

# **What are the issues with sharing the gospel with those that are homeless?**

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

I am currently working for Derby City Mission who are an inner city Christian charity who exist to 'make disciples of every people group in partnership with Churches and other agencies by demonstrating God's love and bringing hope' (Derby City Mission:2019). My work is focused around the Night shelter project, which provides 35 beds for rough sleepers for four months each year. I have become increasingly aware of the regular direct contact that my small, inner city Church has with the homeless in our city and that has provoked me to settle on my dissertation question, 'what are the issues with sharing the Gospel with those that are homeless?' The need for the Church to discuss issues of poverty and injustice in society are perhaps no more apparent than today when considering the government statistics for homelessness specifically. In a document released by Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, rough sleeping numbers in autumn 2018 had risen by 165% since the autumn 2010 total (White, Maguire:2019).

### **Who are 'the homeless?'**

Seeking out a government definition of homelessness, Shelter, the charity write, 'Broadly speaking, the law defines someone as being homeless if they do not have a legal right to occupy accommodation, or if their accommodation is unsuitable to live in' (Shelter England:2019). When working within the homeless community there is some ambiguity to defining those who are homeless according to this definition as the chaotic lifestyles often mean that circumstances are continually changing, on a daily basis even sometimes. Kuhrt believes there are 'three faces of poverty', the homeless experience:

- Material poverty: 'Unemployment, low incomes, lack of affordable housing. Most homeless people come from disadvantaged backgrounds.'

- Poverty of relationships: 'Largest single reason in 2007 for people rough sleeping was relationship breakdown.'
- Poverty of identity: 'Afflicted by a poor self-identity in how they see themselves.' (Kuhrt, Ward 2013:7)

Considering all this, my definition of homeless will include those who I encounter sleeping rough on the street, those who are in and out of government funded hostels, those who are in and out of government shared housing and the majority of those who attend the different food bank projects that run around the city. Although I have been quick to categorise and define this group of people as homeless, a more accurate way of grouping these people is their experience of immense poverty and thus marginalised by society. 'Crisis' the national charity for homeless people have compiled some quite astounding current statistics that draw attention to just how big the problem of homelessness currently is. They estimate that there are more than 9000 people rough sleeping on any given night. On top of this there are almost 42,000 living in emergency accommodation like hostels or Night Shelters (Crisis:2019). The seriousness of the problem for my context is only highlighted further in the statistics compiled from the last 5 years of the Night Shelter project seen in appendix 8. As you can see, in the Night Shelter this year we hosted 346 different guests over the course of four months. These statistics provide good evidence of the extent of the problem of homelessness.

The Bible has much to say about the poor and marginalised and particularly our relationship to them as followers' of Jesus (see footnote<sup>1</sup>). This cannot be separated from the command in Matthew 28: 'to make disciples of all nations'. The parable of the sheep and goats provides particularly potent instruction when Jesus talks specifically about our service to those who are homeless, poor and/or marginalised. The homeless most certainly fall in to the category of 'the poor and marginalised' and so I firmly believe as Christians we are presented with a very real and current issue in our attempt to be obedient to the great

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<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 31:8-9, Luke 14:14, Deuteronomy 15:10-11, Matthew 25:31-46

commission. Considering all of this information, I believe, gives me good rationale to ask the question 'What are the issues with sharing the gospel with those who are homeless?'

## **Dissertation Overview**

I would like to provide briefly, an overview of the content of my dissertation. In the literature review, I consider a range of opinions around 'the gospel' and attempt to summarise those thoughts concisely, providing a working definition for the purpose of my research. The methodology seeks to explain the rationale behind choosing a mixed methods research technique, incorporating interviews, observations and questionnaires to provide the most valid and reliable data. I present the data in separate, clearly marked sections before using the findings in triangulation, referencing back frequently to my literature review to reflect and explore issues that arise. I also consider the implications of my findings before concluding by summarising the research findings. In this section I will discuss the drawbacks of my research, well aware of the expanse of this topic and how my research is only scratching the surface of this topic. I make suggestions not only for further research but also consider some ideas of how to move forward in response to some of the issues that arose in my study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **What is 'the Gospel'?**

To direct my research it is important then that I consider various different opinions and information that will help me to define what I mean by 'sharing the gospel' with those that are homeless. My Church context has streamlined my research to consider what the Baptist union have said about what it means to 'share the gospel'. The Baptist Union have formed a 'three-part declaration of principle', which they believe is 'rooted in Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) with its threefold pattern of authority, baptism and mission' (Baptists Together: 2019). The principle of mission reads 'it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the

evangelisation of the world' (Baptists Together: 2019). On Evangelism, Glen Marshall, writing for The Baptist Union, goes on to explain this is demonstrated by: 'the way we are', 'the stuff we do', and 'the things we say' (Marshall 2016). He summarises, sharing the gospel is 'all about helping people to find out about and understand the good news of Jesus in the hope that they too will want to follow him' (Marshall 2016).

The importance of understanding 'the gospel' is underpinned strongly by Scot McKnight. He says, 'I think we've got the gospel wrong, or at least our current understanding is only a pale reflection of the gospel of Jesus and the apostles'. He explains how Calvinist thinking amongst evangelicals has 'defined the gospel in the short formula "justification by faith"' (McKnight 2011:24,25). McGrath, when considering why the first four books of the New Testament are named 'the gospels', explores the original meaning of the word 'gospel'. He explains that the 'Greek word which is translated as "gospel" is evangelion, which comes from two Greek roots meaning "good" and "news"'. He goes on to explain how this term refers to 'something having happened with positive implications for its hearers' (McGrath 2006:6,7). What then, is this 'good news'? Tom Wright suggests where it is found:

*Everything pivots around the complex event that had happened: the Messiah died, was buried, was raised, was seen. Take that away and Christianity collapses. Put it in its proper place and the whole world is different. That is the news (Wright 2015:24).*

The good news is centred round the person of Jesus Christ. Wright goes on to say, "The good news is about the living God overcoming all the powers of the world to establish his rule of justice and peace, on earth as in heaven' (Wright 2015:43). Edwards points out that the gospel is good news because it refutes our responsibility in earning a 'right relationship with God'. He explains, it is not 'a moral command or obligation to work harder and do more, but a proclamation of what God in grace has already done for the world in Jesus Christ. It is good news!' (Edwards 2015:137). In these writer's depiction of the 'good news' I haven't

found any mention of it being simply about going to 'heaven' or 'hell' which McKnight suggests is common among American Christians and I see many similarities in Christians around me in the UK too (McKnight 2011:27). This is important to consider as I think about *what* I'm sharing, *how* I'm sharing and what I'm aiming to *achieve* in my sharing. For my context, it is perhaps most important to consider what this means in regards to *who* I'm sharing it with.

McKnight points out that as part of understanding the gospel, we must understand it in the context of the larger story, The Bible as a whole (McKnight 2011:36). In relation to my context, this is perhaps most potent as we look at the passage of Luke 4:16 that marks the start of the ministry of Jesus. Luke 4:18-19 reads:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

The passage holds significance because it reveals clues to the way in which we approach sharing the gospel with the poor and Jesus' demonstration of particular attention to the poor. Bock points out that in this passage, in the context of invitation, 'the poor' is a reference to those who are open to God. He goes on to reflect that although the invitation is general to everyone, it is often the poor who humbly sense their need, citing that material deprivation increases spiritual sensitivity, thus openly and honestly responding to Jesus' message of hope (Bock 1994:408). Considering Isaiah 61:1-6 when seeking richer meaning of Jesus' 'good news' we discover how 'proclaiming liberty' and 'the year of the Lord's favour' are seen as references to "the year of jubilee" in Leviticus 25 (Brueggemann 1998:214, Watts 1987:303). As described in Moses law, the year of jubilee, was an occasion in every fiftieth year when release was proclaimed in the form of cancelled debts, slaves freed and return of property to those who had lost it due to poverty (Webb 1996:234). Brueggemann considers that whilst in the context of emerging Judaism, the point may be towards community

restoration, something Webb encourages us to engage with for the richer meaning that may have for us today (Brueggemann 1998:214, Webb 1996:235).

Here we find, woven through scripture, both 'demonstration' and 'proclamation' of 'good news'. Tim Chester in his book, *Good News to the Poor*, considers proclamation and demonstration as 'evangelism' and 'social action'. He argues that both are 'distinct activities' social action seeking to effect 'change in history' whilst evangelism is effecting 'eschatological change' (Chester 2004:64). He gives strong instruction over the need to share the gospel through evangelism arguing 'to engage in social action without evangelism is to fail the people we profess to love'. On the idea of evangelism amongst the poor Chester says, 'Missions takes place in and through relationships and relationships are multi-faceted. Proclamation should be central, but a centre implies a context and our proclamation should take place in the context of a life of love (Chester 2004:55-66). As a way of summarising these different thoughts, I believe Tom Wright helps to summarise. Exploring the topic of salvation, Wright quickly dismisses the thought that the resurrection of Jesus should be reduced down to us hoping to end up one day in heaven, but for now we will struggle through life. Wright speaks of how within Christian mission, the idea of 'present hope' is key, summarising 'The whole point of what Jesus was up to was that he was doing, close up, in the present, what he was promising long-term, in the future' (Wright 2011:204). Mentioning the homeless specifically, Wright goes on to explain how hope for a better future is not something simply 'tacked on to the gospel as an afterthought'. The Gospel I believe is about proclaiming the 'good news' which is centred around the life of Jesus Christ, which is part of the bigger story. I believe as Tom Wright says this is about offering 'present hope' as well as 'hope for an eternal future (salvation)' and is found in being in right relationship with God.

### **The Gospel for the homeless**

If all of the above gives good theological rationale for 'why' we, as Christians, are to share the Gospel with the homeless, we must consider now 'how' we do it and the issues involved. David Sheppard's book, *'Bias to the Poor'*, seeks to, through much exploration, present a case that God has a bias to the poor and we, as the

Church, have a responsibility to reflect it (Sheppard 1983:16). Although the book was written in 1983 and speaks much about specific issues relating to geographical context, the weight of his arguments still hold much significance for the Church today. Considering his motivations, Sheppard speaks of the lack of awareness of different life experiences in the same city and how the Church is supposed to be 'a bridge on which different experiences of life can be given a hearing'. Sheppard talks about how we can excuse ourselves in our service to the poor but our call is to reflect the character of God to the world around us and that includes standing up to things He dislikes such as 'greed' and 'oppression' (Sheppard 1983:17, 18). Considering how the Church can bear good news to the poor, Sheppard sets out four principles:

- 1) Stays present in the neediest areas and continues to believe and worship
- 2) Recognises, develops and supports local ability within the Church and outside it
- 3) Serves people where they are
- 4) Tries to understand, and obey the word of God for both rich and poor

(Sheppard 1983:201).

How those who are disadvantaged see the Church matters urgently, Sheppard points out, because 'their experience of the Church often makes them say that this Christ of the Churches is not for them.' (Sheppard 1983:17,18). This is a potent point to consider that cannot be ignored. These principles are apparent in a journal article on tackling poverty, written by Al Barrett, vicar of a church in Birmingham, as he theologically reflects on 'Asset-Based Community Development'. This methodology encourages us to 'identify and mobilise the gifts and capacities of local people' as a way of seeking change. Although not directly Christian, Barrett explores how it can be a great tool for local churches 'as they join in the mission of God in their local contexts – engaging and supporting their communities in tackling poverty and injustice' (Barrett 2013:1). Along with Sheppard, Barrett affirms the focus on us all being 'made in the image of God',

and how that encourages people to understand their significance and potential (Barrett 2013 1,2) (Sheppard 1983:12).

A direct example of a church reaching out to the homeless is Highway of Holiness Church in north London. In an article in *Idea* (the magazine of the Evangelical Alliance) pastor Rev Alex Gyasi tells Naomi Ossinowo how his church in north London has effectively become a full time hostel for the homeless, 'allowing 40-50 homeless men to sleep in the belly of the church every night' (Ossinowo 2019:21). Considering the Churches response to the problem of homelessness, Kuhrt offers a challenge to consider. He explores how the increase of operating night shelters can actually end up 'empowering residents to live in a more destructive way' (Kuhrt, Ward 2013:9). His argument is built on experience of working in a particular London night shelter and whilst he is aware of how 'profoundly damaged' the guests are, 'requiring a high degree of support and help', he realised the shelter was actually encouraging many of the residents to 'develop their skills in begging, selling sex and shoplifting'. By providing food and shelter free of charge it ended up being 'an incentive to remain in the downward spiral of addiction and helplessness' (Kuhrt, Ward 2013:8,9). Gyasi's church night shelter seems to tell a different story however explaining how they have helped over 900 people, meeting their essential needs through 'a place to sleep, eat and wash; counselling, and connecting them with relevant agencies and public services where possible'. He goes on to explain it's not only physical needs they're meeting. He shares, 'people have come to know Jesus, because they've seen the love of God, and have gone on to be baptised in water and the Holy Spirit' (Ossinowo 2019:21). It appears they are very simply attempting to be obedient in sharing the Gospel both in 'demonstration' and 'proclamation'. This is similar to the experience I have had working in the Derby City Mission churches Night shelter, however I do agree that the challenge offered by Kuhrt is one to be considered alongside because there is always room for improved practice.

Neil Thompson, on the topic of anti-discriminatory practice, explains how a group is stigmatized if 'they are automatically seen in negative terms because of



who they are or some aspect of their circumstances' (Thompson 2018:186). Considering that, it is quite easy to see how the dynamics of interaction between Church goers and the homeless may already hold underlying presumptions. Nash and Whitehead consider Stephen Karpman's theory of the 'Drama Triangle', reflecting on the role of 'rescuer'. They explain the danger with the rescuer assuming role of "'helper" who intervenes on behalf of the underdog, but also has egoistic reason to gain something from being the do-gooder' (Nash, Whitehead 2015:19). This is something affirmed in 'When Helping Hurts' as Corbett/Fikkert reflect on what motivates our work with the poor. They write a personal confession, 'I confess to you that part of what motivates me to help the poor is my felt need to accomplish something worthwhile with my life, to be a person of significance, to feel like I have pursued a noble cause... to be a bit like God' (Corbett, Fikkert 2009:61,62). A Church example that is seeking to counter a 'them' and 'us' mentality is 'Bread Church'. In her book 'I am somewhere else', Barbara Glasson explains how this church is 'working out what it means to be Christian community around the making, shaping and sharing of bread'. She names the group in weekly attendance as 'odd bods like myself', and explains how the bread is 'shaping us; it is showing us how it is possible to be together as a gathering of completely random people on hugely different trajectories in life' (Glasson 2006:11,12). Glasson draws comparisons between the ingredients of making bread and how we ourselves come 'as separate ingredients to community life', and explains how the shared experience of making bread around a table together often evokes conversation with ease. She explains how through the act of making bread, it celebrates solidarity and equality. She says, 'standing side by side is a physical manifestation of solidarity with each other. There is reciprocity in it. In its simple way making bread inspires an understanding of the radical equality of everyone' (Glasson 2006:15). This expression of Church although not directed specifically at those who are homeless, is actively seeking to host an opportunity to meet with Jesus for 'everyone', through the making of bread. The focus seems to be more on enjoying making bread together, sharing life, rather than considering the type of people in attendance.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

Before deciding which method of research to use, I had to consider who I wanted to collect data from, and which way of researching would provide me with the data I desired to collect. As Boynton points out, it isn't so much a question of what research method is better, more which method is 'better suited to your research question' (Boynton 2005:26). Having considered the different approaches to research, I decided to use the 'mixed methods' research for my dissertation as I had a strong desire to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. I felt mixed methods research would allow me to gather the important personal responses to my question as well as gaining a general perspective from people in church, in the way they engage with the homeless. Johnson et al., explains that combining these elements of data gives 'breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration' (Johnson 2007:123). When thinking about how to gather qualitative data, understanding that this gives greater focus to 'how things felt and what people thought', I decided that a series of interviews and observations would be the best research method (Ingram, Harris 2001:51-53). Aware that I wanted my interviews to be focused around answering my research question, I was also concerned that I wanted the interviewee to have freedom to express thoughts and emotions that weren't always a direct answer to questions. For this reason I prepared a semi-structured interview template that kept a strong theme throughout questioning but also gave lots of room for conversation to progress naturally. As Bryman notes, a semi-structured interview 'has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply' (Bryman 2004:321). A more structured interview would have reduced the opportunity for follow up questions that I wanted to make room for in conversation as I was keen to allow room for a greater depth of thought and opinion on the topic of homelessness. This was particularly important, as all three of my chosen interviewees are people who have, at one point been homeless. Two of these men have also experienced Church as homeless people and now themselves, work for a Church. This immediately gives good validity to the research as I interviewed professionals within a Church context with informed consent. I recorded the interviews with a microphone and have the

data stored on a password protected device. This can be accessed for complete transparency on my findings (O'Reilly, Parker 2014:25).

I discovered in my pilot study the need to gather more qualitative data. As suggested by Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, observations are often used in combination with other qualitative methods to 'provide complementary data to understand issues from different perspectives'. They summarise, 'observation is a research method that enables researchers to systematically observe and record people's behaviour, actions and interactions' (Hennink, Hutter, Bailey 2011:170). I decided to engage in three separate methods of observation to collect data for my research. The first, I conducted 'participant observation' in a setting that I have been involved with both as an organiser and volunteer for a number of years. The 'Recovery project' is a weekly homeless drop in/food bank run from a church, that runs for two hours on Wednesday lunchtimes. Due to my long-term involvement and my belonging to the fabric of the community, albeit as a volunteer, meant I could participate relatively invisibly, a term referred to by many as 'going native' (Hennink, Hutter, Bailey 2011:178). My sole purpose in observing people in this context was their response to an 'incident'. Within the last year, the organisers of this project decided to include a 'God slot' for 10 minutes in the middle of the programme. This is simply a given person each week standing to share a testimony or a message that God has put on their heart. Bryman proposes we can observe behaviour in response to an 'incident', which in my context is this short evangelistic message in a relaxed church context (Bryman 2001:170). My other two methods of observation were different in the sense that I went to observe in contexts I had never been in to before. Both of these observations were also 'participant observations' but the level on which I participated differed. In *Qualitative Research Methods*, the authors refer to Spradley (1980) who suggests four different levels of participation. My second observation was conducted at a Christian rehab centre and I was conducting 'moderate participation'. Again, I was observing responses to an 'incident', which was a man preaching. My participation was moderate because I was engaged as a member of the congregation in the service but I was also obviously an outsider (Hennink, Hutter, Bailey 2011:178). My final observation was conducted as an

'active participant'. I visited a Church in Liverpool where the service revolved around making bread. I was actively participating because I was engaging in the activities (making bread) and the time of reflection and prayer. As Spradley is cited, I was trying to learn 'the cultural rules and values' (Hennink, Hutter, Bailey 2011:178).

The way I chose to collect the quantitative data that I required was by designing a 'self-completion' questionnaire. As participants were going to be filling it out without assistant, I chose to use a mix of open and closed questions, with fewer open questions for ease of answer (Bryman 2001:133). As I was hoping to gather general attitudes and feelings towards sharing faith and specifically with the homeless I decided to include a technique within the questionnaire known as 'The Likert scale'. As Bryman summarises, the Likert scale is an 'item measure of a set of attitudes relating to a particular area' and is used to gauge intensity of feelings in response to a particular question (Bryman 2001:68). I chose to use a 'representative sample' when choosing who to give my questionnaires to, so that effectively aiming for 50 people from Church giving me a microcosm of the population of Church goers (Bryman 2001:84:104). My reasoning behind the questionnaire was my desire to establish the general attitude towards sharing faith and interaction with the homeless and whether that demonstrated a need for people desiring education in interaction with the poor and homeless they encounter. I hoped it may also highlight some trends in the major issues around sharing faith with those that are homeless. The reliability of the data I have collected can only be considered in the light of my context. For example, due to the different societal structures and the way people are placed in different cities, you may find completely different results if you were to give the questionnaire out to a different church in the city. The validity of my research could be considered in the bracket of 'measurement validity' (Bryman 2001:30). By this I consider my data to 'reflect the concept that it is supposed to be denoting'. Again the data I collect will be stored in a locked cabinet that can be assessed at any time for transparency on my findings.

I ended up with a reasonable sample receiving 33 questionnaires back. I also arranged the interviews around a similar time. The interviewees were also given a consent form and information sheet that explained the process. I conducted the interviews in a private room, recording it on a sound recording device to play back later and consider the responses at greater length. Using O'Reilly's 12-step analysis method, I spent a while going through the data before using the orders of coding to pull out the key themes (O'Reilly 2014:201). What I discovered from the questionnaires was the theme of 'training' was reoccurring and this was closely linked to confidence, which also proved to be a strong theme throughout. Both of these were related to a core theme in the design of the questionnaire 'church'. Everyone agreed that the church could do more to welcome the homeless. I used the same process to analyse my interview data, listening back to the recordings, coding the different content. Two of my interviewees were very vulnerable and spoke at great length about the issues surrounding my questions. I also used O'Reilly's method to code the notes I had collected from each of my three observations to pull out key themes.

To evaluate how effective my chosen methods of research were, I have to first consider the objective. My objective was to become more aware of the issues that are involved with sharing the gospel with those that are homeless. I sought to achieve this objective by collecting quantitative and qualitative data that would give me an insight to personal experience as well as general attitude and responses by regular church attenders. Brown's seven-question model helped me to summarise my research and consider how to move forward (Brown 1994:96). The first major issue that I found which is inter-related to my question yet could warrant a separate piece of research, is general church goes confidence in sharing the gospel, let alone sharing it with those who are homeless. Further, I discovered from my quantitative research, that those I gave questionnaires were all unanimous in their opinion that the Church could do more to equip them to love and welcome the homeless. My interviews provided qualitative data regarding homelessness, addiction, rehab, relationships and experience of different churches. However, upon reflection I realise I must be careful in regards to assumption, with my question wording sometimes

appearing to 'shape the thinking' of the interviewee (Wallace and Wray 2016:244). I realise this is a skill I must develop when using the semi-structured interview technique, as often the interviewer is to ask questions without much preparation, in response to the direction of the conversation.

#### **Chapter 4: Research findings**

As already discussed, I researched my main question using three different methods: interviews, questionnaires and observations. I will now seek to triangulate this data, looking for themes and hoping to evoke a broader understanding of the issues with sharing the Gospel with those that are homeless.

I interviewed three separate people, all sharing one thing in common; an experience of homelessness. As you can see in appendix's 4,5 and 6, I listened to all three interviews extensively, paraphrasing important parts of the conversation as well as including direct quotes that were of particular interest. These are seen in italics. I then picked up key words and themes through a process of coding (O'Reilly 2014:201) and generated word maps for each interview that can be seen below in figures 1,2 and 3. On the topic of transcription, the author of Qualitative Research Methods explains how pauses, speech fillers and pronunciation can 'all convey meaning and understanding' (Hennink, Hutter, Bailey 2011:211). Further to this, Thompson explains how during interviews emotion can convey emotional expression giving greater focus on certain words. Considering this when listening to the interviews and recording the repetition of words has given me the premise to call these 'key words' (Thompson 2015:96-99). During my observations, as I observed I made 'mental notes' (Bryman 2001:308), as it was inappropriate to be seen making notes. I recorded these down very briefly later, before again using a process of coding created word maps to display the findings. These can be seen in figures 4, 5 and 6.



him to escaping through drugs and alcohol and although wouldn't consider himself to have been an 'addict,' he identified as a 'wreck head' (participant 1:appendix 3). Adam explains in detail his first experience of crying out to God, following a robbery he committed to pay off a drug dealer. He shares how he prayed from the depths of his stomach, 'I hated who I was, I had nowhere to go' (participant 1:appendix 3). Until this point, he explains, he hadn't given much thought to God and although had attended food banks at Churches, he saw attending these projects a way of saving money to spend on drugs. However, Adam did explain passionately how he was impacted by a testimony at one of these projects, and that word is then repeated positively throughout the rest of the interview on numerous occasions. Adam shares both his positive and negative experiences of rehab. On the one hand he uses words/phrases such as 'proper relationships', 'testimonies', and 'structure' to explain his positive experience. On the other hand using words such as 'hypocritical', 'controlling' and 'corrupt' to convey more negative experiences. When considering his church experience following rehab, Adam shares how he was welcomed in to church by a 'hug' from the minister, an experience he describes as 'amazing, amazing'. He explains how this relationship developed to 'discipleship' and his welcome in to the church progressed to volunteering and now working. He explains how the minister would ask him questions as answers to his questions and that though he found it frustrating at the time, he has realised now how it was an 'empowering' experience (participant 1:appendix 3).

## **Interview 2 – Jack**

Jack is currently a pioneer minister of a church in the city at an Anglican church. He is an ex heroin addict and convict. He went through a transformation process at rehab and then through a small church.





to summarise how this family orientated experience of 3 to 4 years of close discipleship impacted him. Considering this experience and how it impacts the way he ministers now, Jack explains how ‘The Gospel lands better when it comes from relational trust’. He also expresses how he believes ‘Church is discipleship when we break ourselves for each other’ (participant 2:appendix 4).

### Interview 3 – Tom

Tom is a man I met at the Churches Night shelter 5 years ago. Since then we have developed a close friendship. Tom is working again and comes to church with me most weeks. He would still officially be classed as ‘hidden homeless’ as he lives with his ex partner under the government radar (Crisis:2019).

Figure 3



The level of depth shared by Tom was significantly less than the first two interviewees. This could perhaps be a point of reflection in itself to consider later. Tom explains how his first experience of Church growing up was attending youth groups along with his friends. He didn’t have much regard for God and considered himself to ‘sit on the fence’ with the whole topic (participant 3:appendix 5). Again a relationship break down held significance for Tom as he explains due to continuing arguments, one day he decided to walk out. He shares how he was completely ‘on his own’ as he had no family there was no one to turn to. He explains how after sleeping rough one night, things just carried on from

there. Tom’s body language and facial expression brightened when I asked him what impact the church had at this point of his life. He shares even though he was embarrassed attending the food bank projects, he always felt ‘welcomed’ and as if people were ‘reaching out’. When we became friends and Tom started to attend church regularly, he explains how he enjoyed coming because it ‘made him feel special’ and he didn’t feel judged. He goes on to explain how the people at church became friends and he would keep coming back because it gave him a ‘boost’ and a ‘lift’. Whilst not yet calling himself a Christian, Tom does acknowledge God and explains how he believes God ‘drew me towards him’ to develop a friendship. Towards the end he summarised explaining how he went to church when he was rock bottom and felt ‘loved’ (participant 3:appendix 5).

## Questionnaires

I received back 33 questionnaires from those I gave out. My intention was to give out questionnaires completely at random to people at local churches to gather mainly quantitative data whilst also leaving room for some qualitative. As you can see in appendix 6 I have created tables to display, what I believe to be, the most important data. I have also here recorded down all the important and relevant quotes.

Table 1

*How do you feel about talking about your faith to someone else?*

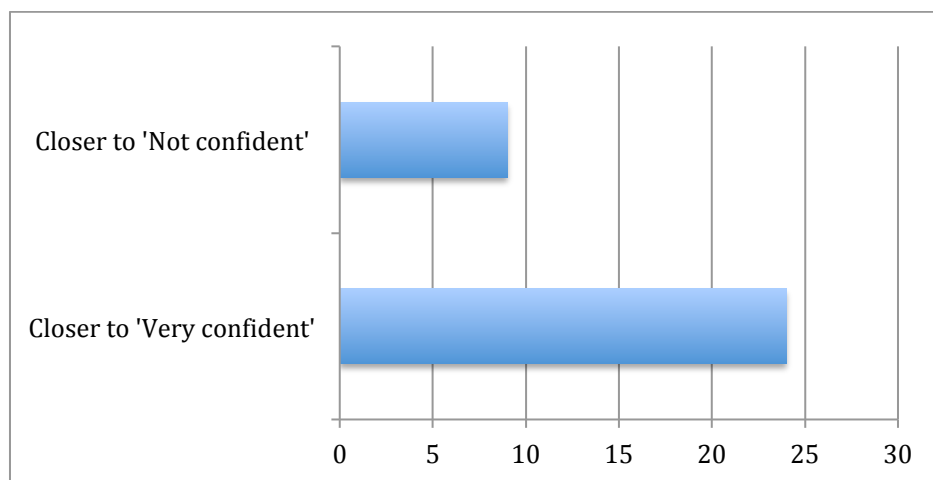
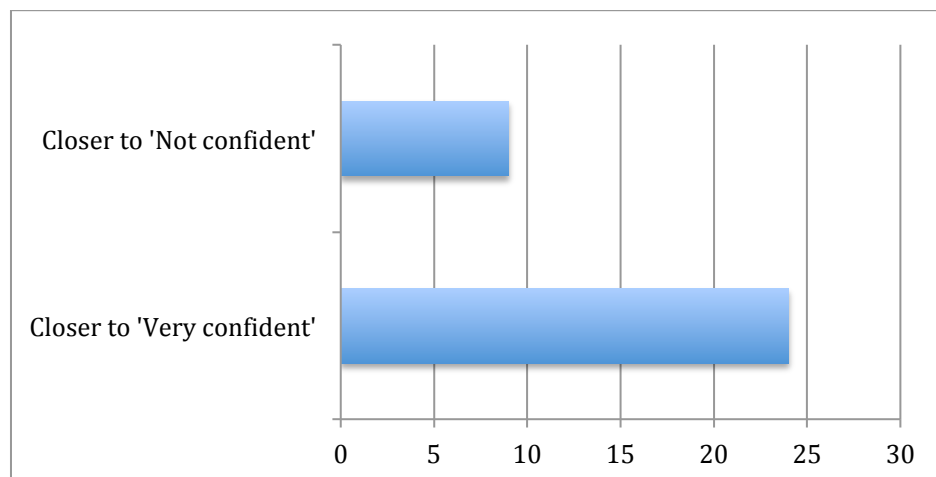


Table 1 shows the comparison between people who are more confident and those who are less confident in sharing their faith. In the questionnaire I used a likert scale as a way of placing yourself on a scale from one end being 'not confident' and the other being 'very confident'. The way I collected this data was simply to group people in the two different categories based on being either under or over the half way mark between the two extremes. I can summarise effectively by saying that from my sample, the majority of people are more confident in sharing their faith than not. Following on from that, I was surprised to also discover that 24 out of 33 people (table 2) declared they were more confident than not to approach a homeless person if they walked in to Church.

Table 2

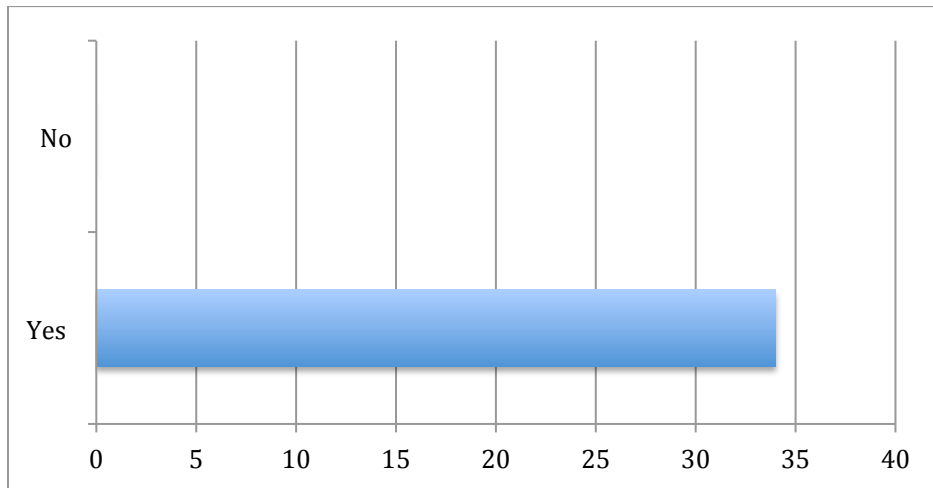
*How confident do you feel approaching a homeless person when they walk in to Church?*



This perhaps shouldn't come as a surprise considering other statistics. 21 out of 33 people also answered that they encounter a homeless person either every week or most weeks. Considering the levels of people we have hosted in this years Derby Churches Night shelter (appendix 8) and the government statistics of increasing homelessness referenced in the introduction, this perhaps gives some more evidence.

Table 3

*Do you think your church could do more to equip the congregation to love and welcome those that are homeless?*



The question I focused on last, was asking people if they think the Church could do more to equip people to love and welcome those that are homeless. Every single person answered yes (table 3) and many went on to use the space to explain why. Having considered these answers, looking for themes, out of 19 that wrote a comment I discovered that 8 people mentioned the word ‘training’ or ‘trained’. Others used words such as ‘advice’ or ‘teaching’. One person wrote, “We need a lot of training and practical experience to discover how best to meet the needs of a homeless person and really help them out of their lifestyle” (appendix 6). What I can see is that whilst people are generally confident to share their faith and again generally confident to approach a homeless person, all agree that there is a need for more understanding as members of the church, in how to love and welcome people in these circumstances.

### **Observations**

I made three observations, each one in a different context, aiming to pull in a greater depth of research. Again I have created a word map of ‘key words’ in response to each observation (Fig. 4,5,6), taking the same process as referenced above for my interviews. As an active participant at bread church the words are aiming to capture ‘my’ experience as a visitor. At the Recovery project and rehab I was observing a response to an evangelistic message and so the words are

aiming to capture the predominant body language, verbal response and attitudes I observed.

## Bread Church

Figure 4



The first observation was at a place called 'bread church' in Liverpool. Here, I simply chose to participate as a visitor, observing the way people engaged and responded to the rhythm of the Church life. The observation caused me to consider and reflect upon the word 'welcome'. I was looked after well as soon as I arrived which immediately demonstrated the values of the church. I was introduced to people and so very quickly felt like I 'belonged' as part of the group. This taught me about the practice of engaging with people as they visit Church for the first time. I also learnt about the practice of doing an activity communally as a way of celebrating equality. I left feeling I had experienced a level of belonging that I don't normally experience in such a short space of time. The overwhelming thought was that 'one day I would love to go there again'.



## Recovery Project, lunch time drop in

Figure 6



At the drop in project, people were free to leave, they were under no obligation to listen or stay. The contrast in response was so huge. At the Recovery Project, the body language of many demonstrated frustration when the God-slot was announced. Whilst at carpenter's arms the majority of the men sat engaged throughout the talk, often affirming the speaker with words of encouragement such as 'yes' and 'amen', at recovery project, a handful of people sighed and got up to leave as the speaker began to talk. The response following the talk was again completely different. At recovery project there was a sense of relief in the room when the speaker came to a finish.

### **Chapter 5: Implications of research**

Before I consider the implications of this research I must first consider the weaknesses and how they impact the validity. Cresswell and Clark consider how we all come with our own 'personal biases and interpretations' and those were particularly evident in the way I conducted my interviews (Cresswell, Clark



2011:12). Specifically in interview 3, Tom was much less communicative than the previous two interviews and so I found myself rephrasing questions in to statements that only required short answers of agreement or disagreement. My bias towards desiring certain information also influenced this. Bryman argues that when giving out self completion questionnaires, 'it is always important to ensure that the questions that are asked are clear and unambiguous' (Bryman 2001:134). Having already discussed the ambiguity of defining the 'gospel' and defining 'homelessness', this proved to be difficult. Another weakness with self completion questionnaires that Bryman suggests is the inability to 'collect additional data' (Bryman 2001:135), which meant I could not discuss further interesting comments that people had left. The major drawback with my observations was the inability for these to develop in to 'ethnographical research'. Ethnographical research according to Bryman, involves spending 'a considerable amount of time with a group with the aim of uncovering it's culture' (Bryman 2001:292). Due to time restrictions this wasn't possible. Mixed methods research allows me to use all three however in conjunction, as Cresswell and Clark summarise, 'Mixed methods research provides more evidence for studying a reseach problem that either quantitative or qualitative research alone' (Cresswell, Clark:2011:12). I believe that enhances the reliability of my research, as each method is not considered in isolation.

### **So, what do all of these findings mean?**

Triangulating these three different methods of research, I desired to pull in a number of different perspectives and angles that would broaden my understanding of the issues involved with sharing the gospel with the homeless. The interviews helped give me context and more understanding to the responses I observed in the Carpenter's Arm's rehab and the Recovery project drop in lunch. The questionnaires also helped me to understand more the disconnect between my sample 'church congregation' and the lifestyles being experienced by those who are homeless. Rather than provide simple and clear answers however, I feel where some of the research has helped my understanding of some issues, I feel the majority of the findings have only encouraged me to

consider the complexity of the issues around homelessness, the church and sharing the gospel.

## **Relatability**

Both Adam (interview 1) and Jack (interview 2) express how the significance of growing up in a particular context influenced their lives. Adam explains how he grew up in a 'broken home' in a 'rough part of Birmingham' and Jack, on a council estate with a 'tribal like mentality' (appendix 3 and 4). Both also mention the significance of lacking a male 'role model' growing up and their subsequent desire to look elsewhere for one. In my introduction I considered Jon Kuhrt's reflection on the concept of 'poverty of identity' (Kuhrt, Ward 2013:7). This is something he believes is intertwined with the 'poverty of relationships'; sharing how a study in 2007 claimed the single largest reason for rough sleeping was relationship breakdown. The 'poverty of identity' is the low self esteem and the 'poor self-identity' in how they see themselves (Kuhrt, Ward 2013:7). The questionnaire responses were unanimous in their agreement that the Church could do more to equip people to love and welcome those that are homeless and I believe the issue of context and identity is a major issue in this.

In 'People Skills' Neil Thompson on the topic of anti-discriminatory practice explains how a group is stigmatized if 'they are automatically seen in negative terms because of who they are or some aspect of their circumstances' (Thompson 2015:186). One person wrote on their questionnaire, "We need a lot of training and practical experience to discover how best to meet the needs of a homeless person and really help them out of their lifestyle." Another person said "Homeless all tend to sit together, would be great if others said 'sit with me'" (appendix 6). This suggests to me that before we can even consider 'sharing the gospel' with those that are homeless, we need to think about the different life experiences and the identity issues alongside that maintain the seeming chasm that exists between the Church and the homeless that come in.

## **Addiction and homelessness**

Observation's 2 and 3 provided interesting data, where the general responses to an evangelistic message were very different in each one. Let's first focus on the response at the Recovery project, lunch time drop in. Here the response was marked by disinterest, however most people listened out of politeness. As already mentioned in the literature review, Tim Chester argues that the Bible gives us instruction to share the gospel both in 'proclamation and demonstration'. He goes on to say however that proclamation should 'take place in the context of a life of love' (Chester 2004:55-66). The Recovery project is arguably sharing the gospel both in proclamation (god slot) and in demonstration (feeding the poor), which leads me to consider why people appeared to be so disinterested. Is it being delivered in a 'life of love'? That consideration is only given more weight when considering Bock's suggestion that it is 'the poor who humbly sense their need, citing that material deprivation increases spiritual sensitivity, thus openly and honestly responding to Jesus' message of hope' (Bock 1994:408). This is something that both Adam and Jack seem to affirm in their interviews, both claiming to be at 'rock bottom' when seeking God, Jack explaining he was 'ready to receive' (appendix 4). If I contrast this with the responses I observed at the Carpenter's arms rehab, the responses were completely different. Here, the responses were marked by enthusiasm, engagement and a desire to listen and receive. The context is different firstly, those in attendance had chosen to be in rehab well aware it was a faith based organisation. (The Carpenter's Arms, Mission Statement:2019). Adam expands on his time in Betel, another Christian rehab, and mentions one of the most positive impacts were the close friendships he developed (appendix 3). This provoked me to consider the influence of 'emotional contagion', which is 'the transfer of moods between people in a group' and how this may have greater power in a highly charged, isolated atmosphere, such as rehab (Barsade 2002:research article). There is neither space nor time to expand on that thought in this essay but I felt it necessary to include it as a thought. Having said that, I believe it was the 'testimonial' nature of the speaker's message at the rehab that held greatest significance. It was his life story that connected with those listening and inspired them and gave them real life example of how God had worked in the

life of an addict. Adam also shares how 'people's stories' had significant impact on his faith journey both before and when he went in to rehab (appendix 3). This reflection also raises another question, that is, 'can we separate out the issue of homelessness and the issue of addiction and respond to them in isolation from each other?' Or perhaps it simply means that when consider the issues involved with sharing the Gospel with the homeless, understanding addiction is one of those issues that needs further study.

## **Relationships**

Jack offers later in his interview perhaps an answer to, what the proclamation of the gospel looks like in 'the context of a life of love' (Chester 2004:55-66). Jack explains during his interview that the 'greatest transformation' in his life came during the 3-4 year period of 'close discipleship' he experienced at a small church. He explains how he 'became part of their lives' and reflecting on this experience expresses his opinion that "The Gospel lands better when it comes from relational trust. You cannot disciple appropriately if you don't have a foundation of trust' (participant 2:appendix 4). Sharon Norton reflects on a theory proposed by Paul Hiebert, which considers different structure focuses of church communities. She explains that the 'bounded-set' focuses on the boundaries as a way of defining who is in and out and what people 'must exhibit in their behaviour and beliefs in order to belong to any given group'. In a different way the 'centred-set' focus defines a 'few characteristics that are central, and does not focus on the boundaries'. Sharon explains how that Jesus is the center and while people can be any distance from the center, they still belong to the 'centred-set group, as long as they are facing the center'. This approach considers how 'growing in faith may look very different' for reasons such as 'upbringing, the surrounding culture and sub-cultures or religious background of a person'. Norton goes on to explain that the outworking of this in planting a church was initially 'doing the slow work of establishing relationships and authentic friendships'. Norton summarises this approach simply as 'belong, believe, behave'. (Norton:unkown citing Hiebert 1994:107-136). Jack explains how the church he joined 'took a massive risk' with him as he had removed himself from his previous culture and was entering in to a new one (participant

2:appendix 4). The church Jack describes seems to demonstrate some characteristics of a 'centred-set' church and this made it possible for Jack to be invited in to 'their lives' through building of authentic relationships. Before we consider how to 'share the gospel' with those that are homeless, should we be thinking more 'how can we build authentic relationships and friendships of trust with these people, so they experience a sense of belonging?' This seems to be something affirmed by those who returned the questionnaires, as they all agreed the church could do more to love and welcome those who are homeless, with one person suggesting, "Homeless all tend to sit together, would be great if others said 'sit with me'" (appendix 6). Theologically, I believe the relationship between Jesus and Peter gives a good example of a 'centred-set focus'. Matthew 4:18-20, tells us how Jesus invited Peter and Andrew to follow Him, initiating the relationship. In Matthew 16:16 a little later in the Gospel, Peter declares "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God", thus confirming his belief. However, we are also given indication that his behaviour wasn't a condition for his belonging. First Matthew 26:51 tells us Peter drew his sword and struck a 'servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear' and then in Matthew 26:69-71 Peter denies he ever knew Jesus. Jesus seems to affirm his focus on belonging and friendship in John 21 when he first, cooks Peter breakfast and then again initiates a conversation to restore Peter. This reflection challenges us to consider the way we look at people when they come in to Church and ask the question, 'how do I build a relationship with this person, encouraging a sense of belonging, regardless of their behaviour?' Perhaps this is the question we need to be asking at church before we consider sharing the gospel with those that are homeless.

### **Are food banks and proclamation enough?**

Considering the response I observed to the evangelistic gospel message at the recovery project, I further wanted to consider Chester's statement of what the proclamation of the gospel looks like in 'the context of a life of love' (Chester 2004:55-66) As mentioned in the literature review, Kuhrt and Ward consider how night shelters could be 'empowering' people 'to live in a more destructive way' (Kuhrt, Ward 2013:9). Their rationale was that free accommodation and

food released more money to be spent on feeding their addiction. This is something Adam confesses to himself in the interview explaining:

*'I thought I'm on to the winner here, there was loads of places I could get food, if I planned it out right, I could go so many places that I didn't have to pay for food and that means more money for drugs'* (participant 1:appendix 3).

Whilst Adam mentions he always remembers the 'kindness' of Christians at these projects (participant 1:appendix 3) and Tom speaks of the 'help' and 'welcome' he received (participant 3:appendix 5), we have to consider these comments alongside the response to the 'god-slot' I observed and the reflections on the 'gospel' discussed in the literature review. I like the full bodied presentation of 'salvation' that Wright offers when he speaks of how within Christian mission, the idea of 'present hope' is key, summarising 'The whole point of what Jesus was up to was that he was doing, close up, in the present, what he was promising long-term, in the future' (Wright 2011:204). Is offering 'present hope' at the recovery project more than just meeting basic needs and sharing the gospel? Brueggemann encourages us to consider 'the year of jubilee' in the Old Testament may be pointing towards 'community restoration', when discussing Jesus' ministry to the poor (Brueggemann 1998:214). Barrett considers how our community work as the church should focus on us all being 'made in the image of God' and how that encourages people to understand their significance and potential (Barrett 2013:1,2). If all of these considerations are facets of 'the gospel', then I think we need to consider how projects such as 'the recovery project' can be more effective in delivering the gospel in a more full bodied manner, that inspires people to consider their God given identity and potential.

## **Chapter 6: Recommendations and Conclusions**

I now understand that my original question 'what are the issues with sharing the gospel with the homeless?' cannot possibly evoke a conclusive answer because there are too many questions that are intertwined with that one itself. To begin, I

believe there simply wasn't space to define the Gospel in my literature review effectively, considering the extent of different literature and opinions on the topic there are available. Secondly, there was also difficulty in defining and categorising people as 'homeless', due to the varied understandings and considerations as to what defines someone as 'homeless'. Both of these issues directly impacted the validity and reliability of my questionnaires specifically because as Bryman says, that when giving out self-completion questionnaires, 'it is always important to ensure that the questions that are asked are clear and unambiguous' (Bryman 2001:134). I believe future study would perhaps need 'church focused' research that included a series of interviews and observations all in that one context. The questionnaires did however provide conclusive evidence for the need of further understanding of how church members are to relate to the homeless. All 34 responding yes when considering if there is a need to be equipped to better love and welcome the homeless in to church. There is nothing ambiguous about that.

As already mentioned I believe there were many other questions that appeared to be intertwined with my overall question, that perhaps require a study themselves. Some of those questions I believe are:

- What is the Gospel?
- Who are the homeless?
- Does the church have a responsibility to engage with the homeless?
- How can the Church be a more welcoming place to those who are homeless?
- What are the causes of homelessness?
- Are young adults in England today confident to share the Gospel?
- How do we share the Gospel?

Perhaps one conclusion is the fact that this study has uncovered these questions as further topics of study. Having said all of this I do believe that my research drew attention to a few different specific issues that are involved with sharing the Gospel with those that are homeless. Triangulating the literature review, and the different methods of research I believe these things became clear.

It became clear to me that people's capacity to understand and relate to one another can be influenced by shared or lack of shared life experience. If we consider this against the statement that Jack made in his interview where he proposed that 'The Gospel lands better when it comes from relational trust. You cannot disciple appropriately if you don't have a foundation of trust' (participant 2:appendix 4). Here I believe there is a chasm. There is a distance between Christian's sharing the Gospel and the life experience of those they are sharing it with, when in the context of sharing it with 'the homeless'. I have discussed examples of people who are seeking to bridge that gap, whether through food bank projects, rehabs, or church night shelters. As David Sheppard writes, it is the Church that is supposed to be 'a bridge on which different experiences of life can be given a hearing' (Sheppard 1983:17, 18). Again this only further encourages me to conclude the need to do a further study specifically focusing on the role of 'the church' in reaching out to those that are homeless.

The theme that was particularly strong coming from each interview was that of 'relationships'. In all three interviews there was evidence of a 'relationship breakdown' that played a role in each person then experiencing homelessness. In a similar way all three testify to the role of relationships and more specifically, 'friendships' that had the most significant impact on the change in their life. Again, this is what lead Jack to state his belief that 'The Gospel lands better when it comes from relational trust' (participant 2:appendix 4). I believe Sharon Norton's reflection on a 'belong, believe, behave' model of Church, that initially focuses on building friendships, provides really good rationale on how Christian's can move forward in their commitment to sharing the gospel with the homeless (Norton:unkown citing Hiebert 1994:107-136). I believe theologically, the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10 gives us biblical instruction in the way we are to be intentional about initiated relationships with those marginalised by society, like the homeless. Zacchaeus was also marginalised and Jesus went directly to him and in verse 5 said "I must stay at your house today". Nouwen explains how the german word for hospitality is 'gastfreundschaft' which means 'friendship for the guest'. He goes on to explain that hospitality, therefore, is the



‘creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place’ (Nouwen1980:68,69). In light of this, I believe that we as Christians have a responsibility to consider how we can approach homeless people more like Jesus did with Zacchaeus and through hospitality we can give room for deep friendships to grow that will consequently usher in change. Nigel Roberts considers hospitality as a way of evangelising. He summarises:

‘Hospitality is an invitation to come and stay. It is an invitation to share food, presence and story. Within that concept the idea of sharing the gospel does not become something impositional as in proselytism, rather it becomes something hospitable as it is part of the process of sharing and respect between humans’ (Roberts 2017:7).

In my own time working with the homeless through the Derby Churches Night Shelter, I have been involved with running an alpha course, ‘a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith’ (Alpha:2019). My experience was that it was disjointed due to the unpredictable nature of the guests, many only managed to come for one session, some coming to a few sessions but weeks apart. What we did establish through the weeks though was that hosting a safe place where the guests could express feelings and share honestly was what they most appreciated. Moving forward, considering all that has been said above, I think sharing a meal on small scale, more intimate level, giving people the opportunity to build friendship could be where a more wholesome ministry to the homeless is birthed. It would need to be a place that was run consistently with the intention of not so much helping the guests but rather getting to know them as people. Jesus was intentional about getting to know people and being with them first and foremost, as modelled through sharing life with his disciples. I believe we can make a start by hosting small regular spaces, as Christians, where we invite the homeless to come and eat with us, rather than us feeding them.

**Word Count: 10,741**

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## Appendix 1: Questionnaire

### Questionnaire

*What are the issues with sharing the gospel with those that are homeless?*

*My definition of 'gospel' for the purpose of this questionnaire:*

*The Gospel I believe is about proclaiming the 'good news' which is centred around the life of Jesus Christ, which is part of the bigger story. I believe as Tom Wright says this is about offering 'present hope' as well as 'hope for an eternal future (salvation)' and is found in being in right relationship with God.*

Age:            Sex:

1) How long would you say you have been a regular church goer?

*(Please circle most accurate answer)*

0-1 years      2-5 years      5-10 years      10-20 years      20 years+

2) How do you feel about talking about your faith to someone else?

*(Please mark on the line)*

---

Not confident

Very confident

3) How regularly do you attend church?

*(Please circle most accurate answer)*

Every week      Most weeks      Intermittently      A few times a year

4) How often do homeless people come in to your Church on a Sunday?

*(Please circle most accurate answer)*

Every week      Most weeks      Intermittently      A few times a year

5) When a homeless person comes to church, how confident do you feel about approaching them?

*(Please mark on the line)*

---

Not confident

Very confident

6) Outside of the church how often do you encounter those that are homeless?

*(Please circle most accurate answer)*

Every week      Most weeks      Intermittently      A few times a year

7) Have you ever had a memorable encounter with a homeless person, either good or bad? If so, what happened?

*(Please answer in as much detail as you would like)*

8) Do you think the Church should be a place where homeless people feel welcome?

*(Please circle your answer and explain further if you wish)*

Yes    No

9) Do you think your Church is a place where homeless people feel welcome?

*(Please circle your answer and explain further if you wish)*

Yes    No

10) Do you think your Church could do more to equip the congregation to love and welcome those that are homeless?

*(Please circle your answer and explain further if you wish)*

Yes    No

Any other comments:

(Please return to me no later than March 22nd, Thanks)

## **Appendix 2: Information and Consent forms**

### Participant information sheet - Questionnaire

My name is Peter Davies, I am currently working at Derby City Mission, a Christian charity that serves the city of Derby in social action and Christian mission. My main involvement is with the Night shelter project, a project that provides 35 beds for rough sleepers every night from December through to the end of March.

You are being invited to take part in a research study that will form part of my thesis for my dissertation with Midlands CYM. The research will help direct my study and give me a clear focus. Before you decide whether you want to take part in the research it is important that you understand why it is being done and what it will involve.

I've been working in various different projects that exist to serve those that are homeless for more than four years now in different capacities. I have chosen to this degree to gain a more informed approach to my work. As I have worked alongside the homeless I have been increasingly aware of some of the difficulties Churches have in how to best love and support them. Further, how the gospel is to be shared in word and in deed and what that entails.

I'm asking you to fill out a short questionnaire that will ask some open and some closed questions regarding your experience of being a Christian and encounters you have had with people that are homeless. You have the option of remaining completely anonymous if you wish. It is also important I make it clear that you have the right to withdraw at any point during the process. If you wish to withdraw the data at a later stage, please will you make sure that this is done at least two weeks prior to my dead line. This date will be clear on the questionnaire.

My details are as follows if you have any questions or concerns:

Peter Davies, 07909865910, [peterdavies@derbycitymission.org.uk](mailto:peterdavies@derbycitymission.org.uk)

If you have any concerns about the way the research is being conducted then you are welcome to contact my supervisor Paul Munro:  
[nightshelter@derbycitymission.org.uk](mailto:nightshelter@derbycitymission.org.uk)



## Participant information sheet - Interview

My name is Peter Davies, I am currently working at Derby City Mission, a Christian charity that serves the city of Derby in social action and Christian mission. My main involvement is with the Night shelter project, a project that provides 35 beds for rough sleepers every night from December through to the end of March.

You are being invited to take part in a research study that will form part of my thesis for my dissertation with Midlands CYM. The research will help direct my study and give me a clear focus. Before you decide whether you want to take part in the research it is important that you understand why it is being done and what it will involve.

I've been working in various different projects that exist to serve those that are homeless for more than four years now in different capacities. I have chosen to this degree to gain a more informed approach to my work. As I have worked alongside the homeless I have been increasingly aware of some of the difficulties Churches have in how to best love and support them. Further, how the gospel is to be shared in word and in deed and what that entails.

I'm asking you if you would be willing to take part in an interview, discussing your experience of homelessness and church ministry with those that are homeless. It will be carried out in a safe and secure environment and you have the option of remaining completely anonymous if you wish. It is also important I make it clear that you have the right to withdraw at any point during the process. If you wish to withdraw the data at a later stage, please will you make sure that this is done at least two weeks prior to my dead line. This date will be clear on the questionnaire.

My details are as follows if you have any questions or concerns:

Peter Davies, 07909865910, [peterdavies@derbycitymission.org.uk](mailto:peterdavies@derbycitymission.org.uk)

If you have any concerns about the way the research is being conducted then you are welcome to contact my supervisor Paul Munro:  
[nightshelter@derbycitymission.org.uk](mailto:nightshelter@derbycitymission.org.uk)

## Consent Form - Questionnaire

**Title of Project:** What are issues in sharing the gospel with those who are homeless?

**Researcher:** Peter Davies, Derby City Mission, 25 Charnwood Street, Derby, DE1 2GU

**Please initial box:**

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

I agree to take part in the above study.

**Please tick box:**

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Consent Form - Interview**

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I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

I agree to take part in the above study.

**Please tick box:**

I agree to the interview being audio recorded

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Appendix 3 – Interview 1 notes

### Interview 1 – Participant 1 (Adam)

History of homelessness and addiction. Now working for a Church in an urban setting.

### Paraphrased notes – Transcription

- Grew up in a broken home. Mum suffered with depression. Various partners. Dad left when 7. Always trying to find a role model somewhere.
- Rough part of Birmingham.
- Always looking for role model. Searching for acceptance.
- Homeless from age of 15
- Hostels
- 16 – drug importation and went to prison at 17
- Got involved with people who appeared to ‘care’
- Thought most important part of life was ‘reputation’
- Experienced homelessness off and on for 15 years.
- Went to rehab but didn’t know addiction like a heroin addict. Was taking crack but would describe himself as a wreck head.
- Hated being alone. Couldn’t cope because he’d start thinking so would go and find something to take to escape.
- Broken relationships continued with different women.
- Always wanted someone so wasn’t alone.
- Started going to church to go food banks.
- *Peter: What were you thinking when you were using the food banks? Did you think, ‘oh, there might be something to this?’ or were you just thinking ‘I’m just going here for some food?’*
- *Interviewee 1: ‘I thought I’m on to the winner here, there was loads of places I could get food, if I planned it out right, I could go so many places that I didn’t have to pay for food and that means more money for drugs’*
- When proper low, someone from betel was doing outreach. Man shared a story about depression. Testimony. Made me cry man. Something spoke to me.
- Always remember kindness of Christians but it was the testimony that spoke to me.
- Turning point: 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2016. Lost everything. Robbed a woman’s bag to pay off a dealer. Ran away and afterwards started crying. Broke down. I hated the person I was. I prayed. I’ve never had that feeling ever again, praying from the depths of my stomach. I was desperate. Nowhere to go.
- Prayed the prayer... where did you go from there? When he had heard about betel he thought it was a cult. It’s dodgy. In the back of my head I thought if I ever lose everything, there’s always a place to go.
- Emailed betel. Poured out heart. Was suicidal and on crack. Betel emailed back asking to ring them. Rang betel. Someone came and picked him up and took him to betel.
- Became a Christian in betel after a month.

- Why did you become a Christian?
- Experiences in Betel:
- *I was looking round, I seen everyone, I want what they have. It made me question, why are they so happy? That just kinda stuck with me.*
- Betel to begin with seemed like a structured hostel.
- *Thing that I still believe is the powerful thing, and has been for me, is people's testimonies. I just started to come across different stories how lives had changed. Different circumstances, it wasn't just similar to mine.*
- I wrote all the testimonies out to try and catch them out because I thought they were all bonkers. To try and catch them lying.
- *So many different stories about how Jesus had changed their life, which began it really.*
- The guilt I had carried started to come to the surface.
- When a guy shared his testimony and asked people if they wanted to invite Jesus in to their life I thought, 'what have I got to lose?'
- How did your life change from that point onwards?
- I started to get unsettled by the way the rehab was run.
- The more I was reading and studying the bible, I was struggling to understand how it the way betel run was 'discipleship'.
- The way betel was structured had both positive and negative impact. 3 positives and 3 negatives?
- 3 positives:
- Needed the structure
- People who I met, the people alongside. Felt like 'proper relationships'. Like brothers. Going through same challenges together.
- Testimonies and devotions.
- 3 negatives:
- Very hypocritical.
- Not being able to ask questions. Submit to authority. Controlled atmosphere.
- Felt like it was corrupt. Leaders didn't make much relationship. The leadership lied to him. Wanted to trust someone and felt let down. Induced fear to keep people in the rehab.
- How did this impact your faith?
- It increased faith. Was having dreams. Was hearing from God more acutely.
- How were your first few months after leaving betel?
- Went on a mad blow out. Was angry.
- Went in to Derby after a few days on his own.
- Was on my own and I was scared.
- *I can remember leaving thinking, right I'm a Christian, now what? And I had nowhere to go, no family, no support or no nothing and yeah it was proper daunting.*
- Was homeless again. Made friends with wrong people. I remember hearing no matter what you need to stay connected with a Church.
- I went in to a Church in town. When I walked in the first person I met was Darren. The geezer just hugged me man. He told me his story and explained he'd been in similar situation.

- How did that make you feel, walking in to the church as a complete stranger, when Darren hugged you? Amazing, amazing.
- I felt like there were people who wanted to help, who didn't want anything in return.
- How did you go from that initial meeting with Darren, to feeling like integrated in to the church?
- It started small. I experienced discipleship with Darren. He kinda took me on as his own person. He helped me put in to picture my anger wasn't gonna solve anything. He helped me to see things from a different perspective. Lots of one and one time. He invited me to volunteer. We'd go to the gym. *The thing that was really empowering was he always used to ask more questions for me to process things instead of giving me answers to my questions. I never used to understand it at first but now it was to allow me to work things out for myself. I used to find it proper frustrating at first but now I realise how important it was.*
- I'd like to help others by helping them see what God has done in my life.
- How well do you think the church are doing in serving the homeless?
- I don't think they're helping in the right way.
- I feel like we're not necessarily providing anything that is giving people thought for reflection on their own life. If anything sometimes I think we're adding to the problem. We're facilitating them, through food banks. It's only through when your forced to reflect on your life that you will want to change. It doesn't matter if they get banned from one place because they'll go somewhere else.
- We need to think smarter.
- *I think the biggest part to make a difference in peoples lives. It's about building relationships and getting alongside them where they're at. And supporting them in that, loving them in that. That to me is the strongest form of evangelising.*

Themes:

Broken, depression, rough, acceptance, reputation, wreck head, homeless, homelessness, role models, hated being alone, couldn't cope, escape, women, broken down, cry, dealer,

Church: food banks, testimony, outreach, food, cry, kindness, back up plan, hugged me, story, discipleship, volunteer, questions, gym, empowering, frustrating

God: Prayed, depths of my stomach, desperate, poured out heart, betel, Christian, happy, desire, changed lives, stories, testimonies, Jesus, guilt, bible, discipleship, faith, dreams

Betel: rehab, unhappy, concerned, happy, brothers, positive, negative, structure, proper relationships, testimonies, devotions, hypocritical, controlling, corrupt.

Homelessness: helping, facilitating, smarter, food banks, banned, building relationships, alongside, supporting, loving, strongest form of evangelism.

## Appendix 4 – Interview 2 notes

### Interview 2 – Participant 2 (Jack)

#### Paraphrased notes – Transcription

- Grew up in a particular culture.
- Grew up in a council estate, 'tribal' mentality.
- Subconscious lack of hope. Lived for the moment.
- Always wanting to be part of something. Never had father figure.
- No positive male role models in life.
- Journey in to addiction seemed like a natural progression.
- Escalated and escalated in to a life of addiction.
- *Idea of shame becomes a thing that shapes you. You find yourself identifying in the community you belong to as a smack head. You'll never do anything with your life and you start to live out that narrative.*
- Experience of church growing up:
- Church was old people. Disconnected. Disassociated from my circumstances.
- When you were in the thick of addiction how did God come on to the scene?
- Addiction lead to a place where all the props of life had gone. No family. No examples of being a Dad. Violent. Selling drugs. Life had become such that I was chasing a buzz to escape thinking about the problems, the guilt.
- Ended up in the prison at rock bottom.
- My heart was totally open. I was ready. *When youre in a place of total dismay you become open to receive.*
- A man came in to my prison cell and said, it didn't have to be like this. You're special. Some big words over my life. I believed him. I was in a place to believe him.
- Tell me about journey from initial introduction to god through chaplain to seeing an outworking of that in life:
- Still not there mate!
- *I had to remove myself from my context. Because theres a dominant narrative that tries to enforce that I'm a smack head. I was fighting against this narrative. So I had to find myself in a community that embodies a different story. So I went to rehab.*
- *The biggest transformation came when I came out of rehab and I had to find a church. Churches don't have a clue, how to deal with this. You're still struggling with addiction. You're not fully accepted as a child of God, still rough round the edges.*
- *I came part of this middle class Baptist church. And it wasn't somewhere that I just came on a Sunday, it was, I became part of their lives. They took a massive risk with me. They invited me in to their daily rhythm of life.*
- *I became friends with people. I got to know his life and his kids. The us and them mentalities were totally broken because we became friends.*
- *Were you on your own in terms of being in that church on your own as a recovering addict?*

- *Here's how I think it works: inculturation. See if there was 10 of me at this church they took in, it wouldn't have worked. If they tried to bring too much of my culture to theirs it wouldn't have worked. Overwhelming. It creates an imbalance. It has to be done sensitively and gently.*
- *Over ¾ years I began to take on a different identity.*
- *¾ years of close discipleship.*
- *Family orientated small scale.*
- *They totally took me in to their lives.*
- *It depends how big your church is and how much your people are willing.*
- *Community mentoring.*
- *I think peer mentoring is a really fruitful thing.*
- *It think the greatest impact of change came because the whole community took me in.*
- *I totally broke away from the old life.*
- *The Gospel lands better when it comes from relational trust. You cannot disciple appropriately if you don't have a foundation of trust. Church is discipleship is when we break ourselves for each other. We opened ourselves up to each other.*
- *I was robbing from people and they just loved me. When I had no faith, you had faith for me.*
- *After 4 years at this church, totally backslid.*
- *Faith was confusing, second naivety.*
- *My simplistic faith wasn't big enough to contain the problem of sin.*

## Themes

Culture, council estate, tribal mentality, lack of hope, father figure, no positive male role model, addiction, natural progression, escalated, addiction, identifying, community, smack head, life, narrative, progression.

Church: old people, disconnected, disassociated, circumstances,

Addiction: broken, no family, violent, selling drugs, buzz, escape, problems, guilt, prison.

Prison: rock bottom, open heart, ready, dismay, receive, chaplain, words, believe, special,

God: believe, chaplain, rehab: remove, context, different, story, community, narrative

Church: no idea, transformation, accepted, child of God, addiction, rough round edges, middle class, Baptist, Sunday, lives, risk, daily, rhythm, invite, friends, children, family, broken, inculturation, overwhelming, imbalance, sensitively, gently, identity, discipleship, small, willing, community mentoring, old, new, trust, gospel, sharing, faith



## Appendix 5 – Interview 3 notes

### Interview 3 – Participant 3

I met this person at a food bank 5 years ago. We developed a friendship whilst he was homeless and using the night shelter. He is now effectively 'hidden homeless' living with an ex partner. He is working again and providing for himself but still lives a chaotic 'homeless' lifestyle to some degree (uses the food banks, dwells in that community regularly).

- Did you ever go to church growing up?
- Many years ago. Youth clubs.
- Never sunk it, didn't really think about God. Sat on the fence.
- Went to Church because all my mates did. Epilogue in the middle.
- Growing up in to adult life, did you ever go church? 20+?
- Very rarely. Mixed with wrong people.
- Tell me about how you experienced homelessness?
- In a relationship, things went pear shaped. Always arguing. One day I just walked out. I was on my own, had no family. Slept rough one night and it carried on from there. No one to turn to.
- We met at church, what was it that drew you back to church?
- People helping me. People reaching out. I was feeling welcomed, drawn in. It hit me. People trying to help me.
- Food banks to eat. I was embarrassed about my situation.
- I went in to a church service once and the preacher pointed me out in the crowd and it really got to me.
- Food banks – us becoming friends – attending church regularly. How was your first experience of church?
- When I came, I'm glad I did. I felt welcomed, sort of like open arms. Everyones nice to you, it makes you feel special. No one judged me you see. It was a good thing.
- What do you think about church now that keeps you going back?
- It gives me a lift for the following week. A bit of a boost. See your friends. Nice feeling. Gives you a boost through the week.
- What do you think about the community?
- It's fantastic. You couldn't meet nicer people.
- Do you experience people being interested in your life?
- I think they're looking out for me, trying to guide me through a better life.
- What are the benefits of church for the homeless?
- They're to help people. The homeless should realise. Snap them out of this thing they're going through. Go in there and talk to people.
- Some really appreciate it, others are bit big headed and aren't as appreciative.
- How do you think the church can do a better job of building friendships with the homeless?
- You're doing the best you can, that's all you can do. You can only improve so much. In my eyes you're doing a fantastic job.
- Do you think there will always be people who find it difficult to fit in?

- People get lonely and confused and they think no one loves them.
- My experience is that I feel loved when I go to church. I was rock bottom and when I go to church I got a lift.
- Perhaps the Lord drew you towards me specifically to help me.
- If you have someone special in life it's a good start in life. It was meant to be. It's as simple as that.

## Themes

Church: youth club, epilogue, on the fence, God, never sunk in, friends,

Mixed with wrong people

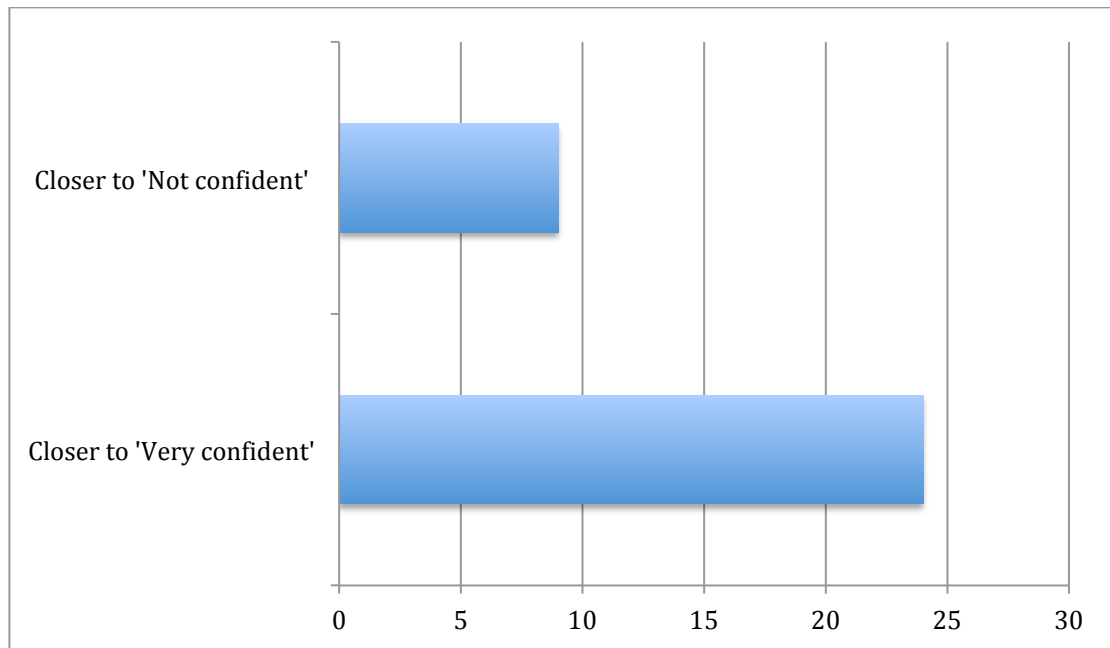
Homelessness: relationship, breakdown, pear shaped, arguments, walked out, no family, alone, slept rough, embarrassed,

Church: food banks, help, welcomed, reaching out, drawn in, hit me, service, preacher, emotion, not judged, special, guide, boost, friends, open arms, nice, lift, fantastic people, better life, appreciate

People, lonely, confused, loved, lack of love, rock bottom, special friend, meant to be, simple.

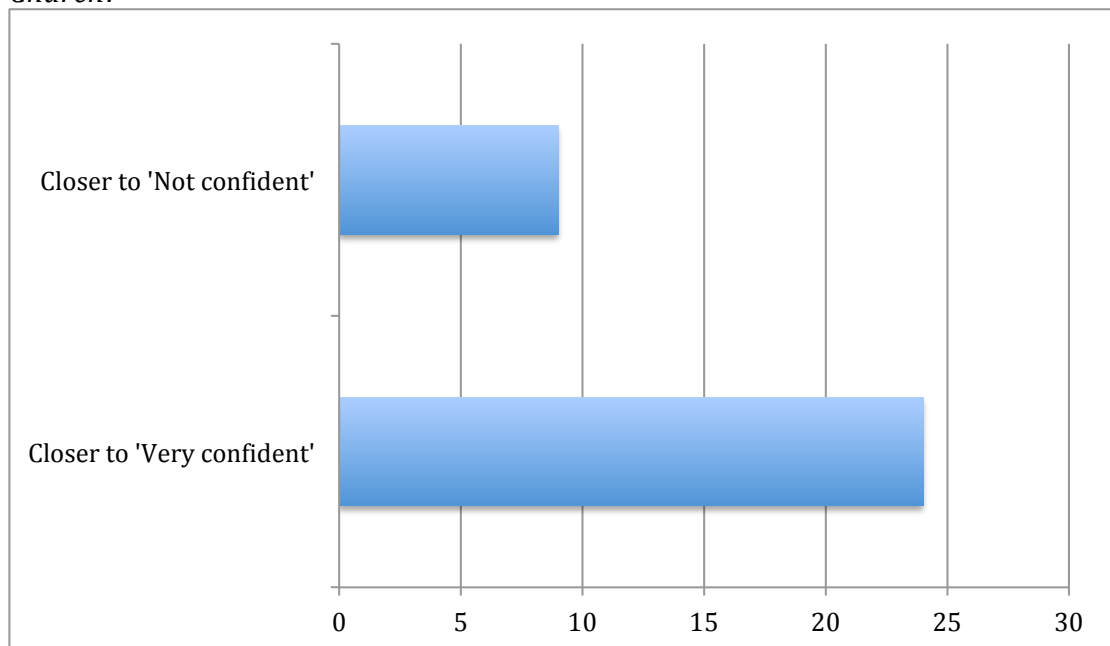
## Appendix 6 – Questionnaire results and notes

*How do you feel about talking about your faith to someone else?*



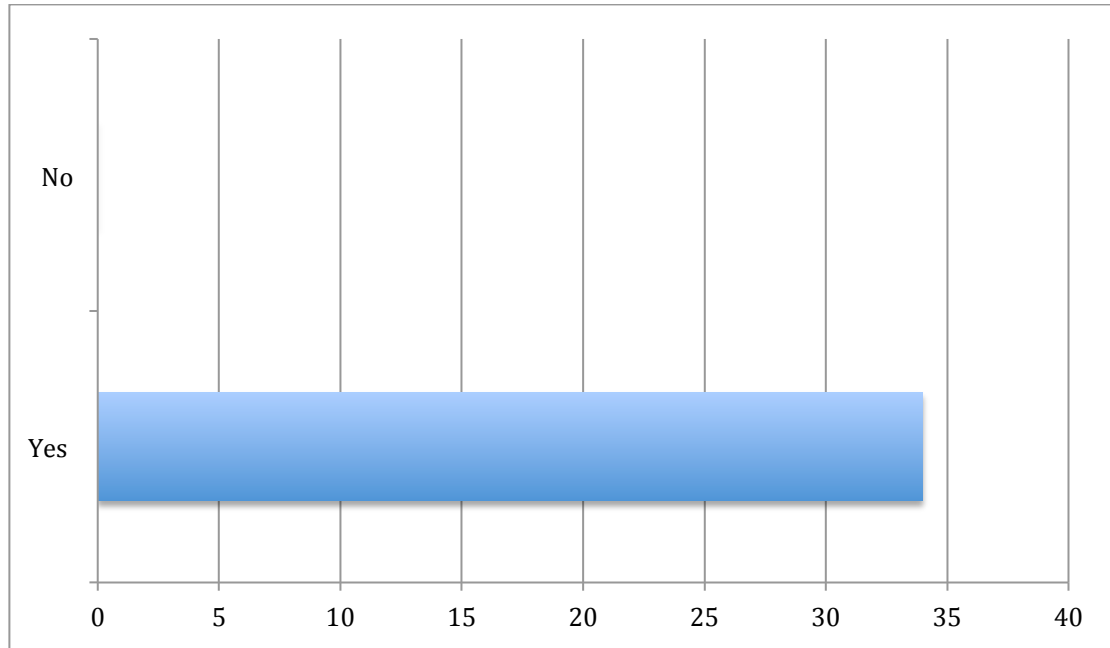
From this evidence, the majority of the people in my sample are more confident than not to share their faith. This is a very rough way of generalising however as the data was collected using a likert scale.

*How confident do you feel approaching a homeless person when they walk in to Church?*



From this evidence, the majority of the people in my sample are more confident than not to share their faith. This is a very rough way of generalising however as the data was collected using a likert scale.

*Do you think your church could do more to equip the congregation to love and welcome those that are homeless?*



Out of these 34 people, in the space to write suggestions, (8) people mentioned the word 'training' or 'trained'. That was out of the 19 people who wrote a comment in the space that was given. Other suggestions included words such as 'advice' or 'teaching'.

#### Direct quotes

"We need a lot of training and practical experience to discover how best to meet the needs of a homeless person and really help them out of their lifestyle"

"Yes, undoubtedly but as a congregation we would need to 'own' the vision"

"Homeless all tend to sit together, would be great if others said 'sit with me'"

"It's a difficult subject as you don't want homeless people to take advantage of 'the church'"

## Appendix 7 – Observation 1, 2, 3 notes

### Observation 1 – Bread Church – 5/03/2019

- Fresh expression Church
- Meet midweek, make bread together around a large table
- Mix of people in attendance. Foreign, cross classes, cross cultural, range of ages. Four people with special needs and their respective carers.
- People share life and enjoy fellowship whilst making bread
- Warm welcome, I was well looked after
- I was paired up with an experienced bread maker who showed me the ropes. He was very kind and engaged in conversation.
- The leaders were keen to move round freely and catch up with people individually.
- Following the bread making, whilst it is baking those in attendance are given the option to move through to a side room for a reflection and prayer.
- Most of those present attended. Short bible passage and a few questions were asked to provoke open discussion. It was a bright room that was painted light blue.
- Following the reflection we were invited to light a candle for those on our hearts.
- People enjoyed the opportunity to commit someone to God through the action of lighting a candle.
- There wasn't any specific direction to the prayer time.
- We then ate together around the large table, breaking the bread we have baked during the morning.
- There was a very peaceful, satisfying atmosphere.
- People enjoyed conversation over lunch.
- Prayers before lunch were read from a choice of blessing cards making it accessible for everyone.
- Inclusion seemed to something that was focused on heavily.

### Observation 2 – Carpenter's Arms Rehab – 06/03/2019

- I had the opportunity to attend a rehab worship service where a minister I am friends with was speaking
- He is an ex addict himself and had been through a similar rehab programme, Teen Challenge.
- I was interested in observing the responses to his sermon.
- The rehab was compiled of a group of around 30-40 men who had all been in rehab for different amounts of time, ranging from 1 or 2 months to a year or two. Most of the leaders had been through the rehab themselves. Most of the guys in this particular service were in their first 3 months of rehabilitation.
- Tom's message was evangelistic, He was sharing 'the gospel' particularly focusing on the testimony of God working in his life. He told His story of becoming a Christian.

- The message was dynamic and people were engaged. Body language demonstrated this further. Most were sitting upright or leaning forward with their elbows on knees demonstrating intent.
- Tom shared very honestly about the gruesome details of his life of addiction. This provoked vocal reaction as many of the men seemed to relate to where he had been. There were also moments where Tom shared honestly about mistakes and comedic moments or mistakes that resulted in extended laughter.
- There were many noises made and confirming words such as 'yes' and 'amen' that demonstrated many of the men were affirming what Tom was saying.
- At the end Tom invited people to come forward for prayer or raise their hand if they would like to receive prayer. He also invited people to make it known if they would like to invite Jesus in to their life.
- There was a very definite response immediately by 3 or 4 men as they made their way to the front.
- Many sat around on their own as the music came on and reflected. Many holding their head in their hands demonstrating they had been impacted by what they'd heard.
- The ministry time lasted for 20-30 minutes where many of the different men sought out Tom for prayer before things dispersed in to a more 'informal' coffee break.

Key words: Evangelistic, passionate, engaged, demonstrated, smiling, laughing, interested, emotion, amen, agreement, silent, hiding, yes, shout, crying, broken, desperate, willing, reflecting, desire, affirming, encouraged, wrestling, confused, despair, hurting

### Observation 3 – Recovery Lunch Project – 20/03/2019

- I have attended this project for a couple of years first as a volunteer and now as part of the management team.
- More recently we have incorporated a 5-10 minute 'god-slot' half way through the project. As it is a lunch time drop in this means someone stands in the middle at one end of the hall and shares a message to on average around 50 people.
- I wanted to observe people's response to an evangelistic message in this context.
- As management I stood up to announce the god slot and ask for respect and 5-10 minutes silence I noticed there were a handful people who immediately got up and left the church. I observed at least 3 people sigh and mutter things under their breath. These people also turned back towards their table and away from the speaker. The majority of the guests responded by pausing their conversations and listening politely to what was going to be shared.
- As I was stood nearby to the speaker we had an incident shortly in to the message with someone under the influence of alcohol walked right up to

the speaker to interrupt and ask questions. Some of the other guests found this amusing.

- There were a few people who attempted to carry on conversing making it difficult for others to hear the message. Someone from management walked round and asked those who were speaking to politely be quiet.
- Most people seemed to listen but more out of duty than demonstrating an intent. The body language of most people seemed disinterested. There were a few people however who seemed to be really engaged in what was being shared.
- I sensed when the speaker started to share some of their own experience, including times of pain, the audience became more attentive.
- People continued to leave intermittently throughout the message but 90% of people stayed for the duration.
- People clapped out of respect at the end. The speaker invited people to find her to chat if they wanted to pray or talk about anything that was said.
- I waited to see if there was any response but did not notice anyone go to initiate conversation within the first 5 minutes.

Key words: Respect, duty, reluctant, bored, interested, listening, disinterested, rude, disengaged, attentive, pain, despair, blank, challenged, annoyed, angry, smiling, responding, polite, interruption

## Appendix 8 – Derby Churches Night Shelter 2018/19 statistics

### Derby City Mission official document

#### RE: Nightshelter Stats

Good Morning,

I trust you are well, for some of us we have 6 nights to go until we close for this year. Others I know have already closed. I am being asked to prepare a report which I am happy to share with all of you once completed. The report is for 8<sup>th</sup> April, to all the local authorities of Derbyshire, to show what I have been up to over the last 2 and a bit years with some funding they gave me. I am wanting to highlight the expanse of shelters that have emerged and trouble you for some stats if you can provide them for me.

You may have already produced some stats, but all I am asking for is:

-How many spaces you offered - 4235

-How many you saw in total come through the shelter during your period 346 accessed; 280 slept over

-Male and female split 39 females & 307 males accessed; 29 females & 251 males slept over

-How many nights you were full - 3

-One or two good news stories of how a guest was helped (more if you have them obviously) I think the highlight of our Nightshelter in Derby this year was KD, a physically and mentally vulnerable man with memory issues made worse by a drink issue. He had travelled from Birmingham to Derby because he wanted to get away from the supported accommodation he lived in where he alleged he was being financially abused by tenants and others in that area. Nightshelter was certainly not the best place for such a vulnerable person physically and mentally but he received love and care there whilst we tried to sort out the issues he had fled from. The situation seemed hopeless humanly speaking as he refused to engage with anyone in Birmingham through fear even to move his tenancy and without that there was little we could do in Derby. He had no proof of his allegations and so we



# **Dissertation Ethical Clearance Form**

University of Gloucestershire

Peter Davies

Student

Nigel Roberts

Dissertation Module Tutor

