

Lesson Four: Doing Triage as a Church in the Midst of Crisis

What are the most critical needs right now? Jesus met needs, spiritual, physical, emotional, social/relational. The charge to address needs is all throughout the Bible and the history of Christianity. But in a major crisis situation the needs can be so vast and diverse that it's difficult to know where to begin. We need a process for continually identifying the most critical needs. We need a sort of triage system for the church's response to COVID-19. We looked at Maslow's hierarchy of needs.



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

And then we looked at the beginning of the “Sermon on the Plain” in Luke 6. Jesus isn't so much talking about meeting needs in this passage as he is offering encouragement to those who are struggling and exhorting those who have plenty to be cautious. He is speaking into a culture that sometimes viewed health and wealth as measures of God's favour. For our purposes, however, the categories Jesus named are interesting. They give us a window into the kinds of needs that

we may encounter — physical, financial, social, mental. Seeking to address critical needs in our community is an act of following Jesus. Where is he calling us?

Please consider some of the following scriptures. What do we need to emphasize? What are potential pitfalls in trying to meet needs? Then use the questions below to articulate and prioritize some of the needs in our communities.

Scriptures to Consider

- James 1:27
- James 2:15-16
- Titus 3:14
- Luke 10:36-37
- 1 John 3:16-18
- Luke 6:20-26

Some Caveats and Cautions:

- When we seek to meet needs, it is good to try and work *with* others instead of *for* them, and especially to avoid doing *to* people.
- There is a growing body of literature about the problems and pitfalls of attempting to meet needs. Let's be responsible, smart, and well informed as we seek to be God's hands and feet in the world around us.
- One of the greatest needs will be for love to hold anger in check. In a stressed community it will be tempting to blame others for our problems — sometimes justifiably. But we are called to be peace makers and ambassadors of reconciliation.

Triage Questions

1. Think in terms of a quadrant of needs.

TANGIBLE	<p>PHYSICAL</p> <p><i>Blessed are the hungry. Woe to the well-fed.</i></p> <p><i>Death from complications of the virus. Spread of the virus to vulnerable sectors (long-term care homes, homeless shelters) Lack of medical resources for other maladies due to stress on medical system.</i></p>	<p>FINANCIAL</p> <p><i>Blessed are the poor. Woe to the rich.</i></p> <p><i>Complete financial collapse. Bankruptcy, foreclosure. Inability to pay for basic needs. Suddenly living above your means. Loss of retirement or savings.</i></p>
	INTANGIBLE	<p>EMOTIONAL</p> <p><i>Blessed are the weeping. Woe to the laughing.</i></p> <p><i>Depression, Suicide, Self harm, Anxiety, Fear of deportation or legal action, Aggressive behaviour, Panic, PTSD, Physiological outcomes of stresses to mental health</i></p>

2. Prioritize the most critical needs. (Some of these needs can be found in our own groups. We are here to support each other.)
 - a. List as many needs as you can think of for each quadrant. (Build on the examples given.)
 - b. What are worst case scenarios in each quadrant?
 - c. Which needs can wait, and which can't?
 - d. Who in our community is experiencing these losses?
 - e. Who is at the greatest risk?
3. Look for the gaps
 - a. What agencies are already addressing some of these needs? How? Are there ways we can partner with them?
 - b. Are there gaps in service?
4. Think in terms of tangible and intangible needs.
 - a. For *acute needs*, prioritize the tangible because people can't think about anything else when they are about to starve or suffocate or lose their home.
 - b. In *chronic situations*, emphasize the intangible because it is very difficult to overcome a tangible problem like chronic unemployment or addiction without the powerful intangibles of love, hope, and community.

Finally, please consider communicating some of these responses to Jonathan so we can organize our ongoing overall response to COVID.