

NEIGHBORS IN NEED

September 9, 2023

When you pass a street survivor holding up a sign asking for help, how does your family respond? Maybe you or your children are asking, “Where do they live?” or “Where do they sleep?” or “Can we do something for them?” We want to foster our children’s desire to help others and their interest in social issues and channel these into action with honest conversations about the issues of poverty and homelessness. God clearly commands us to **do good right now, rather than later** (Proverbs 3:27-30). How can we help our neighbor and model God’s love and mercy for our children?



Here are some practical steps we can take to increase our empathy and show compassion to neighbors in need.

Pivot Perceptions. Check your perceptions about those asking you for help. Teach your children that every person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), so every person deserves the love of God. Make eye contact and smile. Listen to their story, and offer to pray with them. Continue to pray for them as a family afterward. Talk to your kids about the possible reasons why a person of any age may be in need, such as job loss, chronic health problems, no affordable housing options, personal trauma, and addiction.

Elevate Empathy. Change your family’s vocabulary. Say “a person who is homeless,” rather than “a homeless person.” Another option is “street survivor.” Many people who need help are working as hard as they can to improve their lives. Also, show your children how your community helps by showing them where the food banks and housing shelters are located.

Serve Strangers. Love is an action word, and God tells us to love “in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18). Be ready to serve strangers with love by planning ahead of time how you will help a stranger if they ask for help.

- Make “Blessing Bags” that you can hand out. These bags can have a Bible verse or encouraging note, non-perishable (non-melting) snacks, water, wet wipes, socks, or other personal hygiene items.
- Keep a list of resources like local shelters and food pantries handy so you can point neighbors to places that are better equipped to meet their needs.
- Make time together as a family to gather donations and/or serve at church ministries or local charities.

Remind your children that God blesses us so we can be a blessing to others. Every day, we witness people in need. Together as a family, pray and ask God how he wants you to show love through your readiness and willingness to meet the needs of your neighbors.

Want to do a deep dive? Check out Family Fire's article [Missional Living: Serving Your Community](#).

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<https://kidscorner.net/parent-blog/neighbors-in-need>
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