

## Top 10 DO and DO NOT for the Needy.

I do not presume to be an authority on this issue. But these top 10 things to do and do not do for the Needy are based on real life lessons. I have learned the hard way with some of these and hope to spare some of the heart ache and physical problems that have happened during my years of ministry. In addition, I have experienced blessings following these as well! I want you to help those who need and desire to be helped. Do it with the Love of Jesus the Christ in mind. Do it with Respect and Dignity but do it from a places of Safety and Protection.

1. **Do treat them with Respect and Dignity.** Remember that the people you are talking *with* were created by God and known to him before they were born (Jer. 1:5 and Ps 139:13). Do not presume or assume **ANY**thing about them or their situation. Remember Jesus on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13-35) – these men met up with Jesus and shared with Him. They did not know who He was but yet, treated Him with respect. You do not know who you are ministering to – it could be angels (Heb. 13:2). Treat them as Jesus treated others, i.e. Read and Pray over the Samaritan Woman at the Well (John 4:1-30), Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) scriptures. Do not talk down to them; talk *WITH* them.
2. **Do get to know the poor and homeless.** Spend time with them. Ask them their name, ask them about themselves and their stories. Who does not like to talk about themselves? BUT respect them if they do not want to tell their story, give them their space. People become needy for various reasons, among those reasons are physical and mental traumas. They might not be ready to share. But if they **share**. Listen, be quiet and let them talk. Allow them the space to share in their time. But above all – **REMEMBER**. Nothing is more insulting than to give of yourself and have it all been forgotten.
3. **Do share and tell them about yourself.** See if you have common ground to share. Make eye contact if they allow it. Shake their hand, touch them, and offer them a hug. Let them set the boundaries though. Do not impose yourself on them. Tell them your story and how God has helped you in your time of need. Be open and friendly. And don't forget to **PRAY with** them.
4. **Do check on city ordinances.** Does your city allow you to distribute food on the street? Are you creating a traffic issue at the street corner? Are you joining the needy in trespassing? We wish to minister from a position of Rightness. I am checking on Newport News ordinances now.
5. **Do not be ashamed to ask them what they need.** Don't assume; ASK THEM! Offering the needy things they do not need could be insulting and degrading without knowing of their need. Here is some deodorant can be interpreted as "man, you smell". Also, if they have plenty of something, say socks, giving them more when they have no space to keep them is senseless. Consider how will you feel if they refuse what you offer. So always Ask! Give them the courtesy of being in control of their needs/wants instead of you dictating to them their needs/wants. Read Matthew 25:31-46. Notice there was a need before it was filled. What do they need?
6. **Do keep in mind the limitations of the people whom you serve.** How much space do they have to store clothes, food, etc? Do they have utensils, and personal hygiene items? Do they have teeth that can handle hard foods, i.e. apples, nuts, etc? Food items for the homeless should be small items that can be held in the hand. Don't assume that the person has anything needed to

eat what you are giving; can opener, plates, utensils, somewhere to heat it or keep it cold. Keep in mind food safety Hot food needs to be kept HOT and Cold food needs to be kept COLD.

7. **Do buy Socks and Underwear.** They should be NEW. Remember to first find out if there is a need. Bag them in Ziploc bags to keep them dry. Do not spend money for high quality as they are often thrown away when dirty. Most laundry mats now have their own debit card for their machines. Consider a card with \$5.00 on it for the person to do laundry. No More, but offer to refill it when it is empty.
8. **Do distribute Single size/Hotel sized items.** Dry or liquid soap, sanitizer, lotion, disposable razors, toothpaste, non-alcohol mouthwash, toothbrush with cover, etc. in a Ziploc or clear carryall as you would use at the airport. But only what they ASK for, otherwise if they do not want it – it will be thrown away. If you are going to do this for a large group of people, consider ordering from hotel supply companies. Large bottles weigh too much and take up too much space. See above #5 and #6. Why give someone shampoo if there is no place for them to wash their hair? Ask.
9. **Do wash used Blankets/Clothes/etc.** Make sure they are clean and make sure to wash them without detergent once clean. Please keep in mind that homeless have allergies just like the rest of us. Fragrances, soap, softeners can cause allergic reactions. So make sure to rinse them well. If you can, place them in reusable plastic bags as well to keep dry and for storage. Ziploc makes large bags available in stores. Do not give out items that are your leftovers! Make sure there are no holes, ripped seams or edges. Remember #1.
10. **Do give Bottled Water to everyone.** Everyone can use water and dehydration is a common problem among the homeless. Disposable bottles are nice – but reusable bottles can also be a blessing. Water is a good ice breaker and conversation starter at all times of the year.

### **10 Things Not To Do for the Poor and Homeless**

The first five of the Do Not's might seem harsh, contradictory or even against what you might feel. But these are for your safety. How often did Jesus minister alone – his disciples were often not far from him. Jesus had people that wanted to harm him; but he was able to walk through their midst without them seeing him (John 8:59). You need to protect yourself so that you can minister in the future. Also, the people you minister to understand your limitations, and will respect you for your boundaries.

1. **Do not go alone, EVER!** Groups of two or three are best. Remember we do not know their story and why they are on the street. Homeless sex offenders are becoming very common. In addition, men never minister to women without a woman present. This is for your safety and theirs.
2. **Do not tell them your address** or take them to your home. Keep in mind the things in your car or on your person that could lead people to your home. Protect yourself and your family by keeping the safety of your home at all time. If you feel the need to offer shower or place to rest, consider the homeless shelters, or a hotel room. Keep in mind that you will be responsible for damages. And if you are worried about that – then how can you let them in your home.
3. **Do not go out after dark.** Mid-morning to midafternoon work best. It is simply safer that way.

4. **Do not, ever give them money.** If they tell you they need it to buy a specific item, buy the item for them. Even gift cards can be sold for cash to be used for other purposes than you intended. If you want to give a gift card – no more than \$5.
5. **Do not bring it; if you do not want to lose it.** Don't take wallet, purse, etc. Keep in mind where you are. If there is one person in need, there most likely will be others. And while the person you are meeting with might not be an issue, others around them might be. Keep anything expensive in the car
6. **Do not give NEW clothing, except for personal items.** New items might make the recipient a target for theft and items can be returned for cash. Also, if they do not have access to a laundry; once things are dirty and smelly they often get thrown away.
7. **Do not give anonymously.** Don't just leave things at a street corner or a place in the woods where you believe that there are people in need. Don't assume that your stuff will be taken – most likely it will be thrown away. Take your things to a drop off center – many ministries will make sure that your things get to the people who need them. Ministering does not take place anonymously – how does a person develop a relationship without a person to be in relationship with.
8. **Do not give away your trash.** It might be true that one man's trash is another man's treasure. But you need to let them determine if your trash is a treasure. Take items from your house/attic/closet/garage cleaning to the thrift store IF it is usable. If it is trash – throw it away.
9. **Do not give away Bulk Items/Packages.** Loaves of bread, boxes of sanitizer, whole cakes/pies, boxes of anything, will end up in the trash. Keep in mind the space a person has for their items, #6.
10. **Do not assume that a person is in need.** #1. Some people have chosen the lifestyle for being homeless. There is a lot to be said for living off the grid without bills, etc. It might be a way of life that you would not choose but it could be their choice. Do not assume that they must have a mental issue to want to live homeless. Also, those you think might be needy may not be, they just might have everything they need. Ask.

These are not meant to be exhaustive lists but are rather starting points to a homeless ministry and also conversation points for the holiday conversations with your family/friends/co-workers. This time of the year many people become concerned for the homeless and poor. But this is a year round issue that will never be solved. (Mark 14:7).

Keep in mind the last part of that verse (Mark 14:7) – “you will not always have me”. We are lucky in that we have Christ with us and in us. These people we minister to might not know Jesus. We know that life on earth is a war and will end. We know that Jesus is truly the ETERNAL Answer.

I chose to try and emulate the famous phrase of St. Francis, “Preach often; talk when necessary”. Let the love of Jesus live through me by doing 1 – 10, and let them SEE the love of Christ. Why talk about the Love of God when they can experience the Love that God has for them through you!