

Homeless Ministry

By Richard C. Hobbs

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**Laboring in the Harvest Series
Street Ministry**

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About the Author

Richard Hobbs is the Founder and President of Mercy Street Ministries and a soulwinner for Christ. He is an ordained Southern Baptist minister training laborers in the harvest in every nation on earth. Since his teachings do not focus on doctrine but our need and how to share Christ, many Christian churches of different denominations use his materials. He is the author of numerous biblical studies and evangelism training materials committed to helping to fulfill the Great Commission. He has shared his heart for world evangelism through media to over a billion people.

His call from God has led him into the streets to share the Gospel of Christ to a lost and hurting world. From years of experience and the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he has taken the principles he has learned and shared them in many publications. He has distributed his publications freely on the Internet in hopes others would discover their calling to reach this world for Christ. In the first five years of publication his books were circulated in over seventy nations. He invites you to prepare yourself for the greatest harvest of souls that this world has ever seen.

Acknowledgments

I am thankful to the Holy Spirit who has quickened my heart and has given me love for all people. I love people and enjoy the opportunity to share the gospel with them. The Holy Spirit has opened the doors for our ministry to train laborers in the harvest all over the world. For the love, favor, and mercy the Lord has given me, I give Him my life to train laborers in the harvest and share the gospel to the lost.

I am thankful for the many intercessors that pray for our ministry daily. They have spent many long hours and many tears praying for us in the streets and for the lost. Only God knows what their cries and prayers have accomplished.

Lastly, I am thankful for my wife Kay and my daughters Sally, and Sarah. Also, I thank Casey Coble for assisting our ministry. They have helped me with the many tasks that needed to be completed. My family has shared the call the Lord has on my life and has been part of this ministry since its beginning.

Introduction

From the beginning of Christ's ministry on this earth, He stretched His hand to the poor and hurting. The calling from God upon my life has led me to the streets in search of hurting people. Along my path I found people hungry and perishing from this earth with no one to even care. How can we ignore the needs of others and fail to offer something to eat or a kind word in the Name of our Lord.

I encourage you to see the needs of others and ask God to prepare your heart and life to continue the present day ministry of Christ upon this earth.

It is my prayer that the words that I have written and experiences recorded in this book will help you to help others on their journey through life.

Chapter 1

Understanding Homelessness

Homelessness is not always a choice but oftentimes a way of life because of financial problems, medical issues, addiction, mental stresses, or spiritual oppression. Many of them carry the memories and pain that entrap their lives.

My travels took me to Boston, Massachusetts where I had the opportunity to minister in the streets during the evening hours. I checked into a hotel in the downtown area and looked outside my window from the fifth floor. I saw a homeless man sitting on a bench in a courtyard. I unpacked my suitcase and ironed my shirts and all the time the Holy Spirit was reminding me of the man in the courtyard. I placed a package of trail mix in my coat pocket and went out to see the man.

His name is Peter and he and his sister had been abused when they were young. He had never been able to get past the memories of the abuse. He said he joined the military to get away from his thoughts and fear, yet he said he found more memories and pain. He was a Christian but carried the hurt and memories of the past. I believe that the Holy Spirit brought me this far to help Peter to overcome and forgive the past. There are many people like Peter that need encouragement and prayer from those that would simply care.

After I ministered to Peter, I took time to just be a friend. I remembered the package of trail mix that I had placed in my coat packet and took them out to give to him. He said amazingly, "Those are my favorite brand of trail mix." I found a friend in Boston that night and my friend found peace in his heart and peace in his life.

All I did was to see the need from my hotel window and obey a quiet voice of the Holy Spirit encouraging me to care for someone that I had never met. You see the Holy Spirit knew him and simply needed a heart to care and a voice to share that he may find freedom from a life of pain and oppression.

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,
Isaiah 61:1 NIV

Jesus fulfilled this very Scripture in Isaiah as He proclaimed openly in temple that He had fulfilled this Scripture. God sent His Son to this earth to proclaim His will and show Mercy upon all that we may know and demonstrate His will upon this earth.

Chapter 2

Preparing to Share

I remember the words of one homeless man when I woke him up and I said, "What were you dreaming about?" He said, "Taking a shower, being somewhere else, eating food." These words broke my heart as he could not even find provision for his basic needs. Then he said, "Why do I have to be like this now?" I didn't have an answer to his question. I can still hear his words echoing in my mind. I hope that somehow my words will encourage you to prepare your lives to minister to the impoverished and homeless. All this man possessed was some clothes gathered around him on the ground and a piece of cardboard for a bed.

This man and others in need like him are the reason we are in the streets and why we seek to motivate and train others to do the same. While I see homeless people everywhere, I see churches on every corner. I continue in prayer even now in hopes to know how to motivate more churches to reach out. It hurts when I think about all the needs there are in the streets and the mission assigned to us as Christians. Many churches lack the



training and biblical understanding of God's will to minister to those in need as expressed

ed in Matthew 11: 4 & 5 and many other scriptures.

I was in the airport on my return trip and an owner of the largest automatic gate company in America told me his business was thriving from new business involving placing fencing around inner city churches and installing automatic gates that open with a controlled access card used by church members to enter. How can these

churches minister to the needs of the hurting behind locked gates? My words are not meant to be condemning but to remind us to not only allow access to our churches but to our lives as we reach out to those around us.

Notice the scriptures below and see what thrills the heart of Christ. You can see the joy in the heart of Christ as He wanted to tell John what was happening in the streets.

Matthew 11

4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

It is not a burden but a privilege to minister to the homeless. Knowing that it thrills the heart of Christ then I believe it is a commission. Let's prepare our hearts and our lives to seek out opportunities to minister to the poor. Ask God to show you His heart for all people and look into the Scriptures and sow His Words into your life. In one of my teachings, I said is it possible the more we read of Him do we receive more of Him. Let Him change your heart to be more like Him that we may minister with Him to His creation. As you open all of your heart to God you will see others as He sees them.

1 Corinthians 9

22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

This Scripture reminds me of the many times that I found myself humbled when I find it difficult to leave my new needy friends in the streets. Their faces and stories will remain in my thoughts forever.

In addition to preparing your heart you should seek to gain knowledge of any support systems in the city for the poor and homeless. Take time to visit the shelters and find inner city churches nearby that have a heart to

follow-up on those you minister too. Inquire about food banks and other sources for food for those in need. Oftentimes, we will make a list of these resources on a single piece of paper that we can give to those in need and those that minister.

Purchase fast food chain gift certificates in the area you plan to ministry and give to those hungry. The gift certificates always serve as a warm meal to those hungry. Carrying nonperishable food is helpful to give as well. If someone is hungry offer to walk them to a restaurant and have a meal with them. I never offer to drive someone from the streets anywhere as you may find yourself in the presence of drugs, stolen property, or other issues. We are to extend our hearts and care but never compromise or place our ministry at risk

Chapter 3

Two Men on a Journey in Search of Each Other

I was on my way home after working and visiting my father-in-law at a nursing home when I saw what appeared to be a homeless man. He was riding his bicycle with cans and cardboard strapped on the front, along the side of the road. I noticed he had a backpack and a long beard. I knew it was going to be a very cold night and I did not see any gloves or blankets as I parked my car ahead of him on the road.



I greeted him and discovered his name was Mack. We quickly became friends and I gave him two McDonald's food gift booklets. Mack looked through them and was so amazed to discover that these two booklets would allow him to obtain up to ten dollars in food. I also gave him a new pair of gloves and a sports blanket in a zipper cover that has handles. He said, "Why are you doing all of this?" I said, "Mack, I do this because I care and the scriptures have asked us to help those in need. My own brother has needs too and so do so many others." Mack began to hand me all the things back that I had given him. Mack said, "You must go and help your brother first." I said, "Mack I have helped him and he is working too." When he knew my brother would be alright he received the gifts that I had given him. I stood there and thought about how much integrity and honesty

Mack has that he was willing to give everything for even my own brother.

As I began to leave, I asked Mack about eternity and if he was ready and assured he would find heaven at the end of his journey. Mack said, "You know I am getting older and have been wondering what will happen." Mack said that he had been searching for Jesus his whole life and He found me. You see Mack had journeyed through this whole life and never truly accepted Christ as His Lord. We prayed on the roadside and he followed me in a prayer from his heart asking Jesus in. Now Mack had everything! I left Mack but he was still in my thoughts.

The next day, I began thinking about a message that I would share at a senior rehab center meeting on the weekend. I titled my message "Two Men on a Journey in Search of each Other." At the rehab center, I shared how Christ and Mack lived a humble life as a common man and how they were searching for each other. On a dark night Mack and Jesus met each other on the roadside in front of a church that was closed. When I concluded my message at the rehab center, there were five people who wanted the same assurance in Christ that Mack chose. I noticed one lady's tears so I sat down beside her. She had lived near the abandoned house that Mack had stayed. She said, "I knew that if Jesus would accept Mack into heaven that He would accept her too." She said that she knew Mack and he is a good man and indeed lives a humble life.

I am sure this message of Mack will continue to change lives as others come to an understanding that they too are on a journey in search of the One who is in search of them. His name is Jesus and He is waiting for you to make Him your Lord!

Take time to notice those in need of food, shelter, and your friend named Jesus. Unless you minister to others He cannot extend a hand as He seeks to extend His heart. And as the Scriptures in Matthew 25, it would indicate that if we ignore those in need that we ignore the Son of God. To Saul He asked why he had persecuted Him meaning when he had persecuted the

people. Christ does not separate His own feeling from those of His own.

Matthew 25

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Christ searched for Mack that night as God simply used me to stop along the road side. I had first kept going down the road as I had worked late that night and visited my father-in-law in the nursing home. I yielded to the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit and turned back to stop and talk to a man named Mack. I had the privilege to introduce him and Jesus to him. I knew as I left that grace had been extended to Mack and I as we both were reliant upon Christ for the journey to heaven.

Several years later, my daughter and I visited Mack on the Thanksgiving holiday. We wanted to spend some time talking with him to see how he is doing in his walk with Christ. As my daughter and I followed him on his route to the first dumpster of the day, we were able to hear from his heart. He still has an assurance of his salvation and he mentioned trying to share with others that he comes into contact with during the day. He has an unbelievable joy in his heart and an optimistic view of eternity. When we asked Mack who he is, he replied, "I'm just a person who was born into this world from the grace of God. I don't live a perfect life....I may be down and out. I may live in poverty, but in my heart I'm rich because I have the gift of God and I have a strong faith that will carry me until the end of my life."

We have visited Mack many more times and continue to be blessed by his kindness. We've found though that in our visits, we end up being the ones blessed the most by Mack and his faith.

Proverbs 14:31

*“He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker:
but he that honoureth Him hath mercy on the poor.”*

Chapter 4

Homeless but not Helpless



Below is a story written by my Sarah Hobbs my daughter.

We went to Santa Monica on Sunday, and our purpose was to do some filming of my dad witnessing and then hitting the mall for the rest of the afternoon. Things changed. As I walked around with my dad and passed out McDonald's hamburgers to the homeless there, I started seeing the need. I've been around homeless on my trips to Washington D.C. and my other times in California. There are homeless everywhere....even in our small cities in Arkansas. But, for the first time, I was able to see and talk to the person behind the poverty. I met a homeless man who was once an aerospace engineer, but he's been on the streets for 20 years since he lost his job. I saw a Vietnam vet who never really came back from the war. I sat with a group of 5, and we had a devotional out in the park. I saw a man run up to my father while crying and begging to be prayed for. Needless to say, after a few hours talking with them, I no longer wanted to go shopping because it seemed like a waste. How was I supposed to go spend money on things I didn't need when I had just talked to a man who had nothing? Instead, my family and I spent the next few hours shopping for a homeless man we had met named Irving.

My story about Irving is really interesting. Two years prior, my dad went to Santa Monica and he did the same thing... bought some McDonald's hamburgers and passed them out to the homeless. One man he woke up by placing a hot burger in his hand while



he was sleeping...the warmth woke him up. My dad ministered to him and Irving came to know Christ that day. My dad's friend was able to record Irving's salvation and every time I watched the video, I would cry. When he told my father, "You know, I just wish I had it more like you...." reality would hit as I realized I have it so well. I told my dad when we were planning the trip to California, "I want to meet Irving." And, I did.

On Sunday, while we were passing out burgers, my mom told my dad to go to a certain man who was sleeping on the grass. My dad walked up and said, "Irving?" He sat up and was shocked to see a familiar face. It's been two years and he was back at the same place, and he's still strong in his faith.



My father told him about how I had wanted to meet him. This man who had nothing was amazed to see that someone actually wanted to meet him and that people actually cared for him. We went shopping and bought him some new shoes, a backpack, shirt, and other things. The tears in his eyes, the smile on his face, and the giddiness he had as he jumped up and down holding his new "blessings" will always be in my mind forever. He didn't know what to say, so he hugged us.

As we walked away, I turned back to see him on his knees and his face to the ground as he thanked God for our meeting in the park. Ironically, the most amazing part of his new life is that Irving had been on mission trips, attended church and had led people to Christ since he found Christ on a park bench at Santa Monica Pier.

Chapter 5

Ministering to the Homeless

In America, we lack the ability to genuinely care for those that cannot provide for themselves. Much of this mission has been left to the local church and the missions they support. If your church supports a mission, I encourage you to visit the mission unannounced and see if the people and facility are aligned to genuinely care for the homeless. Ensure they are treated with dignity in a Christian environment with quality food and provisions.

My good friend Billy and I were in Biloxi, Mississippi. On one Sunday morning He and I watched as person after person walk by two homeless people standing outside of a fast food restaurant. One homeless man found a cup and came in to fill up the cup with hot coffee. We watched as they shared the cup of coffee and it broke our hearts.

Billy and I looked at the people dressed for church as they overlooked the poor in front of the restaurant. We watched for over 20 minutes as over 40 people walked by dressed in suits and fine clothing. While we felt it was the responsibility of those that lived there to feed the homeless we knew we must do what we were called to do or they would remain hungry. We purchased \$10 in gift certificates and went outside the restaurant to give them to the homeless. What a blessing we received as one of the men did not want to turn loose of my hand as he thanked me. Those that walked by that morning that did not help must ask themselves could they not see the needs of others, is it from fear, or is it that they just chose not to care. They missed the opportunity to fulfill the work of Christ and the blessing we received from seeing the joy in their hearts in their smiles. These words I can still see in my mind the faces of person after person walking by and the joy on the faces of the two needy men as we gave them food gift certificates.

Proverbs 14

*31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker:
but he that honoureth Him hath mercy on the poor.*

On Friday night in Austin, Texas, I had the privilege of speaking at a ministry at an outreach to the poor and all people. I had such a wonderful time sharing my heart with the crowd and it felt like we gathered around a campfire as I just took my time and expressed what I felt. My message was titled "The Heart of God." As I was closing, a young man stood up and said, "*Please don't.*" I said, "*What is your name?*" He said his name is Daniel. I continued on sharing my heart and gave an altar call for all that wanted to receive Christ as Lord.

Daniel and others responded to the message and came forward to receive Christ. When Daniel had prayed I asked for his address for follow-up purposes and he did not have an address as he was homeless. He said, "*Isn't there something written that the last shall be first.*"

Indeed he was correct. Another homeless man was saved and others as well. Two members of the band responded to the altar call. One band member said, "*For over twenty years I thought I was saved and I was not. I had never prayed to receive Christ into my heart. The Holy Spirit spoke to me that I must be saved.*"

Others were touched by the message. The words of Daniel will always ring in my mind as he asked me not to stop sharing the message. He and others were hungry in spirit and soul for the simple Words of Christ. It was a wonderful time of sharing Christ with the crowd that came to hear a simple message of Christ.

After the service I asked how many wanted to be trained in personal soul winning and many responded. I was surprised when several homeless people that were saved in the service were already willing to be trained to share the gospel. A homeless man said, "It would be an honor to receive a certificate for two hours of evangelism training." He was concerned that since he did not have an address that we would not send him a certificate. We told him we would send it to the Salvation Army where he was staying and if he did not receive it to get in contact with us and we would indeed get him a certificate.

I was amazed as I watched that evening, as I saw one of the homeless men that I had trained walking the streets sharing Christ with others in need.

As you prepare to minister to the homeless and impoverished, allow God to transform your own heart and life into His image.

2 Corinthians 5

14 *For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.*

20 *We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

NIV

Conclusion

I pray that you have clearly heard the heart of God for His people through the words He inspired me to write from the many experiences He has given me and the Scriptures that show the need to share Christ with all people of this world. We cannot let people perish in poverty from this earth without an opportunity to know Christ as Lord and Savior. Choose to serve God with a pure heart and follow the ways of Christ by showing His love for all people.

May God lead you to the streets and homes of this world to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. May your life reflect the Glory of the Lord. I hope that many will come to know Christ as you share the witness of the Word. Always trust that God will be with you.