

No One Can Ever Take You Away



Sometimes, statistics are helpful... like the ones collected in our Bakersfield, California, ministry after their Easter Bag Outreach. They supplied 16 church partners with 900 Easter Bags to distribute and saw 99 people come to faith in Christ. Those numbers are significant!

But, while statistics help us measure the scope of our work, it's really important to remember that the numbers represent real people. People like Steven. Steven attended a S.A.Y. Yes!® Center at Calvary Bible church. It was there that he received his Easter Bag.

The center director took time to explain to the boys and girls how they could know God by discovering four keys to God's heart. The tract "4 Keys 4 Kids" was included in every Easter Bag used in the outreach, giving each child an

Continued inside...





Each year, the gift of an Easter Bag helps kids like Steven (far right) become adopted into God's family.

Continued from front

No One Can Ever Take You Away

opportunity to discover these key truths:

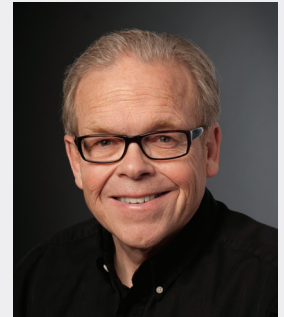
- 1** **1st Key**
God loves you!
- 2** **2nd Key**
Sin keeps us from God!
- 3** **3rd Key**
Only Jesus can fix our sin problem!
- 4** **4th Key**
You must say "Yes!" to Jesus!

Steven, who'd just heard "4 Keys 4 Kids," had been wiggling and squirming around, dropping items on the floor as the mentor finished explaining the gospel. Taking him aside from the group, another leader had a chance to talk to Steven personally. When asked if he understood what it meant to be adopted into God's family, he replied, "To be adopted means that no one can ever take you away." This was a reality for him, as Steven was in the process of being adopted by his grandmother. When asked if he wanted a relationship with Jesus now and forever, Steven's reply was, "Yes!"

Thank you for making it possible for kids like Steven to know they are God's children! Through your prayers and financial contributions, you are helping us take the Good News to the inner cities of America. Please pray for the seeds planted in the hearts of the boys and girls and their families, that they would take root and grow to maturity.

A Personal Word

Because of our work in the inner city, I'm often asked what the Bible really says about God's heart for the poor. What does He want believers' attitudes and actions to be toward the less fortunate?



John Sather
Co-National Director

Isaiah 58:1-12 has some really helpful answers to those questions! My pastor, John Piper, recently shared this with me. The passage explains the difference between real faith and one that is artificial. A real faith is one that cares for others. These verses explain that there are five basic human needs. God is passionately concerned about each, and they reflect the vision and values of Cru® Inner City.

First is the need for freedom from bondage and oppression. Verse six says, "Loose the bonds of wickedness, undo the straps of the yoke, let the oppressed go free, break every yoke."

Verse seven, addressing the second and third basic needs for food and shelter, illustrates authentic faith, asking, "Is it not to share your bread with the hungry? Is it not to bring the homeless poor into your house?" The end of verse seven commands us to clothe the needy, "When you see the naked, to cover him!" Verse nine covers the last basic need: for respect. "Take away the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness," in other words, don't accuse unjustly, belittle, or exploit others.

The rest of the passage explains that blessing that comes when we give ourselves away to others in the cause of justice and mercy. When we live this way, when we are kind to the needy, we honor God! I'm grateful to be in partnership with you in ways that provide for basic needs and honor the Lord.

John H. Sather
Co-National Director

Warming the Heart



Paul Bushey, the pastor of Second Chance Ministries, a partner ministry of Cru Inner City in the Twin Cities, had given Brenda two Homeless Care Kits to use to bless others. She'd given one away, but hadn't had the opportunity to give out the second one.

One day, as Brenda was driving, she saw a man holding a sign telling of desperate circumstances. She remembered the Homeless Care Kit, and realized it would be just the thing to offer this gentleman! As she approached him, she saw that the crowded corner offered no place to park. "God, please," she prayed, "let him be there when I return, and open up a spot for me to park!"

God answered her prayer—she pulled the Homeless Care Kit from her car and walked toward the man. Brenda introduced herself and they began to talk. She showed him the kit and explained what it contained: a blanket, gloves, a hat, some toiletries and snacks. She told how her church cares for people in need and began to tell him about the gospel.

"God please," she prayed, "let him be there when I return."

Not only was he receptive to hearing the good news about Christ, he listened intently, and the Holy Spirit's work was evident in him. At the end of their conversation, he told her, "I know you're here to bless me, but you're going to be blessed." He proceeded to speak words of life, hope, and love over her. Brenda left, weeping to the Lord as she

headed back to her car. Her heart was brimming with thankfulness for God's stirring in this man's heart, and for their conversation which revealed his tenderness toward the Lord.

Homeless Care Kits are one of the most effective outreach tools we offer our partner ministries. Just as cold water is especially refreshing on a hot day, a large wool blanket can meet a basic need on a freezing day. This winter, many more people experiencing homelessness will receive a Homeless Care Kit during the cold months of winter. They will also have an opportunity to hear the gospel, the best part of the kits! Your generosity makes it possible to touch more lives with the love of Christ. We are deeply grateful for your partnership.



The Hidden Face of Homelessness

There are 549,928 people living on the streets, in cars, in shelters, or in transitional housing on any given night in America.¹ Who are these people?

People experiencing homelessness often contradict stereotypes, as do the causes: a lost job, low wages, a large medical expense, family conflict,

and mental health issues are among a variety of reasons. It's estimated that 45% of the homeless have been employed within the last 30 days.²

What isn't unexpected is God's clear call throughout the scriptures to engage and care for those who have no place to rest their head.



194,716 of the homeless belong to families with children.¹



35,686 of the homeless are youth unaccompanied by an adult.¹



99,135 of the homeless are women, many of whom are single mothers.¹



39,471 of the homeless are veterans.¹

¹ According to HUD's 2016 AHAR Report

² According to a 2002 national study by the Urban Institute

Writing a Different Story



Every summer, Debbie volunteers at Vacation Bible School (VBS) at Shiloh Baptist Church in

Jacksonville. During the week, she met Anthony. As she got to know him, she learned he and his family had recently moved into their aunt's home because they'd fallen on hard times.

Later that year, when Shiloh was preparing to distribute Boxes of Love®, Debbie remembered Anthony, and decided to bring a Box of Love to his family. Debbie knocked on the door of the house where Anthony and his family were staying. Monique, Anthony's aunt, opened the door, recognized Debbie from VBS, and invited her in. Debbie noticed there were five other family members sitting in the living room, including Anthony. She explained that she remembered Anthony from VBS and had appreciated his leadership there.

Debbie shared why she'd come—to give them a Box of Love. She told how her church wanted people to know about God's goodness, love and grace. The Box of Love was a way they could show people God's love!

As Debbie and Monique visited, she learned Anthony was being disciplined for something he'd done wrong. His punishment was to write a story. Debbie told Anthony and his family they'd been on her heart ever since VBS. She asked if they would like to hear more about God's love for them. Monique assured her they were interested, and Debbie began to talk about the love of Jesus. While Debbie spoke about Jesus, Anthony stopped writing, and began to ask questions.

After answering Anthony's questions and sharing the gospel, Debbie asked, "Would you like to invite Jesus into your life?" The whole family declared their desire to know Christ! Debbie led them to express their new faith in prayer. Anthony even prayed out

I've got a story for you.



Anthony with Debbie, whose gift of a Box of Love inspired Anthony to invite Jesus into his life.

loud! As soon as he said "Amen," he resumed his writing.

Before Debbie left, Anthony said, "I've got a story for you." He presented her his story. Debbie noticed a big difference between what he wrote prior to trusting Christ and after. Anthony wrote, "I want to be a boy who serves the Lord. I want to be a child who do [sic] the things the Lord tells me to do."

The next day Debbie returned with a drawing pad and notebook for Anthony. Only his mother, who was a believer, was home. She had been concerned for her son and told Debbie how excited she was to hear Anthony say, "Mom, I have invited Jesus into my life!"

A Whole New Life



She was homeless, HIV-positive, and drug-addicted.

She was also shattered by grief: The state of Illinois had taken her children away.

During Chicago's cold, deadly winter, Monica took shelter in abandoned buildings when she could—but she couldn't escape the bitter cold.

But when Monica heard that Galilee Baptist Church was handing out Homeless Care Kits, she showed up to get a blanket.

She got way more.

The people welcomed her, prayed for her, encouraged her to give her life to God.

Monica showed up for church that Sunday—and the next. Soon she opened her heart to Christ. She moved in with her children at her mother's home, en route to a whole new life.

She took shelter in abandoned buildings when she could—but she couldn't escape the bitter cold.

It began with a simple Homeless Care Kit, provided through the generosity of a friend like you.

By the power of God's grace and love, a simple Homeless Care Kit opened the door to a mother in need, caring Christian friends took her hands, and Jesus came into her heart!

Every winter, we equip our partner ministries in the inner city with Homeless Care Kits, so they can reach out to those in need—and lift up Jesus.

Our kits include blankets, gloves, scarves, caps, socks, hygiene basics—and a clear presentation from the Gospel of John on how to receive Christ as Savior.

By God's grace, every single year, we see people like Monica connect with God's love.

So we warmly invite you to help us offer the warmth of God's love this winter—through Homeless Care Kits. Thank you!



Cru Inner City
2112 Broadway Street NE, Suite 100
Minneapolis, MN 55413

CRU.ORG/INNERCITY
innercity@cru.org



Cru is a charter member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

Occasionally the names of people featured in this report are changed to protect their privacy.

Cru®, Cru® Inner City, Here's Life Inner City®, S.A.Y. Yes! Centers®, S.A.Y. Yes!®, Boxes of Love®, Summer in the City®, are all copyrighted products and programs of the Inner City ministry of Cru®. PowerPacks™, and Compassionate Products™ are trademarked products of the Inner City ministry of Cru®. Cru Inner City began as Here's Life Inner City®.

