

THE GOOD GIVING GUIDE

RESPONDING TO REQUESTS FOR HELP



justchurch

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A guide to help individuals respond to requests for help

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This manual is an adaptation by COMMON GOOD of the resource *WHEN THE DOORBELL RINGS* that was written by, and belongs to, THE WAREHOUSE. *WHEN THE DOOR BELL RINGS* was written for church leaders and administrators whilst this is a first adaptation of that manual, aimed at helping individual congregants respond when asked for help, COMMON GOOD is most grateful for being allowed to use and adapt this material for use within Common Ground.



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INTRODUCTION

FAMILIAR SCENES

When the Pharisees asked Jesus what the greatest commandment was, he gave the following answer: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”* (Matt 22:37-38). The Bible is full of injunctions to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and respond to the needs of family and strangers alike. The basis of all giving and all helping is compassion; and the basis of compassion is love. Compassion expresses the love of God; the love that led to Jesus *“making himself nothing”* (Philippians 2:7) and dying on the cross in our place. But we all know that this kind of giving is more easily said than done, and that there are times when we just don't know what to do. We asked some church members about their experiences of being asked for help, and giving.

Below are some of their responses:

- “There is one family living on the streets in our suburb who often come to us for food and/or money. They have 3 young children, and we are very concerned about the children's welfare.”
- “Our local ADT discourages giving as it encourages people to go on asking and loitering in the area.”
- “It's hard not to get desensitized and possibly miss an opportunity that God is asking me to step into. I would rather err on the side of being too generous. If someone gets aggressive when I hesitate, though, then I am not likely to listen further.”
- “I have been approached by quite a number of people at the taxi rank. Some ask for food and others ask for money. Those who ask for food, I give them a portion of any food that I have. Those who ask for money I first try to chat with them, just to find out why they want the money and then give them money – usually R20, R10 or R5.”
- “I was once approached inside Pick 'n Pay by someone who asked if I could buy them some essentials. I bought groceries for the person who approached me in Pick 'n Pay as they truly appeared to be in a desperate situation and I felt I could help.”
- “I very rarely engage with those who come to my door as this makes me feel vulnerable. Most often I ignore the doorbell.”
- “I often don't have enough time to engage properly with the person who is seeking assistance. I know that I should be listening to their story as this is what is most honouring but often I am in a rush.”
- “I struggle knowing that there is no reason for me to be in my car and for them to be on the street. I acknowledge that if I had been born into their circumstances I would probably be in the same place they are and I try to see the world and their circumstances through their eyes.”

Looking at these responses, one can discern the following in the respondents:

- Genuine compassion and desire to help
- Generosity
- Frustration and helplessness at not knowing how to help or where to refer people
- Concern for their own safety
- Failure to understand the lived experience of the person asking for help
- Feeling like they need to be the one saving the person asking for help
- Feeling overwhelmed by the demands put on them
- Inadequate skills and knowledge to address specific situations
- Very real concern for personal safety
- An emotional vulnerability because of these factors

The context of the person asking for help

We cannot deny that South Africa has a huge poverty and equality challenge, much of it as a result of our previously unjust system. The official unemployment rate stands at 25% - that means that a quarter of our population is without a job – one in every four people. Furthermore, the official rate is calculated using only people who are described as “actively searching for work”. People who have lost hope and are no longer searching are not included in this count. Nor are those who do odd jobs here and there, or who work perhaps one day a week. The estimation of this broader unemployment rate is 40%; that is four out of every ten people in South Africa, unemployed.

What's more, “actively searching for a job” has not been shown to increase the likelihood of actually finding work. We repeatedly hear reports of thousands of people applying for posts that advertise limited vacancies, such as the much publicised case in which 34 000 people applied for 90 vacant posts in the traffic department. In addition, poverty is extremely high, even among those who are working, as the gap between the highest and lowest wages in South Africa is the largest in THE WORLD. Simply having a job is therefore not a guarantee of breaking out of the poverty cycle.

So the person asking you for help comes with the background of all these factors – poverty, hopelessness, anger, frustration, desperation, seeing the wealth that others live with - often years and years of it; coupled with the violence, abuse and alcohol-and drug-dependence that so often accompanies the reality of the poverty cycle in an unequal world.

Your context – the one being asked for help

You may live alone, or in a house with your family. You may live in shared digs or in res. You probably travel to and from work or study (or other day time activities) in a car or on public transport. On Sunday you go to church. It is in these contexts, your home or when moving from one place to another, coming to church that you would normally get approached with requests for help. In both instances, there is probably a sense of vulnerability, a desire to self-protect or protect your loved ones with you. At the same time, you cannot block yourself off from a person so obviously in need, in the face of your own relative comfort and provision.

It is not surprising that we often feel ill equipped, unsupported and overwhelmed.

The purpose of this manual is to offer some guidelines on how to exercise compassion in a way that does no harm – to you and to the person asking for help.

GUIDANCE ON GIVING

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP AND PROPER UNDERSTANDING

Before I was saved I hardly gave anything. After I was born again I always ask the HOLY SPIRIT to lead me with regard to giving and now I first listen to a person's story and ask some questions, then ask if I can pray over their situation then try to assist them with a tin of food, or a meal or outside garden work with a decent pay. Church member

Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert in their book, *WHEN HELPING HURTS*, stress the importance of relationship. "What if you give someone money for electricity," they ask, "when his actual problem is not having the self-discipline to keep a stable job?" Giving money in this case will be treating the symptom rather than the actual problem, and will enable the recipient to continue with his lack of self-discipline. Hence the gift of money is doing more harm than good. "A better – and far costlier – solution," they continue, "would be for your church to develop a relationship with this person, a relationship that says, 'We are here to walk with you and to help you use your gifts and abilities to avoid being in this situation in the future'" (p55).

Reasons for homelessness and joblessness are often far more complex than merely a lack of self-discipline, and are rather a result of widespread injustices in society. For this reason, relationships are even more important as we attempt to bridge the gaps that exist. But this is a long-term investment, something you may not feel in a position to do, especially on your own. However, when churches or small groups take up the opportunity or challenge to find the most appropriate setting for such relationship building, and to mobilise those people who have a vision for this ministry, better ways of addressing need can be found.

For example, there is a church that has a weekly supper to which everybody in the neighbourhood is invited, whether they are members of the church or not. This includes residents who have their homes in the area, and people who live on the street. Over weeks of eating together, people got to know each other and the church members got to know the stories of the people living in their neighbourhood. It is only out of this growing knowledge that congregants were able to develop a plan for addressing the challenges specific to their community.

HOW TO AVOID BEING PATRONISING

"Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a covenant between equals." Greg Boyle

The word "patronising" comes from the Latin word "pater", meaning "father". It refers to an attitude that treats another adult as if she or he were a child and you were the parent. It is defined as "apparent kindness that betrays a feeling of superiority". It's a condescending attitude, a "talking down to", and is unfortunately very common.

The problem is, we so easily see ourselves as the healer, saviour or parent and the other as the wounded, the sinner or the child. We believe that their well-being is up to us; we must help them; they are better off because of us; they cannot do without our help; they have nothing to offer or teach us. Those we help in turn come to believe that we are obligated to help them; that they cannot do without our help; that they have the right to try and force or manipulate us; that they have nothing worth offering.

The truth is that we are all wounded and we all have something that we can offer others. When we act as the "saving healer parents" to "wounded sinner children", we encourage them to remain dependent on outside help rather than to discover and use their own resources and take responsibility for themselves. We put unnecessary burdens on ourselves. We encourage dependency in those who receive from us, a sense of false pride in ourselves (we feel good because we do good), and a sense of entitlement in both of us. We feel entitled to the wealth, education, time available to us or position of power that we have. They feel entitled to receiving from us. This often results in situations where doing good results in no change at all, or more likely, in increased expectations of us, and we become annoyed and irritated with the recipients of our help and with giving itself.

According to Eric Berne's theory of Transactional Analysis, there are three different "positions" that people take when relating to each other:

- ADULT TO ADULT – where each sees the other as an equal, where different opinions can be expressed and solutions can be worked out jointly.
- PARENT TO CHILD – where one adopts the attitude of the one who knows better, is in some way superior or more responsible, and has the right to make decisions for or on behalf of the other.
- CHILD TO PARENT – where the person in the "child" position believes that, or behaves as if, he or she is less than the other, dependent on the other, is unable to make good decisions on his or her own, and that the other is responsible for his or her wellbeing. The child uses techniques such as emotional manipulation and crying to get his or her way.

Check it out in your own relationships. You'll soon recognise when and where you take the different positions. The position that you adopt usually brings out the opposite position in the other person. There is far greater power in bringing out the adult in people who are used to being in the "child" position, than there is in remaining the parent yourself.

"When we treat the poor as equals, as having wisdom we wish to hear, they have a chance to begin the recovery of their true identity and the discovery of their true vocation." Bryant Myers

DEALING WITH EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION

Any form of manipulation needs a "handle" onto which it can grab hold. Common handles are:

- Our Christian expectation and obligation to be good and helpful and kind based on what we've been taught about what the Bible says and what God desires of us
- Our own need to be needed, to feel that we're doing something worthwhile through helping others; to feel important
- Our own need to be in control
- False guilt around being in a position of comparative wealth or health compared to another's poverty or illness
- False responsibility for the situation of others and a sense of obligation to change their situation

Much of the "good" that we do as a result of feeling obligated, manipulated or guilty can actually be harmful to the person we are trying to help, and to ourselves as well. This can be so even when we respond from a place of genuine sympathy. Why? Because very often, almost always, in fact –

- We address the symptom rather than the problem
- Our response is a reaction to the immediate situation, rather than a well thought-out, prayed-through plan based on the deeper issue
- Our response is in reaction to our own needs rather than that of the person asking for help
- We do the same thing over and over, even when it doesn't solve the problem

Some very important truths to know at this stage:

- While God does expect us to help those in need, he does not expect you personally to help every person in every way. So be released from that sense of obligation
- You (or your church) are not solely responsible for the well-being of everyone who approaches you
- God has many people in this city – people you (and he) can call on
- God loves the person asking for help; has created this person in his own image, just as he has you. God has given this person gifts and skills, hopes, dreams and desires. God has plans for him, for her; plans to prosper and not to harm, to bring hope and a future – just as he has for you
- At any given time, you or your church may or may not be part of God's plan for this person
- You are able to hear God's voice. Ask him what his heart is for the person asking for help, ask him for guidance in every individual situation; he will guide you
- Referral is a powerful tool - it is not a "cop-out", but a gateway to possibilities for a person that you may not be able to provide on your own

Bear this in mind when you feel you are being manipulated into giving where you don't feel you can or should. Respond to the person as to an adult; an equal. Tell them if you feel you are being manipulated. Explain what you are able to do and what not, and refer them elsewhere as appropriate. But pray, even as you speak to the person, asking God for guidance in what to do, what to say and how to say it.

If at home or in your car, don't be embarrassed about keeping the safety gate or door locked. If necessary, explain why this needs to be so. Explain how you feel about crime or past threats to your safety. Everyone should understand this, as everyone is affected by crime no matter where they live.

NOTES

COMPASSION FATIGUE

So many people in CT are living in poverty and unemployment and I don't feel equipped to help each one personally. It highlights our social divide and goes against my nature of really wanting to help. Bottom line....it always makes me feel guilty and sad. Church member

Compassion fatigue occurs when:

- we become weary of doing good and feel we have nothing left to give
- when the pain and suffering of the people we are seeking to help becomes too much for us to bear
- when the line of people needing help feels like a never-ending stream threatening to drown us

It can result in irritation, anger and resentment towards those needing help, even to the point of never wanting to see another person in need again. What can you do to help prevent and deal with compassion fatigue?

Some practical guidelines:

- Understand and accept that helping others in crisis and trauma does bring risks to your health, safety and spiritual life. Admit to yourself and to God that you are affected by the stress of these situations.
- Ask for help and support from your small group or others in your congregation. Share with others – a friend, a counsellor, your small group. Talk honestly about your thoughts, feelings, desires, fears. There's no need to pretend to be ok or sweet and loving when all you feel like doing is strangling someone.
- Don't be ashamed when you need to rest/ give up/ try again later/ or refer a person or situation to someone else. Do what you can, but accept it when you cannot.
- Examine your motives. Be honest with yourself. Is your desire to help motivated by love for the other, or is it fear, shame, pride, or guilt? Is it your own need to be loved or needed; your need to feel good about yourself; to do something worthwhile? Do you more often find yourself falling into the "parent" role than that of the adult? Whichever it is, it's curable. Recognising is the first step towards changing. Forgive yourself, accept God's forgiveness, and make the necessary changes. Ask someone to pray with you and help you work through these attitudes and emotions.
- Don't do anything with the expectation of being thanked. Instead, do it only with the motive of showing God's love to a person. Simply love.
- Ask for forgiveness for the times you have not responded in the way you should have. Make amends if you can.
- Do not be a rescuer. We can control what we do or give, but we cannot control the outcome, so don't feel guilty when things don't turn out as you would have hoped. Sometimes, after we've tried all else, people need to be allowed the natural consequences of unhealthy and unwise choices and actions. There are times when we need to detach ourselves and stay objective, even when we care.
- Accept ownership for your responsibilities and failures, and allow others to accept ownership for their responsibilities and failures.
- Learn to say "yes" and "no" when needed, and let it be so. Mean what you say. It's an easy trap to say "no" when you know that you're going to end up doing what the other person wants anyway.
- Stay connected to the Lord. He loves and understands more than we can ever know. Pray for His wisdom, strength and power. There is no way we can do this work without Him. Jesus said, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). Remain in him.

"Once the commitment is clear, you do what you can, not what you can't. The heart regulates the hands. This isn't so others can take it easy while you sweat it out. No, you're shoulder to shoulder with them all the way, your surplus matching their deficit, their surplus matching your deficit. In the end you come out even." 2 Corinthians 8:12-14 The Message

NOTES

CLUES TO COMPASSION

“The compassion of Jesus brings a heartbreak so intense, so deep, it's like your gut is getting ripped open. It is a heartbreak that screams in utter agony for the needless, pointless pain of people.” Bruce Marchiano

Compassion is described as an emotion of deep sympathy, empathy, or sorrow for others that motivates a desire to help. It is that motivation for action that distinguishes compassion from other feelings of concern, sympathy or understanding. As we consider Jesus as our model, we realise that he, being fully human while on earth, must have had the same challenges that we have. How then did Jesus survive and maintain his compassion? Bruce Marchiano, in his book *In the Footsteps of Jesus*, highlights his personal encounter with this compassion while playing the role of Jesus in the movie, *The Gospel according to Matthew*. The following clues to compassion have been gleaned from his narrative:

Know and receive God's love

As Marchiano explored Jesus' love for children, the leper, the Pharisees, etc. he describes his most significant realisation as being how much he himself is loved by Jesus. He entreats the reader to think about how much we as parents love our own children, then to multiply that a million times. Even then we wouldn't come close to knowing how much Jesus loves each one of us. It's a “fullness of passion, founded in desperate love” (p88). That's the foundation. Once we know and receive the fullness of Jesus' love for us, we can start sharing that love with others.

View each person coming to your door as you would view your own child

Marchiano speaks of Jesus embracing the leper without a second thought because he sees the leper as his child – a child whom he, as God, created, named and knit together in his mothers' womb; a child whom he had no problem touching and embracing while others withdrew in disgust. If Jesus could see even the most undesirable person as his own dear child, and if Jesus lives inside us, then they are our children too. Just as a parent would rush to save his child from danger, so we should have the same desperation to save any whose lives are leading them to destruction. (You might at this point be a bit confused about the parent / child issue. Earlier it was stated that we should not see ourselves as people's parents, and by this we mean that we should not see ourselves as responsible for people's wellbeing and discipline, nor believe that we have the right to control aspects of their lives, or make decisions on their behalf. We should, however, be prepared to love others and be as concerned for their welfare as would a parent for his or her child.)

Ask Jesus to show you what that person or that person's situation looks like through his eyes

Jesus knows and loves every person. He knows every name, every heart, every struggle, every hurt, every hope, every dream. Marchiano speaks of how it hurt Jesus to see “a sea of people living lives in ways he did not plan”. What enabled Jesus to respond with compassion to crowds of people following him everywhere he went? He saw them as “*harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd*” (Matt 9:36), and he was that shepherd. Be willing to see as Jesus sees and to respond as he leads.

Ask God to break your heart for what breaks his

Marchiano speaks of the “*broken heart of Jesus*” as he weeps over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37 as “*a weeping over their self-destruction*”. We need to be willing to open our hearts to that kind of compassion. It's painful and dangerous, but it's from God. We are far less likely to suffer burnout or resentment when we serve from a place of love and compassion that tears our heart than when serving from a place of religious duty or obligation.

NOTES

PROTECTING YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

“Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed”.

Luke 5:15,16

Even when we see through the eyes of Jesus and respond with his love, we are not required to neglect our own emotional and physical needs. When Jesus saw the crowd of 5000, he had just heard about the death of John the Baptist and was on his way to spend some time alone with his disciples. Yet when Jesus saw the crowd he had compassion on them, stopped and saw to their needs. But just what did this response entail?

Do only what is yours to do

Jesus didn't see it as his responsibility to supply everything the people needed, but asked them what they had and used what they had brought – the loaves and fish. All Jesus did was bless the food and the miracle happened. Sometimes when we give or do beyond what we are called to do, we block the miracles God has planned for other people! It's important to ask God just how much is required from us.

Delegate

Jesus delegated, assigning responsibility to the disciples, saying to them “You give them something to eat” (Matthew 14:16). The miracle happened while the disciples were doing the dishing out so that their faith was boosted. Look for people to whom you can delegate tasks. Ask God to alert you to ways in which you can help others recognise and value their own resources, capabilities and power.

Take time out

After he had dismissed the crowd, Jesus still took his time out by going up a mountain (Matthew 14:23). Withdrawing to lonely places was something he often did – check it out for yourself as you read the Gospels. It's important to find spaces to which you can withdraw, even if just for a little while. In this way, we protect our own health and freedom and avoid building co-dependency.

NOTES

SAYING NO

"If someone is under the influence of drugs or alcohol I won't give them money but I may give them food to help them sober up." Church member

Having to say "no" can be extremely difficult. However, it does become easier with practice. Think of times when you've had to accept a "no" from someone. When has it been easier, and when more difficult? Generally, it's more difficult under the following circumstances:

- When it's something urgent
- When it's something you really want or something you think you deserve
- When you have an expectation of the person you're asking.

If we apply these same ideas to people asking us for help, we can note the following:

- Although there are cases when the need is really urgent, more often it's not. Once you've listened to a person's story it's fairly easy to discern the urgency and whether it requires an immediate response or not.
- The second point of discernment is whether it needs to be attended to by you. Even if the issue is important and the person really needs what they're asking for, it could be something that can be referred elsewhere or that can wait. This is why it's so important for you to know what churches or other service providers in your community offer.
- Where it's a straight case of "sorry we're unable to help you with this one", say so and explain why, if necessary.
- So it's very important for you to avoid building such expectations in the first place. In advance of being asked for help, prayerfully write down principles that guide how you (and your household or business) give, and make sure these are known by everyone – including people who work for you.

Further tips on saying No:

- Apply "God-discernment" right from the start. God does instruct us to love one another and to help the poor, so a "no" is never automatic. But if you say "yes" to what they're asking, let it be because you feel it's right for you to help that person at that time.
- Never see a "yes" as an easy way to get rid of someone. Try not to reach the point where an initial "no" becomes a later "yes" because that's the only way you can get rid of the person.
- Never let the reason for a "yes" be to have them think well of you, or to avoid an insult, accusation or tears.
- It's easier for someone to accept a "no" where there's an expectation. Explain to them what you are and are not willing or able to do.
- Be consistent. It's important for your household to work out and decide what you are willing to give and what not, and for all to know these decisions. Once you've said "no" to a certain type of request, stick to it as far as possible. You might decide, for example, that you'll give food but never money; or money only when there's a job to be done that can be paid for. Stick to that. Explain to the person what your boundaries are.
- Yet still, despite the importance and necessity of developing consistency, we should never become so chained to our decisions that we don't check in with God at every encounter to see what He is saying. On-the-spot discernment should always apply.
- When you have felt it necessary to respond outside of what has been agreed, it's important to let others in your household or business know and to let them know the circumstances. If at all possible, a quick check-in prayer with someone else before responding is always a good thing.
- Where you are unable to help, tell the person seeking help that you understand, that you yourself are unable to help, and then give them possible alternative places to try. If the issue is urgent and you yourself cannot attend to it, phone the place or people to whom you are referring them, and ask them for assistance.
- Always say "no" in love, with respect, adult-to-adult. Keep reminding yourself that God loves this person; that you are equals; you are not his/her mother or father; that your "yes" or "no" is because you feel this is what God requires of you. Never just say "no" for "no's" sake, but let every "no" be because of a bigger "yes". And know what that bigger "yes" is.
- Keep checking your motives and your parent/ adult / child posture.

There are situations when the person becomes threatening or abusive. In these cases, be very firm and strong and assert your God-given authority, but don't become abusive yourself, and remember your love.

THE ROLE OF PRAYER & DISCERNMENT

Prayer

“Imagine them embracing new ways of looking at circumstances that are no longer defined by those circumstances, that transcend them in the spirit and so open the way for transforming them in the physical.” Scott Worley

Praying for the people asking for help is as important as attending to their physical or material needs. There are times when a simple blessing is enough; when all that the person needs is to know that someone cares. A blessing on a life that feels cursed and broken can be a powerful weapon. We can pray for changes in heart and mind, changes in circumstances, and we can pray for healing. Prayer is much more than just words. It is power that connects with the fire of God and brings it down to earth with lightning flashes and victory (see Rev 8:4,5). The enemy is like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8), and devour he does. The poverty and disease we see in the world are not the will of God, but rather a result of the devil's schemes. But God has given us both power and authority to counter the works of the evil one. At times, it is appropriate to pray scripture over a person and his or her life, for example Romans 15:13.

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world 1 John 4:4

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

In the Bible we see Jesus as well as his disciples doing all kinds of miracles. A lot of healing happened to people who were begging, and Jesus assures us in John 14:12 that we can do all that he did and more, and that he'll do what we ask when we pray in his name, i.e. according to his will and by his authority.

We do, of course, need to be sensitive about how and where we pray for people. Places of gathering are good, and having two or three people praying for someone in a safe space is better than one person praying through the gate. But the Holy Spirit is always there, an ever-present guide and our source of power.

Bill Johnson in his book, WHEN HEAVEN INVADES EARTH, tells the story of a man who came to the church for a meal. The man was wearing a neck brace, braces on both arms, was walking with crutches and had cancer. Bill and his brother prayed for this man and not only was he able to remove his braces, move his wrists freely and walk about normally, but on his next visit to the doctor was told that he was cancer free. Surely God can work like that through us too!

NOTES

Discernment

A few times I have paid for the homeless persons shopping in front of me not because they have asked me because the HOLY SPIRIT led me. Church member

As has been previously mentioned, it is important to seek God's face and discern the most helpful response to a given situation. This might seem difficult, but it is totally possible and yields amazing results. The truth is that we can all hear God, but it does take practice for us to recognise when we are hearing him, and to distinguish God's voice from the multiple other voices that go on inside our heads. Below are some scriptures that speak to our ability to hear God:

Call to me and I will answer you Jeremiah 33:3

Your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'. Isaiah 30:21

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. Psalm 32:8

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me John 10:27

Throughout scripture we see people actually talking to and hearing God. There's Abraham when he was told to leave his land, Noah who was told how to build the ark, and Moses who engaged with God constantly. We see David enquiring of the Lord for battle strategy (See 1 Sam 23:1-5; 1 Sam 30:8, 2 Sam 2:1) and there's Saul and Ananias in Acts 9.

Most often when you're faced with making a spot decision, God speaks through a gut feeling or strong impression, with that "still, small voice". Sometimes you just know. When you're faced with a request or demand, ask God how you should respond. Ask him what the real issue is and let this help you. A church member tells the following story:

I was in my car recently when I passed a man lying on the pavement. Generally I don't even look twice as this has (sadly) become such a common sight. This time, however, "something" told me to stop and check on him, which I did. He turned out to be an elderly man who had collapsed in the road and was very confused. He knew in which suburb he lived, but not his address. I took him to the police station in that suburb and they promised to take it from there.

Church member

Of course you will make mistakes, as we all do, but it's encouraging once you start testing your discernment and acting on it, to see it work out.

NOTES

CHILDREN AND GIVING

When you have your own children with you

Children learn parental behaviours and often copy what they observe parents doing.

The bible says;

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

Parents should actively model giving and explain why they choose to give and also why they choose not to. In turn, children sometimes have a very natural and spontaneous generosity from which we can learn as adults. Help children from a young age to develop a spirit of generosity, giving them opportunities to give their own good condition clothing, toys, lunch items and so forth.

Children do what parents and adults around them do. As they get older explanation and dialogue becomes important.

When children ask you for help

Sometimes children are involved in asking, usually in one of the following situations:

- A CHILD WITH AN ADULT. This could be when the child is used by the adult to elicit a positive response from the person being asked. Whilst there are times when people with children approach you and have a real need that you should be open to, people who have children with them in dangerous situations - such as sitting on traffic islands - should not be given to.
- A CHILD ALONE. This can be a child living on the street or a child sent out by their family to beg. It is important to be aware that according to the South African Children's Act, a child who lives or works on the streets or begs for a living is considered a child in need of care and protection. Sometimes people see a child begging on the streets and feel moved to protect the child by taking the child home with them. It is against the law to remove a child, even one in need of care and protection. Only a designated social worker, in the service of a designated child protection organization, or a police officer may remove a child and place the child in temporary safe care. If a person takes a child and does not have the legal right to do so the person can be accused of abducting the child and could face criminal prosecution. Giving to children perpetuates their difficult situation and it is therefore not acceptable to give money, food or anything else to children who beg from you.

NOTES

CONCLUSION

God has instructed us to love one another and to meet the needs of the poor. Needs are not only material, but are also physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional. The single most basic need of every human being is the need to be loved; to be affirmed as being made in the image of God – a living, loving, compassionate God who loves each of us so much that He wants not a single one of us to be lost. When the doorbell rings, we are faced with people with varying needs, desires, motives and personalities.

There are some people who genuinely need urgent help right now, some who can wait, others who are just taking a chance. There are some who want to change their situation, and others who are not yet ready for that responsibility. And there are, of course, the criminals on the lookout for easy pickings. Yet all of them are God's children, and before we know their motive or intention, we have to love them and treat them with respect. Even if we do not supply any material need, let us at least meet their need to be regarded as a human being, to be looked at in the eye, and to be heard.

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing... And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; 13

NOTES

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