

A photograph showing a man in a red polo shirt and khaki pants standing and handing a white object, possibly a piece of clothing or a bag, to a homeless man sitting on a bench. The homeless man is wearing a dark tank top and a backpack. The background shows a window with a view of a street and trees.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN PLAN

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
FOR ANYONE WHO WANTS TO HELP THE HOMELESS
TRAVIS SHARPE

The Good Samaritan Plan

Travis Sharpe



unsheltered.org

INTRODUCTION

It is my hope that through the information gained in this book, you will become more confident and equipped to be a blessing to the people you have a heart to help. When I first began to reach out to the homeless, I was excited, but also scared. I wasn't sure exactly what to do or how to do it. Now, many years later, I have come to believe that it's not so much what you do, but how you do it. If you act in love, with a heart to help, you will do fine.

I do however, believe that there are some approaches that are better than others. There are some things we might do out of kindness that should not be done or maybe not be done at that time. This book is intended to be a step-by-step guide to help you as you figure things out and put your love into action.

It is my goal to help you become more aware, informed, prepared and responsible as you help people in need. This book is a portion of The Good Samaritan Class that I teach to churches, rescue missions, or any other groups who want in-depth training for homeless ministry. Feel free to contact me at travis@unsheltered.org with questions or to set up a class in your area.

Travis Sharpe

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STEP ONE MEETING AND GREETING

The first homeless person that I ever met was a man named Sydney. Sydney was a big, tall, rough looking fellow who intimidated me from the start. He had a raspy voice and he was in a crowd of about 30 other homeless men and women who were hanging out after dark around a dirty pavilion where they all slept each night.

As I approached him, (and the rest of the crowd), I was speechless. I honestly didn't know what to say or do in that moment because I had never interacted with someone like him before. Somehow, I was able to push through my fears and my pre-conceived notions and muster up the courage to speak.

What happened next was a complete shock to me. Not only did I talk to Sydney, but he took me around and introduced me to almost everyone else that was there under the pavilion. That night, for the first time in my life, I realized that although most of these people looked much different than I did, and were at a much different place in life, they were normal people just like me.

My goal in this first step is to impart to you some of what I have learned throughout the years so that you will have much more confidence and courage than I did when I met Sydney. Step one is all about what to say and how to act when meeting someone for the first time.

FINDING SOMEONE TO TALK TO

Sadly, you don't have to look far to find someone who is experiencing homelessness. Homelessness is not confined to big cities anymore. You might see a man or woman holding a sign at an intersection in town or you may notice some cardboard and blankets that have been carefully arranged underneath an overpass.

I have met homeless people who lived in the woods, in abandoned buildings, in their vehicles, in shelters and many other places. Chances are, you may already know where someone is living in your own area. Regardless of where you meet someone, there are some principles you can follow to make that first meeting a good one.

WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY?

There will be times when you want to approach someone and start a conversation with them but you're not sure how to begin. I completely understand. The best advice I can give you is to treat them as you would anyone else. You will however want to be sure that you don't ask offensive questions.

Instead of asking someone if they are homeless, you might try asking something like this: "Are you traveling?" Most homeless people have a bag with them and it's completely reasonable to ask someone who has a bag if they are traveling. In my experience, when asked that question, most people will begin to talk to you and some will even reveal to you that they are homeless.

From that point, you can simply introduce yourself to them. This is where I highly recommend that you have something with you to give them as a small gift. A cold drink or a snack pack works great for this. You can find a detailed list of what to include in a snack pack by clicking [here](#).

With the snack pack or cold drink in hand, you can simply say something like "I noticed you sitting here and thought you might be able to use this." Typically, this is a great "icebreaker" and you will be off to a great conversation and make a new friend.

FOUR PRINCIPLES TO FOLLOW IN YOUR FIRST MEETING

1. Be relational, not transactional

"Just the facts, Ma'am." That might have worked for the famous Sergeant Joe Friday from the hit TV show and movie *Dragnet*, but it won't work in ministry. Hopefully, we will have a result in mind every time we meet someone. We want to know who they are, where they live, what's going on in their life, and how we can help them.

Although we will be paying attention and listening for clues, it's not about how much information we can gather and it's not about a list of questions. Ministry is relational before it is anything else. If we are to make a difference, we must make relationships. There will be a time for gathering information and trying to connect the dots, (step #2), but for now, we should concentrate on beginning a friendship.

2. Listen

When we listen to people we learn about their hopes and dreams. We learn about their fears and challenges. We learn about their journey through life and their current struggles.

Listening opens the door for us to be able to speak into someone's life. Listening will not only give us much desired information about someone, but it will also give us permission; permission to speak those words of truth and love that we are dying to speak.

Most of us want to talk out of turn. We want everyone to hear us before we hear them. That's just backwards. It might be helpful to think of every relationship like a bank account. You cannot make withdrawals before you make deposits.

In a relationship, a deposit is a positive thing that you add to someone's life and listening to someone tell their story might be one of the best deposits we ever make. When look someone in the eye, and block out everything else around us, we say to that person, "you are valuable to me".

When someone senses that they are valuable in your eyes, they will then turn around and listen to your story. They grant you permission to speak to them. Without permission, our words go in one ear and out the other!

3. Take your time

Everyone knows that we live in a microwave society. We want what we want and we want it now. If it's not "quick and easy", we're usually not interested, but if we're not willing to invest some time with people, it's going to be real tough to help them. This concept will hold true from the first time you meet someone and throughout your relationship with them.

Think about this: people who are experiencing homelessness are often overlooked. They are all too often neglected in our society for reasons we all know. When you and I take time out of our day to sit down with someone and hear their story, it has the potential to make a real impact.

4. Don't make promises

Broken promises are the Achilles heel of homeless ministry. I don't know of anything that is more damaging than telling someone you're going to do something and then not doing it. Why is it so bad? Because it is lying, and being lied to hurts.

To someone who has a home, a warm blanket or a warm coat may seem to be a minor detail, after all, we have plenty of that stuff, don't we? In contrast, most people

who are homeless only have a small amount of possessions that are typically carried with them everywhere they go.

The fact is that telling someone we are going to bring them something might be a small thing to us, but a big thing to them. I have had people tell me that they waited all day for me to come only to be disappointed when I didn't show up. Ouch! Remember what I said about gaining permission? One sure fire way to lose it is to break promises.

A better strategy is to simply tell the truth. If it is doubtful you can do something, then just be honest and say so. Most people can handle a solid "no" better than they can handle a broken promise. You may want to take the "under promise and over deliver" approach, especially during your first meeting.

MOVING FORWARD

Step one can be done in thirty minutes or a couple of hours. The circumstances and the attitude of the person you are talking will greatly influence how much time you spend with them. Some people love to talk while others may not want to talk at all. You will need to adjust and be flexible each time you approach someone new. Most of all, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your conversation.

Now that you have met a new friend, and spent a little time getting to know them, you are ready to move on to the second step.

STEP TWO

MAKING AN ASSESSMENT

WHAT IS AN ASSESSMENT?

The goal in this step is to dig a little deeper, to move past the meeting and greeting stage and begin to understand some of the dynamics behind the scenes. The whole idea of making an assessment is to gather facts, background, and context. If we really want to help someone then we need to understand some things about them. We need to try to know them and a good assessment is the starting point.

I've heard people say that we should take everything at face value, that we shouldn't pry and try to find out personal details about people. They say that in doing so, you become their judge. I couldn't disagree more. An assessment is not a judgment; it's an honest look at a person's situation that provides valuable information to assist them in a correct manner.

THREE REASONS TO MAKE A PROPER ASSESSMENT BEFORE GOING TO FAR

1. To blindly give money or other items to someone without understanding the dynamics behind their situation is simply irresponsible.

People will often say that "whatever someone does with what I give them is between them and God." And I agree with that statement. But I also believe that what I do with the resources I have is between me and God. If that is true, and it is, how can I give money to someone with no questions asked if I know in my heart that there is a real probability that they will hurt themselves with it?

Taking the time to make an assessment simply means that you love the person enough to help in the appropriate manner and be a wise steward of the resources God has entrusted you with.

I know what you are thinking. "That five dollars I gave that guy isn't going to hurt him, it's not going to make much of a difference." Well, yours alone might not, but what about when thirty other people do the same thing? Catch my drift?

The average panhandler is counting on people like you. They know that they can make a tax-free day's wage and live irresponsibly because people will be guided by guilt instead of common sense. We need to take the time to do a little homework and see what the person is all about.

2. You could hinder what God is trying to do in someone's life.

If you are reading this, I know you have a huge heart to help people. I mean, who else reads this kind of stuff?

The ironic thing is that sometimes in our haste to help someone draw close to God, we could interrupt God's plans for them. Have you ever thought about the prodigal son in the Bible? The Bible tells us something very interesting about when he was in the hog lot and about to eat the slop along with the hogs.

It says that "no man gave unto him" (Luke 15:16). If the average compassionate person had seen this young man in that awful shape, they would have more than likely fed him a good hot meal. I know I would. But God was doing something in his life through hunger.

You see, an assessment of his situation shows us that poverty was not his issue, rebellion was. And hunger was one of the tools God used to bring about conviction. Do you see how our charity might have hindered what God was doing in his life?

3. You could further a flawed view of personal responsibility.

This is an unfortunate truth. But it is true none the less. Our society and our government has done an outstanding job of rewarding people for ill behavior. Programs that are meant to help the truly poor have been abused to the extent that we now have a generation of people who feel entitled to a free ride in life.

When we treat well people like they are sick, we run the risk of helping to convince them that they really are sick, when in fact they are well. In other words, when we give and give and give without knowing why the person is in need, we help to further their sense that the world owes them something for nothing. And that is simply not true.

I want to be very clear that not everyone who panhandles is a shyster. Not everyone who asks for money will misuse it. But to deny that many do, is foolish. To give blindly is a fast way out. I suggest that we take the time to know them, love them, and help them in a responsible manner.

WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR DURING YOUR ASSESSMENT?

Now that we know the reason for making an assessment, let's look at the kind of information we are attempting to gather. I'll share the key information you need to look for and give you a few questions that will help gather that information and cause it to make sense.

THREE KEYS YOU WANT TO DISCOVER IN YOUR ASSESSMENT

1. Vulnerabilities

One of the greatest determinations we can make while meeting with someone is their level of vulnerability. Vulnerable means capable or susceptible of being wounded or hurt, as with a weapon.

WHAT MAKES SOMEONE VULNERABLE?

- Age (Minors and the elderly can be more vulnerable than others.)
- Mental illness
- Physical condition
- Weather conditions
- Domestic violence
- And many more factors

I want to understand if a person is particularly vulnerable in any way. This will help me to make determinations, especially related to emergency help. If you meet a single mother with two children and they are stranded late at night, you would easily consider them vulnerable to harm. Their situation is much different than that of a middle-age, healthy male who travels the interstates living in the woods and under bridges. The differences are obvious.

2. Barriers and Behaviors

While making your assessment, you will want to look for behavior patterns and barriers to receiving help. A thorough assessment will shed light on the possibility of

behavior patterns that are destructive, as well as those that are constructive. It will also help to differentiate between self-inflicted problems and problems caused by outside forces.

With many people who are homeless, there are barriers and behaviors that stand between the help they need and the help they get. It is very important to understand the difference between a barrier and a behavior.

BARRIERS

A barrier is something that exists outside of a person that presents an obstacle to them achieving their goals. It is not created or fostered by them. Rather, it is created by a society, or genetics, or other forces outside of their control.

In the same way that a building with no wheelchair ramp would be an obvious barrier for someone who was confined to a wheelchair, a homeless person with a mental illness could be legitimately hindered from holding down meaningful employment.

Possible barriers might be:

- Racism
- Sexism
- Mental Illness
- Disabilities
- Lack of education

When you identify someone, who is homeless, or in need because of a true barrier, your job is to help remove the barrier.

BEHAVIORS

Behaviors differ from barriers because they are within the immediate control of the person. Harmful behaviors are made up of a series of bad decisions that have been continued in long enough to become habit forming and a part of everyday life.

Possible harmful behaviors might be:

- Repeatedly failing to pay one's utility bills
- Repeatedly getting into dysfunctional relationships
- Consistently refusing to hold down steady employment and being evicted for not paying rent
- Repeatedly not having responsibilities met because of addictions

We want to get a sense for the level of responsibility that the person is showing for their life. Sadly, some people are irresponsible, even when it comes to their own wellbeing. It is our responsibility to understand the difference between true barriers and behaviors. Many times, we mistake harmful behaviors for barriers. A behavior is the way in which someone functions or operates. It is the actions taken and the response applied to circumstances.

When we mistake harmful behaviors for barriers, we are in danger of three things:

1. Implying that the individual has no responsibility for, or power over changing their behaviors.
2. We are also in danger of approaching the issues the wrong way, therefore applying the wrong treatment.
3. Becoming disenfranchised with the entire ministry.

A clear and honest understanding of the root issues should make our purpose clear and our focus sharp. We don't turn a blind eye to someone because they have "done this to themselves", but we should approach their situation accordingly. Remember, Jesus is the behavior changing expert! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

3. Needs

Almost everyone who comes to you for help will tell you their needs. The problem is that sometimes there is a pretty big gap between needs and wants. That is true for everyone, not just someone struggling with homelessness. Here are a few questions to consider.

- Are their needs valid?
- Can they meet this need on their own?
- Is this need something that myself or our ministry *should* meet?

You might find out that the solution you believe to be the best is not at all what the person wants. For example, you might want to help someone get into a shelter but they might want a night in a hotel. Prayer, wisdom, and a good assessment will help you to determine the validity of the needs you are asked to meet.

MAKING THE ASSESSMENT

Now that you have an idea of what to look for, we'll cover how to go about this. You're going to need to find a good way to remember what questions to ask and how to remember the answers you receive. I'm not as concerned with how you do this as much as I am that you take the time to do it. However, to make this a little easier, I've included a form at the end of this book that you can print out and use as a guide.

The guide is easily used on a clipboard because it makes writing easy no matter where you are. Although it would be a little rude to just whip out a clipboard and begin asking questions and writing down answers, it can be done. When the appropriate time comes, just get out your clipboard and ask, "do you mind if I take some notes?" Most of the time, since you have already gotten to know the person in step one, and they know you're there to help, they won't have a problem with you taking notes.

There are two parts to making an assessment, the gathering of information, and using that information to come to conclusions. Gathering the information is what you do in the presence of the person you are working with while connecting the dots and coming to conclusions will likely be done afterwards.

To gatherer the information, simply do like you did in step number one. Treat them like a friend, take your time and have a conversation. The difference is that this time you will be writing down the answers.

WHERE SHOULD YOU DO THE ASSESSMENT?

It's hard to do this on the side of the road or standing at a busy intersection as the cars go by. I suggest that this be done over a meal or maybe a cup of coffee. The more time you spend, and the more thorough you are, the more discernment you'll gain and it will

feel less like a survey and more like a conversation with a new friend. Basically, any place that you can sit down for a little while without too many interruptions will work fine.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

To help you gain a further understanding of what these questions can reveal, I've lifted eight questions (from the form at the end of this book) and described how the information can be useful.

1. How long has the person been homeless?

This is an important thing to know because it can reveal many other things. For example, if someone has been homeless for 20 years, they probably have a lot more street smarts than someone who has been homeless for two weeks. If they have been homeless for that long then that is a good indicator that there are some major underlying issues in their life. It could be a mental illness. It could be a handicap. It could be an addiction. These are things that need to be known as you set out to help someone.

If you discover that the person you are trying to help has only been homeless for a very short time period that could indicate that with just a little help, they could be back on their feet real soon.

2. Where do they normally spend the night?

This is important as well because it can say a lot about a person's ability to function around others. If they live under a bridge by themselves, that could be an indication that they don't function well or interact well with others.

If they live in a homeless camp with all their friends, that could indicate that they function well but are trapped in a cycle of bad relationships. Or they could be banding together and digging their heels into that lifestyle because they believe they will never be any different.

3. How many jobs have they had in the last couple years?

Believe it or not, many homeless people work hard every day. I know men who have worked and had decent jobs but couldn't seem to get ahead in life.

But if a person has had a dozen jobs in the last year or two, something's wrong. That is a classic sign of addiction. Many people are hard workers but their addiction rules their lives and drives them from difficulty to difficulty.

4. Where are they going?

Homeless people are always going somewhere! Many are transient moving from town to town. Many will ask you for gas money or for a bus ticket. Always investigate this. Ask where they are going and why they want to go there.

Many people I meet who are homeless are where they are because they came there on a promise of some sort that didn't pan out. Now they are stuck with nothing. I personally don't want to shuttle people from city to city unless that move has real potential to change their life. Most moves are not good ones. Before I buy a bus ticket for someone I will always verify the story on the other end first.

5. What are they doing?

If they want money from you, are they doing anything themselves? Giving money to someone who spends all their time asking for money is simply not good. Do they have a plan to overcome their homelessness? I like to invest in people who are trying.

I help people who are not doing much to help themselves too, but that help looks a little different, it's usually not monetary.

6. What is their mental state?

Obviously, someone with a mental illness will have many more challenges than someone in the same shape without the illness. It is very important to understand these illnesses and the implications surrounding them.

Expecting someone who suffers from schizophrenia to be able to function and perform just like everyone else is simply absurd. Their mental state will have a lot to do with how you decide to move forward with them.

Sometimes God calls us to care for, and fight for people. Sometimes we need to hold people accountable and if they won't work they shouldn't eat. But if we don't take the time to understand what's happening with someone we will not know how to proceed.

Severe mental illness is one of the biggest factors in homelessness today and it makes people who suffer extremely vulnerable. At first glance, they may seem perfectly normal, but mental illnesses can be very deceiving. People suffering with mental illness will have good days and bad days. Just because you meet someone on a "good" day, doesn't mean that they can take care of themselves and functioning in society.

7. Where else have they sought assistance and who else has helped?

Many times, you will not be the first person they have asked for help. They have more than likely reached out to other churches and agencies as well.

It's important to know who else is trying to assist them so that services are not duplicated and so that there is no abuse of services.

8. Are they from your town or are they just traveling through?

The answer to this question could shed some light on the best way to proceed. There is a whole culture of people who simply travel the roads and roam from town to town. Their needs will be much different from the needs of a family who lives in your community and has recently become homeless. The traveler might be making a living by panhandling and roaming the highways because that's more fun than working for a living, while the family might have had a medical emergency that caused an unforeseen crisis. The two should be treated much differently.

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER

There are many more questions to ask during your assessment than these, but this is a great start. Remember we are not judging people to be worthy of our time or love. They *are* worthy already because they are made in God's image. We are simply attempting to be better ministers and good stewards.

MAKING SENSE OF THE INFORMATION

Now that you have interviewed your friend and gathered lots of questions to lots of answers, you need to know what to do with those answers. To do this, you will want to compare your notes with the three key discoveries that I mentioned earlier in this step. Ask God to help you understand the dynamics of their situation as you consider their answers in light of those three keys.

Although their decisions might not make much sense to you, and their rationale might not be too rational, you should begin to notice possible vulnerabilities, behaviors, barriers, and needs. More about this in step three.

MOVING FORWARD

Step one and two can be done in the same meeting or at two separate times. You should let your first conversation and the circumstances around it help to determine when

to proceed. Sometimes it will be appropriate to continue while at other times the surroundings or your own time limitations won't allow it.

The best way to proceed from step to step is to set a follow-up appointment. This will also require a little investment on their part because they will have to make an effort to meet you again.

With the meeting and assessment complete, it's time to move on to the third step.

STEP THREE

PROVIDING ASSISTANCE

The idea here in this step is to assist your new friend considering what you learned in your assessment. The conclusions you come to because of an honest assessment will be your guide for when they ask you for help. We'll talk more about bigger needs in a moment, but for now, let's cover the easy stuff.

Some things that they will ask you for are not a problem at all. I call these things "initial assistance", and I'm happy to help anyone with these things no matter their situation. They don't have to meet any special criteria or anything else. These are simple acts of kindness that I freely give to anyone who might ask.

Initial assistance might include:

- A meal
- Food from your church food pantry
- Blankets, hygiene products, clothing, or other physical needs
- Using the resource guide to help them identify possible places to get their needs met
- Transportation to a shelter or other place that will immediately improve their situation

Again, I feel good about helping anyone with these types of initial needs. As previously stated, the assessment you have made is not to determine if you love the person or are willing to bless them. We love people because Christ has loved us and commanded us to love others. Your assessment will come in handy after you have become acquainted, provided initial assistance, and want to do more.

HOW TO HANDLE REQUESTS

If there are bigger needs such as a motel stay, bus ticket, rental assistance, or others, you may not immediately know if you can meet that need, or if you should meet that need. As we talked about in the section about barriers and behaviors, some needs are really the person's own personal responsibility. There should be a valid reason for you to step in and provide larger needs.

It will be much easier to make decisions about these requests if you have been thorough in your assessment. This step will also come easier with more experience. It took a long time for me to realize that everyone's crisis wasn't *my* crisis.

Don't let your budget become the only factor when considering meeting larger needs. Whither you are working on behalf of your church, or you are simply acting on your own, money should not be the only factor. Sometimes, decisions based solely on the availability of funds are the wrong decisions. Common sense and prayer will go much further than a budget will.

FOUR FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- 1. Vulnerability-** Is the person in any immediate danger due to factors outside of their control?
- 2. Responsibility-** Would it be responsible on your part to meet this need? Are you participating in their irresponsibility by meeting this need?
- 3. Budget-** Is there any money available for this?
- 4. Outcome-** What is the most likely outcome from the assistance you provide? Will the assistance I provide help to solve any real problems or just put Band-Aids on the surface?

STEP FOUR

SHARING AND CONNECTING

SHARING THE GOSPEL

Hopefully, you believe strongly in sharing Christ with others. I certainly do. I wouldn't be writing the book right now if someone hadn't cared enough about my soul to tell me about Jesus. Before that time in my life, I was lost and without any hope of eternity in Heaven. However, it was after I received the Lord as my Savior that I realized the hope I gained was not only a future hope, it was also a hope for today. A hope that would begin to guide my feet every day of my life.

The fact of the matter is, we can do all the temporal, physical things within our power to help someone, but if we fail to share Christ with them, we have failed altogether. We should have a true and honest desire for all people to know our Savior and have the same hope for today and all of eternity that we have. Sharing the gospel is the simple act of being a witness for Christ. It is telling others what he has done for you.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN WITNESSING TO THE HOMELESS

1. Always think about where you are and what's going on. While I don't know if there are any "wrong" times or places to share the gospel. I do know there are some that seem to be ineffective and awkward. For example, you may not want to try to talk to someone for a long time when they are on the side of the road with a sign. They are there trying to make money and it is likely that they are just wanting you to get to the point so that you will stop interrupting their "work". It would be better to catch that person when they leave the street corner or intersection.

2. Avoid quick attempts to have someone simply say a prayer along with you. Everyone gets saved the same way. By grace, through faith. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Sincerity is a must for everyone. (Romans 10:9-13)

3. Carry a small New Testament Bible with you when possible.

4. Start with secular conversation and look for a time to transition into a spiritual conversation.

5. Simply tell them how God saved you!

CONNECTING

God certainly knew what he was doing when he instituted the local church. The local church is a local group of baptized believers who gather regularly to exhort and admonish one another

Four reasons someone experiencing homelessness needs the church.

1. Obedience and spiritual growth begin in the church with a public profession of faith and baptism.

2. Most good things in our lives come through **connections**. People who are homeless are often very disconnected and may be very dysfunctional. God has designed our assemblies to have everything we need spiritually and socially.

- Jobs
- Friendships
- Recreation
- Spiritual growth
- Personal growth
- People skills

3. To combat seclusion and depression.

Many people want to be left alone, but God says to assemble yourselves together.

4. Bringing someone to your church is one of the greatest ways to effectively present the gospel to them.

Transportation will be one of the biggest issues in connecting someone with your church.

Tips for transporting guests

- If possible, always have a friend with you when you transport someone.
- Never transport someone of the opposite sex alone.
- Avoid transporting someone who is intoxicated.
- Don't leave valuables in your car.

One of the most effective ways to connect people to your church is to start a van or bus route. Building a route among the homeless population is possible. If your church has a desire to reach the homeless, this is a great ministry to consider.

STEP FIVE

FOLLOWING UP & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

To the best of our ability, we should follow up with the people we have met and helped. I wish we could have a continual influence on everyone we meet on the streets, however, because of their transient nature, that usually doesn't happen.

- Some people you will only meet once.
- Some people will resist any real follow up.
- Some people will be in your life for a little while.
- Some people will become friends.

It is important to treat everyone as if they will become your very good friend. You may never see them again because they might only be traveling through, but you will make a much bigger impact if you treat them like an old friend.

THREE WAYS TO FOLLOW UP AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

1. Following up with bigger needs

If you are working on solving a problem or getting a need met, you should keep in touch and give regular updates. This will give them peace of mind and keep you informed of any changes that have occurred in their life.

2. Visits

Just like a pastor would visit a church member, you need to regularly visit the people you have contacted.

You want to be viewed as a friend, not just a source of supply. You should make more visits where you do NOT give them anything than visits where you DO give them something. This approach will help them to look to God as their source of supply and not you.

2. Wellness checks

Because life on the streets is dangerous and unpredictable, frequent visits to check on someone's well-being are a good idea.

This is especially important when you are dealing with someone who is sick or elderly or someone who has a bad addiction.

Consider frequent visits during extreme weather such as freezing temperatures or after a storm or heavy rains.

The goal of follow up

During all your follow up, the goal should be to build a relationship with your new friend. There is a big difference between going out and *doing ministry* and going out and building relationships. Relationship building is pouring ourselves into people and walking through the ups and downs of life with them.

God has blessed me to have several long-lasting friendships with men whom I first meet on the streets. One of them, a man I have now been good friends with for over ten years, called me just to say "hi" while I was writing this section! He just wanted to talk and see how I was doing. When I first met him, he was addicted to alcohol and crack cocaine and living on the streets of Augusta, GA.

I hope that God will allow you to become a friend to the friendless and an encouragement to many people in the days to come!

CONCLUSION

As you put these steps into action, I am praying that God will richly bless you and give you confidence and boldness. Sometimes you may get the steps out of order, and that's okay. My hope is that you catch the spirit of these steps, do your "due diligence", be responsible and compassionate and simple help those who need the Lord.

Don't let the fear of the unknown paralyze you. You may not know exactly how to respond or what to do, but the important thing is that you do *something*. If you will do something, you will be far ahead of most people who pass by, not caring enough to stop.

Thank you for caring enough to see, stop and love.

Use the assessment guide below to take notes while you are speaking to someone.

1. Hi, my name is..... What's your name? _____
2. Are you traveling? _____
3. Are you from this area? _____
4. How long have you been in this area? _____
5. Are you in need of help? _____
6. How old are you? _____ Male Female
7. Are you working? _____
8. What do/did you do for work? _____
9. Where was your last job? _____
10. Why aren't you working now? _____
11. How long have you been out of work? _____
12. How long have you been living... _____
 - A. In your car? _____
 - B. On the streets? _____
 - C. Living with.....? _____
13. Are you familiar with the services in the area? _____
14. Have you ever used the resources in this area? _____
15. Where did you stay last night? _____
16. Where do you plan on staying tonight? _____
17. Where do you plan on staying tomorrow night? _____
18. When did you eat last? _____
19. Do you have any family that may be able to help you tonight? _____
20. How close are they? _____
21. Are you currently drinking or on drugs? (to determine if they can be housed in a shelter) _____
22. Would you be willing to go to a shelter? _____
23. Do you have transportation? _____
24. Do you have a phone or good contact number? _____
25. Are you alone? _____ If not, who is with you? _____

Notes _____



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For additional resources visit:

Unsheltered.org