

Engaging Homelessness

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[0 : 00] So I always start this class with a couple disclaimers. I'm going to do, I think, three or four. First, I am not the world's best speaker.

I'll give you a perfect example of that. In 2007, I was being interviewed by CNN. Pretty exciting. And they followed me around all day and our crew. And by the end of the day, cameras are off.

The reporter and I are just chit-chatting. And she's like, I'm just so moved by everything I saw today. I just need to go home and drink some red wine and take a bath. And I was like, I stopped her. And I'm like, oh, you need to go home and decompose. I meant decompress. I pretty much told the reporter she needed to go home and rot. And my piece was never aired.

So I may mess up words. We can giggle about it. I'm in my 40s. I'm secure about that fact now. Another disclaimer is that this is based all from my personal experience of almost 16 years working with the chronically homeless.

[1 : 03] I am not the end-all on homelessness. This class is to glean from. Homelessness is a complicated issue. It is multilayered. I am just one viewpoint.

So just know that. I am not the end-all authority on homelessness. To save time, I will not be proving the case for homelessness or the biblical call to serve the poor. Let's just all agree that homelessness is an issue and the Bible says that we are to serve the poor.

Agree? Yeah. And then my last disclaimer, and this is just for my D.C. crowd, I'm not going to do a whole lot of policy talk. That's not what this class is for.

I laugh that D.C. is the place where people are on their way to the poverty conference stepping over the homeless person. I'm going to teach you how to interact one-to-one with the homeless to become friends, to become a part of the community that's around you.

Okay, so everybody is okay with my disclaimers before we even begin. Excellent. This class is in four sections. I tell you my personal story, what I think the church is doing wrong, what it ought to be doing, and then practical application.

[2 : 14] So my story, as we started a little bit, I am from New Jersey. I moved to Atlanta in 1999 to work for a New York Met that became an Atlanta Brave.

Very exciting job when you're in your 20s. Yeah, it was a fun job. I still keep up with that. So in 2000, it's around this time of year, and I'm trying to make the decision, as many people have to do, am I going to go home for Thanksgiving or Christmas?

Christmas always wins. So I find myself in Atlanta in 2000 with not much to do, honestly. So I was like, well, I'll serve. I'll serve Hosea Williams Feed the Hungry at Turner Field.

And it happened to be the same year that Hosea Williams passed away, and about 10,000 other people, and that is not an exaggeration, had the same idea, and I got rejected everywhere I went to serve because they had just too many volunteers.

Atlanta Mission, who is now one of our biggest partners. Salvation Army. Obviously, Hosea Williams Feed the Hungry rejected me. So my friend and I, we decided, well, we saw men and women in, like, parking lots and business entryways not going to any of the dinners.

[3 : 28] Maybe we'll go to the gas station nearby, pick up food, and serve them. I was incredibly impacted by that day.

Now, it wasn't the food we gave. I mean, it was gas station food. It probably wasn't that good. It was the conversations I had. So what I did is I and my friend, we decided to go back the next week, the next week, the next week.

And a month later, at the beginning of January, Chris McDaniel, who was in the video, he's the pastor of Trinity England in Atlanta, he decided, let's make this a ministry. Well, like anyone who's only led something for a month, my first year, I failed miserably.

I gave out a lot of money for rent because I'm gung-ho about it. I was going to save people. I was going to get people off the streets. I wasn't completely naive.

I just, I worked a full-time job, and I couldn't go to landlords to get the rent set up. So I would hand over a large sum of money. One gentleman called me from a motel where he had a party on my dime to let me know that he was there doing that.

[4 : 41] Didn't invite me, which I think was the greater insult. I just, I wanted to help people. I just didn't want to slow down enough to be wise.

I found a mom and a baby on the streets, not connected to any shelter. And I was so emotionally moved that I put them in a car, no car seat, took them to Marietta, Georgia, or had a volunteer take them to Marietta, Georgia, which is about a half hour away, to a motel where I could afford it for one night.

But no backup plan. I got them unsafely to Marietta, outside of where all the programs are, because I was so emotionally moved, I just saw a child on the street sleeping in the elements.

Had to get them the next day, because I could only afford one day. In a car, with no car seat, which is incredibly unsafe. And if you've known Atlanta drivers, they're about equal to drivers here.

It's very unsafe. I would go downtown alone, in some of the roughest areas of town, by myself, late at night.

[5 : 50] Especially when it was cold, I was going to hand out hot chocolate. Because again, I was going to save the world. I would put my foot in my mouth, often, because I was way out of my comfort zone.

So what I call my first year of service, it's just a year of failures. The next year is what I call the year of spiritual cleansing.

I had to repent of my prejudice and attitude. And that's not something that just happened in year two. That's a daily occurrence, or I try to make it a daily occurrence.

Because me, like you, we have an innate desire to be superior. We, every day, struggle with wanting to be better than the person in front of us.

And I don't care what it is. I don't care if it's gender-related, race-related, political affiliation-related, urban-suburban. However you feel superior is something to be repenting.

[6 : 48] So this is a daily occurrence, but it really came to a head that year. I had to realize that my lack was just different, not better. I thought, well, I've got a car, a job, a home.

I obviously know everything about life, obviously. I had to realize that both parties brought something to the table. What I was starting to realize is that the person in front of me had a wealth of stories and life experience that if I would just take a step back, I would realize the value and the dignity placed within them.

So year one, total failure. Year two, a lot of repenting. Year three, no results. And I'm a part of the Instant Rice generation, as are you.

I want to know what I'm doing is going to turn out well immediately, or I'm just going to quit because obviously I shouldn't do it. So about somewhere halfway in that year, I had a come-to-Jesus talk with Jesus because, quite frankly, I was giving up my free time, my finances.

I'm in my, I was like 27 by then, 28. I'm giving up a lot. Bless me. Bless me with something because if not, I don't know why I'm doing this.

[8 : 12] So what happened, that conversation didn't go quite as I'd planned, and I decided that I was just going to choose obedience. That was going to be the only result I kept track of.

I felt called to this, and I was just going to choose to obey. And after that year, we started to see breakthrough. We started to realize that those three years of digging, of being consistent, of not seeing results, but yet still going at it, still becoming friends, still week in, week out, we built trust. I didn't know that result was needed to see, but because we kept at it, we were now a known entity of a safe place. And now, almost 16 years, we turned 16 years on November 23rd.

We have over 2,000 annual volunteers. We're in two cities. I live up here, and Ben, who was on the video, runs Atlanta. Atlanta's where we do a lot of work.

Up here, we're slowly growing. We do job prep. Some events we're starting to do. I'd really like to do more. I always end this part with a quote, and it's not a quote that you're going to find on any bumper sticker or refrigerator.

[9 : 35] It is by G.K. Chesterton. Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly. I probably should have quit.

Maybe. It would look like I should have quit. I was failing miserably. I didn't have results for three years. I was told I should quit. But because I didn't quit, because I was okay with failure. I don't like it, but I'm okay with it. Maybe that's a jersey in me. We're used to failure. Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly. I have a two-year-old son, and I'll probably bring him up a few times because I am a proud mom.

He learned to walk about two weeks before he turned two. The month before that, that kid fell down every other second.

If I put the same thoughts that I put on or that we all put on us because we're the Instant Rice generation, I would have told him he should just quit. He is not doing it successfully.

[10:41] I mean, it took a month. He was falling down every other second. He needed those falls to learn the balance, the development. He had to fail to learn to walk.

So anything worth doing is worth doing poorly. The next part of this class is seven points of what I believe are the failures of the church. My first thought is not willing to get hands dirty or complete indifference.

And most likely, if you're going to spend your Wednesday night here, you're not a part of that. But the church at large, that is still an issue. I'm going to give you a quote from a book called *When Helping Hurts*.

Have any of you read that? Are you familiar with that? Oh, yay. It was written about 10 years ago. It's then two college guys that decide to become homeless for about six months to show how the church is with the homeless.

Here's a quote they have. If we are the body of Christ and Christ came not for the healthy, but for the sick, we need to be fully present in the places where people are most broken.

[11:54] It has to be more than a financial presence. That helps, of course. But too often, money is an insulation. It conveniently keeps us from ever having to come face to face with a man or woman whose life is in tatters.

So that's the first error. The second error, willing to get hands dirty, but it might be better if you stayed home. Under that, and I don't know if it's as popular in D.C., but in Atlanta it's very popular, we have the preaching at them.

The homeless, they're preached at 24-7. And I use the word at because I want you that visual. It's not an equal. It's not a dignifying. It's kind of at.

And often they're preached to hell and damnation. Under the overpass has another great quote. Telling a person that is suffering deeply that he is going to suffer more is probably a waste of breath.

It's like warning someone who is already starving that they are about to get really hungry. But tell them of a restaurant that serves heaping meals to all who come no matter where they are from or what they look like, and he'll more likely listen.

[12:56] Another point under willing to get hands dirty, but it'd be better if you stayed home, is what I call the drop the food and run. I'm coming out from, way out from the city center.

I'm coming to where the homeless are. I want to do my good deed. I want to check it off the list. So I'm just literally going to put the food out, hand it out, and go. I'm not going to engage.

I'm not going to interact. I'm just going to get that little check on that box that I did a good deed. Another error under willing to get hands dirty, is something called tracks.

Now, you all seem like you're a bit younger. I'm in my 40s. Anybody know what tracks are? Okay, got a few. For those of you that don't know tracks, tracks are kind of an older generation thing that are like booklets, little mini booklets.

Tracks, yeah, yeah. Tracks, you know what it is? Jack Chick just died. Did you say that? No, I don't. Do you know Jack Chick? No. Chick Chick's cartoon tracks. Yes, but they're usually like you're going to hell.

[14:01] Exactly. C-T-S, that's the K. Yeah. So my friends on the street would talk to me about how annoying they are, and I'm like, yeah, they're annoying, but they're really not that bad, until I was on MARTA.

I had just come back from New Jersey. MARTA is the transit. The metro. And we're going to use transit. It's like this. If anybody has ever been to Atlanta, yeah, that's a different class.

I had a rough family thing happen in New Jersey. I was flying back. I get to the airport. My roommate, and I was living outside of Atlanta in Roswell, my roommate forgot to pick me up.

So MARTA, because it's like this, and I was living out here, I really, and this is pre-Uber, so I honestly didn't know how I was going to get, and taxis don't really in the suburbs, I mean, yeah. I was in tears on MARTA, because I honestly didn't know how I was going to get my bags from, and me, to my apartment. And I'm frustrated.

[15:09] I'm sad. I had family stuff going on, early travel. And this guy comes up to me, and he's like, what you need is, you need this. And tries to hand me a track.

I've been a Christian since I was six years old. At my baptism, I told the pastor that I needed to get baptized, because I was a wicked, wicked sinner. I was six years old. I was a church leader. I didn't need a track. I needed a ride. So many assumptions were made about me, because I was in a bad place at that moment.

But my spiritual life was not in question. I was just having a bad day. Then I got it. I got why my friends on the street felt dehumanized by tracks, and hated them.

Because so many assumptions were being made, and not even conversation. I saw a commercial for a popular track that looks like dollar bills. Don't ever, ever do that.

[16:11] But in the commercial, the guy who was selling them said, well, if you don't have time to talk to your waitress, this is what you can use. If you don't have time, you don't have time.

Don't give out something that looks like money. That just makes it even worse. Anyway, yeah.

Okay, so box down. If you don't use tracks, which most likely a young group like you don't, you may have older family members that do.

And I would love and encourage you to tell them that story of why people feel dehumanized. Okay. Last point of willing to get hands dirty, but it might be better if they stayed home, is praying without knowing their names.

A lot of times, just again, assumptions. Because of where you were at, let me just not ask you any questions, but just say, let me pray for you. The homeless feel dehumanized by that.

Okay, so we're done with that. Willing to get hands dirty. Let's go on to the next error. Judgment. If they would just get a job.

[17:18] Oh my gosh, I hear that so much. Let me tell you my experience. And this is just my experience, mainly in Atlanta. Before 2008, one of two of my friends on the street had a job of some sort.

2008 happened. The economy went what it did. In the basic things that people need, the price went up. The biggest demographic that we saw in the homeless population then was single moms. Because they had been staying off the street. They had been keeping their heads above water. Everything started to cost more. And they snowballed into homelessness. Now we're back to like 45%, you know, as the economy's recovering.

So a job isn't just the answer. Homelessness is multi-layered. It's not as simple as that. Another area of judgment.

I must know more about life and God because I have a car, home, and job. I am superior. I must save you. And ironically, churches have a reputation of lasting about six months on the streets.

[18:22] Because they give up. They didn't get the fuzzy goosebumps end. And they didn't get what they want. And so they leave. I'm going to read you a, just a quick excerpt from this book.

This is Cross-Cultural Servanthood. And on that Engaging Homelessness class sheet is a book list because I refer to a lot of books on this. So if you are doing any sort of missions, whether it be domestic or international, this is a great book to have and to read.

Right now what I'm going to read to you is just a few sentences about how we are perceived by those we're serving. I need to correct their error, meaning I have superior knowledge and a corner on truth.

My education has equipped me to know what's best for you. So let me do most of the talking while you do most of the listening and changing. I'm here to help you. So do as I say. I can be your spiritual mentor, so I am your role model.

Let me disciple you, equip you, train you, often perceived as let me make you into a clint of myself and the one that truly got me. Superiority cloaked in the desire to serve is still superiority.

[19:34] Okay. The next error. Being numbers obsessed. Pete Scazzaro has an amazing quote about the American church.

He is a New York pastor. He wrote Emotionally Healthy Church. I think it was like seven years ago. Anyway, he says that the American church is a mile wide and an inch thick. And if I can be so bold,

I would say that's an issue in the nonprofit world as well.

I, like I said, I have 2,000 or Lazarus has 2,000 volunteers. That's a big number. People like that. Some events, we feed 1,000.

That's great. We worked to get three to four people off the streets last year where there is long-term life change. That is so little of a number that it's not as, I don't know, attractive to people.

But that's long-term life change. That's growing people this way rather than trying to grow everything this way. And I think an error of the church, and maybe it's an American thing, is that we just care about the big numbers.

[20 : 45] You fed 1,000, which there is nothing wrong with. But let's care about the deep things, too, which often the investment with those takes so long and is so much that it can't have big numbers.

Another error is serving for me, not for the ones being served. Another book on your book list is Toxic Charity. It's written by Bob Lupton, who is an Atlanta gentleman.

You can see a lot of Atlanta stuff in my story and in the class. He started a ministry, a Christmas gift ministry. He was in a suburban church in North Atlanta.

It's a large church, lots of money. He was like, well, there's neighborhoods in the inner city that they may not have Christmas. Let me organize something so that the kids get Christmas gifts.

So he did that year in, year out. Felt called to move into that neighborhood where he had been bringing the Christmas gifts. What happened was he was no longer an outsider.

[21 : 46] He was a neighbor. Christmas time comes around. He's no longer leaving that thing. He's at his neighbor's house. That group comes to the house and he realizes that the father leaves the house when that happens.

Digs a little deeper and realizes that the father felt completely emasculated because here strangers are coming in giving his kids gifts he can't afford.

Light bulb goes over Bob's head. He creates a co-op where parents can come and get the gifts for whatever they can afford. So, church is still donating the gifts.

Kids are still getting the gifts. What the church isn't getting is that Merry Christmas, Holy Spirit goose bump that feel good because it's not hands-on but it's doing so much better giving the power to the parents.

We just organized a Halloween costume drive for, I am fortunate, I live in Southeast, so I have three housing, public housing apartments near us.

[22 : 53] That was the number one thing I thought of as I was organizing that is how can we give these to the parents so they can give them because having the outsiders come in doesn't give the dignity, the ability to be the hero for the parents with their own children.

And I thought about how I would feel with Jack, my son, if outsiders were just coming in to do things that I couldn't do. So, am I serving for me or am I serving for the people being served?

The next error, and don't worry, I only have two left because I know this gets, this is kind of the downer part of the class. not knowing the true stages of charity progression, and I could teach an entire class on this, so I'm going to try to be real brief and like explain it in a minute.

Let's say something happens catastrophic to D.C. It is very appropriate for Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia to come alongside and provide our basic needs.

We can't provide our, I mean, the essentials. That's relief. Let's say we can start, we're building, we're recovering from the catastrophe. We're able to handle our basic needs, but now we need infrastructure.

[24 : 16] We need some of the things for long term. That is rehabilitation. And finally, we got those, we're getting the infrastructure after the catastrophe.

The states can step back even more and just walk alongside us as needs come up, but we're pretty much managing everything. That's development.

The problem that we have is we answer everything with relief answers. We send our old T-shirts to Africa. We send peanut butter to Haiti after the earthquake, which then killed the peanut crop business in Haiti.

we don't think long term because honestly, relief answers are so much easier than thinking about the long term. Okay, I think I did that under a minute.

And I see head shaking, so I think that was explained okay. Okay, the last one, and we'll get on to happier things. The last error, and this is especially for my younger crowd, is what we call in the

non-profit world slacktivism.

[25 : 24] Has anybody heard the term slacktivism? Okay, what slacktivism is, is all you do is share on social media and think you are doing anything. I share on social media, but that's not all.

If we just ended on social media, it doesn't matter how many articles you share, it's not as effective as actually getting out from behind the computer or cell phone and doing something.

Okay, so I've depressed us with all the things we're possibly doing wrong. Let me talk to you about what we ought to be doing. The number one thing that we try to, with everything we do with Lazarus, we really keep this in the back of our mind, is we try to restore dignity.

Every interaction, we think about that. And how we do that is with these thoughts of being fully human. To be fully human is to serve and be served, to know and be known, to hear and be heard. So with everything we do, we try to have that be a possibility. Now, it's not always practical. You saw Health Day on the video. Doctors are just going to do medical things.

[26 : 35] It's not going to be a give and take. There are just some areas where service, it can't be serve and be served. But we do try to think about that in our interactions so that our friends on the street who are often denied dignity can have the dignity of being fully human.

Wow. I lost my spot. Oh, okay. No, I didn't. How that also comes out is doing things with, not for. Let me give you a perfect example of that. We're coming upon the holidays and it's going to be time for our annual Christmas dinner. I think it's our 12th. And what it is, is this an outdoor Christmas dinner where we have real plates because that is a luxury, candlelight.

We do it outdoors because honestly our chronically homeless are more comfortable outdoors often. What happens is, kind of like, let's say I invited you all over to my house, which, another hour that may happen.

If you come over, I cook you dinner, but then I sit down with you. It's not that you are, you know, you have the table and I'm putting food down and all of the value is perceived on my end.

[27 : 56] No. When you come over, I cook dinner and I sit down with you. I pour wine, I drink a glass with you or two. Do things with, not for.

So at the Christmas dinner, we sit down. We serve, yes, but then we sit down and share our advent together, share the year that we've spent together, celebrating. The next area of what we ought to be doing is giving time and space to build relationship, to encourage equipping.

Andre Nowen says, to convert hostility into hospitality requires the creation of a friendly, empty space where we can reach out to our fellow human beings and invite them into relationship.

This conversion is an inner event that cannot be manipulated but must develop from within. And just as we cannot force a plant to grow, we can take away the weeds and stones which prevent its development.

We cannot force anyone to such a personal, intimate change of heart, but we can offer the space where such a change can take place. That's our weekly ministry. Three times a week, we serve in downtown Atlanta and we just hang out.

[29 : 11] I talk sports. Love sports. Politics. I'm glad I'm not there now but I'm up here so I don't know. That's, yeah, that's a different conversation. We just are consistent.

We're there. No agenda. You want to just talk to me about your day over lemonade if it's hot, hot cocoa if it's cold? Great. We have no expectations.

We just want you here. And through that space that's created, through the trust that is built is where life change happens, not instantly. So create the space.

Another thing the church ought to be doing is giving the voiceless a voice. In 2003, three Cobb County men, Cobb County is a county that kind of is next to Atlanta but kind of outside of it, decide to make it a sport to throw rocks at sleeping homeless men.

They got one of our friends, his name was Otis, and Otis was one of those true hard luck, sorry, I said I'd mess up words, hard luck cases.

[30 : 17] He had somebody connected to his identity that had committed a crime, same name. And when you are under-resourced, legal matters can take years to sort through.

So through all of that, he lost, you know, the little bit of money he had and was homeless. Got a job once it got sorted, got off the streets, you know, he's doing well.

Hurt his back on the job. Didn't take long for him to snowball into being on the streets again. Got the call that he was in the hospital with 50 stitches in the back of his head.

He did survive. He's unconscious. I have to take his place. I have to give the voiceless a voice. Called the AJC. They did a story on it.

I don't know if the guys were ever caught, but the stories, the sport, the crimes stopped. Give the voiceless a voice. You'll notice in these that I'm not talking much about meeting physical needs.

[31 : 19] Didn't mention any, actually. And, obviously, meeting physical needs is important. if it is a relief answer, if somebody cannot manage their own.

I'll give you a story. I've got lots of stories. Larry, who was in the video. Actually, before I tell you this story, can I tell you a funny story about Larry? Would you all like a humorous story?

Yeah. Okay. Larry came to mine at my husband's wedding. I love him. We still keep in touch. He got the Bitmoji app. This is not the funny story. This is a different one.

And I get, like, daily Bitmoji things with him. Anyway, he came to our wedding, and he told Matt, who was in the video as well, he's a long-term volunteer, just how nervous he was.

You know, he feels like my father in a lot of ways. So, I was four days shy of 37 when I got married. So, I was an older bride, and I didn't have bridesmaids because I wasn't going to do that to my friends because we're all older and have been through, like, 20 weddings.

[32 : 22] And my husband was a widower, so we just decided, let's just keep it simple. He met me halfway up the aisle, and then we walked down together. Well, when he started to come up the aisle to meet me, Larry thought he was walking out on me.

Got up to tackle him. Matt stopped him, fortunately, so all went okay. There was, Joe was not injured on her, yeah, at the wedding. But I really love Larry, and he's hysterical.

So, 2009, the serious story. In 2009, he was having issues. He had brain tumors, and the way his work, I don't know, it would just kind of go, ebb and flow between the doctor's treatments, and he would feel good, and then he would feel poorly.

And he was feeling poorly. And it was fall time, it was starting to get cold, and he was sleeping outside, and I hated it because this is not just a random person. This is someone I consider dear.

And so, I would give him five or nine dollars to get rooms at shelters. Some shelters in Atlanta, you can have a private room for a very little fee. And so, I did that for a couple months because I just, I hated that he was going to be sleeping on the street, and I care about him.

[33 : 35] And so, it came to be about December, and Chris, the pastor, said, you know, why don't you go away for Christmas and just turn off your phone, which is such a wise thing to say to anybody.

But at that point, I was burnt out. Downside to this kind of employment is that every decision you make has an emotional weight to it. Even if you're putting the best boundaries up, there's an emotional weight to that decision.

And so, I was burnt out, and I took his guidance, and I went to Michigan with my best friend and her family, and told Larry I was going, and left town, and got back, phones on, and he had found a place to stay and a job he could do with his ailment.

If I would have just stepped back and gave him the dignity of problem solving, this could have probably been solved a couple months beforehand. I kept going in because I'm going to fix it.

It's all kind of about me. I cared. I mean, it wasn't completely selfish, but I didn't allow him the dignity of problem solving, so I came up with Band-Aid solutions when he came up with a long-term solution.

[34 : 47] So I tell you that story is that, yes, meet physical needs. It's important. But always ask yourself, can this person use the dignity, the intelligence that God gave them to problem solve even better than you?

Okay, so the last section is practical application. And this is honestly the part where most people fly me in to talk about because most people that I go around the country teach in this class and they live, work, or go to school in cities and just want to know how to love their homeless neighbors.

So, before I start any of this, I want to get some head shakes that you're hearing me when I say that everything I'm about to say is when you are safe.

I have some head shakes, yes? You are in a safe environment. If you are not safe, get out of there. Okay? All right, good.

I needed someone to tell me this 16 years ago. Three points for passing those on the street, on your way to work, school, whatever. I like to fight against your invisible stare.

[35 : 57] We kind of know that you're walking along, they're here, maybe you're afraid they're going to ask for money, maybe it's their visual appearance is emotionally moving, I don't know what it is, I fight it too.

But I like to fight against your invisible stare. And one reason I like to do this is because of a story that a volunteer told me after a health day.

She was at the end of health day just saying goodbye to a guest that had attended. And she was like, it was so good to see you. And he looked back at her with like the most intensity and said, it was so good to be seen.

We don't realize that being seen is a luxury for the homeless. Because they often want to be kind of put into the corner, away so we don't have to deal with them, don't have to see them.

Don't have to remember that they are still very much creatures of dignity that God created. I like to look people in the eyes.

[37 : 01] I, like I said, was raised in New Jersey where we don't talk to anybody and don't look at people we don't know. And then spent 14 years in Atlanta where we tell everything to everybody. Then they talk behind you, behind your back after you leave.

But still, you're telling the Chick-fil-A person your entire life story very quickly. So now I have no problem saying hi. It's true, isn't it? Yeah, so I like to say hi when I'm comfortable and when I'm safe.

And I also like to tell people that you are allowed to be busy. Sometimes people need to hear that because they feel guilty when they're rushing to work because they're running late because life happens.

It does. Don't feel guilty. The next day, just make a little bit more time if you can to give space to say hi. Three points on being asked money.

I like to change the focus of this question and I get this question. It is the number one thing I'm asked. Do I give money? Should I give money? I like to change the question do I know this person?

[38 : 08] If I've taken the time to get to know this person, I know the answer. If I'm not comfortable giving out money, I don't give out money. One to two dollars isn't going to make or break a situation.

So if you do want to give money, great, give a dollar. Give two. There are people that, like Larry, come to my wedding, come visit me in D.C., spend the holidays with me and there are people that I won't allow in my home because I do know them and I can't trust them around my two-year-old son. They are known, good or bad, they are known. You don't, haven't built that time yet, want to do something kind, don't feel comfortable giving money, water bottles, granola bars, Metro cards, McDonald's gift cards, Starbucks gift cards.

There are other things to give that you're prepared to show kindness, to build towards getting to know your neighbor who you pass day in, day out. So, conversation and building relationships. After you've seen Sam every day for a long time, you've started to say hi, you've started to become friendly. A lot of times I get told, oh, but this is kind of uncomfortable, I don't know where to get from A to B, how do I do that?

[39 : 24] So, I give them this question to ask after names are exchanged, all that, and this has saved me not only on the streets of Atlanta, but in stuffy dinner parties that I don't know what I'm going to have in common.

Where are you from? You can build on that question, especially in D.C. When did you move here? Oh, you're from New Jersey. Are your parents there? There's just so many different directions you can go with that question and all of a sudden somebody's telling you about the sister they are no longer talking to and haven't talked to in 20 years because people want to tell you their story. It's just about the keys to get the comfort. And when you're having that conversation, I like to tell people to have it be an equal conversation if you're comfortable because nobody likes to be peppered with 100 questions and feel interrogated.

Oh, I moved to D.C. three and a half years ago. I love it. I live in Southeast. You know, just the ebb and flow of conversation. And as I'm sharing my life, I like to come with the highs and lows of life.

[40 : 31] Just come as I am. Whatever that is. I'll give you two examples of that. In 2002, I got my first new car. It was a beautiful black Volkswagen Jetta.

And I'd had a lemon. I don't know if any of you have had that car that cost \$1,000 in the beginning and then \$14,000 later in repairs. It was awful. So it had died a bad death.

And I needed something just stable. Something that I could get to work in. So I decided going to go the Jetta route. And I was driving to the parking lot where we normally served.

And I was feeling that anxiety because I'm going in with this beautiful black car that I love. I mean, when black cars are washed, they are pretty. And my friends were going back to cardboard boxes. And I felt the weight of that gap as I went up to the parking lot. And when I got there, I was so surprised at the reaction I got. My friends were excited for me.

[41 : 34] They wanted to ask me a ton of questions about cars that I did not know. It is a four-cylinder. It was. I don't have that car anymore. All I knew is it had a great sound system and pretty blue lights on the dashboard.

They were thrilled. They loved it. And I learned something that day. And I'm not saying this is okay from a worldview, but from a relational point of view, this was okay. Where I was and where they were relationally, we're fine because we're friends.

It was just where we were. And I'm not saying that's okay from a worldview, but I am saying it was okay relationally. So the flip side, that's a high in life.

Let me tell you about a low. My cousin committed suicide in 2005. He was 27 years old and it was a shock. Part of my family lives in Colorado. I jumped in the car, drove out to Colorado to deal with, you know, funeral, all that kind of stuff.

Missed a couple Sundays and again, what's the key thing? We're consistent. I was fearing that they thought I'd let them. You know, even missing just two because churches kind of just drop.

[42 : 41] Get back to Atlanta and a dear friend's mom passed away and it was a real hard thing for her because her father had passed away just two months beforehand.

So, about to get back in the car to go Mobile, Alabama to help her with this death. I'm really worried at that point because now we're looking at three weeks to a month that I'm not going to be present. And so, I go down to the parking lot where we normally serve, same parking lot that I was just talking about with the car. And it's Sunday morning and normally about 50 to 100 people are in this parking lot. This morning for whatever reason there was one guy in the parking lot and he happened to be the meanest person I've ever met.

And I'm from New Jersey so that is truly saying very mean. So, I'm in a raw place and I'm like, do I even go up to him, you know, pull up to him and roll down my window and tell him what's going on? I mean, normally I was met with expletives or expletives, expletives, whatever, whenever I talked to him. And I sucked it up, I pulled up to him, I rolled down my window and I, you know, snot to my toes trying to spit out what had happened, you know, because I was raw in grief.

[43 : 59] And I blubbered it out, I rolled away, went to Mobile, Alabama, came back, my first week back and he came up to me and he was like, I was praying for you.

I'm like, okay, who are you? Realized, and we were never close friends, he was never buddy-buddy with me, he never started, like, you know, laughing and joking all the time.

But I did realize that there was a small breakthrough with him because I didn't come to him that day with any capacity to save him. I could barely muster up life.

I was in the throes of grief, I was raw, I was at a bottom and I was so relatable there. In life, in your communities, including your homeless brothers and sisters, come as you are, the highs and lows. After a time of consistent interaction and conversation, I like to follow up by finding out what talents, what assets people bring to the table. We've gotten to know Tony on Barracks Row.

[45 : 04] I live near Potomac Abbey Metro, so we walk to Barracks Row all the time. And Tony is a gentleman that's experiencing homelessness. And he's also an amazing caricaturist.

So, I try to hire him when I, like, I threw a fall festival on Sunday. It was Sunday. The word's a week's of blur. I think it was one day this weekend. Now, granted, he doesn't have a phone always, so the communication got, he wasn't able to work that day.

But I'm trying because he has talent. He has an asset to bring to the community. And I want to call that out. I don't believe in this ridiculous Christian, American, bad theology of fake humility.

Chris McDaniel, the pastor in Atlanta who I refer to a lot, he's a dear friend, he says that humility is an honest assessment. And if we walk that out, if we say what we're good at and what we're bad at, then other people feel that confidence, that comfort to say what they're good at.

I am really good at throwing large events. I am terrible with grammar and spreadsheets. That's just an honest assessment. I have some good qualities. I am made in the image of God and I am a creature of dignity.

[46 : 21] I am comfortable in saying that so thus, we could then have the conversation of what you're good at. If you are only saying I am bad at stuff, you are not giving the people around you the comfort zone to also have them say they're good at stuff.

Almost done. Beware of the savior complex. You cannot save anyone. You can bring hope and light to spark change. You can be the hands of Jesus, but you are not God.

Beware of time expectation. It takes months, if not years, for breakthroughs and life change. With the mentally ill, I just try to make them as comfortable as possible.

That is way above my pay grade and probably above most of yours. And the only thing I'm going to say about policy is that we have a mental illness resource crisis in America.

I'm going to give you a very personal story of that. I was two weeks shy of 40 when I had my son. Around month three, when he was three months old, I started to unravel.

[47 : 31] A lot of chemical changes happen with pregnancy. I was an older mom, so that may have taken place. I was diagnosed while I was unraveling and went to get psychiatric help.

I have insurance. It was a month wait. A month. I was not sleeping or eating. A month, and I am a resource person. I had to go out of pocket to get the help I needed.

I am a resource person. In Atlanta, it was a three-month wait. Sorry, three-week wait for an emergency mental health call.

Emergency is you are harmed to yourself or another. Three weeks. I don't have the answers for policy. I don't know the funding. I do know we have a crisis.

Be smart and use wisdom. Use your gut when it comes to safety and hustling. Sorry, that was a bad segue. I'm back to the list. Do not be led by guilt.

[48 : 37] Guilt is a terrible, terrible decision maker. If I'm alone, if I feel unsafe, fortunately, I am not the world's savior and God has a lot more in the world other than me.

So I just pray that somebody else more equipped can come and help. Protect your car and home base. Again, ask, do I know this person and their story?

Know your limits. Self-care is not selfish and you need to be a good steward of you and you have limits. You have limits in time, financial limits, energy, ability.

My husband and I have very different limits when it comes to social energy. I guess I'm an extrovert. Maybe I am. I can be with a lot of people for a long time.

He has a lower limit. Even we have different limits. Know your limits. Know the difference between nice and kind.

[49 : 44] The Middle English root word for nice is foolish and stupid. Nice is boundaryless, a pushover. Kind is more genuine and has boundaries.

And I'll even be so bold to say Jesus wasn't nice. He wasn't. We make him this American nice and I know I sound like I'm anti-American. I'm not. I'm just saying we have some issues in our perceptions of Jesus.

He had lines of need and was like, now I'm going to go over here and rest. My husband's favorite verse in the Bible is where the Pharisees say something stupid and Jesus sighs.

My husband relates to that. And I can imagine it just, he overturned tables. I have never in my life overturned a table in anger.

I have broken a glass. I've never overturned a table. This Jesus we serve was not nice. Kind, yes. Not nice. Always ask, can this person help themselves?

[50 : 53] How can I walk alongside? And I'll end with this. Attended a staff meeting at Trinity and Chris McDaniel, the pastor, had a whole meeting based on these three sentences from a Jesuit priest.

And we're all over 18 here. Anybody offend if I use the real language? Bring it. All right. These three things are great thoughts to have in the back of your mind. You are not Jesus.

This is not heaven. Don't be an ass. You are not Jesus. You cannot save everyone. Find what you can do and do it well. This is not heaven.

We're not living with the ideal. We're going to have puppies that die, crime, all the things that go on in life that is just awful. We're going to have it. It's a part of life. It's not heaven. Between the tension of those two, don't be an ass.

So that's it. True Jersey fashion, I end with the word ass. Thank you guys for having me. Can we do questions?

[51 : 57] Yeah. Answers? Yeah. Can I do the first question? Can you tell your Super Bowl party story? Which Super Bowl party is that? Oh, well, tell us about how you started doing a Super Bowl party.

Oh, okay. Well, we do throw a Super Bowl party and it is fun. Pretty much there is no serving involved. We do a chili cook-off and it just kind of happened to me because I love sports and I was like, well, where are my friends spending Super Bowl Sunday?

It's kind of like a holiday. Got a projector and a screen and this is outside in February now, well, January then. That's a long time ago. February now. Have chili cook-offs.

That's how we get food. And you want to talk about just bringing people together over smack talk where it is equalizing. I mean, there's no service. You eat chili and you make fun of the Broncos or whoever's playing or the halftime show.

Really funny, the year that Janet Jackson thing happened, the reception wasn't good. So I had no idea any of that had happened until I got home the next day because we just couldn't see very clearly during halftime.

[53 : 05] Is that kind of just the general? Did I tell you a funny story that I'm just not remembering? No. Okay, good. I want to do that here. It's a little colder up here so I don't know how that, I want to start doing bigger events up here because they're fun.

Our health day is a lot of fun. We have dance-offs at everything we do because that's fun. I think fun is a need. I mean, it is a part of what we need to live to feel truly alive.

So I look at fun as something that is a desperate need. Even for busy up-and-comers DC people, fun is a need. Great.

Okay. Thanks. Yeah, so, so, I was curious how you connected with other organizations here such as the pathways to housing and other organizations.

I do. I attended the breakfast this morning. Were you there? Yeah, I was there too. Did you see a woman running around after a two-year-old? I was stuck in the corner. Okay, that was me.

[54 : 12] My two-year-old was amazing. I mean, he's two. Very quiet, but he has to wiggle at some point. He's two. And I'm taking him to these breakfasts and dinners and, yeah, all that kind of stuff.

I am the main caretaker for my son, so it's a juggling. Yeah. To answer your question, because that wasn't the answer. Up here, we actually were up here before I moved up here.

We had a leader who was, he was leading in Atlanta with the job prep section. He wanted to do that up here, so we made contact with Central Union Mission, and so we've been doing job prep there for four and a half years, and then slowly getting to know people like Pathways to Housing.

I know Adam there through teaching this class somewhere else. So, yeah, we're slowly getting our, I don't know, our connections here.

In Atlanta, because we've been there so long, the relationships with programs are very deep, but here we're slowly starting. Any other questions?

[55 : 16] Yes. What's your regular rhythm here? What are you? Right now, we do job prep on the first Saturday of every month in multiple places, and I teach interviewing whenever I can.

There's no regular rhythm, and I teach any kind of job prep at Central Union Mission when I can with my son, and then I also teach this a lot, but for serving, right now, it's the first Saturday of every month.

I would like to do more. Catholic Charities reached out. They want to do an art project to make their shelters more homey. That's something I'm looking into.

We decided to stay here a year ago, and in that year is when we started to really dig because I didn't want to get really plugged in in the uprooted because long-term consistency, I can't say that, consistency is important.

So right now, that's it, but I can always let everybody know what service opportunities are there. And one's actually close.

[56 : 23] We won't be serving this month, but December at a food pantry not far from here on Columbia Ave. Well, it's now the Table Church is building.

On the corner, their food pantry, we've been doing, and we really need Spanish speakers if you know of anybody. And that's fairly close. Are most of you Northwesters? I figured.

I mean, it makes sense. Okay. Yes. Do you have churches that do their own thing or do they coordinate with Lazarus or do they kind of say, we'll pick this model and do something similar on our own?

Both. Yeah. And all is well. I mean, more people serving is great. I just try to make sure they're serving well and treating our friends with dignity.

But yeah, some people do their own thing. Some people are part of Lazarus. I mean, we're only mainly in these two cities, so anything outside of those two cities is definitely doing your own thing. Yes.

[57 : 26] So you spoke briefly about getting Chris McAnless' involvement with the pastor of Trinity. Mm-hmm. Was it selling him on the idea that brought the backing of Trinity?

Like, how did you get Trinity? He just saw what we were doing and was like, well, that's cool. Let's do it. But was that the like seminal turning point of getting all of Trinity behind you?

I mean, yeah, it was so little then. I mean, this is back when it was VSN. he actually went to Trinity. I don't know who knows your story.

So we may have interacted because I went to that small group a few times. Anyway, it was a small thing then and just grew kind of with Trinity.

I mean, it was, Lazarus has been around longer than Trinity in a lot of ways. So we were already an established thing when it became its own church and then grew along with Trinity. So it was just a natural relationship.

[58 : 26] Does that answer? I've got more questions. Oh, you've got more questions. Okay. Was it important to have Trinity kind of as a backer? Yes. Or, so yeah.

Yes. That brought, yeah, it just created, they offered office space, spiritual guidance. I mean, so much volunteer funding, everything, a lot to get us bigger and moving past being a church ministry to a 501c3.

I mean, we became a 501c3 in 2008, so we've been serving eight years already and we got our 501c3 status in three weeks, which is near miracle.

Have anybody tried that process, getting near the 501c3? It's a difficult, difficult process. Three weeks, though, because we had a rider.

Yeah. They just, yeah, their partnership in this was vital for our success. more you can say about like an ebb and flow was a point where it felt like there was a bit of, lack of a better term, exhaustion, like maybe the church didn't feel like it was producing the fruit that it wanted to see and you didn't feel the same kind of support or was, was there an ebb and flow?

[59 : 54] Like what did, and then if there was, how did you manage it? I don't think there was an ebb and flow. I think we've been like-minded for 16 years now. I mean, we still have office space there and feel tremendous support from Trinity.

No, they're a good church. Chris McDaniel, I have huge respect for so much. He's the godfather of my son. It's not, I'm not Catholic.

I'm New Jersey. So, that's okay. No horse's head or anything like that. Sorry. You have a granddad. I just wanted to pay you back off this question.

Is that something, I mean, are you looking for like church partnerships up here or not? Yeah, I mean, we have a really strong partnership that just is natural because I go to the table church.

So, the table church is a huge support to me in whatever capacity we're trying to do now. My life looks different now as a mom, so I'm not building as much as I did in Atlanta but that doesn't mean we can't.

[61 : 01] But, yeah, the church is very important for these type of things. Very important. Did that answer? Yeah, I was just curious. Yeah. I just didn't know how much like, I guess it sounds like you're still hashing out your vision.

Here, yeah. Or what here looks like. I mean, right now we pretty much do job prep. That doesn't mean we won't do more and honestly, weekly ministry is the real heart of what we do.

I just haven't gotten into a good rhythm there yet. Yeah, I mean, it's like a little different because of the weather, right? Yeah, though I've never been, I don't mind weather.

Yeah, I know, but like Atlanta, Atlanta is different. Yeah, I mean, it's hotlanta. Our last Super Bowl party was 70 degrees. Yeah. We had King of Pops. If we don't know what King of Pops are, find out.

Live at Rockland's Park. What's that? Can we kill the truck? What happened? I'm just kidding.

Yeah, I mean, weather can be a deterrent and also I'll probably start in Southeast if I do because I'm really trying to build in the neighborhood I'm in.

[62 : 11] The sunnier it is, the less likely you are to have people come. It's here. The sunnier. Yeah. Yeah, because I don't have people who would be elsewhere. Okay, wait, I had up here and then I'll get, yes.

So I'm not a sports fan so that's kind of not something that I can connect with people on. I thought it was helpful that you suggested asking people where they're from. Do you have any other questions that you, just like icebreaker and getting to know any questions that you kind of keep top of mind? I don't know, I build on that quite a bit. And I, my fallback is usually what sports team, if I find out where you're from, oh, you're from Chicago, good week for the Cubs, sorry about last night, you know, just that kind of stuff.

I mean, if you know of the different, like I'm thinking like if I know my best friend's from Michigan, if I was meeting her, oh, Terry's in the spring or summer, awesome, I don't know, whatever culturally is from that area, you could build on that.

And that's just my natural inclination is to go to sports because it's something I enjoy. But there's so many things to, what do you, what did you do growing up for fun?

[63 : 25] I don't know. I mean, there's so many different things you can do. I still like to base it on that question. I seriously have used that at dinner parties because I was sitting there like, oh, I wonder, are they going to ever talk?

Yeah. So I had back there. My question was, you, in the beginning, so like, in terms of engaging, right, like, at the end of that conversation, or like, you've got to go, or, for you, how, in the beginning, I mean, do you feel like it's, do you, do you have, should you have like a list of places people can go?

Yes, and we are working on that for DC. I'm sad I didn't have them by the class, but I can get that. Little cards that you keep in your wallet that have like, the just bullet points.

And you should always have the hypo, hyper, thermia line in your phone. I can get it to you because, and especially as the cold happens, DC has amazing, like, they'll go and pick up people. Just having that line in your phone is good. And there's just general things on that card that's helpful. And I'll make sure I get you guys some, I should be getting them soon. So like, you were talking a lot about like, well, you know, it's all about your relationship.

[64 : 46] I mean, if you're the first I'm talking to somebody and engaging getting them, is it okay to be like, can I, to end with a question of like, what can I do for you?

my personal tendency is I don't go there unless they go there because I want them to take ownership.

it's knowing where I end and they begin kind of and the homeless are, again, it goes into assumptions.

Why? I just, I wait until they ask mainly because everybody has an agenda with my homeless friends and so if I don't know them well enough and I have asked people after a time, like there was Gregory who was one of the most intelligent, sweet, soft-spoken guys that I've ever met and just one day I said to him, why are you out here?

I just don't understand. I mean, he was so eloquent and just brilliant and it just took that question mark of like, why are you here?

[65 : 55] I mean, I didn't do anything. I said I'd get him some information. By the time I got it for him, he was already in, like, he had taken the steps to get off of the streets. I think he just needed someone to remind him how amazing he is.

So, I mean, sometimes I've done that but it's very rare. Normally I'll let them when they're wanting the help. I don't know if this falls under it but a counselor once said to a friend of mine and I took this very much to heart, unsolicited advice is a form of control.

And even like, can I help you? I sometimes in my mind and I'm not saying I'm right, view it as advice. Like, you obviously need some help. So, I kind of let them come to me when they want help. I don't know if that's right. It may not be. Yeah. And then, sorry, I'm just sort of isolated. You know, I think, I'm just thinking practically like, one day, like, you know, the guy I see every day who is like, hustling for the rest, like, yeah, he's only eating and there's meat and I just don't know what to say other than, I'm sorry, I can't today.

Like, I just, I'm trying to think of what else I can do or say or to start that relationship. If there, if the first question to me is if I'm like, hi, and the response to me is here, right?

[67 : 25] Like, where do I go from there? I would say be patient. Lawrence is a guy, he's a gentleman up here. Before we moved to near Potomac Ave, we lived in Navy Yard and Lawrence, we got to know, he's homeless and was always asking us for food for money and we would, like, my husband would be like, well, I'm going home for lunch, can I bring you back something?

And slowly, we built a relationship and honestly, he was completely weirded out that we wanted to talk to him. People don't want to talk to him. It threw him off but we kept at it though.

If we didn't have the time or the capacity for food, then we didn't do it. So you, you guys made the time. We're going to go back. We're going to talk to him. Yeah. Yeah.

We're going to sit with him. Just like you. Yeah. And it's not, I'm not talking long-term commitment. Like, it was like five minutes. I'm walking to see Joe because he was stationed at Navy Yard, my husband, and we lived in the neighborhood so I'd walk and have lunch and just chit-chat, weather, day, whatever.

He, really funny, he decided that my husband Joe was not Joe, he's Mike. I'm Mrs. Mike. Jack is Mike Jr. and our dog Duke is John Wayne.

[68 : 43] And to this day, he refuses. He also decided I'm from L.A. Yeah. Anyway, but it took a long time for him to feel comfortable because he just was completely weirded out that I wanted to talk to him and that Joe wanted to talk to him.

So I would just say be patient, do whatever, and again, I'm not the end-all on homelessness, so do what works for you. If I was in that scenario, I would work with whatever time capacity I have.

If he is asking for food, granola bars, breakfast bars, and honestly, if I had the time, and I have done this with Lawrence, I'll sit and eat with him if I brought something, like bring an extra one and just sit with him.

I'm like, oh, I'm hungry too. Can I sit with you? Yeah, but be consistent. Keep at it. Yeah. Yes? It's kind of like a safety question.

Do you feel safe talking to people alone? Because I know at the beginning of the story, you talked about being with a friend. Mm-hmm. So most of the time when I pass people, I'm on my own because I live downtown and I pass the same people.

[69 : 57] And sometimes you do stop and say hello, but I also, I've been attacked by a random person. So like, how do you? I trust my gut. If I don't feel safe, I don't do it.

I do feel safer, especially if other people are around. I mean, if it's just me and a person, like in a park, it's dark, I'm not going to do it.

If it's Easter Market on a Saturday, yeah, I'll totally talk to you. I'll totally sit there. When I was talking about the Lawrence on Navy Yard, it was M Street, very busy.

So are you mostly engaging with people on your own? Right now? Yeah, or with Joe, yeah.

Because it, what I'm talking about is your day-to-day. So it's not, four of us are going to, it's not our weekly ministry.

I'm talking about, I'm going to work and Tom is there every day. And so a lot of times we don't have the luxury of having a buddy. Do you just kind of, I mean, do you kind of have like two or three that you're like at any one time or do you have sort of a sense for like, just pick one and then have that be kind of the relationship that you're building?

[71 : 11] I mean, I literally probably passed 20. Yeah, that's true. I mean, it might be reception in that case. Right now, the guys at the park, I'm slowly getting to know them, but it's just, hey guys, you know, we just wave to them because we're the new neighbors.

I'm the strange middle-aged woman that is real friendly. And I'm just building on that because again, I've got long-term views so everything doesn't have to be today.

Yeah. You had a question. Yeah. I appreciate your comments on talking about like practice of speaking when you're approached with the first question maybe ask for a couple of dollars. And I'm curious and also with the reference to when helping her like her critique, we hear a lot is that by giving a couple of dollars here or there or anything like that can be seen as perpetuating or sustaining a detrimental cycle underneath or some underlying harmful cycle.

How do you make that? Well, I mean, like I said, one or two dollars, I really don't think it's your comfort level. I don't think that's going to make or break a whole situation.

I mean, yes, compounded by maybe 50 people give one or two dollars. But you're not responsible for the 50 other people. And again, it goes back to knowing if I know the situation, then I might be willing to give versus I just give out money.

[72 : 39] I'm trying to think when I... What do you carry with you? You said granola bars? Yeah, I rarely have cash. So what do you carry with you personally? Granola bars, usually water because I'm usually walking with my stroller so having a bunch of water in the bottom is not an issue.

Right now in my car, I have hats and gloves because it's about to get cold and even last night it was cold enough for hats and gloves. I have water, I have granola bars, umbrellas, and McDonald's gift cards.

So that's personally what I have in my car right here across the street. So I try to be prepared that way. Like I think ahead and have those things with me. I'm also a mom so having snacks on the hand is always.

I mean, yeah. Though, I mean, I don't know how much the people on the side of the road really like little fruit snacks.

Yes? I had a quick question about like, is there, because I know there's a, there's some people in this church that have helped one specific person out of mind for a very long period of time like a year or more and like done over and above like many, many things helping out like gone to court for them and all this kind of stuff.

[73 : 54] You know, there's just like, you know, there's been anger, violence, cussing, you know, all that. Is there like a point where you're just kind of like, you let that person go?

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it all depends on your limits and what the whole situation is. Can they do this themselves and they just don't want to? It may be by me intervening, I'm actually denying them the time.

I mean, it's a, each case is very different in each scenario. But yeah, absolutely. There is a time when you have to just say no. I've even done that with Larry who is a dear, dear, dear friend.

I've just been like, Larry, no, I've helped you out way too much and you need to figure this out and I'm out. Please send me a bitmoji.

You know, I mean, we're still friends because I view it as how would I do it with my friends? I mean, if my best friend Aaron needs me to survive, then it's not a friendship, it's a caretaking relationship.

[74 : 59] I want a friendship. Now, granted, there have been times, ups and downs in life where my best friend needed me to do things that she couldn't do, but that's not the whole basis of the friendship.

I don't know, is that helpful? And again, it's completely situation. Person, the person is different. Caretaking, like, the people that can, their limits are different. I mean, it's just, every situation is so fluid that I can't have an exact answer.

Yeah. Question. You said, you spoke very briefly about mental illness. Yeah. Very briefly because it's way above my pay grade. Right, but I feel like many of the homeless people I have spoken with, like, mental, like, there's this, it's the elephant in the room, right?

Yeah. This person is clearly, like, on a different planet from me, and I don't know how to, like, just having a conversation, period, is difficult, or it's a very strange conversation.

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, and so I don't know. I just listen. I mean, sometimes it's just nice to be heard, and I try to interject where I can. I mean, I have to realize that my skill set can't fix this.

[76 : 18] I can't, but I can listen. when someone is mentally ill, do you spend more effort on sort of relief, like, median physical needs?

Yeah, because they can't, that would be, depending on what level, like, okay, I said, I, did I even say what I had, that I got diagnosed with OCD, postpartum OCD, anxiety, and depression?

The OCD still stayed. So, I mean, I have a mental illness, but I'm self-functioning. I mean, it depends on the level, but I think that is definitely, they can't manage life themselves, then yes, relief answers, absolutely.

Because they can't do it. I mean, they, yeah, I mean, it's very appropriate then. But other than that, I really do try to listen, even if it makes no sense whatsoever, because sometimes they're so easily brushed off because they don't make sense, that just sitting there and giving them the dignity of my time, and looking them in the eye.

Yeah. Can we do one more question? Does anybody have any more questions? Great, yes, yeah. Why D.C.? You, like, talked a little bit about why Atlanta.

[77 : 33] Okay, my husband was in the Navy, and I met him in Atlanta, actually attending one of these classes. He attended. I taught. And I was so, I only kind of knew him, and he's an intel officer, and I was so nervous, because he's intelligent.

Or so, I don't know. He is. He's very smart. We moved for his job, and it was just the right time. I'm still very much involved in Atlanta, but it was very good to have Ben come in with a different mind than mine, because you can get so closed in with one person's perception and perspectives, where he still, we work together, but he brings in other thoughts.

So it was just the right time. Sometimes people, organizations, get kind of stuck with their founder's personality, especially after a long time. So it was a good time to bring other people in, and for me to branch out to a different city.

So, yeah. And we love it here. We decided to stay. Yeah. Long term, bought a house, wearing it.

Yeah. Okay. Last question. Thank you guys for having me.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.