



IF YOU DON'T SEE THEM, YOU'RE NOT LOOKING



# INVISIBLE NEIGHBORS



FOR CHURCH-WIDE SERIES + SMALL GROUPS + SUNDAY SCHOOL + YOUTH PROGRAMS

## INVISIBLE NEIGHBORS SERMON SUGGESTIONS + RESOURCES

BY DR. BOB WENZ

## ***Introduction***

### ***About the Messages***

The following eight sets of sermon notes are designed to parallel the various sections of the book *Invisible Neighbors*. One message is an introduction to the overall series, followed by six sectional messages and one that corresponds to the epilogue.

For this series to have maximum impact—and for your congregation or parishioners to have the highest level of engagement—you, as the deliverer of the messages, need to read *Invisible Neighbors*. It is available at [www.invisibleneighbors.org](http://www.invisibleneighbors.org). Additionally, for an ideal experience, *Invisible Neighbors* should be used as a Sunday school or small-group curriculum.

The messages and resources—texts, outlines, and ideas—are intended to be starting points; you may adapt them and use them to build a series of your own.

While these are copyrighted, feel free to use them as you would like (attribution, when appropriate, is appreciated). May God empower you to speak on behalf of hungry, homeless, abused, and addicted people in our communities who wait on the church to raise up a movement on their behalf.

### ***About Dr. Bob Wenz***

The late Dr. Bob Wenz wrote this series of sermon notes to complement Association of Gospel Rescue Missions (AGRM) President John Ashmen's book, *Invisible Neighbors*. Bob was no stranger to AGRM, having served as its minister-at-large from 2008 to 2010. During that time, he led a task force of members that studied the need for church curriculum and did foundational work for what would eventually become the *Invisible Neighbors* project. Bob is still a great friend of AGRM and its member missions and makes his valuable services available on a freelance basis, as needed.

Bob served as a preaching pastor for 27 years before a three-year tenure as vice president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). His own book, *Navigating Your Perfect Storm* (InterVarsity, 2010), uses lessons from Jesus' last supper with his disciples to equip believers for the inevitable life crises they will face as his followers.

## Introductory Message: Overture to the Series

### *Preparing for Something New*

In *Invisible Neighbors*, John Ashmen calls us to move strategically into the world of the homeless. This may be a frightening journey for many—a whole new world. The people of God have been called to move into the world of frightening neighbors before. Abraham was called to leave what he found familiar in Ur and travel to a new place. Israel was on the verge of moving into the promised land of Canaan not long after the exodus from Egypt. However, because the Israelites were afraid of the giants in the land, they were to spend 40 years in the wilderness before Joshua would finally lead them across the Jordan River into a new land.

The story of the crossing of the Jordan may serve well to introduce the theme of *Invisible Neighbors* as God seeks to lead His people out of a familiar (and comfortable) place into new places where He wants to prosper His word and glorify His name.

*Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. After three days the officers went throughout the camp, giving orders to the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between you and the ark; do not go near it." Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you." Joshua said to the priests, "Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people." So they took it up and went ahead of them. And the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: 'When you reach the edge of the Jordan's waters, go and stand in the river.'" Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God. This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap." So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground (Joshua 3:1–17).*

### *Preparing for Something New*

## I. Introduction idea

The story of Mike Yankowski on pages 51–56 of *Invisible Neighbors*

## II. As He has done at other critical times, God wants to lead His people by faith out of places with which we are familiar into new places where he can bring prosperity and health and bring glory to His name.

### A. God wants to take us where some of us have never been before: the world of the homeless.

*After three days the officers went throughout the camp, giving orders to the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before (Joshua 3:2–4a).*

1. We must get out of our comfort zone (not easy).
2. We must follow God closely.
3. We must acknowledge our anxieties because we have never been this way before.

### B. God wants to consecrate us for the journey of faith.

*Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you.” Joshua said to the Israelites, “Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God. This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites (Joshua 3:5, 9, 10).*

1. Trust God at every step.
2. Trust God to do what only He can and wants to do—amazing things.
3. Trust God to defeat the obstacles and enemies we will encounter.

### C. God wants us to focus on the harvest.

*Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water’s edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho (Joshua 3:15–16).*

1. The obstacles may be great (river is at flood stage).
2. The rewards are high (harvest time).

3. The consecrated ones follow and cross over.

### **III. Conclusion: Put your foot in the water!**

*Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing (Joshua 3:15b–16a).*

1. We begin by hearing the call and instruction of God to move us out of our familiar spaces.
2. We begin by consecrating ourselves to following God.
3. We begin by putting our feet in water.

## Message 1: *Under the Radar*

As John Ashmen points out in Part I of *Invisible Neighbors*, we are surrounded by neighbors. Some of our neighbors are doing fine. But many are in great need. In our cocooned culture, these neighbors can easily remain invisible; they are under the radar, but not by choice.

Recall the hubbub Mathias Rust, a German aviator, created when he landed on May 28, 1987, near Red Square in Moscow. As an amateur pilot, he flew his small single-engine plane from Finland to Moscow, primarily flying “under the radar” of the Soviet Air Defense System. He landed on Vasilevski Spusk next to Red Square near the Kremlin.

In this message, we will look at New Testament people; some are under the radar, others are more visible, and all need the redemptive power of Christ in their lives.

### *Under the Radar*

#### I. Introduction idea

The account of Mathias Rust (See Wikipedia for full story: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathias\\_Rust](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathias_Rust))

#### II. We are surrounded by needy people. Some are easily identified, while others are our invisible neighbors who need our help to seek Jesus and find restoration.

##### A. Sadly, some of our neighbors can be overlooked for years; they are invisible.

*Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.” But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’” So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?” The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well (John 5:1–15).*

1. The man at the pool of Bethesda is the epitome of an invisible neighbor.
2. He is one of many (amplify).
3. He has been in need for many years; his need is chronic.

## B. Remarkably, some of our neighbors are crying out for help.

*Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road (Mark 10:46–52).*

1. Bartimaeus is clearly a needy person who urgently seeks help; this is his opportunity.
2. The crowd **rebukes** him (to marginalize him) because he makes them feel uncomfortable.
3. The crowd rebukes him **because they are caught up in their own agendas** and needs they seek from Jesus.

## C. Fortunately, some of our neighbors are made whole when we respond to their plight.

*One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today" (Luke 5:17–26).*

1. Here again is a paralytic, as in the story from John at the pool of Bethesda.
2. "Some men"—perhaps four (one for each corner)—respond to his need.
3. They cannot make him well, but they take him to Jesus!
4. Again, there are obstacles to overcome, but his caring friends do what is needed.
5. Jesus "needs" us to bring hurting people to him.

## III. Conclusion

No one needs to carry the burden of the invisible neighbor alone. Jesus needs each of us to pick up our corner—to do our part.

**Conclusion idea:** Hand out short pieces of rope as reminders of the message.



## ***Message 2: Then All the People Shall Say “Amen!”***

In Part II of *Invisible Neighbors*, John Ashmen describes the United States as a “nation of neighbors in need.”

Clearly, we are a unique and diverse nation. We are a nation of great disparity between the haves and have-nots. We are a nation of immigrants and host a wide variety of colorful cultures.

Our cities and towns comprise communities that include people of specific nationalities. Some are long-standing and identified: China Town or Korea Town or Little Italy. Many new enclaves are emerging, such as Arab communities in Detroit. And in Washington State’s schools, students speak more than 120 languages. Some students are citizens, some are legal aliens, and others are undocumented.

Among every ethnic group are those who are poor and oppressed. While their skin tones may be varied, their issues are often really not racial or cultural as much as they are circumstantial. Single mothers. Veterans. Substance abusers. Undocumented immigrants. The elderly.

These individuals who find facing life especially challenging—those who are the most vulnerable in society—are the modern equivalent of the “aliens and strangers” of which God spoke to his people, Israel, in the Old Testament. God has always called his people to treat the “alien and stranger” differently—with special care and kindness.

As the nation of Israel was about to enter the land of Canaan to claim it as its inheritance, God (through Moses) provided the people with an important lesson in demographics: There is a distinction between “your brothers” and “the poor and needy in your land.” Israel as a nation came out of slavery in Egypt to conquer a land previously occupied by other nations. For a variety of reasons, they found themselves living in a land with numerous aliens and strangers among them. Not everyone in Israel was a brother! God has clear commands for His people regarding the alien and stranger among them. In Deuteronomy we find some important insights into our own “nation of neighbors in need.”

### ***You can read more in:***

- *Welcoming the Stranger* by Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang (InterVarsity Press, 2009)
- *Christians at the Border* by M. Daniel Carroll R. (Baker Academic, 2008)
- *A Place at the Table* by Chris Seay (Baker Books, 2012)

## **Supplement: Why Are People Homeless?**

The first issue of being homeless involves not being able to find affordable housing. In every state, more than the minimum wage is required to afford a one- or two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent. In the United States, we define affordable as a two-bedroom apartment renting for no more than 30 percent of one's income. According to that standard and in light of the national average costs for housing, a minimum-wage worker would have to work 89 hours each week to afford a two-bedroom apartment. It comes as little surprise that in some communities up to 25 percent of homeless people are employed, and that 12 million Americans spend more than 50 percent of their salaries for housing.

More foreclosures and evictions have meant that an increasing number are experiencing homelessness. There was a 32 percent jump in the number of foreclosures between April 2008 and April 2009.

In addition, federal support for low-income housing has fallen 50 percent since 1980. And about 200,000 rental-housing units are destroyed annually in the United States because they are considered low-income and therefore undesirable for owners. This has forced fair-market rent for a two-bedroom unit up by 40 percent in the last five years. In 2009, a person needed to earn \$18 an hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment.

Clearly, homelessness and poverty are inextricably linked. In 2007, 12.5 percent of the U.S. population, or 37.3 million people, lived below the U.S. poverty level. One in three were children (children are 25 percent of the total population). Compounding that problem is that even minimum wage has failed to keep pace. The real value of the minimum wage is 26 percent less than 30 years ago.

The poor face difficult choices when they have limited resources, and often it is housing that is sacrificed because it consumes the greatest portion of income. Many think that if they are poor, they are essentially an illness, an accident, or a paycheck away from living on the streets.

The declining value and availability of public assistance also contributes to increasing poverty and homelessness. The Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program ended in 1996 and the block grant program that replaced it, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), has not been able to keep up with inflation. Extreme poverty is growing even more common for children, especially those in female-headed and working families.

Additionally, the disabled—including disabled vets—struggle to find housing in spite of Veteran's Affairs and Social Security benefits. In 2006, for the first time, the national average rent for a studio apartment rose above the income of a person who relies solely on Social Security Disability. On a national average, monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment rose to \$715 per month, which is a 115 percent of a person's monthly income on Supplemental Security Income.

Domestic violence, alcoholism and other addictions, and rising health care costs also contribute to the complex problem of homelessness.

*Adapted from the National Coalition for the Homeless, © July 2009*

## *Then All the People Shall Say “Amen!”*

### **I. Introduction idea**

Read one of the individual profiles in *Invisible Neighbors*, or tell the story of a person you know who is at-risk. Ask questions: Who are these people? What is it like to be on the outside looking in, on the margins of society where a person is seemingly invisible? Yes, we know of stories of people who are scammers—those holding out the “help needed” signs who don’t really need help, and those who abuse the system. But those are exceptions in light of the millions on the margins. Who are those around us who are at-risk?

### **II. Because of His great love for the least and the lost, God calls His covenant people not to ignore but to *focus* on the people in our communities who have become marginalized because of their circumstances.**

#### **A. God calls Israel not to forget or overlook the aliens because His people were aliens in Egypt.**

*And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt (Deuteronomy 10:19).*

*Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge (Deuteronomy 24:17).*

*“Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen” (Deuteronomy 27:19).*

#### **B. God seeks compassion for widows and orphans because they are most vulnerable.**

*A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling (Psalm 68:5).*

*Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed (Psalm 82:3).*

- When the Old Testament speaks of the widows and fatherless, it is really addressing the most vulnerable people in any culture.
- Today when the average marriage lasts only seven years, and when nearly half of all children are born out of wedlock, the parameters of the definitions *widow* and *orphan* have exploded. Indeed, the single mother with a child or multiple children (effectively fatherless, even if he visits) is perhaps the most vulnerable person in society.

#### **D. God mandates care for the widow, the fatherless, and the alien because the nation has a collective responsibility to care for them.**

- The gleanings of the fields were strictly set aside for the alien, fatherless, and the widow.

- In addition to the Levites, the alien, fatherless, and widow were to be supported in part by the tithes of the people (10 percent every three years).

*When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands (Deuteronomy 24:19).*

A similar provision is made for the olives and grapes:

*When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow (Deuteronomy 26:12).*

*Then say to the Lord your God: "I have removed from my house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded (Deuteronomy 26:13a).*

### **III. God's concern for the alien, fatherless, and the widow is to be shared by all.**

*"Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow." Then all the people shall say, "Amen" (Deuteronomy 27:19).*

- Do all the people say, "Amen"?
- What part of "all the people" don't we understand?

## **Message 3: Context is Everything**

John Ashmen writes in Part III of *Invisible Neighbors* that the “church is the divinely chosen channel through which God wants to minister to the poor and the oppressed.” Elsewhere, Ashmen notes, if you ask most people what the Bible says about the poor, many will respond: “The poor will always be with you”—perhaps the only comment they recall from Jesus. This quote from Jesus originates in Deuteronomy, and when seen in its context, certainly has a meaning vastly different than when taken out of context.

The data is fairly consistent: The very wealthy and the poor give a greater percentage of their income to other in need. Perhaps we can speculate as to the reasons that each of these two groups give while the middle class, by comparison, gives significantly less. The wealthy may give for a number of reasons. Certainly many give because they recognize how blessed they are and want to “give back.” No doubt there are a few that give to gain recognition or reduce their tax burden. Many of the poor give to those in need generously because they know what it is like to be in need; they know how vulnerable they are. The middle class—the bulk of the North American church—seems to have some catching up to do.

### *Context is Everything*

#### **I. Introduction idea**

*A farmer was in court suing for personal injury and damages resulting from a traffic accident. He was run off a country road while driving his prize bull to market. The truck veered off the road into a ditch, throwing him and the bull from the truck as it rolled several times. The farmer was on the witness stand being cross-examined by the attorney for the driver who had cut him off.*

*“Isn’t it true, sir, that when the State Police officer arrived, you told him “I feel fine; I am not hurt?”*

*“Yes. That is true, but you have to understand the context.” He continued, “When the officer arrived, he walked down the embankment and came to my bull. He took one look at the injured bull, pulled out his service revolver, and shot the bull in the head. Then he came to me and asked: ‘And how do you feel?’”*

When read in context, many portions of God’s Word take on a dramatically different meaning than the ones we might initially assume to be true.

#### **II. The perpetual presence of the poor in the land is the reason God calls us to care for them; we are not excused from our responsibility.**

##### **A. Moses passes on a compelling “should” that is impossible to ignore.**

*However, there **should** be no poor among you. for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance. he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. For the LORD your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you (Deuteronomy 15:4–6).*

1. This is not a promise, guarantee, or prediction, but a “should.”
2. There should be no poor in a land that is prosperous and receives God’s blessing.

The only question is if God's people will obey.

1. If they will obey, the land flowing with milk and honey will be enough for all.
2. If God does His part, then the burden falls on God's people.

### **B. Moses passes on a syllogism that is easy to distort.**

*If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs....There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land (Deuteronomy 15:7, 8, 11).*

1. Much like a syllogism, Moses offers a premise and a conclusion.
  - There is a major premise: *There will always be poor people in the land.*
  - There is unstated premise: *(I am your YHWH your God.)*
  - There is a conclusion indicator: *Therefore*
  - There is a conclusion: *I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and need in your land.*

2. A valid argument is one where if the premises are true, then the conclusion must be true.

- The context here is everything.
- This is part of a whole syllogistic argument.
- Taken out of context/separated from the overall argument, this text could lead many to reach false conclusions, similar to the one below:

*There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, there is not much we can do about it.*

### **III. Conclusion**

- As Christ-followers, we really need to get it right.
- We need to understand the biblical context for the best-known statement about the poor.
- The poor will always be in the land.

- In a land with great wealth, there should be *no* poor in the land.
- That is the very reason Jesus calls us to be open-handed to them.
- Let's get it right this time.

## **Message 4: A New Heart after God**

In his book, John Ashmen challenges us to be radical. Radical doesn't refer to out-of-control people who break the law or who do outrageous things. Being radical is really being properly rooted, like a radish.

From the perspective of some, human society is beyond redemption, but individuals are not. Individual souls can be rescued and redeemed by the preaching of the God's Word through the power of the Holy Spirit. Some invoke the image that the world is like the *Titanic* that has struck an iceberg and is sinking. The ship cannot be saved, but individuals can be pulled out of the water into the lifeboats of the church; this is the work of saving souls through the proclamation of the gospel. C. S. Lewis wrote, "As our only means of glorifying Him, the salvation of human souls is the real business of life." D.L. Moody, the great nineteenth-century evangelist, described his calling from God: "Moody, it is your job to pull as many drowning people out of the water into lifeboats as you can." This is called "lifeboat theology": We rescue lost souls before the return of Christ as Judge of all the earth.

For those in the historic tradition that views the millennium as symbolic, **social engagement aimed at redemption of all of God's creation** is a vital part of following Christ. These Christians believe the ship not only will not sink, but also must be recovered and restored for the Captain who knows how to sail through the ice flow. At the same time, people need to be lifted out of the icy and lethal waters into which they have fallen, even if those already in the lifeboats at times have sailed too far away to hear either the lost ones' cries or their flailing in the water.

One contemporary commentator wrote:

*But his "lifeboat theology," which claims that really the only thing that matters is evangelism—pulling as many folks into lifeboats as you can—has been both a blessing and a great curse for contemporary evangelicalism. On the one hand, it has created an evangelistic urgency. And it is evangelical churches that are growing because of this passion. On the other hand, by narrowing the focus simply upon getting people to say the sinner's prayer, we have had almost nothing to say about whole slices of life.*

*Let me suggest an alternative theology: "ark theology." Noah's ark not only saved people; it preserved God's other creatures as well. The covenant that God made with Noah and his descendants was not only with humanity: "And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come.'" [This is] ark theology—that God intends to restore all of creation, every realm, every creature, every part. Or as Abraham Kuypur, the great Dutch theologian and politician said nearly 100 years ago, "There is not a square inch of the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ who is sovereign over all, does not cry: Mine!"*

Perhaps no passage of Scripture is as challenging as Matthew 25:

*"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil*



*and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Matthew 25:31–46).*

The text clearly deals with the question of eternal life and eternal loss. But there is no mention in the text to “praying the sinner’s prayer,” or going forward at a meeting, or other things that have become associated with American evangelical Christianity in general, and fundamentalism in particular. Instead, this is the implicit link between personal salvation and caring for the poor and the needy.

Are we at an impasse? If we care for the people in the water and never get them into the lifeboats, have we failed to follow our calling as Christians? If we seek to get on board the sinking ship to man the bilge pumps for the sake of Christ, have we foolishly wasted our time?

Carl F. H. Henry’s 1947 classic, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (reprinted in 2003) serves as a reminder that American Christianity is in a critical new round of discussions about the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This thin volume—a mere 89 pages and especially thin by Carl Henry standards—sought to reconnect two aspects of the gospel that had seemingly polarized. Henry wrote that “a Christianity without a passion to turn the world upside down is not reflective of apostolic Christianity” and that “there is no room here for a gospel that is indifferent to the needs of the total man nor of the global man.” Christianity is a universal message for the whole person—personally, culturally, and politically. Henry was at best uneasy that Christianity, based on an inspired and inerrant Bible and founded on the universal Lordship of Christ, could withdraw from the great matters of social justice and limit itself to personal salvation and codes of personal piety. Historically, he argued, “Christianity embraced a life view as well as a worldview; it was socially as well as philosophically pertinent.”

Henry called to the church to be rooted deeply in God’s purpose and plan. Paul calls us to the same things in Romans 12.

## *A New Heart after God*

### **I. Introduction idea**

Martin Luther wrote, “People go through three conversions: their head, their heart, and their pocketbook—unfortunately, not all at the same time.”

Right from the beginning—just days after Pentecost—caring for the poor and the work of evangelism had the equal priority in the early church.

*All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need (Acts 4:32–35).*

*In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor (Acts 9:36).*

When we read the background of the church’s approach to the mission to the Gentiles in Acts 15, we are struck by the poor’s importance to the church’s ministry to the Gentiles.

*For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor. the very thing I was eager to do (Galatians 2:8–10).*

### **II. Cultivating a heart for the needs of the poor—both spiritual and material—is a transformation process that can and should begin now.**

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1–2).*

#### **A. There is an urgent need today for the church to embrace its calling and mission.**

When Paul suggested this in Romans 12, he was building upon all that he had laid out in the first 11 chapters:

- Romans 1: The sinfulness and lost nature of man
- Romans 2: The righteousness of God

- Romans 3: No one is righteous before God.
- Romans 4: Since Abraham, righteousness is by faith.
- Romans 5: The just are justified by faith in Christ.
- Romans 6: The just have died to sin and are now alive to God.
- Romans 7: The just have an ongoing struggle with sin.
- Romans 8: The Christian lives in the power of Holy Spirit.
- Romans 9–11: The relationship of Israel to the Church

**B. Urgency comes from a grasp of the mercies of God laid out clearly.**

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers (Romans 12:1a).*

- The operative word is *therefore*.
- When we see the word *therefore*, we need to ask, “What is it there for?”
- *Urge* is the root of *urgency*.
- Paul: Based on what you personally know about God’s mercy, you need to allow God to work.

**C. Living sacrifices are urgently needed.**

*...to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1b).*

- Recall that Jesus said that the person who will lay down his or her life will find it (see Matthew 10:39).
- There is a spiritual exchange; we lay down our lives for Him because He laid down His life for us on the cross.
- It is in the truest sense an act of worship.
- Recall David: “I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing” (2 Samuel 24:24b)
- We will explore the implications of living sacrifice in the next message.

**D. Transformation into the likeness of Jesus is how we become living sacrifices.**

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2a).*

- We are transformed because of (in light of) God's mercy.
- We are transformed daily as the Holy Spirit renews our minds.

### **III. Living sacrificially on behalf of others is the essence of sacrifice.**

*Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2b).*

- *Then* is the operative word here; it is the bottom line, the outcome of God's redemptive work.
- Doing God's will is not an onerous or odious thing, but good and pleasing.

## **Message 5: Supernatural Hospitality**

In “Radical Hospitality,” author John Ashmen focuses on the need for hospitality, not merely housing. Hospitality is a radical concept because it requires vulnerability and openness that other acts of love do not. In fact, that hospitality is listed as a spiritual gift suggests it is supernatural.

There are several lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament; they don’t fully replicate each other. Some gifts are included on all the lists, and some are only on one. Some of the gifts seem more spiritual—discernment, miracles, prophecy—while some are rather practical. But all are supernatural.

In Romans 12, Paul calls upon Christ-followers, therefore, to be *living sacrifices*, arguing that it reasonable to do so in light of what God has done—a reasonable offering for those who “no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Corinthians 5:15).

How do we give ourselves as a “living sacrifice?”

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

*For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited (Romans 12:1–16).*

Perhaps the most obvious list of appropriate sacrifices is found in Romans 12. If we look closely at the following verse, we can see the life lived sacrificially in response to the mercies of God.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you:

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

If it is encouraging, let him encourage.

If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously.

Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.

Honor one another above yourselves.

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction.

[Be] faithful in prayer.

Share with God's people who are in need.

Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Live in harmony with one another.

Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.

Do not be conceited.

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath.

On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Our sacrifice

Pride/ego

Serving others

Time/vulnerability

Our resources

Our pet sins

Our own agendas

Pride/position

Complaining and negativism

Self-sufficiency

Money and possessions

Convenience and privacy

Rights

Individualism/need to control

Status/snobbery/prejudices

Ego and selfish agenda

Need to control/pride

Demands for fairness

The right to judge (If we are called to feed our enemies, how much more those who are our friends or people in need.)

Adapted from *Room for God?*  
Dr. Bob Wenz, Baker Books, 1994

## Supernatural Hospitality

### I. Introduction idea

Dick Eastman of Every Home for Christ once gave a message on the book of Romans claiming that the whole book could be condensed to 12 words: God takes bad men, makes them good, and keeps them that way. Indeed, Romans traces God's redemptive work in history.

It is in chapter 12 that Paul calls on God's people to live transformed lives in light of all God has done. God's whole redemptive purpose is summarized in Romans as being for one end: to redeem us from the consequences of sin and to use us to redeem others as well.

### II. True redemptive ministry to the homeless requires exercising a number of spiritual gifts as we offer ourselves as living sacrifices on behalf of the one who redeemed us by His grace and mercy.

#### A. Encouragement gives hope.

*If [his gift] is encouraging, let him encourage (Romans 12:8a).*

The biblical meaning of *encourage* is to call someone near to console, comfort, exhort, and implore them. Although the goal of this gift is to comfort and motivate, part of exhortation involves pointing to the future, giving reason for hope. A person with this gift is moved when he or she sees someone down and likes to comfort the other individual, and hopefully motivate them toward change. In this way encouragement is an act that has both short- and long-term effects.

#### B. Generosity is a gift to be cultivated.

*If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously (Romans 12:8b).*

Generous giving is a vast subject, and there are enormous resources available to those who want to learn to manage their finances, be good stewards, and be generous givers. While God calls and empowers some be generous givers, he calls all of us to give.

#### C. Mercy is the capacity to feel compassion.

*We have different gifts, according to the grace given us....if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully (Rom 12:6, 8b).*

The gift of mercy is the capacity to feel and express unusual compassion and sympathy for those in difficult or crisis situations and provide them with the necessary help and support to see them through tough times. It is the ability to "walk in another's shoes" and to feel the pain and burdens they carry. Most of all, these gifted people do not judge; they extend mercy.

#### D. Hospitality is more than just entertaining.

*Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality (Romans 12:13).*

1. *The idea of hospitality has become skewed in recent years.*

- The practice of hospitality seems to be a foreign concept to many.
- The spiritual gift of hospitality is the ability to welcome strangers (as well as friends) in your home with kindness and joy.
- In Paul's day—before hotel chains—people who traveled often depended on others to extend hospitality to strangers.

2. *In Genesis 19, Lot models hospitality.*

He invites two strangers (he doesn't know they are angels) into his home.

- We are reminded that like Lot, we might be offering hospitality to angels and not know it.

*The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. "My lords," he said, "please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning." "No," they answered, "we will spend the night in the square." But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate (Genesis 19:1–3).*

3. *The New Testament has much more to say about hospitality.*

- Elders and pastors are commanded to exercise hospitality (see 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8).
- Peter enjoyed the hospitality of Simon (see Acts 9:43) and Cornelius (see Acts 10:24, 48).
- Paul enjoyed the hospitality of Lydia (see Acts 16:14–15) and the Philippian jailer (see Acts 16:34).

#### **E. Humility is essential for hospitality (ministry) to the homeless.**

*Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position (Romans 12:16).*

- For many, entering the world of the invisible neighbor requires breaking through a barrier and embracing a low position.
- This is what the incarnation is all about: Jesus entered the world and embraced our fallen state.



## **Message 6: On a Mission from God**

In the final part of *Invisible Neighbors*, John Ashmen focused on the unique role of rescue missions, which exist to proclaim the passion of Jesus toward the hungry, homeless, abused, and addicted.

A rescue mission's facilities are only tools to accomplish a *mission*, just as the Spanish missions in California were built as tools to accomplish a mission of the Jesuits.

2 Corinthians 9 describes a mission of a church: a collection in Asia for the saints in Jerusalem who were undergoing great hardship.

*There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident. So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.*

*This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"* (2 Corinthians 9:1–5, 12–15).

The mission of the early church involved proclamation to Jews and Gentiles alike and included caring for the poor. In Galatians 2, Paul writes about his mission:

*For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do (Galatians 2:8–10).*

I recommend a series of recent articles about the many avenues of ministry in Portland, Oregon; these pieces demonstrate the diversity of God's missionary heart for our urban pockets of need. Go to <http://www.christianitytoday.com/thisisourcity/portland/>.

## *On a Mission from God*

### **I. Introduction idea**

“We’re on a Mission from God” (Available on YouTube: <http://youtu.be/ZXCpa3XVc4A>)

- Jake and Elwood may have been misguided, but perhaps you like their enthusiasm!
- The church has undertaken many specific missions since the first century; some have been misguided.
- The sense of mission permeates the first-century church.

### **II. As partners in ministry, the church and the rescue mission work arm in arm fulfilling the mission as old as the church.**

*For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do (Galatians 2:8–10).*

#### **A. The mission is in response to the grace of God.**

*James, Peter and John...gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me (Galatians 2:9).*

1. The established church (Peter, James, and John) affirmed the ministry of Paul and Barnabas because they recognized the grace of God.
2. Our common grace is what binds us to a common mission.

#### **B. The mission is expressed in various ways by a common grace.**

*We should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews (Galatians 2:9b).*

1. Paul went to the Gentiles; Peter continued to take the gospel to the Jews.
2. The mission involves God’s specific calling.

#### **C. The mission to the poor was part of the DNA of the early church.**

*That we should continue to remember the poor (Galatians 2:10).*

1. The early church in Jerusalem opened a “rescue mission” (see Acts 6:1–7).
2. Paul wanted this to be part of the Gentile church’s DNA (see 2 Corinthians 9).

#### **D. The mission will bring praise to God.**

*Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else (2 Corinthians 9:13).*

#### **III. Becoming “missional” is a personal choice.**

- For Paul, it was a personal commitment to the poor.
- A new buzzword in evangelical and emergent circles is “missional.” In essence, this means everyone has a mission from God (and a mission field) that begins at the threshold of our homes.
- *Missionary* doesn't only apply to those who are formally sent out, like Paul.
- We have a mission that has to power to transform lives and our culture.
- Our rescue missions are waiting for the church to rise up and join the mission.

## Concluding Message: *What Kind of Men Were We Among You?*

In the epilogue of *Invisible Neighbors*, “The World Is Watching,” John Ashmen reminds us that the world is waiting for the church of Jesus Christ to step up and fulfill its calling and its mission. The church in the 1800s was at the forefront of social engagement, battling against such social ills as child labor and slavery. Yet it appears that the church of the twentieth century ceded much of its social concerns and ministry to others, with the mistaken idea that caring for the addicted, abused, homeless, and poor was the province of the “social gospel.”

The epidemic of broken families and the resulting dysfunction among families is certainly a major cause of homelessness in this country. The growing number of homeless families, especially the skyrocketing number of homeless single moms, reminds us that the brokenness of one generation is passed down to the next, usually multiplying along the way. With the brokenness comes an amplified distortion of the roles of father and mother, and a spate of absent fathers.

The encouraging trend of the twenty-first century is that the millennial generation sees the gospel as both a verbal proclamation and a personal demonstration of God’s love. (I recommend you read *The Hundred Years War* at <http://www.rtwministries.com/articles-100war.asp>.) The church is increasingly responding to God’s call: “Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed” (Psalm 82:3).

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul clearly notes and models important, life-giving family roles in nurturing the new converts in Thessalonica. (I encourage you to learn more about these roles in action by going to <http://www.samekindofdifferentasme.com/>.)

*For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake (1 Thessalonians 1:4–5).*

*As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:6b–12).*

## What Kind of Men Were We Among You?

### I. Introduction idea

“Dan Quale Was Right” was the name of a major article by Barbara Whitehead in the April 1993 issue of the *Atlantic*, refuting those who had criticized the then-vice president for his comments about single parents. Quale had challenged TV program *Murphy Brown* for advancing the idea that a family with only a single mom was as good a family as a family with a mother and father.

The evidence is overwhelming. While there are many single moms and dads who make the best of it, God wired us in such a way that we need both a mother and father to be complete and to soar. We are wise to keep that in mind as we minister to broken people.

### II. As Paul demonstrated with the Thessalonians, in our care for the poor and homeless we are wise to utilize parental roles/characteristics in order for them to grow in their knowledge of God and experience restoration.

*Background to the text:* The pagans in Thessalonica were at first far from God, and Paul’s ministry there (see Acts 17) was stormy as the Jews rejected him roundly and roughly. But Paul notes in 1 Thessalonians 1:

*You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit....Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:6, 8b–9).*

#### A. We need to move into the world of the homeless in an incarnational manner.

*You know how we lived among you for your sake (1 Thessalonians 1:5b).*

*We were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well (1 Thessalonians 2:8a).*

1. Like Paul in Thessalonica, we need to live and move among the homeless, sharing not just the gospel but each other’s lives.
2. Incarnational ministry—coming alongside—is essential to reach those on the margin.
3. A homeless person’s feelings of abandonment and distrust may dissipate with a believer’s consistent, loving physical presence.

#### B. We need to influence with motherly gentleness.

*We were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children (1 Thessalonians 2:7).*

1. The invisible neighbors need to see that someone cares and demonstrates a kind and gentle demeanor.
2. The role of mother from a child’s infancy is sustainer, nurturer, and even healer.

### C. We need to imprint in others fatherly qualities.

*For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God (1 Thessalonians 2:11–12a).*

1. Many people (especially the homeless) lack adequate father figures.
2. We need to impart encouragement by our steadfast involvement.
3. We need to instill responsibility for living a productive, godly life.

### III. Transformation is a process that requires a long-term investment.

**Rescue** involves pulling people to safety from adverse conditions, and from choices and habits that lead to damage and death, helping them avoid hopeless and harmful trajectories of life.

**Redemption** is the process of buying back. It speaks of God's work from first to last. More than 100 times, the Bible mentions God as a redeemer who buys back and restores to the original, rightful owner lives that He created. These lives had become separated from Him and were under the control of sin and possession of the Evil One.

Rescue and redemption go hand in hand. The good news is that God sent his son, Jesus, who entered our dangerous and not-so-pleasant world to redeem His lost and broken creation. We present people with a gospel that is about life transformation in Jesus, and the reclamation of His creation. He came because he believes (yes, God believes!) that each of His created children is worth the price of that redemption. And that is what gives intrinsic worth to every homeless person, every addict, and every abused individual.

**Rehabilitation** is an essential part of the overall process of rescue: helping people break the bonds of addiction and desperate behavior, and experience healing and wholeness. But it is not accomplished in isolation.

**Re-assimilation** means preparing people to dwell in community, and to have meaningful roles that lead to stability and "missional" living.

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good (Titus 2:11–14).*