

HOMELESS

in Springfield-

PART II

CAN THE HOMELESS CHANGE?



Years ago, an old high school friend asked, “Can homeless people really change? The answer to that question is *yes*. In our twenty-seven years of working at Inner City Mission, we have witnessed a whole spectrum of changes taking place in the lives of our residents—from dramatic transformations to more subtle changes over time.

Yet another reality runs parallel to this one: Some people never change. They either cannot or will not. That saddens us, but it doesn’t stop us from loving them and offering an environment that encourages healing in their relationships with God, themselves, and others.

Alongside that, we seek God’s wisdom to understand the core issue of each person’s homelessness as we help them uncover their unique place in life. None of this happens overnight. We offer support and guidance while they discover how to live it out. As a result, we’ve watched thousands of broken hearts begin to mend and trust again.

One such person is Mandie, who came to Inner City Mission out of domestic violence. She explains her homelessness like this:

I needed help. I couldn’t stop making terrible choices that were destroying my life. Down deep, I knew I needed God. While at the ER, someone called the mission and a place was prepared for me. I was nervous to go, but I said to God, ‘You take the reins, and I will go along for the ride.’ I have to say, that was the best decision I ever made in my life.

“At the mission, I slowly began to come out of my shell. I started talking with others about my emotions. Once I began to express what was so deeply hidden in my heart, I no longer felt so alone in my world of neglect and worthlessness. Thank you for caring about me. - Mandie



Another woman, Brielle, came to the mission after living on the streets for six months. She sent this letter to our staff:

I am writing to thank you and let you know how much the mission has helped me. When I first arrived, I was basically agnostic and had been for years. I had an abusive stepfather in my life which convinced me there must not be a God even though I had been a Christian.

We used to go to church with him, but afterward we’d go home and suffer abuse. In the years that followed, attending church would bring extreme stress in my life. I hated it. But that changed after moving into the mission. I started attending church even though I felt unworthy to step in the doors. I knew what a sinner I was, and figured they wouldn’t have me. But I was wrong. The church welcomed me, and I felt 100% better after the service.

In one of the Bible studies at the mission, someone said God allows things in our life to make us stronger. I thought about that and realized it was true. I am stronger because of everything I have been through.

At the mission, we have prayer and thank God for every day. I now have an attitude of gratitude for what I have instead of being worried about what I don’t have. Thanks to the mission and its supporters, I have been able to rediscover God and regain the faith I had when I was younger. - Brielle



In the three years prior to Kayla coming to Inner City Mission, her husband, son, mother, uncle, and two aunts had all passed away. Devastated, and trying to survive as a single mom with two teenage sons, she suddenly faced the stark reality of homelessness. Kayla would write this note to us:

I was so afraid when I called the mission for help. After talking with two other shelters

and being turned down, I didn’t know what to do. They couldn’t take boys after a certain age, and my sons were too old at sixteen and thirteen.

When I found out the mission had room for us, I started crying. I was so thankful. When we got here, we felt very welcome. Right away, I noticed your religious foundation and realized it was more than a shelter. I knew the Lord had answered my prayers by guiding our steps here.

We stayed at the mission for approximately two months. That gave me enough time to find employment and save money for a rental house. I admit it was hard to leave the mission. The staff and volunteers provided more than food and shelter. They addressed other needs like emotional support, friendship, love, spiritual guidance, and the list goes on and on.

You mission angels are definitely God-sent to many people. I want everyone who reads this to know how much I appreciate you. I did not have to think hard about what to write here. It all comes from my heart. You have my love and respect. - Kayla



Maybe you have wondered, “Can homeless people really change?” Well, the answer is *yes*. Is the process easy? *No*.

Until next time,

SCOTT & CONNIE PAYNE



INNER CITY MISSION
helping the homeless find lasting stability

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