



## Confidential resource and needs assessment

*Recently, the deacons of the church I serve asked me to help them develop an assessment tool, an interview document to help them determine both the resources that people have at their disposal, and the needs they have. Part of the document would serve to explain our philosophy of ministry, a philosophy based on Scripture.*

*One of the reasons we need such a tool is the radical difference between needs and wants (a difference many are unable to acknowledge). Another is the difference between what the Bible says about Christian love and what people demand from one another. The "welfare state" has bred into generations of Americans the expectation of "something for nothing." And it seems that big government's "entitlements" have spilled over into the expectations of many in the church. While Acts 2:42ff (and other passages in early Acts) makes quite clear that when the Spirit of Christ takes hold of a people, there is nothing they won't share with those in need, at the same time, others seem quite willing to abuse the love of God's people with a greedy and bitter spirit.*

*The document printed below serves as a suggestion for you. Think about ways you might make use of in your ministries.*

Confidential resource and needs assessment for diaconal ministry

### **Introduction: A Biblical philosophy of mercy**

*(Read carefully all Scripture references.)*

The deacons of this congregation have been charged by God with many important responsibilities. We are to manage wisely the resources (including finances, talents and gifts) of the congregation so that we may together serve the Lord effectively. And, although we cannot eliminate poverty (and should not try, Matthew 26:11), we are to demonstrate the love and mercy of Christ to those who have special needs, first of all within the church family. God's Word especially challenges us to pay special attention to the needs of those who are defenseless, who have no advocate in a hostile world. In the Old Testament, the Bible makes clear that God watches out for the "fatherless," the "widow" and the "sojourner," and expects His people to do the same (Exodus 10:18, Deuteronomy 27:19). The New Testament reiterates the same theme, instructing the church to care faithfully for those in such helpless situations (Luke 18:1-8; 1 Timothy 5:3-5, but note v. 4).

Our goal is to demonstrate such mercy and love, and at the same time, stimulate responsible and faithful stewardship among the people of God. Where possible, any assistance from the church should aim at cultivating freedom from dependence on anyone but God (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12), so that the individual/family can become an active part of the circle of faith and the willing/happy support of others by his/their work (2 Thessalonians 3:10). By showing love and mercy to those who truly need, and by challenging those who do not have such needs to work responsibly and give generously, God is honored, His love is made visible in a loveless world, and the Gospel is adorned.

You have requested our assistance. We are honored by that fact, for it is an honor to serve God by ministering to you. For us to do so, it is necessary to have certain information. The questions which follow do not seek to pry, but they do request your open, prayerful and honest participation in the process described above, so that we can help you as God has called us to do. We pledge to keep your answers strictly confidential among the officebearers who must care for you. Please

understand that by filling out this assessment, you are not jeopardizing the possibility of our assistance, but merely helping us determine how we can and should help you.

## Assessment Questionnaire

### **General Questions**

1. Please describe in detail the problem/need that you have.
  - Is it an immediate crisis, or a long-term need?
  - Does it involve only financial need, or other needs such as transportation, medical care, counseling, assistance with budgeting, etc.?
2. Please tell us about yourself and your family.
  - Single? Married? Divorced? Widowed?
  - Do you live with parents or children?
3. Please tell us about your work.
  - Do you have a job? (Full-time or part-time? Temporary or permanent?)
  - Do you receive benefits such as health insurance?
  - How long have you been there?
  - How many jobs have you held in the last 3 years?
4. Please tell us about special circumstances.
  - Medical: illness, incapacity or handicap? Mental disease? Medications you are taking, or should be taking?
  - Legal: Are you in trouble with the law?
  - Do you use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs?
5. Please tell us about other resources available to you. (For example, do you qualify for government assistance, insurance, pension, family resources, community resources?)

### **Material Issues**

#### ***Financial***

1. Do you have a budget? Is it written? If we believe it necessary, would you share it with us?
2. Do you believe you live within your means?
3. Does your budget include giving to church and/or kingdom causes in gratitude to God?
4. Please list your total indebtedness.
5. Please list other financial resources available to you (investments, savings, family resources).

#### ***Lifestyle***

1. Do you own your own home, or rent?
2. List make and model of all cars you own.
3. Do you own an RV, boat, motorcycle, plane?
4. Please describe briefly your entertainment system (TV, stereo equipment, computer, telecommunications equipment, etc.).
5. Please describe briefly your last 2 vacations.
6. List any hobbies that impact your lifestyle or financial condition.

### **Spiritual issues**

1. Have you personally accepted Christ as your Savior, and committed your life to Him as Lord?
2. Are you faithful in reading/studying/meditating on God's Word?

3. Are you faithful in prayer each day? Have you committed your present problem to Him? How have you prayed about this?
4. Are you faithful in worship on the Lord's Day?
5. Do you struggle with any of the following (quite common) spiritual temptations: bitterness, envy, anger, resentment, pride, loss of hope, laziness?
6. Does guilt overwhelm you? Are you living in some unconfessed sinful pattern of life, either in regard to personal morality or in regard to some interpersonal relationship?
7. Do you struggle with depression? (If so, is it long-term, short-term? Under a doctor's care for treatment?)
8. Does your assessment of your gifts and abilities square with other people's assessment of you?

### **Other issues**

1. Please list any additional information you believe may help us to provide Biblical, spiritual, and/or other assistance to you.
2. Please describe any ministry in which you are involved, in which you are ministering to others in the service of Christ.

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