

- (1) With whom do we have contact?
- (2) What kinds of needs do these persons have?
- (3) What kinds of help can we provide for their needs?
- (4) For which of these persons and needs are we responsible?

With whom do we have contact?

From time to time we become aware of people who have problems in our community and neighborhood and our churches. Some people have recently lost their jobs; some couples are on the verge of divorce; some parents are being driven to distraction by a son who is alcoholic or on drugs or involved with immoral friends, or a daughter who is pregnant or ready to run away; some people are deeply depressed and practically ready to commit suicide; and many are looking for something that will give their lives some kind of meaning and purpose.

The modern communications media have made us aware of people all over the world who have genuine and sometimes pressing problems. We read and hear of and see pictures of people who are dying of diseases for which no cures have as yet been discovered, of families bereaved or made homeless by wars or terrorism or earthquakes or floods or typhoons or hurricanes, of millions of persons starving to death, of persons who languish in prisons or labor camps because of their religious or political beliefs, of millions of orphans in various countries, and of terrible accidents in which people lose their mobility or their limbs or their lives.

In today's world we have contact with people with all kinds of needs. Some of these contacts are direct, and some more or less indirect.

What kinds of needs do these persons have?

Of course, all of these persons have spiritual needs. Many of them have emotional, physical, material, or social needs. If they are not Christians, they need Christ as their Savior. That is their primary need, since it concerns their eternal welfare! If they are Christians, they need to grow in grace, in faith, in hope, and in love and obedience.

If they are afflicted with incurable diseases and it does not appear that God is marvelously healing them, they need grace to strengthen their faith and hope, comfort in their affliction, and as much relief from pain, discomfort, and anxiety as is possible to provide. If they are bereaved, they need the comfort and the healing of heart which God can provide. If they are homeless, they need a place to live, a shelter for themselves and their children. If they are starving