

# WOULD YOU STOP?

And one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?"  
- James 2:16



## GATHER

Icebreaker - A Game of Two Extremes

Gather the young people in the middle of the room and ask them where they stand on a particular issue e.g. Milkshake: Chocolate or Strawberry? Pick a side! Ask the young people to move to the side of the room to indicate their stance on the issue. There is no standing on the fence! Once they have decided, ask a couple of volunteers to argue their case and then you decide on a winner before moving onto the next question.

- Fold toilet paper or Scrunch?
- Sleep in or Get up Early?
- Big party or night in front of the TV?
- Would you rather go to the football or a concert?
- Do homework or do the washing up?
- Facebook or Twitter?
- Summer or Winter?
- Be taller or shorter?

## PROCLAIM

**Questions:**

We are passionate about so many issues and are willing to stand up for what we think is right but do we have the courage to stand up for what really matters?

What issues of social justice are we willing to fight for? Poverty, inequality, racism...

Tonight we are going to think about homelessness and how we respond to the Christian call to love.

**Watch:** UNICEF: Would you stop? **LINK:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQcN5DtMT-0>

**Reflect on the video.** What parts of the social experiment stood out to you?

How do you think you would have responded if it were you passing by?

Would you stop?

**Read:** Pope Francis on his trip to the United States -

"Here I think of a person whom I love, someone who is, and has been, very important throughout my life. He has been a support and an inspiration. He is the one I go to whenever I am "in a fix". You make me think of Saint Joseph. Your faces remind me of his. Joseph had to face some difficult situations in his life. One of them was the time when Mary was about to give birth, to have Jesus. The Bible tells us that, "while they were [in Bethlehem], the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Lk 2:6-7).

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The Bible is very clear about this: there was no room for them. I can imagine Joseph, with his wife about to have a child, with no shelter, no home, no place to stay. The Son of God came into this world as a homeless person. The Son of God knew what it was to start life without a roof over his head. We can imagine what Joseph must have been thinking. How is it that the Son of God has no home? Why are we homeless, why don't we have housing? These are questions which many of you may ask daily. Like Saint Joseph, you may ask: Why are we homeless, without a place to live? These are questions which all of us might well ask. Why do these, our brothers and sisters, have no place to live? Why are

these brothers and sisters of ours homeless? Joseph's questions are timely even today; they sound eerily familiar to those who throughout history have been, and are, homeless."

## BREAK

**Activity:** Homeless or not homeless?

**LINK:** <https://www.slideshare.net/mrhoward12/whos-homeless>

You can click on the above link for the interactive powerpoint or read the case studies out loud for young people to respond.

Ask your young people to think of all of the possible causes for homelessness. E.g. Lack of qualifications, lack of social support, debts, poor physical and mental health, relationship breakdown, getting involved in crime at an early age, family breakdown and disputes, sexual and physical abuse in childhood or adolescence, having parents with drug or alcohol problems, and previous experience of family homelessness, having been in care, the armed forces, or in prison.

**Act:** What can we do? As a group, decide what you would like to do to help combat homelessness

and to help those who find themselves without anywhere to call home.

## SEND

**Reflect:** Ask the young people to find a space, make themselves comfortable and close their eyes.

They are now going to hear the diary of a day in the life of a homeless person.

This could be any one of us. Let us take this time to enter into this experience and get a glimpse of what it is like to live without the comforts that we take for granted.

**Read:** Tonight, I'm happy.

I've found warmer shelter under a dark, slightly broken bridge. I have company too. There's three men sat in the corner and they look to be starting a warm fire. Brilliant! This seems like a hotel compared to my last three nights sleep. Well, I say sleep. My nights usually consist of wandering around trying to find a small shelter where I can lay down for a few hours. I'm very rarely that lucky. Where ever I go it seems like someone's beaten me to it or the shelter I seek is simply unbearable. Yes, I, a homeless man (not tramp, merely homeless) will judge shelter. It's rare that this happens though.

It's rained hard for the last three nights, which means the word warm didn't enter my vocabulary at any point during this period. However, tonight I seem to have hit the 'jackpot for the poor'. Lying under the bridge, with my trusty companion Jack, I have reached the peak of my luck for this month.

Jack is my very loyal King George Spaniel. My greatest possession and my greatest friend. The only living thing that ever seemed to listen and understand me. I've had Jack since I was 23 years old when he was a present for my late wife. He always seemed to stick close to me whenever we went out and I always felt as though he was my dog and not my wife's. I don't know why but at this moment in time I wouldn't be without him for the world. I say my greatest possession but there's not a lot to choose from if I'm honest. Even then he'd still be my favourite.



Back to the bridge, where the best night's sleep I've had in a long time awaits me. This seems to be a popular place amongst the homeless as there's more people turning up every five minutes. This doesn't bother me though as I have settled in my spot and I won't be moved until the morning.

The orange bricks seem to glow as I stare at them wondering how I've managed to come to such a place, a wreck to the man with a home, a home to the man without one. I was growing tired, the heat from the newly born fire a factor in this tiredness. I lay my head on my backpack filled with a rather large blanket and a hat. I wouldn't need my blanket tonight as I was as warm as a man in my situation could be and happier than I should be. It's a long time since I've been this happy and I've still got no reason to be jubilant like this.

My head is on my backpack which is working as my pillow for the night. Jack is curled up and comfy as my eyes close as I drop into a worry-less sleep, a more than deserved sleep, and wait for the morning that awaits me. I sincerely hope it never arrives.

### **Pray:**

Hear our prayer today for all women and men, boys and girls who are homeless this day.

For those sleeping under bridges, on park benches, in doorways or bus stations.

For those who can only find shelter for the night but must wander in the daytime.

For families broken because they could not afford to pay the rent.

For those who have no relatives or friends who can take them in.

For those who have no place to keep possessions that remind them who they are.

For those who are afraid and hopeless.

For those who have been betrayed by our social safety net.

For all these people, we pray that you will provide shelter, security and hope.

We pray for those of us with warm houses and comfortable beds

that we not be lulled into complacency and forgetfulness.

Jesus, help us to see your face in the eyes of every homeless person we meet

so that we may be empowered through word and deed, and through the political means

we have, to bring justice and peace to those who are homeless. Amen.

