

A Biblical Vision for the Christian Community's Engagement with the UK Homeless in  
Terms of Charity and Justice.

Terri Abbey

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## Abstract

UK homelessness is a very real and complex issue with the root cause being extreme poverty. Treatment of the poor, and God's concern for them was a central in rabbinic Judaism, and in the ministry of Jesus. It should also be a concern for the Christian Community today.

Many across the UK today are homeless or face becoming homeless in the future. While Jesus states in Scripture, "you will always have the poor with you" (Matthew 26:11), I will argue that these words spoken by Jesus are not said to offer an excuse for sitting idly by and doing nothing, but in fact he is showing us the opportunity and responsibility the Christian Community's engagement has for showing the same love and concern that God has for the poor.

Through the use of Scripture, and providing a structure of biblical principles, I will propose that the biblical vision for the Christian Communities engagement with the UK homeless is an inclusive community, generous through charity, while empowering, and advocating on behalf of those with no voice.

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*A Biblical Vision for the Christian Community's Engagement with the UK Homeless in Terms of Charity and Justice*

*Chapter 1: Introduction*

Walter Brueggemann in *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination*, challenges us to “rediscover a narrative of compassion and hope that calls us beyond ourselves, and to re-imagine the world as God intends it to be.”<sup>1</sup> This narrative is one in which “healing comes to the broken, justice to the poor, peace to the nations, and we all celebrate coming home to a restored creation.”<sup>2</sup> This vision of compassion and hope is one that is solely motivated by showing the same love that God has shown to us. Justin Welby argues that “a society that lives in love will flourish and develop and will liberate its members.”<sup>3</sup> Brueggemann, Tom Sine, and Welby echo a biblical vision that is one of hope, love, compassion, and justice that focuses on the well-being of society. This image as God intends is extends to all humankind. This is a biblical vision of a community that includes the rich and poor alike, welcoming even the homeless population.

UK homelessness is a very real and complex issue with the root cause being extreme poverty. Treatment of the poor, and God’s concern for them was central in rabbinic Judaism, and in the ministry of Jesus. This should also be a concern for the Christian Community today. The society described by Bruggeman, Sine and Welby, is one that the Christian community needs not only to imagine, but through taking action can make a reality.

Today there are many individuals across the UK who are homeless or face becoming homeless in the near future. While Jesus states in Scripture, “you will always have the poor

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Sine, *Live like You Give a Damn! Join the Changemaking Celebration* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016), 92.

<sup>2</sup> Sine, *Live like You Give a Damn!*, 92.

<sup>3</sup> Justin Welby, *Reimagining Britain: Foundations for Hope* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 8.

with you” (Matthew 26:11),<sup>4</sup> I will argue that these words spoken by Jesus are not said to offer an excuse for sitting idly by and doing nothing, but in fact he is showing us the opportunity and responsibility the Christian community has in showing the same love and concern God has for the poor. These words are a call to action. The statement of Jesus does not dismiss the Christian community from meeting basic needs while actively seeking justice on behalf of those whose remain on the margins and excluded from society.

In Scripture we find many principles and instructions that were given to the community of Israel and still apply in the Christian community today. A community that is generous in charity and a community that is actively seeking justice for the poor. However, while Scripture calls the Christian community to be generous to the less fortunate, I will also be arguing that there is a distinction between just providing charity and actively seeking justice. I will argue that the Christian Community has a responsibility for both, not only in meeting the immediate needs of the poor, but also seeking justice for those who are homeless or facing homelessness in the UK today.

The aim of this dissertation is to bring an awareness to the many issues affecting many in the UK today while bringing to light the myths surrounding the homeless population. Using Scripture, I will provide a structure of biblical principles, examining what a biblical vision concerning those living in homelessness would look like. This will be accomplished by using principles from both the Old and New Testament. I will argue that the ministry of Jesus is the example we must follow in learning how to ‘be with’ those on the margins.

Arguing that every human being is not only created in the image of God, but also created for community, I will examine what Scripture says about generosity and charity. I will then examine the responsibility of the Christian Community’s engagement with biblical justice

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<sup>4</sup> *ESV translation will be used throughout unless otherwise noted.*

and what this entails. To accomplish this, I will explore how empowerment is important to those living in homelessness, how they are to be included into the community instead of being left on the margins and what advocacy on behalf of those who are not being heard or seen looks like.

Because of many complex layers to homelessness, I will examine a holistic approach for engaging with the UK homeless. I will present a vision of pastoral care for the homeless population that is living out God's concern for the poor. Some of the issues being looked at are mental health, addiction, extreme poverty, and physical disabilities causing the spiral of homelessness to continue.

To accomplish the described task, I will begin by investigating what the Old and New Testament texts set forward in the Christian community's engagement with the homeless as it relates to the image of God, charity, and justice. Following the biblical analysis, I will offer an image of the UK homeless today while engaging with social sciences, statistics and research from the local councils, and UK governments.

Kevin Van Hoozer explains the importance of hermeneutics by stating it "is relevant not only to the interpretation of the Bible, but to all of life."<sup>5</sup> By bringing together the biblical, social, and hermeneutical perspectives I will then offer an analysis of the numerous facets of the Christian Community's engagement of 'being with' and 'living with' the homeless population in the UK.

Acknowledging that after spending considerable time working with the homeless population of Glasgow, I do recognise my own personal bias. However, this will not prevent approaching this research objectively, as I recognise the complex situation of each individual and homelessness.

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<sup>5</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2009), 22–23.

Through my own experience, and time spent working with the homeless population it will enable me to offer a fresh perspective.

Desmond Tutu makes a striking argument in which he states, “God relies on us to help make this world all that God has dreamed of it being.”<sup>6</sup> The outcome of this research will help provide the principles for partnering with God and imagining God’s dream of a biblical vision for the Christian community’s engagement with the UK homeless population.

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<sup>6</sup> Desmond Tutu and Douglas Abrams, *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time* (London: Random House, 2005), 18.



## *Chapter 2 – The Community of Israel: Looking at the Old Testament Law*

Gordon Fee states “contemporary believers are not expected to express their loyalty to God by keeping the Old Testament law(s), since we are related to God under a new covenant.”<sup>7</sup> However, as Fee argues there are some aspects within the Old Testament law that are still applicable to Christians today, those laws that support the new covenant.<sup>8</sup> The two commands that are the same in the Old Testament, and the New Testament are to love the Lord with all your heart, and to love your neighbour as yourself.<sup>9</sup>

The Old Testament law gives important principles in caring for the poor amongst Israel, with God giving numerous commands to Moses for the people. In Deuteronomy, laws can be found that call attention to the value of human life and human dignity,<sup>10</sup> as well as laws encouraging a positive attitude toward those at the margins of society (Deut 15).<sup>11</sup> These same laws and principles are still relevant and apply to the Christian community today despite living in the modern world. The very law given by God to Moses and the Israelites in ancient biblical times will lay the groundwork for a biblical vision engaging with the UK homeless today. Richard Hiers concurs that the “biblical law represents legislative visions of conditions that would constitute a good society.”<sup>12</sup>

When God created humankind, the purpose was more than to just create individuals, but to create a community of people that would become his image bearers. Bruggeman argues that that ‘image of God’ is “an explicit call to form a new kind of human community in which

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<sup>7</sup> Gordon D. Fee, Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, Fourth (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 170.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon D. Fee, Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 174.

<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18

<sup>10</sup> Deuteronomy 21:10-14, 22-23; 22:8; 23:16; 25: 1-3

<sup>11</sup> Blessing Onoriode Boloje, "Deuteronomy 15:1–11 and Its Socio-Economic Blueprints for Community Living," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 74 (2018), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Richard H. Hiers, *Justice and Compassion in Biblical Law* (London: Continuum, 2009), 175.

the members after the manner of the gracious God are attentive in calling each other to full being in fellowship.”<sup>13</sup>

The purpose of the law given to Israel through Moses was that Israel would become a light to the nations around them, reflecting the image of God by being formed by the characteristics of God. Israel was required to be faithful to God and the covenant, reflecting the character of God and demonstrated in their love to each other.<sup>14</sup> According to Thomas Noble “justice lay in loving the neighbour.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Reflecting The Image of God in Community**

The beginning of Genesis, after creation was complete, God says, “let us make man/ ‘woman’ (my emphasis) in our image, after our likeness,” (Gen 1:26). Seeing the echo of Trinitarian language in the use of the word *us* this could suggest that humankind was meant to be a reflection of this community of the Trinity. A community that worked together and in relationship with each other, a community that was whole. Godlikeness, for Alan Kreider, is “wholeness and God has a passion for wholeness in every area of life.”<sup>16</sup>

Scripture states male was first created in the image of God (Gen 1:27), but there was something still missing. God said that it is not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18), so he then created female. The idea that humankind was never created to be alone is echoed again in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is written that two are better than one, and they will have someone to help if they fall, (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12) suggesting that in community there is a sense of safety, help when needed and fellowship with others in relationship.

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 34–35.

<sup>14</sup> T. A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People: The Theology of Christian Perfecting* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2013), 27.

<sup>15</sup> Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*, 27.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Kreider, *Social Holiness: A Way of Living for God's Nation* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), 41.

Through the exodus from Egypt, there was a new community who emerged from the slavery that once held them in bondage and oppression. This was not the beginning of a new religion, religious ideas or vision of freedom, it was “the emergence of a new social community in history.”<sup>17</sup> Bruggeman argues that humankind is a community consisting of male and female, and only within this “community of humankind is God reflected.”<sup>18</sup>

Within this new community came laws, governance that provided order, and a new normal of right and wrong with accountability.<sup>19</sup> Isaiah 58 provides a glimpse into what this new normal of right and wrong looks like. It is an image of those who are oppressed going free, providing shelter for the homeless, helping those who are in trouble, sharing with those who are hungry and providing clothing. Isaiah provides a structure for providing charity and of seeking justice.

### **The Obligation of Compassion to the Poor through the Means of Charity and Generosity**

Through the many instructions God gave Moses, and the people of Israel, generosity remained a common theme. Moses stated, “*if among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord is giving you, you shall not harden your heart of shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.*” (Deut. 15:7-8). These Scriptures suggest that within the community of Israel that there would be times where there would be some who were poor among them. Peter Craigie arguing, that for a variety of reasons there would be those within the community that depended on other for their welfare, those who were not self-sufficient.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination: 40th Anniversary Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 6.

<sup>18</sup> Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 34.

<sup>19</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1976), 234.

The community of Israel would have brothers or sisters that needed help. They were called upon to perform acts of *tzedakah*, the Hebrew word that “literally means righteousness, but Hebrew speakers use it in reference to giving and charity.”<sup>21</sup> Giving according to Jeremiah is “those who harvest grapes always leave a few for the poor,” (Jeremiah 49:9). This demonstrates generosity and concern for others instead of just looking after their own interests.

One important thing to note from Scripture is where it says “within the land that the Lord is giving you.” Everything that Israel possessed was given to them by God to provide for their needs, to provide for them a prosperous life. Everything that was given to them by God was also meant to be shared, as written that “whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed,” (Proverbs 19:17). God was faithful in his generosity to Israel. The proper response to God’s generosity through their act of worship required that they extend that same generosity to those who are in need, whatever that need may be.

St. Basil the Great admonished that “those who love their neighbour as themselves possess nothing more than their neighbour.”<sup>22</sup> Craig Blomberg argues that while wealth can turn one’s heart from God, “one may give one’s riches generously and compassionately to glorify God and help the needy.”<sup>23</sup> God’s people living in their new community by being generous and sharing what they had with others in the community would help alleviate the poor among them. This would distribute the wealth among them so that everyone had what they needed. As Basil suggested loving your neighbour meant that they had the same material possessions and opportunities. Generosity, however, is a conscious decision that required action. The New Living Translation bible states, “generous people plan to do what is generous,

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<sup>21</sup> Firm Staff, "The Hebrew Meaning of Generosity: In Giving We Receive," n.p. [cited 24 June 2021]. Online: <https://firmisrael.org/learn/the-hebrew-meaning-of-generosity/>.

<sup>22</sup> St. Basil the Great, *On Social Justice* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2009), 43.

<sup>23</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: Biblical Theology Of Possessions*. Kindle Edition. 2020. n.p.

and they stand firm in their generosity,” (Isa 32:8). This suggests deciding to be generous and then acting upon it.

While Israel was called to be generous to the poor, it is also found in Scripture the call to seek justice for the poor and oppressed. Behaviour towards others “cannot be understood apart from a deep awareness of the character of the Lord.”<sup>24</sup> Providing charity and seeking justice are quite different. Generosity is giving the things that are needed such as food and clothing. However, while it is commanded to give those things to those in need the responsibility of Israel did not end there. Generosity and compassion is also to seek justice on behalf of the poor among them. This raises the question of what seeking justice for the poor and marginalised among the community of Israel entailed?

### **Seeking Justice for the Poor and Marginalised Beyond Charity and Generosity**

Biblical justice according to Paul Louis Metzger “involves making individuals, communities, and the cosmos whole, by upholding both goodness and impartiality.”<sup>25</sup> Justice is about making situations right. While charity involves meeting immediate needs, justice extends beyond meeting immediate needs moving towards the causes of injustice and challenging the structures leading to oppression in individuals, communities, and the cosmos as a whole. It works to break dependency and restores dignity instead of taking it away from others.

By examining what it means to seek justice for the poor the prophet Amos shows that all nations are held responsible by God to pursue social justice (Amos 1:1-2:3). Walter Houston states, “justice depends on the fortunate recognising their responsibilities to the less

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<sup>24</sup> Tom Finley, "Social Justice in Amos," n.p. [cited 28 June 2021]. Online: <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2015/social-justice-in-amos>.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Louis Metzger, "What Is Biblical Justice?," n.p. [cited 29 June 2021]. Online: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2010/summer/biblicaljustice.html>.

fortunate.”<sup>26</sup> In Jeremiah we find God instructing Jeremiah to speak to the king of Judah. In these instructions the king was told to be fair-minded and just and to do what is right. Some of the ways this was to be accomplished was to help those who have been robbed and those being oppressed; and to not mistreat foreigners, orphans and widows, (Jeremiah 22:1-3 NLT). Scripture states that the Lord loves justice and hates robbery and wrongdoing, (Isa 61:8). Isaiah offers similar words to those of Jeremiah about learning to do good, seeking justice, helping the oppressed and defending and fighting for the causes of those who are less fortunate or vulnerable in the community, (Isa 1:17). David also instructs to “turn from evil and do good, and you will live in the land forever. For the Lord loves justice,” (Psalms 37:27-28 NLT).

Ezekiel describes a man who is righteous, doing what is just and right. In his description this man is described as a merciful creditor who does not keep items given by poor debtors, who does not rob the poor instead giving food to the hungry and providing clothes for the needy. This man grants loans without charging interest, avoids injustice and is fair when judging others, (Ezekiel 18:5-8).

God not only loves justice, but he executes justice on behalf of the fatherless and widow. Scripture states that God loves the sojourner and gives him food and clothing, (Deuteronomy 10:18-19). Israel is also instructed to love the sojourner for they themselves were once sojourners in the land of Egypt,<sup>27</sup> with The New Living Translations stating that he ensures orphans and widows receive justice. He is working on their behalf, but the responsibility also falls upon the people of Israel to act justly in dealing with others.

I will now propose three principles found in the law of Moses that will help with demonstrating what justice for the poor requires. While this is not a complete list, the principles

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<sup>26</sup> Walter J. Houston, *Justice for the Poor?: Social Justice in the Old Testament in Concept and Practice* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2020), 49.

<sup>27</sup> Deuteronomy 10:19

that will be examined are empowerment, advocacy, and inclusion. This will attempt to lay the foundation of what seeking justice on behalf of the poor must look like.

### **Justice Through Empowering the Poor**

The Old Testament Scripture not only gave instruction to Israel regarding charity to the poor, but it also included instructions to the poor themselves. These instructions were for those who were able to work, the rich and the poor alike.

Bryant Meyers in *Walking with the Poor* argues that work is fruitful. Just as God is productive, he argues it also every human being's responsibility to be productive, stating "that every human being has the responsibility to work and to enable or allow others to work so that they can fulfil their purpose."<sup>28</sup> The first man and woman created were placed in the Garden of Eden not just to enjoy it, although that was one of the benefits they would receive. The man and woman were meant to work in the garden and tend to it (Gen 2:15). Humankind was not created to just let God or someone else do everything for them when they had the ability to do for themselves, but they were meant to work, doing those things that will be productive and fruitful.

The gleaning system provides an example of empowering the poor. God says, "*when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner*" (Lev 19:9-10). Gleaning is an example of providing justice, that also highlights the distinction between charity and justice. Blomberg argues, "gleaning rights are not voluntary acts of charity of the rich toward the poor; they are the poor's right to

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<sup>28</sup> Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), 63.

livelihood.”<sup>29</sup> Charity involves voluntarily giving to others, while gleaning is the process of landowners having an obligation in providing access to the poor through means of production or the land.<sup>30</sup> They did not voluntarily give the gleanings to the poor, the poor were given access and the freedom to work for a living, receiving a right to the provisions provided by God.

The gleaning system not only helped to empower the poor but helped to restore their dignity by providing a way for them to work and care for their families.<sup>31</sup> This responsibility fell not only to the landowners, but also to those who were poor. Empowerment came through a shared responsibility, mutual support and accountability. Deuteronomy 23: 24-25, Blomberg argues, also “protects the farmer from others who might try to glean too much too quickly.”<sup>32</sup> The provision was there for the poor, but they needed to work to gather it instead of relying on everything to be done for them and there were boundaries in place to protect the landowner.

We find another example of empowerment by the prophet Elisha. When a widow cried out how a creditor was threatening to take her two sons as slaves, Elisha asked what he could do to help her. He listened to her problem and then by asking what she had available Elisha offered her advice on what to do. By listening to his advice, she was not only empowered to provide for herself but to also get her debts paid off.<sup>33</sup> Elisha did not provide charity but showed her how to use what she already had to make a living for herself and her two sons while getting herself out of debt.

While the gleaning system provided a form of justice for the poor, we cannot ignore the consideration of those who were unable to work. The question that needs to be asked is what

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<sup>29</sup> Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches*. Kindle Edition. 2020. n.p.

<sup>30</sup> Theology of Work, "Gleaning (Leviticus 19:9-10)," n.p. [cited 22 May 2021]. Online: <https://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/leviticus-and-work/holiness-leviticus-1727/gleaning-leviticus-19910>.

<sup>31</sup> The book of Ruth is an example of gleaning and providing for her mother-in-law

<sup>32</sup> Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches*. Kindle Edition. 2020. n.p.

<sup>33</sup> 2 Kings 4:1-7



about those who were disabled or unable to go out and work in the fields. What systems were in place for those in the community who could not go out and collect food?

In the case of those with disabilities or other reasons why they could not go out and work, they needed someone to speak up on their behalf. They needed someone to defend their rights, and challenge those who were not acting justly towards them or taking advantage of them. They needed someone to be their voice when it appeared that their cries were not being heard. They needed someone who would be willing to help and advocate on their behalf.

### **Advocating for the Poor and Those on the Margins**

God created structured power through laws that governed economic, political, and social system, giving this power to individuals and institutions with the intent of empowering humankind to flourish.<sup>34</sup> These laws were put in place to give power and protection to everyone including the poor and vulnerable among them.

Enforcement of these laws “was a matter of justice” concerning the whole society and they were given “warning about what would happen if power was used to oppress rather than empower.”<sup>35</sup> Sorrow awaits those unjust judges and the ones issuing unfair laws depriving the poor of justice and ignoring the rights of the needy, preying and taking advantage of those who are vulnerable (Isa 10:1-2).

In terms of advocacy a simple definition is the support or help given to those who are unable to speak for themselves.<sup>36</sup> In any instance where oppression hinders another from flourishing is a cause for speaking up. There are many places in Scripture that call for speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves. “*Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights*

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<sup>34</sup> Stephen Offutt, David F. Bronkema, Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, Robb Davis, Gregg Okesson, *Advocating for Justice: An Evangelical Vision for Transforming Systems and Structures* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2016), 11.

<sup>35</sup> Offutt, *Advocating for Justice*, 11.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, "Advocacy," n.p. [cited 1 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>

*of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy*” (Proverbs 31:8-9). We find Jeremiah calling for justice and righteousness, doing no wrong to others (Jeremiah 22:3), and Isaiah stating, *“learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause”* (Isaiah 1:17). These verses all call for action, both in speech and in action.

Gehazi the servant of Elisha demonstrated advocacy on behalf of a woman from Shunem. When Elisha asked her what could be done for her, he even offered to speak to the king and commander of the army on her behalf. However, Gehazi spoke up and told Elisha that she does not have a son and that her husband is an old man.<sup>37</sup> She needed an heir since her husband was already an old man and she would be left on her own if something were to happen to him. Again, it can be found where Gehazi advocated on her behalf when she had eventually returned to her land and went to see the king about getting her house and land restored to her. Because Gehazi spoke up for her the king made sure that everything that she had lost had been restored to her.<sup>38</sup> Gehazi was instrumental in helping this woman get what was rightfully hers.

Esther is another example of advocating on behalf of her people in the Old Testament. The Jews were in danger of being killed, however Esther in her position of Queen could do something about it. She could have chosen to be silent ensuring her own safety, but was challenged to speak, *“who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* (Esther 4:14). Using her position of power, she advocated for her people, and they were not only saved from death, but their status was positively changed (Esther 9). Esther saw the wrong that was being committed against the Jews and made the decision to act on their behalf even if it meant that she could be placed in danger.

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<sup>37</sup> 2 Kings 4:11-14

<sup>38</sup> 2 Kings 8:1-6

Scripture also gives warnings about exploitation of the poor and vulnerable. “Don’t rob the poor just because you can or exploit the needy in court. For the Lord is their defender. He will ruin anyone who ruins them,” (Proverbs 22:22-23 NLT). Scripture warns that “*whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered*” (Proverbs 21:13 ESV).

The Mishna Bava Metzia, a collection of Jewish oral traditions, states “just as there is a prohibition against exploitation [ona’a] in buying and selling, so is there ona’a in statements, i.e verbal mistreatment.”<sup>39</sup> This verbal mistreatment could be in the form discrimination or exclusion. The Israelites were faced with verbal mistreatment while in the land of Egypt, harsh labour and they cried out to God in their trouble.<sup>40</sup> God heard their cries and because of his covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he acted. He delivered them from the land of Egypt. God did not only deliver certain individuals, but he delivered all of the Israelites, creating a people for his name (Exodus 2:23-25). All of the Israelites were rescued from the oppression that they were faced with. God did not only choose those who he felt deserved to be delivered but everyone was included in the rescue. Justice is inclusive to all.

### **Inclusion into the Community**

After the exodus from Egypt, Ben Greenberg argues, this large and diverse group of Jews in the wilderness become unified in heart. He continues saying that each one was valued in the community, no one being used to reach a greater goal. He states, “every member of the community was valued. Every member of the community was welcome. Every member of

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<sup>39</sup> Sefaria, "Exploitation | Texts & Source Sheets from Torah, Talmud and Sefaria’s Library of Jewish Sources," n.p. [cited 1 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.sefaria.org/topics/exploitation>.

<sup>40</sup> Exodus 5

the community was powerfully present.”<sup>41</sup> Exclusion or discrimination was not meant to take place within this new community.

Leviticus 19:18 suggests inclusiveness and the application applies to any kind of neighbour. Inclusion is a central biblical theme. “At the heart of the covenant given to Moses was the statement that the Hebrew tribes were rescued slaves, a cause for gratitude and humility. For that reason, they were always to care for the stranger and the disadvantaged (Exodus 20:2; Leviticus 19:32-37), in a network of responsible and supportive relationships.”<sup>42</sup>

The story of Jonah is a wonderful example of inclusion. Jonah ran from the call of God not wanting the people of Nineveh to experience the mercy of God. God, however, not only saved the Gentile crew,<sup>43</sup> but upon hearing the message of Jonah the Ninevites repented. Jonah in his anger forgot the word of the Lord given by Jeremiah, “If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it,” (Jeremiah 18:7-8). While Jonah did finally do what God had asked of him, he also portrayed negative characteristics that was not intended by God. He showed discrimination against the people of Nineveh and was willing to see them excluded instead of being included.

After examining the Old Testament texts regarding the image of God, generosity, and justice in the form of empowerment, advocacy, and inclusion I will now demonstrate how the life of Jesus and his ministry was demonstrated through these principles.

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<sup>41</sup> Ben Greenberg, "Inclusion Is a Jewish Imperative," *n.p.* [cited 1 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/2013/06/07/inclusion-is-a-jewish-imperative/>.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Ballard and Lesley Hesselbee, *Community and Ministry: An Introduction to Community Development in a Christian Context* (London: SPCK, 2007), 95.

<sup>43</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1976), 193.

### ***Chapter 3 - The Demonstrations of Jesus through the Old Testament Principles***

“February 15, 2015, Pope Francis very directly challenged leaders in the church to follow Jesus by embracing a gospel of ‘compassion and action.’ Declaring ‘the gospel of the marginalized is where our credibility is found and revealed.’”<sup>44</sup> The Old Testament principles for living in community with the marginalized are demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus. We find this throughout the New Testament text; Jesus did not only remind his followers of these principles but through his actions he showed how to put them into action. The principles lived out in the ministry of Jesus is the model for the Christian Community today.

Samuel Wells argues for the concept of not working for, working with, or being for the marginalised.<sup>45</sup> His argument is that we need to be like Jesus and be with those who are rejected in society. Being with is walking alongside them through difficulty, building relationships that work to bring about transformation in the lives of others and in society as a whole. This idea is clearly demonstrated in the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus came to dwell and be with people during his life.

#### **Jesus the Visible Image of God in Community**

Jesus the visible image of God came to dwell among humankind (Colossians 1:15). Jesus throughout his ministry did not live alone or keep himself hidden away from others. He wanted to be with people. This can be seen after his baptism and temptation in the wilderness. It was after this that he chose his first disciples (Matthew 4:18-22). These disciples consisted of “Jews, uneducated commoners, and simple men of faith.”<sup>46</sup> Jesus chose ordinary and

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<sup>44</sup> Sine, *Live like You Give a Damn! Join the Changemaking Celebration*. Kindle Edition. 2016. n.p.

<sup>45</sup> Samuel Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 23.

<sup>46</sup> Allyson Holland, "Who Were the 12 Disciples and What Should We Know about Them?," n.p. [cited 18 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/who-were-the-12-disciples-and-what-should-we-know-about-them.html>

common men purposely passing over the rich and influential in society.<sup>47</sup> Jesus was building a community through a diverse group of individuals and throughout his ministry his focus was on the wellbeing and new life of this community.

The Lord's Prayer that Jesus taught<sup>48</sup>, Shane Claiborne argues the 'our' in the first words of the prayer are a prayer of community and reconciliation. He argues it is belonging to a new humanity, and an "interconnectedness, grace and liberation in a new social order."<sup>49</sup> Jesus taught the new social order by choosing those who were weak according to the world's standards to shame the strong. He chose what the world considered as foolish to shame those who thought that they were wise.<sup>50</sup> Jesus had compassion for people and when he saw an individual in need he acted on their behalf.

### **Jesus Demonstrating Compassion and Generosity**

Throughout Scripture there is the call to be compassionate to others.<sup>51</sup> It is "part of our job description as followers of Jesus (Matthew 25:31-46).<sup>52</sup> Showing compassion to others goes hand in hand with generosity. Scripture states, "if someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion how can God's love be in that person?" (1 John 3:17 NLT). Jesus not only saw the needs of those around him but in his compassion, he generously met their needs.

The feeding of the five thousand is one example of the compassion and generosity of Jesus (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15). Jesus had compassion

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<sup>47</sup> Holland, "Who Were the 12 Disciples and What We Should Know about Them?," "Who Were the 12 Disciples and What Should We Know about Them?," n.p. [cited 18 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/who-were-the-12-disciples-and-what-should-we-know-about-them.html>

<sup>48</sup> Matthew 6:9-13

<sup>49</sup> Shane Claiborne and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers: Prayer for Ordinary Radicals* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 18.

<sup>50</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:27

<sup>51</sup> Some examples found in Ephesians 4:32, 1 Peter 3:8, Colossians 3:12

<sup>52</sup> Brian Fikkert Corbett, Steve, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), 13.

on this huge crowd (Mark 6:34). He knew that they were hungry, and he met their physical need. Although Jesus could have fed them without any help from his disciples, he told his disciples to feed them (Mark 6:37). Jesus already knowing that the crowd would be fed, he put the responsibility upon his disciples to do something for these people. Jesus was teaching his disciples that they not only could but needed to provide for others when the opportunity arose. Larry James argues that this “signals Jesus’ intention that his people will never be content to send the hungry away or sever communication from the practical action of being a neighbour to those in need of a human touch no matter how overwhelming the challenge may seem.”<sup>53</sup>

Another perspective on generosity from this narrative can be found in John’s gospel. Andrew told Jesus that there was a young boy in the crowd who had five barley loaves and two fish.<sup>54</sup> This young boy in his generosity gave all the food he had so that others could be fed. Scripture does not say that the boy was told to give this food but rather suggests that this young boy also had compassion on the hungry crowd and was willing to give up what he had in order to help them. The young boy seeing the need around him wanted to do something and even though his small amount of food may have seemed insignificant to the overwhelming need around him, instead of being discouraged he chose to give what had. Through this seemingly small action on his part, through his generosity many were fed.

Another example of generosity that Jesus taught can be found in the narrative of the widow’s offering.<sup>55</sup> Jesus watching the crowd putting money into the collection box saw that out of their abundance the rich were putting in large amounts. Then came the poor widow and put in only two small coins. It states that Jesus called his disciples to him to illustrate the generosity of this widow. While the rich only gave a tiny part of their wealth, this poor widow

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<sup>53</sup> Larry M. James, *The Wealth of the Poor: How Valuing Every Neighbor Restores Hope in Our Cities* (Dallas: Abilene Christian University Press, 2013), 12.

<sup>54</sup> John 6:8-9

<sup>55</sup> Mark 12:41-44

gave everything that she had. This generosity by this poor widow was recorded twice in Scripture showing the importance of her act.<sup>56</sup>

Jesus showed compassion to a man with leprosy and healed him. It is found in Scripture that Jesus was moved with compassion<sup>57</sup> when the man asked if Jesus was willing to heal him. Out of compassion and his generosity Jesus told the man “I am willing.”<sup>58</sup> Jesus never walked away from those who were in need, no matter what that need was or who they were.

When considering charity and giving, Jesus instructs his followers to not store up treasures on earth but instead store your treasures in heaven.<sup>59</sup> He goes further stating that you cannot serve both God and money.<sup>60</sup> To serve God is to show God’s generosity to others and show them compassion. On the other hand, serving money or material possessions leads to not thinking of others or loving one’s neighbour. Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind and equally important is to love your neighbour as yourself.<sup>61</sup>

Loving God and loving one’s neighbour is not only about generosity and compassion or giving charity to others in need. Loving God and loving others include seeking justice on behalf of those who face injustice, discrimination, and oppression by others.

### **Jesus Sought Justice Not Merely Charity**

Jesus not only taught and demonstrated compassion and generosity, but he also taught about seeking justice. Jesus sought justice for society through “the call to love neighbours, to bring healing into broken contexts, and to offer forgiveness and restoration.”<sup>62</sup> Jesus

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<sup>56</sup> Mark 12: 41-44 and Luke 21:1-4

<sup>57</sup> Mark 1:41

<sup>58</sup> Mark 1:41

<sup>59</sup> Matthew 6:19

<sup>60</sup> Matthew 6:24

<sup>61</sup> Matthew 22:37-40

<sup>62</sup> Ted Grimsrud, "Jesus and Justice," n.p. [cited 18 July 2021]. Online: <https://peacetheology.net/restorative-justice/6-jesus-and-justice/>.



announced that he came for those who were broken and needed healing (Mark 2:17). He demonstrated this through the many healings of people with diseases that kept them on the margins, those who had physical disabilities that kept them in poverty and unable to care for themselves, and those who were in bondage or demon possessed such as the man who many probably feared and was avoided by everyone (Mark 5:20). He sought justice for those who were excluded from society.

The justice Jesus came to demonstrate did not only include bringing healing to those who were oppressed or broken or excluded but he also demonstrated seeking justice in confronting those who were responsible for the oppression and structures that brought harm to others.<sup>63</sup> This is evident in his encounters with the religious leaders.

The gospel of Matthew shows Jesus confronting the religious leaders. He challenged them on their exclusion of others, for being concerned with the gold in the Temple, and their lack of justice, mercy, and faith. Jesus confronts them on their greed, self-indulgence, and the motivations of their hearts.<sup>64</sup> These who were educated in the law failed to do what the prophets of the Old Testament spoke of seeking justice and caring for the needs of the poor, widow, and orphans.

The ministry of Jesus demonstrated justice on behalf of others through empowering those who he encountered, he advocated on behalf of those who were being treated unjustly and included those in his inner circle whom society often excluded. He did not only just teach on these matters, but the very actions of Jesus demonstrated how to put them into practice.

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<sup>63</sup> Grimsrud, "Jesus and Justice," n.p. [cited 18 July 2021]. Online: <https://peacetheology.net/restorative-justice/6-jesus-and-justice>

<sup>64</sup> Matthew 23:1-36 NLT

## How Jesus Empowers Those He Encounters

Throughout the Gospels many of the miracles performed by Jesus are recorded. While all Jesus had to do was simply touch an individual and they would be healed, speak and it would happen, there were times that the miracles received by others called for action on the part of the other person.

An example of this can be found in John's gospel. There was a man who had been lying sick for thirty-eight years. (John 5:3). In the encounter with this man, Jesus asked him a very important question. He asked the man if he wanted to be made well, (John 4:6). He did not ask the man why he was not well but if he wanted to be made well and whole. This man had been dependent on others for many years, and although Jesus could instantly heal him if he chose to, he required a response from the man. After listening to the man give his reasons for why he could not or has not already been healed, Jesus tells him to "get up, take up your bed, and walk," (John 5:8).

This narrative suggests that the healing that took place was out of the response by the man. Jesus was willing to do something that the man could not do on his own, however, he expected the man to do the things that he could do. The man needed to take a form of action to see his situation changed and by getting up and doing the things that he could do is what brought about his healing (John 5:9). The man needed to participate in his healing instead of just having everything done for him.

Jesus also empowered his disciples for ministry. Jesus delegated tasks to them such as sending Peter fishing so that the temple tax could be paid<sup>65</sup>, or sending two disciples to go and fetch a colt<sup>66</sup>. Jesus taught his disciples that there were things that they could do. Jesus sent seventy disciples ahead of him to go to the places he was planning to visit and gave them

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<sup>65</sup> Matthew 17:27

<sup>66</sup> Matthew 21:1-2

authority.<sup>67</sup> Jesus had Peter stretch his faith and his human abilities by calling him to walk on the water.<sup>68</sup>

While Jesus empowered the people that he was in contact with showing them that they were able to take part in situations changing, or stretching their abilities there were also times when Jesus defended others who were being mistreated or looked down upon. Jesus advocated on behalf of others.

### **Jesus Advocates on Behalf of Others**

One example of the advocacy of Jesus is found when he advocated on behalf of a woman who was caught in adultery. After the religious leaders brought the woman to Jesus expecting him to judge her, Jesus replied to them that anyone who has never sinned throw the first stone (John 8:7). In this passage Jesus not only did deal with the woman's sin, but also those who were accusing her. The religious leaders thinking they had a solid case for stoning this woman were challenged by Jesus. Their sins were no different from hers, so they had no right to judge her in her situation. The woman's accusers had to walk away. While Jesus was advocating and defending the woman there was also a lesson for her. This woman was offered forgiveness and a new life but was told to go and sin no more (John 8:11). The woman was offered a new opportunity without judgement so that she could go and have fullness of life. Jesus not only advocated on her behalf but sought out her wholeness of life.

When Jesus visited the home of Lazarus, Mary took an expensive jar of perfume and anointed the feet of Jesus. She was showing love and generous giving, but she was quickly criticised by one of the disciples for not giving the money to the poor. Jesus came to her

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<sup>67</sup> Luke 10:1-9

<sup>68</sup> Matthew 14:22:32

defence telling the disciple to leave her alone.<sup>69</sup> Jesus spoke up on behalf of her against the accusation that she was facing.

John's gospel tells the narrative of a man who had been born blind from birth. The disciples assumed that it was because of sin or the parent's sins that this man was blind. Jesus spoke up for this man who was being looked at as though he was to blame for his condition. Jesus stated to the disciples that it was not because of his sins or the sins of his parents that he was in this condition.<sup>70</sup> He quickly dismissed the stereotype that this man faced by those who he came into contact with. Jesus showed that not everything was as it appeared and that the label put on this man was incorrect.

While these are only a few examples of Jesus advocating on behalf of others they show that he did not sit by and watch others being falsely accused, mistreated by others. Jesus did not care whether someone was a woman, from a different religious tradition, or someone who society had rejected. Every individual no matter what their situation, mattered to Jesus and he included everyone.

### **Jesus Includes Even Those that Society Excludes**

The entire ministry of Jesus was based on being with and including those that had been excluded. There are many examples of this in Scripture. One criticism Jesus faced from the religious leaders was that Jesus socialised with those who were drunkards, tax collectors and sinners (Luke 7:34). Women can also be included in this group of people.

Jesus even shocked his disciples when they found him in conversation with a Samaritan women (John 4:27). Not only was Jesus talking to a woman, but a Samaritan woman. A Samaritan who Jews refused social contact with; this was something that was not supposed to

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<sup>69</sup> John 12:1-7

<sup>70</sup> John 9:1-3

happen.<sup>71</sup> Jesus took time to talk to this woman and the encounter changed not only her, but because of Jesus welcoming her into conversation many others became changed as well.<sup>72</sup>

Jesus healed those who “were not recognised socially”<sup>73</sup> showing compassion to those who were suffering. He showed compassion regardless of a person’s background, social standing, or religious beliefs.<sup>74</sup> An example of this is also found in the healing of a Roman officers slave.<sup>75</sup> Another example is the woman who had a medical condition causing her to bleed for twelve years. In her condition she was considered unclean, and she touched Jesus. Instead of Jesus getting angry or turning her away, he healed her. Even an unclean woman was welcomed by Jesus.

Jesus loved all people, and not just those that society accepted. His ministry is the model for how the Christian Community is meant to engage with the homeless population. Jesus also had something in common with those who are homeless or facing homelessness today. Jesus says, “foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head,” (Luke (9:58). The situations of the people that Jesus encountered are similar to the situations that people still face today. The image of the UK homeless is the same type of exclusion, discrimination, and stereotypes that Jesus encountered throughout his ministry.

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<sup>71</sup> Robin A. Brace, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ; An Inclusive Message," n.p. [cited 18 July 2021]. Online: <http://www.ukapologetics.net/08/gospelinclusive.htm>.

<sup>72</sup> John 4:39-42

<sup>73</sup> Brace, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ; An Inclusive Message," n.p. [cited 18 July 2021]. Online: <http://www.ukapologetics.net/08/gospelinclusive.htm>.

<sup>74</sup> Brace, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ; An Inclusive Message," n.p. [cited 18 July 2021]. Online: <http://www.ukapologetics.net/08/gospelinclusive.htm>.

<sup>75</sup> Luke 7:1-9

### *Chapter 4 - The Image of Homelessness in the UK*

The numbers for homelessness in the UK today show that this is a very present problem that needs to be addressed. Before the COVID-19 pandemic the number of homeless households was already high. Despite the protections that were in place during the pandemic statistics show that homelessness in the UK is still on the rise.

The British Medical Association (BMA), a trade union that represents and negotiates on behalf of doctors and medical students in the UK, is a leading voice that advocates “for outstanding health care and a healthy population.”<sup>76</sup> They report that before the pandemic between 2010 and 2019 the number of households in temporary accommodation in England increased by 75%, while rough sleeping increased by 141% during this period not including the population of ‘hidden homelessness.’<sup>77</sup>

Figures released by the government show that December 2020 closed with 95,370 homeless households living in temporary accommodation. It was reported that despite the eviction ban that was in place during the pandemic, 62,250 households were found to be homeless or were at risk between the months of October and December 2020.<sup>78</sup> Scotland reported that 33,792 applications for homelessness assistance had been filed and as of 31st March 2021, it was at 25,226.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> BMA, “Impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) on homelessness and the private rented sector,” n.p. [cited 17 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.bma.org.uk/media/3582/bma-submission-impact-of-covid-on-homelessness-and-prs.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> BMA, “Impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) on homelessness and the private rented sector,” n.p. [cited 17 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.bma.org.uk/media/3582/bma-submission-impact-of-covid-on-homelessness-and-prs.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> Shelter England, “Almost 100,000 Households Recorded as Homeless at the Start of 2021,” n.p. [cited 16 July 2021]. Online: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press\\_release/almost\\_100000\\_households\\_recorded\\_as\\_homeless\\_at\\_the\\_start\\_of\\_2021\\_](https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/almost_100000_households_recorded_as_homeless_at_the_start_of_2021_)

<sup>79</sup> Homeless Network Scotland, “Homelessness in Scotland: 2020-21 Statistics,” n.p. [cited 16 July 2021]. Online: <https://homelessnetwork.scot/2021/06/29/homelessness-in-scotland-2020-21-statistics>

The chief executive of Shelter, Polly Neate states, “to say the last year has been difficult for homeless families is a gross understatement.”<sup>80</sup> She goes on to say that it has been atrocious with the lockdown, school closures and no space to learn or work with no access to the basics such as internet or a washing machine. With the eviction ban set to soon lift she is concerned that more struggling families will end up in the same situation.<sup>81</sup> According to figures released by a social justice group, almost 1,000 individuals of the homeless population died in 2020 across the UK.<sup>82</sup>

During the pandemic the director of StreetLink, delivered by Homeless Link and St Mungo’s connecting rough sleepers with local outreach teams, Matt Harrison reported seeing an increase in alerts, high numbers were from people sleeping rough. Many were concerned about the pandemic and “did not know where to turn for help, particularly as many of the services they usually relied on for support, such as day centres, were asked to close.”<sup>83</sup>

Streetlink saw the number of alerts rise from 16,371 recorded in January to March 2020 to 16,976 in April to June and increase of 4%. “The rise comes despite the government claiming that more than 90% of homeless people have been accommodated during the

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<sup>80</sup> Shelter England, "Almost 100,000 Households Recorded as Homeless at the Start of 2021," n.p. [cited 16 July 2021]. Online: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press\\_release/almost\\_100000\\_households\\_recorded\\_as\\_homeless\\_at\\_the\\_start\\_of\\_2021\\_](https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/almost_100000_households_recorded_as_homeless_at_the_start_of_2021_).

<sup>81</sup> Shelter England, "Almost 100,000 Households Recorded as Homeless at the Start of 2021," n.p. [cited 16 July 2021]. Online: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press\\_release/almost\\_100000\\_households\\_recorded\\_as\\_homeless\\_at\\_the\\_start\\_of\\_2021\\_](https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/almost_100000_households_recorded_as_homeless_at_the_start_of_2021_).

<sup>82</sup> Ahmet Gürhan Kartal, "UK: Almost 1,000 Homeless People Died in 2020," n.p. [cited 16 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/uk-almost-1-000-homeless-people-died-in-2020/2153400>.

<sup>83</sup> Inside Housing, "Homelessness Outreach Teams Reported Rise in Rough Sleeping Numbers during Lockdown, New Study Finds," n.p. [cited 1 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/homelessness-outreach-teams-reported-rise-in-rough-sleeping-numbers-during-lockdown-new-study-finds-67580>.

pandemic via its 'Everyone In' scheme."<sup>84</sup> London saw an increase of 27% during this time frame, from 9,543 up to 12,134.<sup>85</sup>

For many when they think of someone being homeless, they think of that person sitting on a piece of cardboard or the one sleeping in the doorway. However, there are many who are homeless that remain under the radar. Before going further, it is important to offer some working definitions for homelessness.

### **Defining the Terms of Homelessness**

To be considered homeless means that you do not have a home. Someone is homeless even if they have a roof over their head.<sup>86</sup> Sofa surfing or staying with friends or family is still considered as an individual being homeless despite the fact that they are not rough sleeping. Those who are rough sleeping are often the ones that are seen. These are those that sleep in the streets, parks, or doorways.<sup>87</sup> For the onlooker it is these individuals who are the image of homelessness. However, there are many that remain in hidden homelessness those who do not approach their local councils. Instead, these are the ones that are often forgotten. Rough sleepers are considered in extreme homelessness, however, hidden homelessness is still considered homelessness.

Social causes of homelessness include a lack of affordable housing, poverty and unemployment. These are not the only reasons for homelessness as there are certain life events

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<sup>84</sup> Inside Housing, "Homelessness Outreach Teams Reported Rise in Rough Sleeping Numbers during Lockdown, New Study Finds," n.p. [cited 1 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/homelessness-outreach-teams-reported-rise-in-rough-sleeping-numbers-during-lockdown-new-study-finds-67580>.

<sup>85</sup> Inside Housing, "Homelessness Outreach Teams Reported Rise in Rough Sleeping Numbers during Lockdown, New Study Finds," n.p. [cited 1 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/homelessness-outreach-teams-reported-rise-in-rough-sleeping-numbers-during-lockdown-new-study-finds-67580>.

<sup>86</sup> Shelter England, "What is Homelessness," n.p. [cited 26 May 2021]. Online: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/homelessness/rules/what\\_is\\_homelessness#:~:text=The%20definition%20of%20homelessness%20means%20not%20having%20a%20home.&text=You%20count%20as%20homeless%20if,no%20legal%20right%20to%20stay](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/rules/what_is_homelessness#:~:text=The%20definition%20of%20homelessness%20means%20not%20having%20a%20home.&text=You%20count%20as%20homeless%20if,no%20legal%20right%20to%20stay)

<sup>87</sup> Gov.UK, "Health Matters: rough sleeping," n.p. [cited 26 May 2021]. Online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-rough-sleeping/health-matters-rough-sleeping>



which can cause individuals to become homeless. Some of these life events can include a death in the family, a relationship breakdown, loss of a job, unable to afford the rent, leaving prison or care having no home to go to, or escaping a violent relationship.<sup>88</sup> All of the events can lead to homelessness and once an individual is homeless there are many other consequences that come from their situation.

### **The Physical and Emotional Effects of the Homeless Community**

Homelessness is not only devastating to a person emotionally but puts one at risk of danger physically. It causes one to live in isolation, engaging in risky behaviours and their physical safety remains in jeopardy. “On average, homeless people die at just 44 years old.”<sup>89</sup> For people who are sleeping on the streets, they are almost 17 times more likely to be or have been a victim of violence. “More than one in three people sleeping rough have been deliberately hit or kicked or experienced some other form of violence whilst homeless,” and are over nine times more likely to take their own life than in the general population.<sup>90</sup>

Health issues among the homeless population is also a concern. The risk rough sleepers face is infections, or illnesses that come from living outdoors. There is also the fact that many in the homeless community also suffer with mental health issues. The current COVID-19 pandemic makes the health risk even greater.

Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs comprises physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. The lower needs must be satisfied before the needs higher up can be achieved.<sup>91</sup> The basic needs include things such as food, shelter, clothing,

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<sup>88</sup> Crisis “About Homelessness,” n.p. [cited 28 May 2021]. Online: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness>

<sup>89</sup> Crisis “About Homelessness,” n.p. [cited 28 May 2021]. Online: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness>

<sup>90</sup> Crisis “About Homelessness,” n.p. [cited 28 May 2021]. Online: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness>

<sup>91</sup> Saul Mcleod, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," n.p. [cited 16 February 2021]. Online: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>.

and warmth. For the homeless population they are still seeking to meet these basic needs, and “for people who are ‘extremely and dangerously hungry,’ no other interests exist but food.”<sup>92</sup> Until these needs are met, they remain stuck. This causes them to overlook their health issues, prioritising other issues such as seeking food above medical attention.<sup>93</sup>

Amartya Sen states, “poverty is better understood as being the result of deprivation of human freedoms.”<sup>94</sup> For Sen “human well-being is not what people consume (economics) but what people are and do.”<sup>95</sup> Sen calls these functionings or the basic stuff such as food housing clean air, water and feeling safe.<sup>96</sup> Sen argues “if the poorest can function the society is functioning too.”<sup>97</sup> God’s intent for humankind is more than just simply survival according to Sen.<sup>98</sup>

During the pandemic with the NHS and local authorities having to prioritise COVID-19 patients, this posed a challenge for those in the homeless population with existing or long-term health conditions. There was also a higher risk of contracting Covid-19.<sup>99</sup> With their needs falling across a range of different services they were less likely to be able to access vital information and updates regarding the pandemic. With most GP’s arranging phone or virtual appointments this also proved to be challenging to those with no phones or access to the internet. For many, the services where they were able to go for social interactions or meals were now closed leaving a population that is already isolated completely cut off.

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<sup>92</sup> Kreider, *Social Holiness*, 45.

<sup>93</sup> Physiopedia, “Health and Wellbeing Needs of the Homeless, the Physiotherapist’s Role,” n.p. [cited 1 June 2021]. Online; [https://www.physio-pedia.com/Health\\_and\\_wellbeing\\_needs\\_of\\_the\\_homeless,\\_the\\_physiotherapist%27s\\_role](https://www.physio-pedia.com/Health_and_wellbeing_needs_of_the_homeless,_the_physiotherapist%27s_role).

<sup>94</sup> Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 29.

<sup>95</sup> Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 29.

<sup>96</sup> Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 29–30.

<sup>97</sup> Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 30.

<sup>98</sup> Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 30.

<sup>99</sup> Homeless Link, “Engaging with health services during the COVID-19 pandemic,” n.p. [cited 26 May 2021]. Online: [https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-engaging\\_with\\_attachments/Engaging%20with%20health%20services%20during%20Covid-19\\_final.pdf](https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-engaging_with_attachments/Engaging%20with%20health%20services%20during%20Covid-19_final.pdf)

Humankind is not meant to live in isolation yet for many in the homeless population this is their reality. They remain dependent on the help of others. They face judgement every day from those who look upon them with disgust, or even those who look upon them with pity. *If only they would just get a job* some may be thinking, however the problem is complex. This isolation often leads to risky behaviours. Some turn to alcohol or drugs. In my opinion alcohol and drugs are not always the cause of homelessness but instead the result. According to Crisis UK “being homeless is incredibly stressful,” arguing that “it is not uncommon for those traumatised by homelessness to seek solace in drugs or alcohol.”<sup>100</sup>

The National Coalition for the Homeless argue in many cases that “substance abuse is a result of homelessness rather than a cause.”<sup>101</sup> It numbs the pain and the situations that are faced on a daily basis. For someone living in isolation and fear, lacking belief that they have value and worth, alcohol and drugs are a way to cope. The National Coalition for the Homeless argue that substance abuse is “an attempt to attain temporary relief from their problems.”<sup>102</sup>

In the homeless community charity can only go so far. Giving a meal, a blanket or a hot cup of coffee is often needed. These are basic needs that everyone is entitled to and many of these individuals do not have them. However, charity can only do so much, as too much charity will often lead to dependency. For this population that remains on the margins, more that charity is needed. Those who are isolated and silenced need someone to advocate for them, to be a voice to speak for them. They need to be included and welcomed in instead of being stuck looking in from the outside. They are human beings, created in the image of God and are worthy of respect.

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<sup>100</sup> Crisis UK, "Drugs and Alcohol," n.p. [cited 27 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/health-and-wellbeing/drugs-and-alcohol/>.

<sup>101</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless, "Substance Abuse and Homelessness," n.p. [cited 28 July 2021]. Online: [www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/addiction.pdf](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/addiction.pdf).

<sup>102</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless, "Substance Abuse and Homelessness," n.p. [cited 28 July 2021]. Online: [www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/addiction.pdf](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/addiction.pdf).

“With the reopening after the pandemic *Inside Housing* has seen a letter sent to councils who received Rough Sleeping Initiative funding for 2021/22, in which the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) said one of the ‘funding principles’ was that councils should close their hotels by the end of June this year.”<sup>103</sup> Where does this leave a large group of people who are now being turned away from temporary accommodation and now face the risk of sleeping on the streets while still in the midst of the pandemic?

The Christian Community has an obligation to provide charity and justice for this population. The time for occasional acts of charity must be replaced with acts of justice seeking to bring wholeness to a broken community. Scripture tells us that “whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered” (Proverbs 21:13). This shows how much caring for the poor means to God. It can also be noted that “whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed,” (Proverbs 19:17). Is it possible that one is insulting God when they choose to look the other way in regard to homelessness, for Scripture also states, “whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honours him,” (Proverbs 14:31)? By doing nothing have we silently become the oppressor?

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<sup>103</sup> Lucie Heath, "Government Tells Councils to Close 'Everyone In' Hotels as a Condition of Rough-Sleeper Funding," n.p. [cited 15 July 2021]. Online: <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/government-tells-councils-to-close-everyone-in-hotels-as-a-condition-of-rough-sleeper-funding-71426>.

*Chapter 5 – The Responsibility of the Christian Community for Engaging with the UK Homeless*

After the examination of the Old Testament principles, and how these were demonstrated in the life of Jesus, providing a glimpse into the UK homeless population I will now explore what this means for the Christian Community's engagement.

In Matthew's gospel Jesus makes the statement "the poor you will always have with you," (Matthew 26:11). This statement could be interpreted by some as there is nothing that can be done to alleviate poverty in the world. The question that arises is what did Jesus mean by this statement? John Bolt argues that what is intended by Jesus' words is that the presence of the poor is an opportunity as well as an ongoing obligation for the Christian community to aid the needy.<sup>104</sup> Jesus was not giving the excuse to sit idly by doing nothing to help them.

Blomberg also suggests that with this statement Jesus is in fact alluding to Deuteronomy 15:11 that there will be some in the land who are poor, which is followed by the command to be openhearted and generous toward the poor and needy in the land.<sup>105</sup> One of the reasons according to Blomberg that there will always be the poor among us is that there will always be those who are corrupt and exploit the poor.<sup>106</sup> He goes on to argue that "part of our responsibility to help them may actively involve resisting the corrupt regimes that exacerbate their plight."<sup>107</sup> Jesus was explaining not only that the poor would always be there, but so was the opportunity and responsibility to help them. The homeless population is created in the

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<sup>104</sup> John Bolt, 'Christian Obligations: "The Poor You Will Always Have with You"', *Journal of Markets & Morality* 7 (2004), 468.

<sup>105</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 76.

<sup>106</sup> Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 76.

<sup>107</sup> Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 76.

image of God and God is concerned for them, their needs being met and for them to receive justice.

### **Reflecting the Image of God**

From the earlier examination of Scripture, finding that humankind was created in the image of God, it was suggested that they were created for community, and it is not good for man to be alone. When considering engaging with the homeless population it is important to begin here for two reasons. The first being is that the image of God is found in those who are homeless. Also, the fact that male and female were created different from each other it can be seen that the image of God reflects the many differences among humankind. Those who are well clothed and fed, who are part of a church community or those who are wealthy are not the only ones who reflect the image of God. His image is found in those who have nowhere to call home, those who are dirty and hungry, and those who society considers of no value. The beggar sitting on the sidewalk who God created in his image is valued just as much as the one who has a home to go to. “If the original humans were created in the image of God, that means that every human bears that image.”<sup>108</sup>

The second reason beginning at this point is that the biblical story not only begins with community but ends in community.<sup>109</sup> Human beings were created for community and being with others. God never intended for man/woman to live alone; but were created with the need for relationship. The account in the Bible is “an account that affirms the equality and status of both men and women and their call to partnership in society and family life and in the

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<sup>108</sup> David S. Gruber, "Counting the Homeless Reminds Us That Each Person Is Made in The Image of God," n.p. [cited 25 May 2021]. Online: <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Counting-the-Homeless-Reminds-Us-That-Each-Person-Is-Made-in-The-Image-of-God.html?soid=1108996851673&aid=24MigwwjbPY>.

<sup>109</sup> Claiborne and Wilson-Hartgrove, *Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers*, 18.

church.”<sup>110</sup> God declared it is not good to be alone. Bryant Meyers argues, “being fully human means being in relationship and thus relationships must work for the wellbeing of all.”<sup>111</sup>

Considering a man or woman who is homeless, sitting there in isolation and alone this is not what God intended for humankind. He himself declared that it is not good. Walking by, ignoring their existence is not only disregarding God’s statement, but is also failing to recognise the image of God within this community.

In our love for God and others it is important to recognise that the poor, those sleeping on the streets, those who are ‘the other,’ or different are our brothers and sisters.<sup>112</sup> The Anglican Communion Office in the 2015 publication of the Buffalo Statement wrote that “all human beings, regardless of their situation or condition, are loved by God and are to be valued as true persons.”<sup>113</sup> The homeless community is valued equally by God deserving to be treated worthy, with dignity and respect, and valued just as God values them. John Perkins states, “you don’t give people dignity. You affirm it.”<sup>114</sup> Lupton argues, “dignity is eroded as people come to view themselves as charity cases,”<sup>115</sup> becoming dependent on others for their mere basic needs.

When they or their situation is being ignored is “when we objectify others”<sup>116</sup> denying their existence or humanity and this leads to dehumanization. By stereotyping and looking upon them with prejudice or judgement one then becomes the oppressor, and Scripture tells us

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<sup>110</sup> Steven Croft and Paula Gooder, *Women and Men in Scripture and the Church: A Guide to the Key Issues* (Norfolk: Canterbury Press, 2013), xi.

<sup>111</sup> Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 53.

<sup>112</sup> Claiborne and Wilson-Hartgrove, *Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers*, 42.

<sup>113</sup> Anglican Communion Office, "In The Image and Likeness of God: A Hope-Filled Anthropology," n.p. [cited 22 June 2021]. Online: <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/208538/in-the-image-and-likeness-of-god-a-hope-filled-anthropology-2015.pdf>.

<sup>114</sup> Mere Agency, "5 Principles for Ministering to the Homeless," n.p. [cited 11 February 2021]. Online: <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/5-principles-for-ministering-to-the-homeless/>.

<sup>115</sup> Robert D. Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How the Church Hurts Those They Help and How to Reverse It* (London: Harper Collins, 2011), 21.

<sup>116</sup> David Livingstone Smith, "Dehumanization, Essentialism, and Moral Psychology: Dehumanization, Essentialism, and Moral Psychology," *Philosophy Compass* 9, (2014): 19.

that this is an insult to our Maker (Proverbs 14:31). Andy Watts states that “we dehumanize people the moment we decide we have nothing to learn from them.”<sup>117</sup> One of the ways that the Christian community is to engage with the homeless population is to really see them and affirm their value as another human being. There are many sitting alone and in silence. Anthony Woods rightly states, “they do exist, in staggering numbers,”<sup>118</sup> so we cannot afford to look the other way. Recognising this population is valued by God is the first step. However, there is more needed when engaging with the homeless population. There is an obligation and responsibility to the Christian community to be generous and provide charity to those who are in need.

### **The Responsibility to the Christian Community for Generosity and Charity**

Israel was instructed be generous in helping those among them who were in need. Jesus also demonstrated this in his feeding of the large crowd. Generosity was demonstrated in the Old Testament by leaving a few grapes for the poor for example, and in the New Testament we find the generosity of the young boy who gave his food to help others who were hungry. The example of Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with something that was of great worth. Generosity is blessing others.

Justin Welby states, “the people of God are called to be a blessing to those places where they live,”<sup>119</sup> or those places that they frequent. During the current pandemic Welby agrees that the Christian community played an enormous role serving the poor in communities and supporting those who were isolated or bereaved.<sup>120</sup> The pandemic affected everyone, and while

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<sup>117</sup> Mere Agency, "5 Principles for Ministering to the Homeless," n.p. [cited 11 February 2021]. Online: <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/5-principles-for-ministering-to-the-homeless/>

<sup>118</sup> Anthony Wood, "Finding God's Image in the Homeless Population," n.p. [cited 24 June 2021]. Online: <https://christianchronicle.org/finding-god-s-image-in-the-homeless-population/>.

<sup>119</sup> Welby, *Reimagining Britain*, 25.

<sup>120</sup> Welby, *Reimagining Britain*, 25.



the Christian community played a large role in assisting those in need what happens once the pandemic is over, and things return to normal?

According to Muhammad Yunus, “charity is rooted in basic human concern for the poor.”<sup>121</sup> Jesus made it clear that his followers are obligated to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and welcome the stranger, (Matthew 25:42-45). While Scripture does instruct being generous and providing charity there are some things to consider. Too much charity can often lead to dependency. In some cases, charity can cause more harm than it does good. For the Christian community that is filled with compassion towards the poor and generous in their giving to those in need, this needs to be recognised.

Robert Lupton, in *Toxic Charity* states, “giving to those in need what they could be gaining from their own initiative may well be the kindest way to destroy people.”<sup>122</sup> While there is no denying that there are times when charity is needed, continuing to just give handouts will deepen the cycle of dependency. Wisdom and discernment are required when giving charity to the homeless.

Another thing to consider when it comes to charity is that it is often the easiest way to not have to engage with the homeless population. It is easy giving money to a church or charity believing that the responsibility has been fulfilled. However, I would argue that generosity is only a small part of the Christian’s responsibility. Shane Claiborne rightly states that “charities become the brokers for our compassion toward the poor,” without every really having to get to know them.<sup>123</sup> Giving charity is often done out of a compassionate heart, however, the problem is that it is done without engagement with the poor. Jesus spent time with people, especially

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<sup>121</sup> Muhammad Yunus, *Creating a World Without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism*. Kindle Edition. 2007. n.p.

<sup>122</sup> Lupton, *Toxic Charity*, 8.

<sup>123</sup> Claiborne and Wilson-Hartgrove, *Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers*, 39.

those that others did not want to engage with. When considering generosity, it can also be being generous with one's time.

With engaging with the homeless population, it can also be seen that compassion for others and being generous is not only shown by those who are more fortunate. In my experience with working with the homeless population I was out on a cold day. Forgetting my gloves, my hands were very cold. My partner and I encountered a man that we stopped to talk with. As we were leaving, shaking his hand, he looked at me concerned. He said, "your hands are so cold, here please take my gloves." A man with nothing but a piece of cardboard to sit on, the clothes on his back and one pair of gloves, he was willing to give up a pair of gloves he needed to make sure my hands were warm.

There is also the responsibility of the Christian community to seek justice on behalf of the homeless population. How does this justice work into practice?

### **What Seeking Justice Entails**

Justice entails changing situations and structures that cause injustice. Justice for the homeless population comes through empowerment, being an advocate for those whose voice is not being heard and welcoming them in instead of keeping them out on the margins.

Seeking justice for the homeless population comes through being with them through a genuine relationship. Wells argues that this relationship "focuses more on stillness, on disposition, on letting the homeless person take the decisive steps and identify the significant issues."<sup>124</sup> This can only happen through engagement and building relationships instead of just relying on giving or giving to charities.

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<sup>124</sup> Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto*, 23.

One important thing that can be done for someone living in homeless is to help empower them to learn how to turn their situation around. Scripture states, “two are better than one, and they will have someone to help if they fall.”<sup>125</sup> In order for the homeless population to become empowered and break out of depending on others they need someone who is willing to be with them.

### **Empowering the Homeless for Living in Community**

Empowering others has many lasting benefits. It helps to improve local quality of life, relieve poverty, and change lives of participants.<sup>126</sup> Empowerment is based on shared responsibility and mutual support and accountability.<sup>127</sup> The Oath for Compassionate Service is to never do for the poor what they can or have the capacity to do for themselves, above all doing no harm.<sup>128</sup> There are many examples of organisations that work with the homeless population to empower them for living in the community.

### **Case Studies: Demonstrating Justice and Love in Action**

Housing First in Leeds is an example of what empowering the homeless population should include. Their organisation works with those to develop work ready skill and helps with employment applications. They work with individuals to create a roadmap for beating addiction and planning for the future.<sup>129</sup>

Glasgow City Mission, a Christian organisation also works to empower those who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless.<sup>130</sup> Working in partnership with other organisations they provide a space where men and women can come in and sit down to enjoy

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<sup>125</sup> Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

<sup>126</sup> Lupton, *Toxic Charity*, 15–16.

<sup>127</sup> Lupton, *Toxic Charity*, 29.

<sup>128</sup> Lupton, *Toxic Charity*, 10.

<sup>129</sup> Housing First Leeds, “Turning Lives Around,” n.p. [cited 11 August 2021]. Online:

<https://www.turninglivesaround.co.uk/housing-first-leeds/>.

<sup>130</sup> Glasgow City Mission, “Home,” n.p. [cited 11 August 2021]. Online: <https://www.glasgowcitymission.com/>.

a meal with others. There are staff and volunteers who work to help develop skills and offer help with benefits and applications. The important thing is that nothing is done for them, it is through their participation that things get done.

The Christian Community has the ability to aid in empowerment. Larry James describes how City Square that began in 1988 found a way to empower the poor without stripping away their dignity. In his story he explains that after giving away food to the hungry they realised that they were actually robbing dignity from these people by only giving things away without allowing them to be part of the giving. He goes on stating that the decision was made to invite those who received food to also become a part of working in the food pantry to give out food to their neighbours.<sup>131</sup>

There are important implications from these examples. In order to affirm dignity and meet individual needs justice is at work. These men and women are able to participate in changing their situations and receive the benefits of helping others instead of only being on the receiving end. They are empowered to see that they also have something to give to others and to society. By offering opportunities for the homeless to work also helps them discover their value. Being together and working together creates a community that reflects the Kingdom of God. There is also the opportunity to learn from each other as every individual is unique and has something to offer to others around. While empowerment is important for those who are able to do things for themselves, there are also times when advocacy is needed on behalf of the homeless population.

### **Advocating for Those whose Voices Remain Silent**

There have been Old Testament examples of advocacy, and New Testament examples demonstrated how Jesus also advocated on behalf of others. The implications of these

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<sup>131</sup> James, *The Wealth of the Poor*, 12.

examples show how the Christian community can advocate on behalf of the homeless. In the earlier example from Gehazi, he saw the need of the woman and spoke on her behalf. Esther used her power to change the situation of the Jews who were facing danger, and Jesus defended the man who was believed to be blind because of sin.

Through engagement with the homeless and building relationships with them will help recognise the issues facing these individuals. Randy Ridenour argues that “we often do not realize the systemic obstacles that keep our fellow human beings in poverty,” continuing that instead the poor are often blamed for poverty.<sup>132</sup> Through listening and recognising the problems that they face will enable being in the position of speaking up on their behalf. Paulo Freire asks, “who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society?”<sup>133</sup>

Conscientisation, a Freirean concept, is where people become aware of political, socioeconomic and cultural contradictions diminishing their lives. Freire argued that “this awareness, which is based on critical insight, leads to collective action.”<sup>134</sup> Advocacy for the homeless helps to make people aware of the things that are impacting their lives negatively, and working together for collective action. Freire argues that “to surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity.”<sup>135</sup>

The UK Jewish Community’s response to extreme poverty is that as long as there is poverty and suffering in the world, there is a responsibility to act. Believing that extreme poverty is man-made and can be solved through action, not as charity (tzedekah), but rather

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<sup>132</sup> Randy Ridenour, "Abandoning Jubilee: The Structural Causes of Poverty," *Review & Expositor* 116 (2019), 13.

<sup>133</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), 19.

<sup>134</sup> Margaret Ledwith, *Community Development: A Critical Approach*, Second Edition (Bristol: Policy Press, 2011), 100.

<sup>135</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 21.

seeking to increase justice (tzedek). They believe it is their responsibility to bring greater justice to the world.<sup>136</sup>

Justice for the homeless can also be seen by *A Bed Every Night* in Manchester. While meeting the immediate need of providing a bed they go further. Their website explains how they have strengthened links to health services. These services include substance misuse and mental health while also focusing on monitoring health outcomes. They offer housing support services working toward empowering these individuals toward independent living.<sup>137</sup> They recognise the complex issues and work to change these issues that keep individuals in homelessness.

Jesus provided another example of how the Christian community can advocate on behalf of the homeless. When the disciples assumed that a man was blind due to sin, Jesus corrected them. He did not allow this stereotype and spoke up for the man. The homeless population often face judgement, discrimination, and stereotypes. As seen earlier homelessness is a complex issue and there are many obstacles that these individuals face. There are many myths surrounding homelessness that can cause people to be wary of engagement. Speaking out in defence of someone being unfairly judged is what Jesus did and is the responsibility of the Christian Community. Not speaking out and allowing the stereotypes to continue is what keeps this group of people excluded in society. Another way for seeking justice is welcoming those in who have been excluded as biblical justice is inclusion into the community.

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<sup>136</sup> 'Tzedek "The UK Jewish Community's Response to Extreme Poverty," n.p. [cited 29 June 2021]. Online: <https://tzedek.org.uk/>.

<sup>137</sup> Manchester City Council, "A Bed Every Night Scheme," n.p. [cited 11 August 2021]. Online: [https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/200117/homeless\\_people/7586/what\\_were\\_doing\\_to\\_help\\_homeless\\_people/2](https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/200117/homeless_people/7586/what_were_doing_to_help_homeless_people/2).

### **Inclusion of Those in Society Who are Cast Aside and Rejected**

Jonah provided the example what exclusion looked like. He did not believe that the people of Nineveh were worthy of God's mercy. While it can be easy to criticise Jonah, can the response today prove like those who homeless or rough sleeping. Walking by pretending not to see them or believing that it is their fault for their situation they face echoes the thoughts of Jonah.

Jesus associated with those who were overlooked. He spent time eating with them, talking to them, coming to their defence, and welcoming them into his presence. When the Christian community welcomes the homeless population to dwell with them it reflects the inclusion showed by Jesus. "This world judges them to be beggars, destitute, and burdens to the state,"<sup>138</sup> when they are valued by God, and these are the very ones that Jesus considered important enough to socialise with.

As earlier stated, God declares it is not good for man to be alone, and that two are better than one. To seek justice on behalf of the poor these two things are important. God never meant for man/woman to be excluded, this is the effect of a sinful world. If two are better than one, what do you do for the one who is alone? The argument by Samuel Wells is a strong one. Engagement with the homeless population means that we welcome in these individuals, listen to what they have to say, and be willing to learn from them. Inclusion is not only for the benefit of the homeless but brings a new understanding to the Christian community. It allows for seeing things from a new perspective and recognising what action is needed to change the systems that are keeping them in their situation.

Inclusion is the principle holding everything together. Being in relationship with others recognises the image of God within them, becoming aware of immediate needs that can be met,

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<sup>138</sup> Marcella Hoesl, "The Kingdom: Preferential Option for the Poor," *Missiology: An International Review* X (1982), 63.

and offers the opportunity for empowering others and speaking up on their behalf. Justice cannot take place until inclusion takes place.

### **Conclusion: A Biblical Vision**

Through the examination of Old Testament principles for the people of Israel and how they were demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus it is clear that these principles still apply to the Christian Community today. The statistics of the UK homeless makes it evident that there is the poor living among the communities today.

The Christian Community has a responsibility to this population. Humankind was created for community and relationship, and “the Christian witness is that the reconciliation that comes through Christ can begin to redeem all that is broken.”<sup>139</sup> The Christian Community must engage with this population and build relationships with them affirming their value that bears the image of God. Just as Jesus was with people, the call is to also be with people. This calls for engaging with and walking with the homeless population.

Through examination of Scripture there is the call for generosity and charity. Through generous giving the Christian Community becomes the image bearers of God. This not only reflects love for God, but it reflects love for neighbour. It is evident from the statistics that there are those who have immediate needs and charity is needed. However, it was also shown that too much charity can lead to harm. While I argued that the Christian Community must be generous about meeting immediate needs, it must also work to empower individuals so that they do not fall into dependency.

By creating opportunities for the needy to participate in change, or to also become a part of giving as in the example of City Square or working alongside them to learn new skills

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<sup>139</sup> Mere Agency, "5 Principles for Ministering to the Homeless," n.p. [cited 11 February 2021]. Online: <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/5-principles-for-ministering-to-the-homeless/>.



will eventually lead to a change in their situation and lead to empowerment instead of dependency.

The Christian Community is called to seek justice on behalf of the poor. Justice as argued by Wells is “recognizing that every individual has inherent worth as a human being. Pursuing justice means taking up the cause of those whose rights have been ignored or suppressed.”<sup>140</sup> Justice is advocacy and making unjust structures and situations right. This can only happen through inclusion of the homeless population.

“The calling for Christians to the homeless is not an either-or of ‘material’ or ‘spiritual’ care. It is both-and.”<sup>141</sup> This can only be done through including those that are on the margins, when we “recognize God’s word in the poor who cry out for saving action on their behalf. We hear the message better when we find our place beside the poor, when we share the good news together.”<sup>142</sup>

It is through these things that the Christian Community will not only engage with the UK homeless but make this biblical vision a reality. Returning to the words of Tutu, “God relies on us to help make this world all that God has dreamed of it being.”

**Total Word Count: 14,301**

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<sup>140</sup> Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto*, 274.

<sup>141</sup> Mere Agency, "5 Principles for Ministering to the Homeless," n.p. [cited 11 February 2021]. Online: <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/5-principles-for-ministering-to-the-homeless/>.

<sup>142</sup> Hoesl, "The Kingdom: Preferential Option for the Poor," 63.

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