

Meeting the Needs of People in Crisis

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Crisis hits all people at some time in life. When crisis strikes, people need help. If your church is organized with ministry leaders and teams, you're on track for meeting needs when crisis strikes.

The first step is get ministry leaders and teams together to discuss how to take appropriate action.

Some questions that might need to be answered include:

- Has anyone made contact with the person or family?
- What needs have been identified?
- What is the most immediate need?
- What needs can be dealt with later today or in the coming week?
- Who is responsible for coordinating ministry efforts?
- How many people need to be involved in meeting the need?
- What assignments need to be given, and to whom?
- What resources are required to meet this need?
- What long-term needs should we consider and plan for?

Crises are not always tragic and negative. Some are exciting and fulfilling, such as the birth of a child or a child's graduation from high school or college. But every crisis is a turning point, a time when friends and fellow Christians should respond in appropriate ways to meet specific needs. In meeting needs, we let them know that Jesus cares for them as well.

Before jumping into the middle of a crisis, make sure you are prepared. Some well-meaning efforts have created more harm than good when the people responding create confusion or fail to say or do the right thing. Here are some tips for how to respond effectively during a crisis.

Dos

- Be a good listener.
- Have a loving, accepting attitude.
- Attempt to help in practical ways.
- Ask what specific things you can do to help.
- Just be there and say: I just wanted to be with you at this time because I care.
- Provide spiritual support.
- Read appropriate, encouraging Scripture passages and pray with people whenever possible.
- Coordinate your efforts with others who may be providing assistance.
- Know your skills and limitations.

Don'ts

- Don't judge or attempt to interpret what is being said.
- Don't take over a crisis situation unless asked.
- Don't divulge confidences.
- Don't say, "I know how you feel."
- Don't try to defend God or explain why circumstances happen.
- Don't offer help you cannot provide.
- Don't offer specialized help that you are not equipped to give.
- Don't get in the way of emergency personnel.

A good rule of thumb may be something this simple: Do unto others as we would have them do unto you. The Golden Rule can be a two-way street, too, as we never know when crisis will come into our own homes.