

NO PLACE TO CALL HOME



1. What is your most common reaction to homelessness?
When I see a homeless person on the street, I feel—

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Afraid | <input type="checkbox"/> Disgusted | <input type="checkbox"/> Confused |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indifferent | <input type="checkbox"/> Annoyed | <input type="checkbox"/> Offended |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry | <input type="checkbox"/> Strange | <input type="checkbox"/> Content |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sympathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Helpless | <input type="checkbox"/> Superior |

2. Who are most homeless people? Check your top three answers.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentally ill people | <input type="checkbox"/> Families | <input type="checkbox"/> Physically disabled people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Criminals | <input type="checkbox"/> Alcoholics | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug addicts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elderly people | <input type="checkbox"/> Runaway teens | <input type="checkbox"/> Single-parent families |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor people | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy bums | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minorities | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed people | |

3. What do you think these statements—do you **A** (agree) or **D** (disagree)?

- ___ Most Christians don't care to help the homeless.
- ___ The homeless have serious disabilities that keep them homeless.
- ___ Homeless people don't want to help themselves.
- ___ Homelessness exists because of a lack of housing.
- ___ There's nothing that can be done to help the homeless.
- ___ If Christians don't help the homeless, no one will.
- ___ Homelessness is the government's problem.
- ___ The homeless must learn to fend for themselves.
- ___ Churches could do more to help the homeless.

4. On the scale below, indicate to what degree you are **different from** or **similar to** homeless people.



5. Check out Matthew 25:37-45 and briefly describe how your youth group could provide at least two of the following for the homeless.

- | | | | |
|------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Food | Spiritual healing | Church services | Special services |
| Healthcare | Job training | Clothing | Shelter |

NO PLACE TO CALL HOME [homeless people]

THIS WEEK

High schoolers are well aware of the problem of homelessness. They see people aimlessly walking the streets, the “will work for food” signs, and reports of the problem on the news. Homelessness is a visible problem in the United States and other parts of the world. But even though the problem is readily recognized, it’s quite misunderstood. Use this TalkSheet to help clear up some of the misconceptions about the issue and to challenge your students to become part of the solution in the name of Jesus.

OPENER

You may want to have someone unknown to the group impersonate a homeless person. This person should play and dress the part—and be able to address the issues of homelessness and answer difficult questions your kids might have. Some of these may include why they can’t get a job or what made them homeless.

For a different twist, you could also ask the manager or someone from a homeless shelter to come in and talk about the problem with the group. Because they have firsthand experience, they may be able to share stories about and discuss the problems of a homeless family—food, shelter, medical care, spiritual problems, life-threatening problems, and so on.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Create a list of the feelings shared by students. You probably will be able to generate a larger list than the one found in the activity. Ask the students why they feel the way they do. Investigate what kind of experiences students have had with the homeless—caricatures viewed on television, past work with the homeless, and so on.
2. Use this activity to identify the different stereotypes people have of the homeless, from the victim down on his luck to the tramp who prefers the lifestyle of the transient. Also talk about what a home provides for people—shelter, protection, dignity, security, and status.
3. Poll the kids on their answers to these statements. If everyone agreed on a particular one, go on to the next. If there is a wide difference of opinion, discuss the pros and cons.
4. How are your kids and the homeless alike? Where did they rate themselves on this scale? Take some time to talk about how different or similar they are to those who are homeless. What do they have in common besides physical belongings?

Point out to your kids that homeless people are created in the image of God, just like them.

5. Ask the group how serious Christ was when he delivered this parable. If Christ was serious, how serious will we be in acting on his words?

THE CLOSE

Review the different points made during the discussion. Point out that the problem of homelessness arises from a multitude of conditions existing in our society. There are homeless because of alcoholism, drug addiction, unemployment, chronic mental illness, physical disabilities, AIDS, domestic violence, single-parent families, and government policies on affordable housing—just to name the major contributing factors. Some of these people don’t want help. They prefer their chosen lifestyles. But most of the homeless want help desperately. Government assistance and homeless shelters have not been able to eliminate the problem.

Emphasize that many homeless people need much more than just shelter. Christ waits for his people to touch the lives of the homeless in his name. Remind the group that Christ was homeless also (Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58).

MORE

- Role-play the homeless situation with your kids—give each of them a specific problem, such as losing their job, getting divorced, being a single parent, suffering from AIDS, being abused at home, being hooked on cocaine, or being forced into prostitution. Or would they answer those who asked them questions like “What is wrong with you?” How would these situations affect their lives? You may want to have other kids question them and see what it’s like for the homeless person to explain where they are and why.
- Or you and a few of your kids may want to dress the part and sit on a corner asking for food or money (be sure to get other adults to help you out and keep an eye on your kids) How do other people react to them? What looks do they get and how to they feel? Did holding a homeless sign or “will work for food” help them? Debrief with the group and talk about experiencing homelessness from the other side.