

Can You Pay This Bill?

Workshop at CCDA | Chris Sicks | September 13, 2013

Workshop Outcomes:

1. Participants will be better equipped to respond to requests for financial assistance from the community.
2. Participants will be prepared to train their office staff and volunteers to respond to requests with compassion and consistency.
3. Participants will grasp the distinction between a merciful “no” and a merciful “yes.”
4. Participants will recognize how relationships with God’s people can provide holistic help and meaningful transformation.
5. Participants will leave with practical strategies they can immediately implement to improve their response to requests for assistance.

Workshop Outline:

- 1) **Introductions**
 - a) Who are you? Name, church/organization, state, reason for being here.
- 2) **The phone call**
 - a) “Hi, can I speak to the pastor?”
 - i) (Some people knock on the church door, but our response should be similar)
 - b) What they are (usually) seeking—material help, with utilities, food or rent.
- 3) **The challenge—how to respond?**
 - a) Who is the right person to respond to such calls?
 - i) Ask participants: Who takes these calls at your church?
(1) This, of course, varies depending on your church structure and size
 - ii) Ask participants: What happens next?
 - iii) Many churches either say no to everyone, or say yes to the financial request without engaging the person relationally. There’s a better way.
- 4) **Step back**
 - a) What is the mission of the church?
 - b) What are the needs of human beings?
 - i) Material
 - ii) Emotional
 - iii) Spiritual
 - c) All human suffering is a result of a broken relationship with the Creator.
 - d) Loving ministry that has lasting impact points people to their Creator.
- 5) **Whole people need a holistic response**
 - a) It’s easy to hand out bags of groceries. It’s harder to build relationships.
 - b) But that’s what the church is best at—being a community.
- 6) **Acts 2:42-47 as a model**
 - a) The church must provide material assistance to hurting people.
 - b) But this is best done in the context of everything else the church does.
 - i) Fellowship, teaching, eating, praying, worshipping.
- 7) **What are some of the best ways to respond to these calls?**
 - i) What is practical?
 - ii) What is biblical?
 - iii) What is loving?
- 8) **Q&A and Conclusion**
 - a) Email me for copies of the presentation and handouts: chris@tangibletheology.com
 - b) You can also download them from: <http://tangibletheology.com/resources/>

Resources

Books

- *Ministries of Mercy* by Tim Keller
- *The New Testament Deacon* by Alexander Strauch
- *When Helping Hurts* by Corbett & Fikkert
- *Love Walked Among Us* by Paul Miller
- *Beyond Charity* by John Perkins
- *Tangible: Making God Known through Deeds of Mercy and Words of Truth* by Chris Sicks

Online

- tangibletheology.com to find today's slides, handouts, and other resources to help and encourage you in ministry. (See Resources section)
- chalmers.org for training and resource for community development that avoids paternalism and dependency
- diaconalministries.com (CRC, Canada) for a variety of resources and ideas

Contact Me

- chris@tangibletheology.com
- Alexandria Presbyterian Church | 2405 Russell Road | Alexandria, VA 22301
- 703-683-3348 work

Can You Pay This Bill?

If your church or non-profit has a phone number or a doorbell, you probably get requests for financial help. People ask for rent, utilities, food, gasoline, etc. What is the right response? How does God want us to use His resources? For whom, for what, and in what ways? Join us to discuss various approaches to this perennial issue, including the respective roles of the pastor, deacons, office staff, and congregation. Learn how to respond in a way that invites people into relationship. Discover ways you can be loving, responsible, and Biblical as you respond to these requests.

Can You Pay This Bill?

Workshop at CCDA | Chris Sicks | September 13, 2013

OPENING ACTIVITY: How would you respond to these actual situations?

Melanie Carver

December 15, 2009 phone call to your ministry office. She's looking for help with Christmas gifts and car repairs. From KY, just moved back here in June
Lives close to you, used to attend 1st Baptist Mount Zion Church

Family of seven, Husband is an IT contractor

They are garnishing husband's checks for student loans

Have been on time with rent until this month, have nothing for Christmas

Has a mechanical bill for his truck, and Dec rent is unpaid.

His boss gave \$2000 toward truck repair. Needs \$500 more.

What do you do next? _____

A small group leader from your church calls about Lucinda Wilson:

Lucinda and Jack are members of your church. Jack runs the sound equipment.
Lucinda is from England, they met when Jack was stationed there.

Lucinda hasn't seen her mother in 2 years, and the doctors say her mother won't survive more than 2 weeks because the cancer has spread so much.

Jack & Linda have \$200 available for a plane ticket, and could put the balance on a credit card if they have to. Their small group wants to contribute \$250. The ticket will cost \$750. Can the church provide the remaining \$300?

What do you do next? _____

Mary, a member of your church, calls you about a student in her class:

Mary says that Anna is a student in her 3rd grade class. Has had trouble hearing, Mary had the school nurse check her out, then was told by the county hearing services office that Anna needs hearing aids.

Mary and Kathy from the county have a plan to help Anna, whose mother cannot afford the hearing aids. The office can get very advanced digital hearing aids through the Lions Club. But \$200 is needed to have them fitted and adjusted. It can be paid directly to the County Hearing Services office.

Mary wants to know if the church might help with this \$200 expense.

What do you do next? _____

Mindy called from Transform America

October 23, 2012

a ministry of New Kingdom Ministries International (You Google it and find them at: <http://www.nkmi.org> — they are in Minneapolis—1500 miles from you.)

Mindy says a woman in your town needs financial help. She posted a prayer request on KTIS radio's website — *PrayerWorks*. And Mindy responded.

Mindy hasn't met her in person. But "the Lord told" Mindy to help this woman— she said that three times. The woman needs \$3000 for a security deposit and Mindy has so far raised only part of it: \$771. She is calling churches on behalf of this woman to try to raise the money.

What do you do next? _____

The following email came to your office's general email account:

Hello,

My name is Jim Knowles. I am reading a book by Timothy Keller (Prodigal God). I looked on the internet for churches in my area affiliated with Keller's church and saw your website in my search.

I have not been to church in several years. I have been involved in AA for 8 years. I am very thankful for this fellowship. I have been sober and working the steps many of my friends here are good men but when it comes to certain accountability some things are difficult to talk about (some times I think instead of confessing my sins or character defects it is more of someone co- signing my stuff).

I know I need to fellowship with other guys and renew my faith in Christ. I am stuck and feel like the wave in the ocean when it comes to my following and obeying God.

I was hoping to maybe talk to someone and get renewed in my faith . If someone would be willing to get together and talk it would be greatly appreciated.

Look forward to getting back on the path of our Savior and being restored and be of service.

Sincerely, Jim
(555) 663 3483

What do you do next? _____

Michelle Henson

Called 11/12/12

Lives 45 minutes away from your office, has a phone bill that's unpaid—\$185 has a speech and hearing disability and a mild retardation husband left her, son was taken by state when he was 8 gets a \$545 disability check each month and \$33 in food stamps

says her payee has been taking money out of her check as a "fee"...so she is going to ask for a new payee. The payee is supposed to pay the phone and power, but hasn't paid these things.

You ask about churches and ministries closer to her. Michelle said she has spoken to Grace Baptist, and they offered to give her a ride to church. Doesn't remember the name of the guy she spoke to.

You call Grace Baptist. You speak to Marie in the church office. She says Michelle has been coming to them for help for at least 7 years. They have helped her with food and phone bill numerous times. They have offered repeatedly to bring her to church, but she has never come.

What do you do next? _____

Stanley Terry

Came to the church office to see you 3/6/13. Was a member of your church six years ago. Moved away, been back for 9 months. Has attended worship at your church 2-3 times since then.

Your deacons have given him food vouchers twice during the past three months. Stanley is polite and apologetic for bothering you. You smell beer on him...during your conversation he volunteers that he drank a couple today.

Stanley is 39, has a bad back. Lives in a rooming house...bunch of guys live there, a few do some drugs and drinking, fair amount of drugs in the neighborhood. They all share one kitchen and 2 bathrooms. Rent is \$105/week.

In 1990 he did 22 months jail time for possession of crack with intent to distribute. Admits he was his own best customer. Swears he's off that now, has no desire to go back to that lifestyle.

Since 1998, he's been doing carpentry work for a guy named David. David leads the *Narcotics Anonymous* group Stanley attends at the Baptist church near yours. Carpentry work has been slow lately, so Stanley asks for \$50 for groceries.

What do you do next? _____