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Act 31: Hope for the Homeless

by Ed Walker

How do we handle our hearts with those who are homeless? If we live in cities or towns, it can become all too easy to blank out the same faces we see day after day. And the question nags at us: surely there's more we can give than 50p here and there? Today, we're looking into the more that's possible.

"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by

itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds." **(James 2:14–18 NIV)**

You walk past a homeless person on the way to work or while shopping. If you do nothing about his physical needs, or only say to him, 'God bless you,' then your faith is dead, according to James 2. That feels quite harsh but let's look at it in a different way. Instead of walking past, you could transform the life of a homeless person, working with your church as a generous community. Food, shelter and support could turn someone's life around and you have the power to do it.

It's significant that the theme of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (Matt 14:13-21) was this: Jesus saw the crowd **and had compassion on them**. The early disciples said, 'Send them away.' But Jesus says to the fledgling church, 'You give them something to eat.' It's all too easy to leave the issue of homelessness to charities and our local councils. However, churches can model the love of God by reaching out and offering practical and compassionate support to the vulnerable and homeless in their communities.

Nine years ago my wife, Rachel, and I asked ourselves the question, 'How can we help?' We'd received an inheritance of £30,000 which we used to buy a house in Peterborough. We partnered it with our church and, to this day, it's still being used to house homeless men, now leased through Hope Into Action.

It's my belief that every church in the UK can make a difference to the crisis of homelessness. It starts by answering this question from Jesus: 'How many loaves do you have?' and then obeying his command, 'Go and see.' Jesus could be asking your church to see how much capital you have in your reserves and collective savings account, then asking you to bring it to Him. Liaising with your local homelessness charity, speaking to Hope Into Action and starting the ball rolling by making relationships with the vulnerable and homeless in your neighbourhood can transform lives. Why not use a Sunday morning service to address this issue and talk seriously about what you and your church can do? You'll be surprised to find how much help you can offer.



After nine years working in war zones, Ed Walker came back to England and set up [Hope Into Action](#), an award-winning charity which enables churches to house the homeless. It has over 60 partner churches and together they run over 70 homes for the homeless. In 2017 it was awarded 'Best Housing Project in the Country' by *The Guardian*.

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GREEN OPTION:

Donate £2 to a local or national homelessness charity. You can use Give.net to search for a charity near you and give online.



YELLOW OPTION:

Call your local homeless shelter, and ask if there's anything that they need. Then go and meet that need.



**RED
OPTION:**

Invite a homeless person to your church, or to a local soup kitchen. Go along with them. If they need a lift, offer to give them one. If you feel uncomfortable doing this alone, do it in pairs or triplets with others from your church or community.

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