To Rescue or Not, That is the Question
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During the high school years, young adults are moving from a state of
dependence and total reliance to independence and self-reliance. This transition
for many parents and adolescents is fraught with uncertainty and trepidation.
This is because there is a negotiation taking place in which both parties are
dialoguing about who will do what and when.
“Josh, you’ll do your laundry from now on. It’s time to get in the habit of taking
care of your own laundry”
“No way mom! You’ve been doing it all my life! I don’t need practice”

“Julie, just remember that when you are away at college, you cannot overdraft
your college account, it costs $35.00! (4 weeks later)
“Hi dad, I swear I didn’t mean it, but I saw some cute earrings and before I knew
it, I used my debit card. Anyway, I see the bank is charging me an overdraft! I
need you to take care of it.”

Everyone makes mistakes. Some mistakes cost more than others. The cost of
mistakes is not only in financial terms, but also in terms of responsibility and
accountability. Parents often have to work through decisions about what they are
willing to do and make up for in their adolescents’ lives. It is often unclear as to
which way a parent should go. The question is – should I (the parent) take care of
this problem, or should I let my son or daughter take care of the problem, or is
there some way I can help my adolescent work through the problem? Here are
some things to think about as you find yourself in this decision making spot:

1. Is this a minor but irritating event? (Socks on the floor)
2. If yes, then how many times am I willing to take care of the problem, and
what does that communicate to my young adult? (That they can’t take
care of small things? That they should be a “taker” and not a “giver” in our
family?)
3. If no, then is this major event a first time offense? (Bank overdraft,
speeding ticket, failing final grade, drinking or drug use) If it is a first time
event, how can I stay calm, and talk to my son/daughter about the
sequence of thoughts and choices they had before they made that
decision? How can I help them understand the seriousness of the event
and help them think of ways they can guard against it happening again?
4. If this is a repeated major event, what are the pros and cons of helping my
adolescent? Can I seek help from outside resources to join together with
me to advocate for my adolescent’s plan of care? Will school officials, or
law enforcement, or therapists or physicians or church leaders join
together to help my adolescent get back on track? What are all my
options? Where can I go to get some help?
As parents, it is very hard to watch our children struggle. It is hard to watch them in pain. If it is unclear, we need to ask for help and talk to others. All in all, we need to make all of our thoughts captive to Christ. We need God's help and His mind as we make decisions, always remembering that we are preparing our children to launch into the world. If we do all the work for them, we create incompetence. Let them work it out. Let them work with you to work it out.

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