and so forth).
- You may do things that, in the end, will bring you harm, like smoking, drinking alcohol or using drugs, or spending more than you can afford.
- You may have accidents.

**Discussion:** After reading through the above information, you as the leader might want to begin by sharing something that you have experienced during the crisis. This will help others be more comfortable to share.

**Ask:** Would any of you like to share about what you have been feeling? *Allow for sharing.*

### **Leading the lesson**

- Ask different members to read the lesson aloud.
- As you read through the list of basic practices, ask members to share about personal experiences related to the list. Do they have other good ideas to share?

*(Remember to ask questions and allow folks to share)*

- Discuss the “For Reflection” questions.
- Ask members to share other Scripture verses that have encouraged them.

**Closing**—Prayer and song.

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**DISCLAIMER:** This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, or cure any disease, disorder, or mental health condition. It is written to assist those who have experienced loss as a result of natural or human-caused disasters. If you use this product, you show that you understand this.

## INTRODUCTORY LESSON ( LESSON 0)

Your world may have turned upside down. Here are some basic practices that will help you recover more quickly.

- Do your best to take care of your body, by trying to eat well, get enough sleep, and exercise. If you have trouble sleeping, getting more exercise or doing more physical work during the day may help reduce stress and allow you to sleep better.
- Look for ways to connect with others, even if you feel like being alone. It will help you recover. Isolation will slow your recovery.
- Be willing to ask for help if you need it, and to accept the help that is offered.
- Reestablish routines where you can, especially with children. This reduces the feelings of chaos the disaster created.
- Complete small projects and tasks. This can help restore some sense of control and order.
- Avoid making major decisions, as much as possible. Be aware of how you are using alcohol, sleep aids, or other things to cope.

After a disaster, you may not want to pray or read the Bible for a while. Don't let that add to your worries. It is a normal reaction and does not mean that you have lost your faith. Other people will pray for you, and God understands, as the verse below reminds us. Give yourself time to recover.

*Just as parents are kind  
to their children, the LORD  
is kind to all who worship  
him, because he knows  
we are made of dust.*

**Psalm 103:13–14 CEV**

You may have many practical problems and fewer resources than you had before the disaster. It can be hard to think clearly after a disaster. Your situation may feel hopeless and the way you would like to solve your problems may not be possible right now.

As you try to resolve the many problems you are facing, it may help to discuss the following questions with someone. This can help you to think through your options and plan your next steps.

### For Reflection

- What resources do you have?
- What have you already tried? What was helpful or not helpful?
- What are some other things you could try?
- Who might be able to help you, even a little bit?
- What seems like the most helpful next step?