

Ministering to Members with Long- Term Needs

Workshop

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Ministering to Members with Long-Term Needs

Agenda

Intent: Help deacons provide comfort and assistance to members with long-term needs.

- Introduction
- Long-Term Needs
- Biblical Principles and Capabilities Needed to Minister to Long-Term Needs
- Resources for Long-Term Needs
- Cases and Debrief
- Summary



Workshop Introduction

Workshop Overview

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

- Identify **examples** of long-term needs
- Describe the **impact** of long-term needs on the individual, the congregation, and the deacons
- Identify **resources** (from the church and the community) that may be available to help
- Create **strategies** for ministering to members with long-term needs
- **Lead** the congregation in ministering to members with long-term needs

Notes



What are Long-Term Needs?

Definition

Long-term needs are any needs that are reasonably likely to continue for eighteen months or longer. They are rarely only physical needs – many have deep, hidden causes. They may not be immediately visible.

Examples of long-term needs may include

- Physical disability or illness
- Mental disability or illness
- Emotional problems
- Addiction
- Poverty or debt
- Severe accident
- Loss of work for extended period of time
- Prison
- Divorce

Long term needs may have a wide range of causes

- Misfortune
- Environmental factors (e.g., the economy)
- Sin

Implications

Long-term needs are difficult to resolve – many will **never** be resolved. They present unique and difficult challenges deriving from potential discouragement and drain on resources. They can be

- Difficult for the individual – long-term needs can be discouraging
- Difficult for deacons – continuous demand on time and attention
- Difficult for the congregation – maintain support over a long time frame

Challenges

The primary challenges deacons face regarding long-term needs are

- Identifying these needs
- Supporting the individual
- Keeping the congregation's attention

Notes



Deacon Responsibilities Re: Long-Term Needs

Biblical Basis

Scripture has always taught concern for the poor and needy.

Lev 23: 22



This verse emphasizes the needs of the poor. In particular, it lays out principles for this ministry:

- Share your blessings
- Don't provide "hand-outs"

1 John 3:17



This verse emphasizes the importance of considering the needs of our brothers. One key principle is that our generosity to those in need is a reflection of God's love in us.

1 Ti 5: 3-16



Scripture does provide some guidance in ministering to the poor – we are directed to use judgment along with mercy. Key principles are that deacons (and others) should

- Consider the recipients' ability and resources for helping themselves
- Consider attitude, membership in the church

Notes



Importance of Addressing Long-Term Needs

“Wholeness” in Mercy Ministries

Ultimately, people have both spiritual and physical needs and both are important for their overall health and participation in the kingdom of God.

Often financial assistance is needed. But often that is not the only, or even most important, need. Counseling and emotional support require time and personal commitment (and sometimes, specialized expertise) that can be difficult to find or sustain over time.



Consider how we can seek true “wholeness” for the individual or family with which we are working

Notes



Need for Biblical Wisdom

Proverbs 15: 22



Most (or all) long-term needs require practical assistance and counseling – Deacons need a range of gifts and skills for this ministry.

- Honesty
- Sensitivity
- Objectivity
- Patience

The Proverbs verse highlights the importance of wisdom and, in particular, the wisdom that can be derived from working cooperatively with other deacons (and even the session, in some situations).



For additional reading on this topic, see also “Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands” by Paul Tripp.

Notes



Helping, Not Hurting

Proverbs: 12:26



With long-term needs, it is often difficult to achieve rehabilitation. It can be tempting to provide the immediate relief but “drop the ball” on getting the individual restored to independence. In some cases, the Deacons need to consider how their actions, intended to help, may inadvertently bring about harm to the individual. Often, it is important to ensure that the individual has “skin in the game” and is responsible for taking steps to help themselves in order to prevent an over-dependence on aid. It can become a difficult balancing act to help people without hurting them.

Try to...

- Help
- Guide
- Coach

While Avoiding...

- Dependency
- Directing
- Doing



For additional reading on this topic, see also “When Helping Hurts” by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert and “Resources for Deacons” by Tim Keller.

Notes



Addressing the Root Cause

I Timothy 3: 8 - 10



Deacons must take the time to understand the full situation of the individual we are trying to assist. It requires listening to the stated and unstated needs, concerns, and attitudes in order to get to the root cause(s). The individual may have been struggling for a long time before approaching the deacons. And, they may wish to hide information or “spin” what they tell you in order to avoid confronting personal blame.

To uncover underlying issues, Deacons need:

- Patience
- Wisdom
- Sympathy, empathy
- Communication skills/develop relationships



The work of a Deacon depends more on Godly character than an individual Deacon's personal capabilities.

Notes



Engaging the Church with Discretion

Matthew 6: 2 - 4



To meet long-term needs, especially those requiring significant resources (e.g., people, time, dollars) it may be appropriate for the deacons to engage more of the church in the ministry. This can be a challenge for deacons that are unaccustomed to delegating or leading. To effectively engage additional members in the ministry, Deacons need to:

- Know member gifts
- Involve the case in deciding what can be shared
- Share details cautiously

Part of the challenge of a deacon is stewardship of a finite set of resources available within the church. In some cases, it is better stewardship to bring in outside resources, as long as the ministry isn't compromised.

As in all diaconal work, it is critical to maintain appropriate confidentiality. For instance, you may share more with an elder than with members at large. And, you should have the case's permission before sharing information with other members.

Notes

Resources

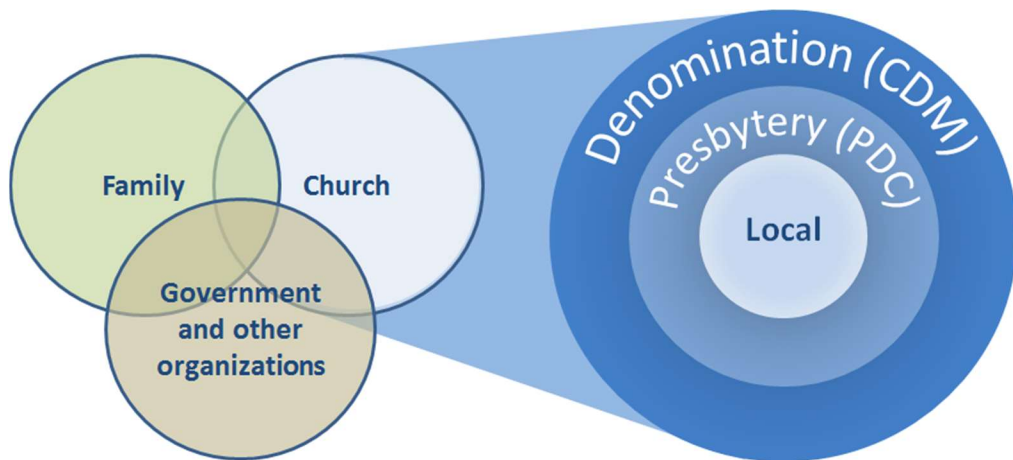
Resources

There are a number of places the deacon can look for additional resources, depending on the type of need.

Clearly, scripture supports looking to the individual and their family as the first and primary source. But often those resources are insufficient (or have previously been depleted before the deacons even got involved). And families are less a resource today, as more are broken or geographically distributed.

There are community and government resources that may be appropriate for certain types of needs.

And, there are levels of resources within the church, depending on the type and scope of the need.



See also “Resources for Deacons” by Tim Keller.

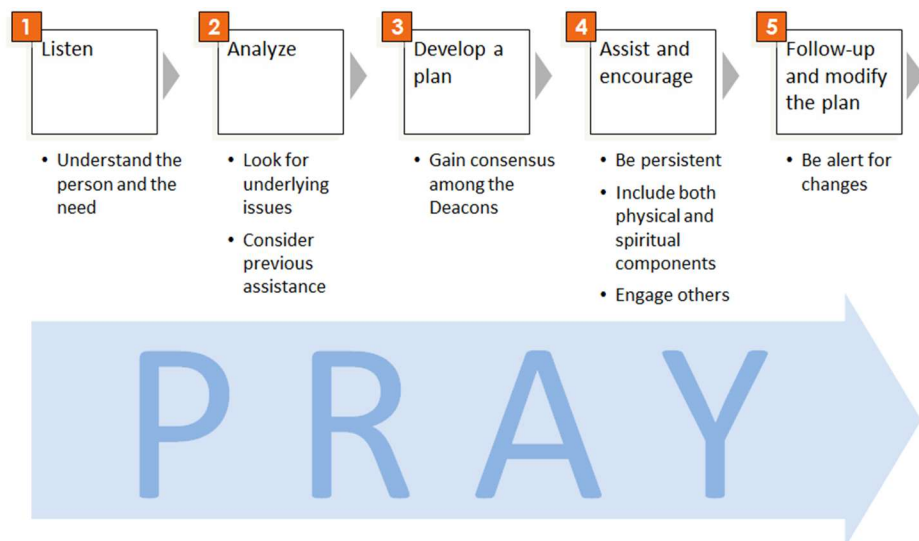
Notes

Creating a Plan

Creating a Plan

Whenever possible, deacons should work together to address the needs that arise. It is especially important for long-term needs when a significant amount of time and energy are being committed to and expended on the case.

If possible, a long term plan should be defined (whether formally on paper, in minutes, or just by verbal agreement) for the support to be provided by the body of deacons. This plan may target eventual independence or simply define a set of near-term actions being undertaken for the case. It is critical that it is undergirded by prayer.



Remember not to lose sight of what God is doing in the lives of the individual **and** the deacon(s) ministering to him/her.



There will always be progress...and often set-backs. Keep perspective when things don't always go according to the plan.

Notes



Case Exercise

Long-Term Needs Case Overview

The cases that follow provide an opportunity to apply the Biblical principles described earlier in long-term need situations that may resemble those you will encounter. The intent is to practice discussing the case with a group of deacons to arrive at a support plan that is agreeable to the deacons while complying with Biblical principles.

Just like when dealing with actual people, there is no one “right answer” – focus on determining what the situation calls for and why. This will help prepare you for actual situations that may occur with long-term needs in your local ministry.

There are four different cases – your group will work on only ONE of them. After the individual groups have created an initial plan, we will reconvene with the entire workshop group and discuss each case.

The key question to answer for your case is:

“What should we do...and why?”

Instructions

1. Break into groups of five to seven people.
2. Imagine you are a board of Deacons in a local church.
3. You will receive a hand-out from the Workshop Facilitator describing the case situation. Take a few minutes to read and consider the information.
4. Discuss the situation, your options, and relevant Biblical principles
5. Decide on action steps (including follow-up) you would take.
6. Discuss how you will communicate your plan to the case.
7. Reconvene with the full workshop group to discuss the results

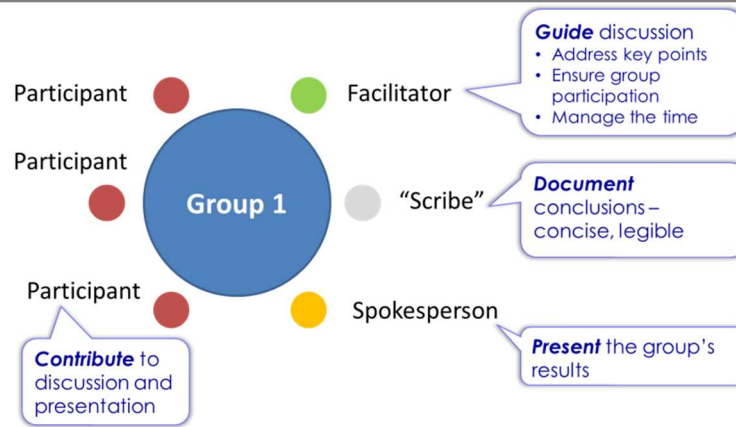


Case Exercise, *continued*

Tips

- Refer to the presentation for Biblical principles and scripture references.
- Use the flipchart easel to record your results.
- You may not have sufficient information to make a firm decision. You can either make assumptions or identify the information you would collect before making your decision. Either way, document your decision(s) and the rationale for them.
- If you are unable to reach consensus, note the primary views and rationale for discussion with the full group.
- To help the discussion to move forward productively, consider identifying/assigning the roles below in your group. Note: Your Workshop Facilitator will ask you to identify at least a group Facilitator to ensure you finish your work on time – if you don't select one, the Workshop Facilitator will assign one for you.

Roles



Notes



Case 1 Debrief: **Tim**

Situation Summary

(Need and underlying issues/causes)

Assumptions

Recommendations

Basis – Biblical Principle

What Actions Will We Take?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Risks or Anticipated Problems

What might go wrong? How will we maintain accountability?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Notes

What additional information might we need to make a sound plan? How would we involve/inform the congregation?



Case 2 Debrief: Alice

Situation Summary

(Need and underlying issues/causes)

Assumptions

Recommendations

Basis – Biblical Principle

What Actions Will We Take?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Risks or Anticipated Problems

What might go wrong? How will we maintain accountability?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Notes

What additional information might we need to make a sound plan? How would we involve/inform the congregation?



Case 3 Debrief: Dave and Jane

Situation Summary

(Need and underlying issues/causes)

Assumptions

Recommendations

Basis – Biblical Principle

What Actions Will We Take?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Risks or Anticipated Problems

What might go wrong? How will we maintain accountability?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Notes

What additional information might we need to make a sound plan? How would we involve/inform the congregation?



Case 4 Debrief: Sue

Situation Summary

(Need and underlying issues/causes)

Assumptions

Recommendations

Basis – Biblical Principle

What Actions Will We Take?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Risks or Anticipated Problems

What might go wrong? How will we maintain accountability?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Notes

What additional information might we need to make a sound plan? How would we involve/inform the congregation?



Long-Term Case Summary

Long-Term Case Approach

Long-term cases require prayer and discussion in order to determine appropriate responses

- What Biblical principles apply? Is this a need we should address?
- What type of response will truly help the individual?
- What are the long-term goals for the case?



It is important for the deacons to come to agreement as a body and rely on the wisdom of the group.

Tools for Financial Counseling

Financial issues are a key part of most diaconal counseling situations

- **Resources**, for example, finance education or management programs (e.g., Crown Financial, David Ramsay)
- **Tools**, for example, references, files, data-collection forms, spreadsheets

Deacons Leading the Service Ministry

For deacons to effectively perform and lead the service ministry in our local congregations, we need to work on developing (and encourage others to develop) a set of gifts required of believers but difficult to practice. The world does not necessarily value this set of gifts but they are crucial for an effective diaconal ministry.

- Patience
- Encouragement (Barnabas)
- Wisdom
- Prayerful
- Humility
- Servant-like
- Generous
- Self-giving
- Loving and Sympathetic

Notes



Workshop Summary

The Effect of True Long-Term Mercy Ministry

An effective mercy ministry to members with long-term needs will have a greater impact than on those that are supported – ultimately, it will bring glory to the Lord and build up His church.



What would it look like if we implemented effective long-term ministry in our churches?

Potentially, there could be a wide-ranging set of benefits.

- Christ is glorified
- Church is unified
- World is evangelized
- We remove hypocrisy
- Word and deed become one
- We see the church becoming whole

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)
"When Helping Hurts"	Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert
"Resources for Deacons"	Tim Keller (published by the PCA: Christian Ed and Publications in 1985)
"Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands"	Paul Tripp

Subject	Verse(s)
Gleaning	2 Corinthians 8: 1-14
Example, witness	Matthew 5:16
Giving	Acts 2-4
Blessings of considering poor and needy	Psalms 41:1
Model the love of Christ	I John 3: 16-18
Requirement for mercy ministry	Matthew 25:31-46
Consider others	Philippians 1: 27 -2: 11
Example: Epaphroditus ministry to Paul	Philippians 4:16-20
Servants like Christ	Philippians 2