

HOW TO ESTABLISH A LOCAL MINISTRY

A Practical Guide to Build a Core Compassion Ministry



Send Relief



TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Calling

Understanding the Call

3 Biblical Truths about Your Role

Where to Start

Friendships

Learning

10 Ways to Build Relationships with Vulnerable People

How to Build Cross-Cultural Relationships

The City and Target Community Assessment

The Goal

Reconciliation

Poverty Alleviation

Be W.I.S.E.

Your Local Ministry

External Mobilization

Serving

10 Tips as You Serve Vulnerable Populations

10 Things to Expect as You Establish a Local Ministry

Trauma-Informed Care

THE CALLING

Understanding the Call

Meeting needs and changing lives happens in the context of a local community. We often misunderstand the role God has called us to play in serving the broken and vulnerable around us. We believe only a gifted few can answer the call to minister to the most vulnerable.

As Jesus followers, we all have the charge to be obedient and be like Him. Micah 6:8 tells us, “Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the Lord requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God” (CSB).

Recognizing and understanding three fundamental truths can help you take the first steps toward meeting needs in your communities.

- **God’s Word commands it.**

The words *poor*, *oppressed*, and *sojourner* appear numerous times in the Bible. Scripture helps us understand that it matters to God how His people treat those who are vulnerable.

- **Our troubles become our ministry.**

What troubles you? God has created you intentionally and with a purpose. If you have a passion or something that burdens you, this may be a way you can serve others.

- **God has called us to love our neighbor.**

The second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. This means we should love all our neighbors, even those with whom we have nothing in common.

3 Biblical Truths about Your Role

We can be tempted to disqualify ourselves from serving in a local ministry when we think about our past mistakes or recognize our lack of experience. Understanding three things can help as you establish a local ministry.

- **Everyone has something to give.**

Jesus fed over 5,000 people with a boy’s five loaves of bread and two fish. No matter how small it seems, what we have can be used by God to serve those around us.

- **Everyone has a part to play.**

In 1 Corinthians 12, we see the gifts that each person is given in the body of Christ and how every gift is a necessary part of the body. If you are a Jesus follower, you are uniquely gifted and have a role to play to be faithful and obedient to His commands.

- **Everyone has unique gifts.**

We are all created in the image of God, but we are also created uniquely. You are unique and can serve with the giftings, talents, and abilities that God has given you.



WHERE TO START

FRIENDSHIPS

The most empowering and Christlike way to begin to establish a local ministry is through friendships.

Friendships transform us.

- *Friendships with those in need bond us to the person, not the cause.*
- *Friendships open our eyes to the image-bearing nature of those who are most vulnerable.*
- *Friendships teach us how to walk alongside the vulnerable as equals.*

Friendships inform us.

- *Friendships teach us the truth about a whole person.*
- *Friendships give us a new perspective.*
- *Friendships allow us to learn their stories, their needs, their dreams, and who they are.*
- *Friendships lead us to act on what we know instead of what we think we know.*
- *Friendships prove our actions to be more effective.*

LEARNING

Before you make a ministry plan, you must understand your city. You already know people, places, and things in your city. But often, your knowledge is limited to your own experience. You must get to know your city in a way that reveals the truth about its needs. The goal is to have an educated, holistic, and biblical approach to meeting needs.

Time spent investing in friendships and learning will directly impact your effectiveness to serve and connect with the vulnerable in your city. Ask questions, make connections, and connect the dots of what is happening. Read books, attend training, and listen to experts that are in the trenches.

Key Questions to Ask:

- *What actual issues exist at the root of the needs you discover?*
- *What people groups do you feel called to serve? How does their culture differ from yours?*
- *What do they truly need? Research their needs. Resist assuming what they need.*
- *What best practices can you engage in to meet the specific needs? How can you serve this particular people group?*
- *What are empowering ways you can meet the needs of others?*

10 WAYS TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Building relationships is the greatest assessment tool to gain insight into your community and the populations your church desires to serve. So, how do you build genuine relationships with people who are different than you?

1. Relationships limit categories.

- *Don't see people as a category. See past their situation and know them as people. Get to know their names, stories, personalities, goals, and hurts.*

2. Relationships lead to action.

- *As you get to know people, let their hurts and suffering become your concern. When your friends hurt, you should hurt as well. Then you should do something to help them.*

3. Relationships imitate Christ's example.

- *John 1:14 tells us that God came to dwell among us. Be near the people you're serving, not distant from them.*

4. Relationships look for opportunities.

- *Look for people who might be unlikely friends. These friendships may become an opportunity for you to love and serve the least of these.*

5. Relationships prioritize friendships.

- *Be intentional and active in pursuing other people. Seek them out. Don't be passive and wait for them to come to you. Go.*

6. Relationships value conversation before collaboration.

- *People often want you to hear their story more than they want you to do something for them. So, don't just give people food. Sit down, eat with them, and have a real conversation.*

7. Relationships understand cultural dynamics.

- *We are all made in the image of God, but we also have cultural differences that make us unique. Understanding cultural differences and how to respect them is key to building relationships.*
- *For more information on building multicultural friendships, see [How to Build Cross-Cultural Relationships](#).*



8. Relationships invest in people without an agenda.

- *Don't come with a plan of what you want to do and how you think vulnerable populations should be served. Instead, come with a willingness to serve however you can.*
- *To further identify the assets and needs of your community, see [The City and Target Community Assessment](#).*

9. Relationships understand mutual brokenness.

- *There are no “haves” and “have nots” in the kingdom of God. We have equal value and worth and are equally in need of mercy, grace, and salvation.*

10. Relationships know longevity is imperative.

- *Serving cannot be a one-day or one-time event. Be prepared to pursue long-term relationships with vulnerable people.*

How to Build Cross-Cultural Relationships

Besides encountering possible socioeconomic differences between our lives and those of the vulnerable, we may also discover differences in culture, upbringing, and how we think about the world. We often take it for granted, but culture significantly impacts how we live, think, feel, and act.

Alleviating Nervousness and Tips for Cross-Cultural Relationships

Before serving the vulnerable, examine yourself and ask God to cleanse you of all prejudices.

- Acknowledge that some hidden socioeconomic or racial assumptions may exist in your attitudes toward people from different cultures. Consider if you often have a “fix it” mentality which looks at people as problems that need solutions or management. Our motivation in serving others ought to go beyond the idea of “helping them.” This method fails to see their capacity for designing their solutions and that we may need them as much as they need us.
- Submit and candidly acknowledge before God and others your inability, in your strength, to love others as God loves. Submit to one another—remain willing to learn rather than only teach; receive rather than give.
- Commit for the long haul. You must decide to stick with the cross-cultural friendships you’re forging even when they cause pain and stress.

Build the relationship slowly.

It may feel awkward the first few times you meet and speak with someone in need. In most cases, no deep, life-changing conversation will occur in the first several interactions. This moment happens for several reasons: lack of trust, relationship, trauma, mental illness, addiction, etc.

Build on common elements or commonalities you can find between you and the person you engage.

Do not pity individuals so much that you take responsibility for their problems.

Treat the people you interact with as individuals, not based on racial or socioeconomic class stereotypes.

Do not assume those in need don’t have any job skills or are otherwise “helpless” to help themselves.

You are *not* their rescuer. Jesus is the Savior.

Be empathetic. Resist giving others permission to excuse their present-day responsibilities because of unfortunate, painful events in the past.

Nurture an empowering relationship that allows the individual in need to contribute to their lives changing.

THE CITY AND TARGET COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The following assessment will help you gain a better understanding of your city and target community. We want to have the lens of needs and assets. We don't want to only ask "What is missing?" but also "What is God already doing?" or "What is good here?" We are not only trying to build a scarcity grid of the issues, problems, and lack in your city. We also want to see the hope, the joy, the flavor, and expression of your city.

The most empowering and Christlike way to learn about your city and the needs of those in it is through relationships. Stay away from online research and assumptions. Ask people impacted by injustice. Become a listener. Listen to everyone involved, from all sides.

Try not to make knee-jerk decisions on what you will do. The goal of this assessment is to be humble and learn from others. This step of the process is just as important as the future work itself.

Impact Areas to Apply Survey to:

- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Sexual exploitation and human trafficking
- Child-centered injustices (foster care, runaways, child hunger, etc.)
- Refugees
- Racial injustices

You can expand and add more to impact areas to reflect your context and your passion.

City Demographics

- What are the demographics of your city?
- What is the poverty rate in your city?
- What are the socioeconomic dynamics of your city?
- What is your city geographic layout according to the above questions? Is there a tie between the demographics, poverty rate, and other socioeconomic factors?
- What is the personality of your city regarding justice issues?
- What is the history of your city regarding justice, poverty, and exploitation issues?
- What is the percentage of professing Christians in your city?
- What is the unique expression of the Kingdom of God in your city? How do believers live out their faith (generally speaking)?

Target Community Demographics

- What are the demographics of your target community?
- What is the poverty rate in your target community?
- What are the socioeconomic dynamics of your target community?
- What is your target community geographic layout according to the previous questions?
Is there a tie between the demographics, poverty rate, and other socioeconomic factors?

THE CITY AND TARGET COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- What is the personality of your target community regarding justice issues?
- What is the history of your target community regarding justice, poverty, and exploitation issues?
- What is the percentage of professing Christians in your target community?
- What is the unique expression of the Kingdom of God in your target community? How do believers live out their faith (generally speaking)?

City Assets

- What are your city's greatest assets?
- What does your city have going for it that other cities do not have?
- What does your city already have in place that can be used for justice?
- What institutions in your city are creating change and making an impact?
- What schools in your city are creating change and making an impact?
- What faith-based initiatives in your city have gained traction and are changing lives?

Target Community Assets

- What are your target community's greatest assets?
- What does your target community have going for it that other communities do not have?
- What does your target community already have in place that can be used for justice?
- What institutions in your target community are creating change and making an impact?
- What schools in your target community are creating change and making an impact?
- What faith-based initiatives in your target community have gained traction and are changing lives?

Impacted Population (Members of Target Community)

- What seem to be the driving forces behind the issues that most affect members of your target community? Consider a lack of access to education, jobs, and so forth. Every community has forces at work that drive the issues. Try to feel out what those are in your target community.
- What do members of your target community feel they bring to the equation, the dialogue, or the solution?
- What do members of your target community want to see change? What would be meaningful for them to see happen?
- What has not been helpful? What does not seem to work? What do members of your target community roll their eyes at?
- How do members of your target community feel? What are their common struggles? Fears? Goals? Strengths? Dreams and abilities?

THE CITY AND TARGET COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Poverty and Homelessness

- What is the breakdown of poverty in your city? Where is it? Who does it most affect?
- What is the breakdown of homelessness in your city? Where is the majority of the homeless population located geographically? What population seems to be most affected by homelessness?
- What is the scope of homelessness in your city? Mild, moderate, or severe?
- What is your city's attitude toward poverty and homelessness? What about city leaders? What laws, if any, reflect this attitude or approach to addressing it?
- What initiatives are working well to address both poverty and homelessness?
- What is in place that is not working?

Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking

- What is the scope of prostitution in your city?
- What is the scope of sex trafficking, that you can estimate?
- What high-risk factors are present in your city that may be a sign of exploitation or trafficking vulnerability?
- How many strip clubs are in your city?
- What areas of your city see higher volumes of sexual exploitation?
- Is there a porn industry presence in your city? If yes, how does that show up?
- How many women are incarcerated for prostitution?
- What is the online prostitution presence like in your city?

Child-Focused Issues

- How many children are in foster care in your city?
- How many biological parents of children in foster care are in your city?
- What is the situation of child hunger?
- Who is advocating and fighting for children?
- How many child victims of trafficking were identified in your city in the past three years?
- Does the foster care system have a protocol for human trafficking in place? If yes, what is it?

People of Peace

People of peace are impacted by the issue, embedded in the culture, knowledgeable, ambassadors, and good guides for you as you serve the target community they are in. You will often recognize a person of peace because they will welcome you, receive you, be open to you and your friendship, be open to what you have to say about Jesus, be interested in and open to the life you live as a follower of Jesus, and assist or serve you in some ways. They also are influential in your target community and already have traction or momentum.

THE CITY AND TARGET COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- Who are the people of peace in your target community?
- Who are the people of peace in systems like law enforcement, leadership, and so forth?

People of Influence

- Who appears to be important to know if you want to work in your city's justice lane? Consider people like government leaders for your district and so forth.
- Which individuals in your city are natural leaders that would bring about influence? Who is already working toward change?
- Who makes decisions that most impact the vulnerable in your city?
- Who is an influencer in the faith community in your city?

Law Enforcement

- Are there law enforcement initiatives in place for vulnerable populations in your city?
- What is the general attitude toward law enforcement in your city? Gather multiple perspectives.
- Does it appear that law enforcement works with your city? Why or why not?
- Do you know individuals in law enforcement that work in your target community? How do they feel about the things on this assessment?
- Is there a specific task force for human trafficking law enforcement?
- What law enforcement unit oversees prostitution and human trafficking?
- Are there law enforcement vice teams working undercover human trafficking? Who are they?

Hospitals and Healthcare

- What hospitals in your city see the highest number of vulnerable populations?
- What hospitals have training and response protocol in place for sex trafficking, sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse, trauma, refugees, and so forth?
- What hospitals have mobile and community health resource efforts?

Judicial Systems

- Does the district attorney's office have human trafficking or exploitation initiatives in place? Consider things like diversion programs.
- Where are most prostitution arrests made in your city? Where are those arrests taken for incarceration?
- What is the legal response toward prostitution in your city? What is the typical punishment?
- What city or county jails have women in them?
- What is the population of women incarcerated in your city?
- Who runs the juvenile court?
- Is there a juvenile detention center?
- Are there juvenile district attorney programs geared towards high-risk teenagers?

THE CITY AND TARGET COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Local Churches

- What local churches serve in the trenches in your target community in an impactful way?
- What congregations best reflect the demographics of your target community. Consider things like race, culture, socioeconomics, and so forth.
- Are any faith communities involved in disciplining those impacted by injustice in your target community? Consider those impacted by homelessness, poverty, exploitation, incarceration, and so forth.

Nonprofit Organizations

- Who is on the front lines when it comes to poverty, homelessness, sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and other justice issues that move your heart?
- Make a database of these organizations.
- Who are they? List their name, vision, beliefs, affiliations, and leadership.
- What do they do? Include programs, initiatives, outreaches, and so forth.
- How do they do it? Note their strategies, culture, expression, and so forth.
- Are they making an impact? Is the needle moving in that area because of them?

Training

- Who facilitates human trafficking training for law enforcement in your city?
- Who facilitates human trafficking training for hospitals in your city?
- Who facilitates human trafficking training for the school systems in your city?
- Who facilitates human trafficking training for the hospitality industry in your city?
- Who facilitates human trafficking training for other nonprofits in your city?

Community Response Questions

- Is there a sex trafficking hotline in your city? If yes, what are the details? Who runs it? How do they respond to calls?
- Is there a sex trafficking or sexual exploitation task force in your city?
- Do your hospitals have sexual abuse nurse examiners (SANE nurses) present?
- Is there a street homeless crisis team in your city?
- Is there a mental health crisis response team in your city?
- Is there a domestic violence crisis hotline for your city?
- Is there a domestic violence shelter or safe house in your city?
- Is there a sexual assault hotline for your city?
- Are there runaway shelters for children in your city?
- Are there drop-in centers for children in your city?

THE CITY AND TARGET COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Biggest Question to Answer

- What is God already doing through organizations in your city?
- Who is gospel-centered, relevant, and moving the needle in your city?
- What gaps are obvious when you learn about existing resources?

Assessment of You

- What are you passionate about? What keeps you up at night? What is your personality like? What makes your personality unique?
- What are your gifts?
- What skills are unique to you?
- How does your career offer something you could give to others?
- Do you have extra of something? Consider your financial resources, physical resources, time, and so forth.
- What is your current influence in your city?
- What circles of people are you in? What connections do you have that are important?
- What is your capacity? How much time, energy, and other resources can you put toward this effort?
- Where do you see momentum in your ministry on the ground? What resources, assets, and relationships do you already have? What pieces are already in place?



THE GOAL

RECONCILIATION

When we think about poverty, we often think about a lack of material resources. But poverty is more than material. Scripture teaches that God established four foundational relationships for each human being.

Our Relationship with God

- *This relationship is primary.*
- *Our relationships with self, others, and creation flow out of our relationship with God.*

Our Relationship with Self

- *We are uniquely created in the image of God and have inherent worth and dignity.*
- *While we are not God, we reflect God's image, making us superior to the rest of creation.*

Our Relationship with Others

- *God created us to live in a loving relationship with one another.*
- *God designed humanity to know one another, love one another, and live in community.*

Our Relationship with Creation

- *Genesis 1:28-30 gives us a cultural mandate.*
- *God created us to steward His creation by understanding it, protecting it, subduing it, and managing it so that it is preserved and produces bounty.*

THE GOAL

These four key relationships highlight how humans are multifaceted, which implies that poverty alleviation efforts should also be multifaceted. If the root of poverty is relational brokenness, relational healing must be primary in our approach.

Colossians 1:19-20 reminds us, “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Jesus], and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (CSB). God is a Reconciler. His entire aim is to reconcile all things back to Himself.

The solution to poverty is reconciliation with God, self, others, and creation.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Poverty alleviation is the ministry of reconciliation, moving people closer to glorifying God by living in right relationship with self, others, and creation. Empowerment means that people grow in their ability to analyze their situation, make healthy decisions for improvement, and carry out those decisions in all four of these relationships.

Material Poverty Alleviation

Material poverty alleviation works to reconcile the four relationships so that people can fulfill their calling to glorify God by working and supporting themselves and their families with the fruit of that work.

- *Material poverty alleviation empowers people to trust God and earn material things through their labor. In doing so, people will move closer to who God created them to be.*
- *Work is an act of worship. When people seek to fulfill their callings by glorifying God in their work, praising Him for their gifts and abilities, and seeing their efforts and its products as an offering to Him, work serves as an act of worship to God.*

Three Empowering Approaches

Not all poverty is created equal. The path we choose to meet the needs of those we serve starts with knowing the appropriate response to their individual needs.

1. *Relief: urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from a natural or man-made problem*
2. *Rehabilitation: restoration to the positive elements of pre-crisis conditions*
3. *Development: ongoing change that moves people closer in the right relationships with God, self, others, and creation*



BE W.I.S.E.

YOUR LOCAL MINISTRY

When we first see needs in our communities, we often want to do something immediately. But if you are going to establish a ministry to vulnerable populations, you need to be wise in how you approach that process. These four key components are essential in building healthy, long-term ministry in your city.

W: HOLISTIC

I: INCARNATIONAL

S: SUSTAINABLE

E: EMPOWERING

Holistic

- *God created a whole person: body, spirit, heart, and mind. Each of us participates as part of the whole.*
- *God created us as relational beings. We see that in the call to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength: the whole person. When something impacts one part of us, the whole is affected.*
- *Poverty, often present in vulnerable populations, is not solely material. Poverty exists because of brokenness in relationships with God, self, others, and creation.*
- *A holistic, whole-person, relational approach is needed to alleviate poverty.*

A woman with dark hair, wearing a light blue short-sleeved top and shorts, is sitting on a metal bench. She is holding an open book and looking down at it. In the foreground, the back of a brown, fluffy dog is visible. The background is a blurred city street scene with buildings and other people.

BE W.I.S.E.

Incarnational

- *Local ministry should model the example God laid out for us. As John 1:14 says, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (CSB).*
- *God has called us to be with those He has called us to serve.*
 - *With our understanding of who we are*
 - *With our physical proximity*
 - *With our willingness to listen, learn, and grow alongside those in need*

Sustainable

- *People are the greatest asset of your local ministry.*
- *Long-term, fruitful ministry occurs when the health of the team is a priority.*
- *A ministry’s internal culture is of equal importance to its external output.*
- *Questions to assess sustainability:*
 - *Is the pace we move as a ministry sustainable for health and balance across every domain of our lives?*
 - *If we grow to “x,” will that level of activity remain sustainable for health and balance across every domain of our lives?*

Empowering

- *Determine an appropriate response for those you are called to serve. Do they need relief, rehabilitation, or development?*
- *The right approach begins an empowering process.*
 - *Do we do “for” or “with” those in need?*
 - *Do we provide relief where development is needed?*

EXTERNAL MOBILIZATION

You must also be W.I.S.E. in your external mobilization, which includes short-term mission trips, vision trips, and training opportunities. These teams and groups will join you on mission serving vulnerable populations in your local context.

Holistic: Consider Holistic Approaches

- *Mobilization opportunities keep the whole-person approach and the whole vision of the local ministry in mind.*
- *Opportunities include hands-on serving and allow individuals to engage people face-to-face to learn with those outside of their norm. They will do a project “with” those the ministry serves instead of “for” them.*
- *Opportunities improve the local ministry's vision and mission and those they serve and impact all involved at physical, emotional, and spiritual levels.*

Incarnational: Mirror Local Ministry

- *Mobilization opportunities mirror the local ministry and look like what's happening on the ground.*
- *Mobilization stays on mission with what the local ministry aims at every day.*

Sustainable: Prioritize Local Ministry

- *Mobilization opportunities prioritize local ministries.*
- *Your job includes evaluating and guarding the priorities of the local ministry as you also build mobilization and short-term opportunities.*

Empowering: Equip Partners for Local Context

- *Mobilization equips partners for their local context. Those who come in for short periods of time receive information and firsthand practice of what they can do in their context at home.*
- *The goal of mobilization is to send individuals back to their cities where they can make the most significant impact.*



SERVING

10 TIPS AS YOU SERVE VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Walking with the vulnerable in your local context will bring many challenges and rewards. So how can you serve in a way that offers the hope of the gospel?

1. Build friendships

- *Beginning a new friendship is always challenging, but starting a friendship with someone you hope to serve is the same as starting a friendship with anyone. Introduce yourself and ask their name. Which leads to tip number 2 ...*

2. Remember people's names.

- *After you've learned someone's name, make sure you remember it. Say it back to them. Knowing and using someone's name creates a powerful connection when you're first getting to know someone.*

3. Learn.

- *Listen to their story and learn more about them. Don't approach people as if you already know everything about them, and don't make assumptions. Instead, have an attitude that's ready to learn.*

4. Sometimes people really want attention, especially in larger groups.

- *Some people may act out to get more attention than the others around them. To be the most helpful, find ways to avoid rewarding negative behavior. This leads to tip number 5 ...*

SERVING

5. The larger the group you're working with, the more structure you need.

- *You'll want to be flexible, but it is okay to have plans that help you keep a larger group under control.*

6. If someone gives financially, speak well even over the smallest gifts.

- *Ask the Lord to bless the contribution and to use it for our good and His glory. Follow Christ's example as He blessed five loaves of bread and two fish before He fed the 5,000.*

7. Have a "services, not money" policy.

- *Giving people money can actually contribute to their problems, not solve them. Instead of giving money, find other ways to serve and help them.*

8. Sometimes, people in trouble can feel like they have no choice.

- *You can help give people options, even if you can't give them exactly what they ask for. You might say something like, "I can't give you \$30, but I would like to invite you to have lunch with me now." This gives the person the choice to accept or refuse the invitation.*

9. You might have to say "no" to immediate, short-term requests.

- *Eventually, you might say something like, "I can't help you anymore unless you let me become a part of your life."*

10. Remember that the body of Christ always reaches out with two hands: relief work and release work.

- *Relief work relates to immediate needs. Release work relates to long-term freedom—freedom from sin, freedom from patterns of dependency, and/or freedom from addictive behavior.*
- *If we only do relief work, we patronize others and do not give them the help that they need most. If we only do release work, we risk them having a hardened heart as we share truth without meeting their immediate needs.*
- *We want to work toward both meeting needs and changing lives.*

10 THINGS TO EXPECT IN ESTABLISHING A LOCAL MINISTRY

Ministry to vulnerable populations is challenging. Having realistic expectations can help you stay in the game for the long haul and continue to meet the needs of the most vulnerable around you as you establish a local ministry.

1. Expect to need wisdom.

- *When serving vulnerable populations, approach new situations and new people with wisdom. Knowing the potential issues that could arise and being prepared for them will allow you to not lose heart when things get hard.*

2. Gauge your expectations.

- *The people you are serving may not appreciate what you've done for them because of distrust, past trauma, or a lack of healthy relationships in their lives. But remember Scripture doesn't tell us to expect appreciation when we help the poor and oppressed. If our expectations are set appropriately, then we can serve and be consistent in the face of any response we receive.*
- *For additional information on how to serve those who have experienced trauma, see [Trauma-Informed Care](#).*

3. You are not the Savior.

- *Only Jesus is our Savior. If we try to act like someone's savior, we draw their attention away from Jesus and run the risk of burning out. You are not responsible for or sufficient to change people's lives. Only Jesus is.*

4. Expect to set healthy boundaries.

- *Healthy boundaries help you take care of yourself. Individuals who are living in the chaos of vulnerability need boundaries and order more than they need most things. Boundaries bring a sense of order where there is none and allow for that relationship to stand apart as different from every other relationship in their life.*

5. Be light, not lightning.

- *Ministry takes a long time. Lightning comes in bright and fast, brings a quick flash, and then it's gone. Think of ministry to the vulnerable like a streetlight. A streetlight is calmer and less flashy but steady and consistent. It continues to bless people even if it goes unnoticed.*



6. Expect change to take a long time.

- *Ministry to vulnerable populations is a long haul. Deep change and transformation aren't quick.*

7. Expect relapses.

- *People will relapse—it's inevitable. Relapse doesn't mean failure. Celebrate forward motion and support that individual as they walk back to health. Remind them that they failed because they are trying. Teach them about God's grace and that His strength comes into in our weakness. Relapse does not have to be the end of their journey and our relationship with them. A relapse can be a great tool to teach the gospel.*

8. Expect to learn.

- *Staying informed about relevant topics and issues vulnerable populations are facing can help you be prepared to respond appropriately. As you find out what is relevant and important to the people you're serving, focus on learning so that you can be a good friend as they process the trials of their lives.*

9. Expect to fail sometimes.

- *You'll make plans and have strategies for how to serve people and invest in them. Sometimes, they won't work. Be okay with something not working out how you planned. Be flexible and readjust for next time.*

10. Expect there to be a cost.

- *Serving vulnerable populations will cost more than you expect. Discomfort is not a signal that you're doing the wrong thing. The Lord can do far more in your life outside of your comfort zone than He can when you're comfortable. What He has for us in exchange for our sacrifices and the cost of serving in His Kingdom is far more valuable.*
- *Serving vulnerable populations is hard, but hard doesn't mean bad. Serving the vulnerable is worth it because Jesus is worth it, and we have the chance to point others to Him.*

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE



WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma is anything that does not nurture. The dictionary defines it as a deeply distressing or disturbing experience.

Trauma leaves a lasting negative effect on the victim's brain and well-being.

Trauma impairs one's memory, concentration, regulation, behavior, relationships, self-identity, new learning, and focus.

Trauma has led to heart disease, obesity, addiction, mental illness, and many other medical conditions.

Trauma impacts an individual's ability to trust, cope, and form healthy relationships.

Trauma disrupts emotion identification, the ability to self-soothe or control emotional responses, and the ability to distinguish between safe and unsafe.

Trauma shapes a person's belief about self and others, one's ability to hope, and a person's hope and entire outlook on life.

Be aware trauma could affect those you serve. It sometimes shows up as negative or unhealthy behaviors.

Consider the possibility that the person's behaviors are a valiant attempt to cope with a horrendous situation. Those behaviors may be saving their life.

Fundamental principles to consider when interacting with a victim of trauma:

- Remember the ways that trauma changes the brain, thus changing the person.
- Treat the trauma, not the behavior.
- Healing should be the goal, not behavior modification.
- Follow the principles of Trauma-Informed Care.

WHAT IS TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE?

Trauma-Informed Care engages people with histories of trauma that recognize the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges its role in their lives and behaviors, both past and present.

The goal of trauma-informed care is to acknowledge the impact of trauma on individuals so that they are not re-victimized in the process of seeking help. In addition, being trauma-informed allows you to focus on the root of presenting behaviors or circumstances to see what truly needs healing.

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

1. SAFETY

Addressing the physical and emotional safety of an individual is the first important step to providing Trauma-Informed Care.

In Practice:

- Create a warm, hospitable, inviting environment and allow the individual to have some say over the place where you meet.
- Ensure physical safety and emotional security when talking on the phone or meeting in person.
- Identify potential sights or sounds that could trigger reactions from the individual and eliminate them by reducing or avoiding loud noises or sudden, surprising events.

2. CHOICE

The more choices and control the individual has over their experience—through a collaborative effort with service providers and those meeting their needs—the more likely they will participate in services. And those services will prove effective.

In Practice:

- Ask questions that allow the individual to make decisions, such as where they would like to go on an outing or where they would like to sit in a room.
- Offer information but allow the individual to make their own decisions about the care and resources they'd like to receive.

3. COLLABORATION

Collaborative care involves sharing the responsibility to make decisions with the individual who has experienced trauma. It means working with them to plan, providing insight and input into their safety and plans. When collaborating with someone in need, you do not make decisions for them but with them.

In Practice:

- Set aside enough time to get to know them and their needs, their story, and what they have to offer in the equation of having their needs met.
- Allow the individual to play a significant role in planning and evaluating their needs and the services they receive.

4. TRUSTWORTHINESS

When serving an individual who has experienced trauma, clearly communicate tasks, boundaries, and the role of all involved. Following through on what you say and respecting boundaries build trust with the individual in need.

In Practice:

- Communicate the steps you will take to care for the individual in need.
- Allow the individual to communicate the role they will play in the process.
- Follow through with all things you have agreed to do.
- Allow the individual to communicate the boundaries they need you to hold for them to feel comfortable.
- Reiterate and respect those boundaries.

5. EMPOWERMENT

Focusing on an individual's strengths and empowering them to build on those strengths while developing more vital coping skills provides a healthy foundation for them to fall back on if and when they stop receiving services or assistance for their needs.

In Practice:

- Do not do for the individual what they can do for themselves.
- Allow the individual to decide their future, even if you disagree with it.
- Follow the individual's lead, support them in their efforts to analyze, assess, and meet their needs.



Send Relief



4200 North Point Parkway | Alpharetta, GA 30022

SendRelief.org