

Again, bear in mind that not every method of help has to be financial. One congregation in Texas, for example, regularly hosts a potluck dinner for widows only, where these women can sit and visit with the elders and other leaders of the congregation, ask questions, and make their needs and ideas known.

Another congregation hosts an annual “Adoption Sunday.” During the worship service the minister preaches about orphans; asks people whose lives have been touched by adoption to stand; and highlights area children’s homes and foster-care programs, including descriptions of the various ways individuals can volunteer.

6. Benevolence work is a great evangelical tool. We can reach the lost by addressing their physical needs as well as their spiritual ones. However, consider Paul’s remark in Galatians 6:10: “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (See also Romans 12:13).

Can you formulate a scriptural priority system for dealing with the needy?

Questions: On Your Own

1. Proverbs 21:13 is a sobering reminder: “Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.” Honestly reflect on this passage. Do you close your ears to the poor? If so, why?

How can you overcome those barriers and learn to listen to—and help—people less fortunate than yourself?

2. Can you think of one step you could take toward face-to-face contact with people who need help? You can begin with something as small as mowing an elderly neighbor’s yard, or offering to baby-sit for a single mother. List as many possibilities as you can, even if you don’t feel up to actually doing them.

3. Regardless of our bank accounts, some of us have social networks that we know will prevent us from ever hitting the bottom. There will always be someone who will give us a loan, or a job, or a place to stay, to help us get on our feet again. Consider your own situation: What would have to happen to make you one of those “in need”? To whom would you go for help? How would you hope to be treated?