



Will Work for . . . : The Untold Stories of Homelessness

David Robeck

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People are generally do-gooders. We want to help. And we're going to help the homeless and those in poverty – one way or another! Right? Most believers and nonbelievers were culturally reared to embrace Biblical principles that guide us to: Defend the poor and the fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and the needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. Psalm 82:3, 4 KJV Can anyone disagree with these precepts? We must help! BUT HOW? Despite visible homelessness in our communities, most people don't fully understand the issues and the complex causes. We address a symptom with a temporary fix that makes us feel good. We volunteer at nonprofits that focus on food, medical care, or spiritual guidance. While these address immediate needs providing nutrition, bandages, and spiritual joy, they rarely address core problems that affect the lives of those in need. When it comes to homelessness most government entities are guided by the misused term "homeless" as they find ways to provide a physical residence, but the lack of shelter is merely a symptom. This government cure gets them off the streets, out of sight, and often forgotten. Many core problems are traced back to teen and single parentage, broken homes, mixed families, intolerant parents, and abusive relationships, etc. Along with addiction and mental illness these are exacerbated by courts empowered by inadequate legislation to mediate single issues alone. Some prominent advocates with an understanding of deeper issues often focus on building their own empire. They earn academic credentials on preset research and hire peers to perpetuate their work. They obtain unending government grants and contracts using self-serving and dubious statistics to justify new business ventures or unwarranted salaries for themselves, their partners, coworkers, and relatives. Conversely, but equally as troubling, are nonprofits with historic reputations that are outdated, poorly managed, and operate at low performance standards. These are often managed by egocentric, nepotistic, and unqualified employees, many of whom are taken from the ranks of troubled clients and touted as success stories. Programs must be appropriate, self-sustainable, and report reliable outcomes. Often observed is political manipulation, ineffective programs, poor financial stewardship, unqualified management, and expectations of unquantifiable "fellowship." The overlapping issues of homelessness and poverty are examined through interwoven patterns of firsthand stories of real people. These stories are true and touching and frustrating or disgusting or infuriating. Homelessness is not the same reality for any two people. It represents complex issues that require a variety of services and tough decisions that are not always politically incorrect. It's the author's goal to help the reader understand the challenges, survival strategies, social interaction, and conditions in the broader spectrum of homelessness. Collaboration is key. Rather than simply pay our taxes and make our donations, the entire community must continue to report, question, challenge, and encourage those we've assigned to care for our homeless. We must respond with goals beyond affordable housing and free food and medical care. The homeless and impoverished must also be encouraged to engage and become active in our communities. They may lack traditional life and social skills, but they have much to offer. They can't be left to survive as "victims" of addiction, mental illness, abuse, poverty, unending nonprofit services, and government management. They must also be challenged to make better decisions and become fully engaged in a self-directed life. This book offers fresh insight and a clearer vision for your community, government and nonprofit groups by providing a deeper understanding of this broad-spectrum challenge we call "homelessness."

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