

their hands in confusion or helplessness. Some Christian relief agencies do a better job. Sometimes Christian missionaries can help to administer this aid. Some local churches have a benevolence fund to which a person can contribute, and from which assistance is distributed to needy persons in the church or in the community.

Some Christians would like to help those in need of salvation, but don't know how to witness to them. Perhaps they have never really tried; or perhaps they tried once, felt that the results were dismally disappointing, and gave it up. Perhaps they could be helped by a class on witnessing, or by a helpful piece of literature, or by being with someone who witnesses to various people. Perhaps they are simply afraid, and need to ask God to give them boldness and deep concern for lost persons whom they know.

For which of these persons and needs are we responsible?

First of all, we need to remember that we are speaking of needy persons with whom we have contact. With some of those who are very distant geographically, we may have a very indirect contact. With others who are distant, we may have a more direct contact, through some other person or organization that operates in that part of the world. With some needy persons who are nearby, we may have a very indirect contact. With others who are nearby, we may have more direct contact, through a relative, close friend, or neighbor; or we may have personal acquaintance with such persons, perhaps in our neighborhood or church.

If we are speaking of those with whom we have contact, for whom we have some responsibility, it would seem that we are most responsible for those whom we have personal acquaintance. They comprise our first level of responsibility. Just as the local church should care for the needy in their midst before attempting to provide relief for the needy half-way around the world, so the individual believer should do the same.

On the basis of the Scripture which says, "While we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Galatians 6:10), it would appear that our second level of responsibility includes those needy Christians in more distant places with whom we have more direct contact, perhaps through a friend or a missionary.

It would appear reasonable to assert that our third level of responsibility includes needy persons who are nearby with whom we have indirect contact; and that our fourth level of responsibility includes needy persons who are distant with whom we have indirect contact.