

The
Matthew 25:40
Project

Love God. Love Your Neighbor.

Do They Deserve a Reward?

By Mike Bencheck CEO Matthew 25:40 Project

We want to see people who are able to pay their own way get help. The Bible tells a story of a paralyzed man whose friends dig a hole in the roof of a house and lower him down to be healed by Jesus. This man could not pay his own way. He couldn't work or pull himself up by his own bootstraps. His friends found him worthy enough to go to some extreme measures so that he might be healed. Jesus certainly found him worthy. He healed the man. How can we look at some who God has created and say that they are worth less than others?

What about people who cannot work? The mentally ill often can't keep a job even if they find one. Their illness causes them to act irrationally sometimes or the medication that they take to control the illness leaves them unable to fully function. Does this mean that they are somehow less important than others? Does this mean that because they have a mental illness they don't deserve a place to live?

How about addicts? Addiction is a recognized illness. Do addicts not deserve to have a place to live because of the illness they have? Before we go too far in this discussion I need to clear up a few things. Addiction is not a choice. It is not a character flaw. It is an illness. I talk to addicts almost every day. I am an addict. I've been sober myself this time since 7/11/2005. None of us have chosen to be an addict. Yes in the midst of my addiction I choose to drink but so did all my friends and colleagues. We all drank together. The difference is that I am an addict and they aren't. They can stop when they want to and I can't. They do not need to go looking for a better drunk to ease the pain. As an active addict I needed that drink like other people needed oxygen.

I was able to get sober in 2005. I had God to rely on, a job, a place to live, and a wonderful woman in my life that supported me. Not all addicts have these things. A homeless addict might see no options in their life. They can't overcome their illness and because of their illness they can't work a job. They are destined to live the rest of their lives homeless. They will bounce in and out of jail, the hospital, and maybe a shelter now and then forever. Maybe they try going to treatment. When they get out of treatment, they need a place to live and beds in sober living environments are very limited and often don't come free. They end up living outside again and surprise they start to use again.

There is a better way that we can deal with the problem of homelessness than chasing them around or out of town. Let's join together as people of faith and help the least of these.