

## How do I respond to someone with a 'Short Term Need'?

What is your reaction when you are approach by someone with a need? How do you respond?  
How do you determine if a diaconal response is appropriate? Is there a proper response?

1. **Listen well and treat others with respect.** Recognize all of us, including those who approach us or whom we see in need, are image bearer of God and should be treated with respect and dignity. Sometimes, the biggest need the poor and homeless have is to be treated like a person. Don't assume the person wants money-they may simple want a relationship. You should be able to tell this quickly. Introduce yourself and ask the person their name when they approach you for assistance. That can diffuse the situation. Permit yourself with the opportunity to learn more about them and a proper response of respect, love, and with care.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **Always pray with and for the people.** Follow the example of Peter and John in Acts 3. You 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 the. If not offer one that may be appropriate for their situation and time of despair.
6. **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 you 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.
7. **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.