

Ministering to Members (and Non-Members) with Short-Term Needs

Workshop

Developed for the OPC Diaconal Summit II, 2012

by Bill Snodgrass, Grace Fellowship, PA

*Instructional design and production by PRH Consulting Inc., Wheaton IL, USA
All materials are © 2012 Orthodox Presbyterian Church, USA All Rights Reserved.*



Workshop Introduction

Agenda

-
- Introduction
 - Short-Term Needs and Why They are an Important Part of Diaconal Ministry
 - Cases
 - Case Debrief
 - Summary



Workshop Introduction, *continued*

Workshop Overview

Help deacons provide comfort and assistance to members (or others) with Short-Term needs.

By the end of this workshop you will be able to:

- Evaluate a short-term request for needs
- Determine the Biblical principles behind the decision on how to respond to short-term needs
- Determine how your board should approach and communicate regarding these situations

Notes



The Nature of Short-Term Needs

What are Short-Term Needs?

Short-term needs arise in situations where individuals have a situation where they are hoping to receive assistance at the time of their request. These needs

- Are typically financial
- Involve smaller dollar amounts
- Address an immediate problem
- Typically require a response right away

Many times, especially with non-members, short-term needs often come with only minimal background information.

An exception could be responding to a disaster, which may require mobilizing a number of individuals for a short time to help with clean-up/recovery.

Notes



The Biblical Basis for Ministering to Short-Term Needs

Biblical Basis

Scripture provides a number of examples and principles for addressing the needs around us.

- To whom should we minister?
- How should we respond to needs?

Gal 6:10



“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Luke 10:30 - 36



“...which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?”

Notes



The Biblical Basis for Ministering to Short-Term Needs, *continued*

Expectation

Sometimes people have made choices that contribute to, or even cause, their problems. Sometimes it is simply a trial an individual is going through. Once we provide assistance, is it appropriate for us to set expectations for how the recipient responds?

- Should we expect appreciation? Should we expect the individual to change?
- Should we provide limits on how the assistance should be used?
- Can we expect to further the relationship?

Ephesians 4: 28



"Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. "

This verse shows that the Bible does encourage people to work. It is a good measuring stick to use when someone is arguing we should help someone who is not willing to work. Note: it is also speaking of believers (see v. 17 – "no longer Gentiles" and v. 25 "members one of another...")

1 Timothy 5: 5-6



"She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives."

This verse suggests that it is legitimate to inquire about other resources (e.g., family) that are available to the case. And, that piety is also a consideration. (Note: This verse is applicable to members – but is the principle somewhat transferable to non-members? Should we not also evaluate their resources and attitude?)

Notes



Mercy and Proper Stewardship

Members and Non-Members

Your response will likely vary depending on your relationship to the person making the request.

- While we do fact-finding with both members and non-members, we have a relationship with members of the church that allows us to do verification on a different level.
- Regardless of member or non-member, each case is unique (background and response), highlighting the importance of listening and discernment.



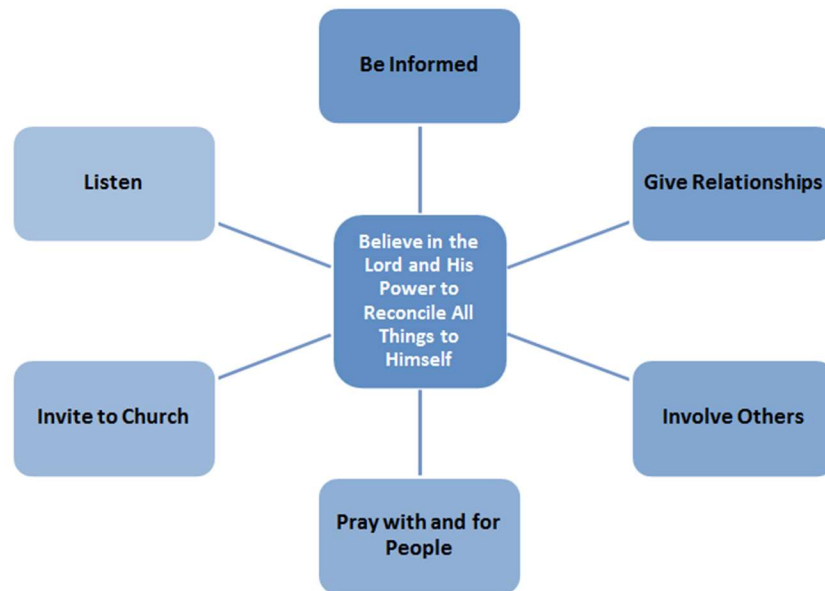
In either case, you will want to be looking for signs of potential slothfulness, deception, or a longer-term problem under the surface.

Notes

Practical Application

Members and Non-Members

Below is a model for how we can apply the Biblical principles as we minister to individuals with short-term needs.



Source: Christ the King Presbyterian Church (PCA) Raleigh, NC (permission granted by David Spickard, Jobs-for-Life at www.jobsforlife.org)

On the following page are additional descriptions of each area in the model.



Practical Application

Application Model, continued

Listen well and treat others with respect	Recognize all of us, including those who approach us or whom we see in need, are image bearers of God and should be treated with respect and dignity. Sometimes, the biggest need the poor and homeless have is to be treated like people. Don't assume the person wants money—they may simply want a relationship. You should be able to determine this quickly. Introduce yourself and ask the person their name when they approach you for assistance. That can diffuse the situation. Permit yourself the opportunity to learn more about them and a proper response of respect, love, and with care.
Be informed. Good News!	There are resources all across your city and many in close proximity to where the people are in need. In many cases, those who approach you know of these resources, but for your benefit, cards should be available so that you can hand them out listing the available resources in your community. Consider finding out more about these places by engaging your deacons and investigating them yourselves. You can even invite them to your meetings to have them explain their purpose and mission. Continue to expand your list of services and review them often so that every board member is aware of them.
Never give money, give relationship instead	Giving money does not address the underlying problem and can often make the individual's situation worse. Decide within your own board if you want to take this firm position. Buying bus tickets, buying groceries or providing access to food closets, paying the landlord, paying the electric bill, etc. are practical and appropriate. Also, instead of responding to an immediate request for money or food, consider offering relationships instead.
Involve someone else	You don't have to become a one-man aid agency. In most cases, it may be most helpful to reach out to other deacons on your board. You may reach out to other individuals in the church to gain wisdom and personal help. You can also involve other organizations in your church as well as other churches in your community.
Always pray with and for people	Follow the example of Peter and John in Acts 3. We may not have what they want, but we have what they need. Never underestimate the power of praying with and for people. Be prepared as well to read scripture with them. Ask them if they know and like a single Bible text. Read it with them. If not, offer one that may be appropriate for their situation and time of despair.
Invite them to church	One of the advantages and opportunities we have as a church (as opposed to individuals who happen to be approached and get asked for money) is that we have been blessed with much. We have our own church community of support as well as a loving heavenly Father that always presses our levels of comfort. If your church is quite removed from the person's home, develop and utilize a transportation ministry. Develop relationships with other churches, with their boards and their members which may be of greater proximity to those seeking help. But don't forget them! Follow-up with them.
Believe the Lord and His power to reconcile all things to Himself	One of the greatest challenges we will have is to see people beyond their current circumstances and believe that the Lord can really change and transform their lives. In the process we might find out that the encounter we have with them is less about what God wants to do with them and more about what He wants to do for us.

Case Exercise

Short-Term Case Overview

The cases that follow provide an opportunity to evaluate and decide the appropriate level of assistance to provide in a short-term need situation.

You will not have all the information you need – but in actual short-term situations that is often the norm.

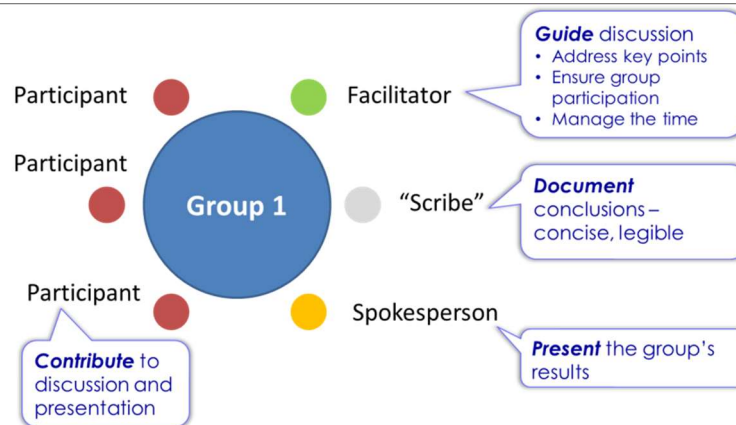
There are five different cases – your group should be able to review and make a decision on all of them. After individual group work, we will discuss each case. The key question to answer for each case is:

“What assistance are you going to provide for the case and how are you going to tell them”

Instructions

1. Break into groups of five to seven people. Locate the case the facilitator assigns to your group. Imagine you are a board of Deacons in a local church.
2. Take a minute to read the first case. Then, discuss the case and list questions you would like answered or information you would like to obtain in order to help with your decision.
3. Obtain the “answers” from the workshop facilitator. (The “answers” may or may not address everything you wanted to find out – which happens with real cases too.)
4. Decide on the assistance you are willing to offer and how you will communicate the decision to the case.
5. Move on to the next case if there is time.
6. Reconvene with the full workshop group to discuss the results.

Roles





Case 1 Debrief: **Stan**

Situation Summary

Follow-up Questions/ Information Needed

Decision

☐

Provide Assistance

☐

Do not Provide Assistance

What You Will Communicate to the Individual

Biblical Basis

Notes



Case 2 Debrief: **Stella**

Situation Summary

Follow-up Questions/ Information Needed

Decision

☐

Provide Assistance

☐

Do not Provide Assistance

What You Will Communicate to the Individual

Biblical Basis

Notes



Case 3 Debrief: **Sterling**

Situation Summary

Follow-up Questions/ Information Needed

Decision

☐

Provide Assistance

☐

Do not Provide Assistance

What You Will Communicate to the Individual

Biblical Basis

Notes



Case 4 Debrief: **Tom**

Situation Summary

Follow-up Questions/ Information Needed

Decision

☐

Provide Assistance

☐

Do not Provide Assistance

What You Will Communicate to the Individual

Biblical Basis

Notes



Case 5 Debrief: **Paula**

Situation Summary

Follow-up Questions/ Information Needed

Decision

☐

Provide Assistance

☐

Do not Provide Assistance

What You Will Communicate to the Individual

Biblical Basis

Notes



Case 6 Debrief: **Donnie and Dawn**

Situation Summary

Follow-up Questions/ Information Needed

Decision

☐

Provide Assistance

☐

Do not Provide Assistance

What You Will Communicate to the Individual

Biblical Basis

Notes



Workshop Summary

Short-Term Cases

- Short-term needs can present a challenge (and seeming distraction) to your diaconal ministry
- How you address these needs reflects on the church, as well as stewardship

Tips

- ❑ **Get aligned** (in advance) within your diaconal board on parameters for responding to these requests
- ❑ **Communicate** your approach to pastors or others who may interact with these cases
- ❑ Keep a **database**
- ❑ **Verify**, ask questions, be patient
- ❑ Remember the **spiritual** dimension

Notes



References and Resources

Recommended Readings

For further study, either individually or with your Deacon board as a group, consider the following sources.

Title	Author(s)
"Report of the Committee to Study the Principles of Diaconal Ministry"	OPC website, from the 51st General Assembly, 1984
"Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road"	Timothy Keller, 1989