

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

**Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to  
the Faculty of the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

by

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## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Homelessness represents an incredibly damaging and challenging reality across the United States; of the 588,000 homeless in this country, 33,000 are military Veterans. Homelessness among Veterans is intensified by afflictions of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Suicide Ideations, Moral Injuries, and Substance Abuse. The purpose of this DMIN action project was to establish a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to reduce their homeless rates. The objectives of this project were to bring homeless Veterans to Jesus, decrease Veteran homelessness, establish ongoing relationships with homeless Veterans, assist homeless Veterans in overcoming specific factors impacting their continued homelessness, instill an atmosphere of inclusion and care among homeless Veterans, and provide biblically-based mentorship and guidance to homeless Veterans through discipleship. Homeless Veterans and support staff from outreach organizations that met specific criteria participated in the project. Surveys provided to homeless Veterans focused on the occurrence rate and impacts of PTSD, TBI, Moral Injuries, and Substance Abuse. Questionnaires given to homeless Veterans and support staff participants centered on the “why” of the question of homelessness. Roundtable discussions with homeless Veterans concentrated on Spiritual Warfare, Suicide Ideations, and the previous subjects of PTSD, TBI, Moral Injuries, and Substance Abuse. Substance Abuse was shown to be the most widespread of the ailments afflicting homeless Veterans. The encouraging results of this project indicate that a Jesus-centric ministry approach to engaging homeless Veterans through a dedicated discipleship program can produce positive, realistic outcomes for Veterans suffering from chronic homelessness.

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## Abbreviations

CoC	<i>Continuum of Care</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
HCSB	<i>Holman Christian Standard Bible</i>
PTSD	<i>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</i>
TBI	<i>Traumatic Brain Injury</i>
US	<i>United States</i>
VA	<i>Veterans Administration</i>
VHA	<i>Veterans Health Administration</i>

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

Discipleship is at the very core of being a follower of Jesus. Jesus expected His followers to carry His message to the farthest reaches of the planet, to go and make disciples of all nations as found in Matthew 28:19-20, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Holman Christian Standard Bible). However, it is not the farthest reaches of the planet that is the focus of this study, but it is the desire and calling to help those within local communities that have served this nation: homeless Veterans.<sup>1</sup>

Homelessness represents an incredibly damaging and challenging reality across the United States. Homelessness directly affects over 580,000 people across the US on any given night.<sup>2</sup> Of these 580,000, over 33,000 are Veterans; homeless Veterans account for over 7% of the homeless population within the US.<sup>3</sup> Reaching the homeless Veteran population via discipleship is an essential step toward breaking the grip homelessness has on the Veteran population. Centurion Witness Ministries has served the homeless Veteran community in the broadest of terms, but there has been no establishment of a tangible relationship with the homeless Veteran community. Jesus reinforced a definitive call to action to His disciples when He appeared following His resurrection. Jesus said, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I

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<sup>1</sup> The term Veteran will be capitalized throughout this paper. This is in keeping with the tradition and guidance of capitalizing the terms Veterans, Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, or Airmen, by the Veterans Administration and the U.S. Department of Defense.

<sup>2</sup> Tanya D. Souza et al., *The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress (Part 1)* (The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Community Planning and Development, 2022), 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

also send you” (John 20:21, HCSB). This project will highlight that establishing a dedicated discipleship program for homeless Veterans clearly fits within the mission parameters found above in the Gospel of John.

### **Ministry Context**

Centurion Witness Ministries was founded in 2011 in Huntsville, Alabama to serve the local homeless community. Through the past thirteen years, there have been modifications to the ministry’s mission set, but a definitive focus remains on homeless Veterans. Huntsville, Alabama has remained the core event location for the ministry and serves as a clearinghouse and proving ground for all ministry activities.

The 2020 US Census determined that Huntsville, Alabama had supplanted Birmingham to become the largest city in the state of Alabama.<sup>4</sup> The homeless population in Huntsville reflects the statistical data typically found within a metropolitan area referred to by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development as an “Other largely urban Continuum of Care (CoC) geographic category.”<sup>5</sup> This classification is an area “in which the population lives predominately in an urbanized area within the CoC’s principal city or cities, but the CoCs does not include one of the nation’s 50 largest cities.”<sup>6</sup> Huntsville meets this established criterion.

Huntsville is also home to Redstone Arsenal, a premiere Army location with numerous highly technical units and commands, including the US Army Material Command, US Army Space and Missile Defense Command, US Army Contracting Command, and several Federal

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<sup>4</sup> “Programs-Surveys,” Redistricting File, United States Census Bureau, accessed March 23, 2023, [https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/data/01-Redistricting\\_File--PL\\_94-171/Alabama/](https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/data/01-Redistricting_File--PL_94-171/Alabama/).

<sup>5</sup> Souza, *The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report*, 30.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Bureau of Investigation organizations and schools.<sup>7</sup> Not unexpectedly, there is a significant military retiree presence within the area of Huntsville. The overall Veteran population in Huntsville encompasses approximately 10% of the entire community.<sup>8</sup>

### Support Organizations

Various organizations and groups support Huntsville's homeless community. Four of the more prominent and impactful groups serving the homeless in Huntsville are the North Alabama Coalition for the Homeless, the Downtown Rescue Mission, the Salvation Army, and First Stop. In addition, Manna House and the Rose of Sharon Soup Kitchen provide sustenance to the homeless and hungry. Each of these organizations offers an approach to supporting the homeless that is slightly different from the others. For example, the North Alabama Coalition for the Homeless serves as a clearinghouse for groups, churches, and individuals seeking an opportunity to assist the homeless with clothing, fundraising, or volunteering. The Downtown Rescue Mission offers daily meals to the homeless, a place to sleep for the night, and a year-long on-site program for those seeking to break free of whatever challenges have brought them to homelessness. The Salvation Army, with limited overnight space, also provides meals and a place to sleep at night. The last of these four main contributors, First Stop, also provides meals, clothing, and a chance for a shower and change of clothes. First Stop also offers the means for the homeless to accept mail. Receiving mail is a difficult task for the homeless.

Centurion Witness Ministries has established an ongoing relationship with the Downtown Rescue Mission, the Salvation Army, and First Stop. These relationships have led to developing

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<sup>7</sup> "Tenant Organizations," United States Army, Team Redstone, accessed March 23, 2023, <https://www.army.mil/redstone#org-resources>.

<sup>8</sup> "Quick Facts," Huntsville City, Alabama United States Census Bureau, accessed March 23, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/huntsvillecityalabama>.

and exercising two dedicated support activities per year for the ministry. These two annual programs are the Summer and Christmas support bag giveaway events for homeless Veterans. The giveaway bags contain clothing appropriate to the season, sundry items, and snacks; the Christmas giveaway bags also contain signed Christmas cards and stockings filled with candy. These dedicated events are quite an advance from the early years of the ministry. Previously, the project director would assemble ten to twelve Christmas gift bags filled with various items and would drive throughout portions of Huntsville seeking those that looked like they may be in need. This haphazard approach did not allow for a dedicated response to Veterans, and it did not provide an opportunity for extended fellowship. Thus, while advanced in the distribution of goods, these dedicated events still do not fulfill the fundamental calling of discipleship; the ministry must satisfy the requirement in Matthew 28:19 to make disciples.

#### Centurion Witness Ministries

The project director and Centurion Witness Ministries' originator is a retired soldier. Much like the Centurion in Mark 15:39 acknowledging that Jesus was, as claimed, the Son of God, this professional soldier had Jesus in proximity without truly knowing Him; "When the centurion, who was standing opposite Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, 'This man really was God's Son!'" (HCSB). Just as the Centurion in Mark had become a witness for Jesus, so did this soldier. Centurion Witness Ministries was established by recognizing the truth of Jesus and applying the realization found in Mark 15:39. The ministry's initial focus was on bringing water, snacks, and the message of salvation to the homeless in and around areas of Huntsville, where the homeless congregated.

Early outreach simply consisted of approaching the homeless and letting them know that Jesus had sent someone to tell them they were loved and to see what assistance they needed. The



project director would initiate a quick prayer, and then share water, snacks, and a message of salvation with the homeless being contacted. Those asking for additional information about salvation received further ministering. These early outreach opportunities led to seeking the potential of achieving a more significant impact by establishing relationships with the major organizations assisting the homeless in Huntsville, as described. In 2018, outreach missions transformed from a singular focus on homeless Veterans to broadening the ability to minister to Veterans suffering from personal attacks arising from combat-related stresses, suicide ideations, and other devastating spiritual warfare attacks.

Undertaking this new mission set while maintaining the ability to continue focusing on homeless Veterans required expanding the ministry team. Four full-time ministry members were required and attained. These ministry members are all combat-seasoned, retired military members. When the ministry member speaks with a Veteran about challenges, they speak from experience, and the Veteran can feel empathy emanating from the ministry team member. Two additional part-time support ministry team members have come on board; both are former military members.

In addition, a fantastic support network of Veterans, Veterans' families, and Veteran supporters provides prayer and financial assistance to the ministry. Ministry members are all volunteers and, as such, do not accept a salary. However, all costs for the ministry team participating in ministry activities are financially covered, including transportation, meals, and lodging costs for attendance at a Firebase event (explained below). Veteran groups and individuals seeking to support a Veteran-run, Jesus-centric ministry provide ongoing funding. Centurion Witness Ministries is a recognized 501 (c) 3 charity. Donations include monetary and

donations-in-kind that cover the costs of some location-specific events. The ministry also receives pro-bono legal assistance from a well-established Alabama-based law firm.

Centurion Witness Ministries currently operates within a framework that supports a two-fold mission approach to serving Veterans. One mission parameter focuses on homeless Veterans, as described, and the second mission activity concentrates on Veterans and still serving military members suffering from spiritual attacks. These spiritual attacks on Veterans are devastating; one must only look at suicide statistics pertaining to Veterans. These attacks require a focused, effective counterattack; these spiritual counterattacks occur at various amazing locations within the US referred to by the ministry as a Firebase. Firebase missions focus on Psalm 18:37 as the guiding Scripture for the spiritual counterattack: “I pursue my enemies and overtake them; I do not turn back until they are wiped out” (HCSB). At the Firebase locations, the ministry provides a hands-on, biblically-grounded program focused on positively impacting areas the ministry knows to be challenging in a Veteran's life. These challenges include post-traumatic stress, suicide ideations, combat-related struggles, addictive behaviors, and family and societal conflicts.<sup>9</sup> A Firebase program is carried out over several days at a quiet location free from distractions. The ministry provides the location, transportation, meals, lodging, note-taking supplies, teaching materials, and some recreational activities to provide an additional venue for discussions and interaction. Successful Firebase missions have occurred in various locations, with attendees coming from Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Montana, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Virginia.

The mission to serve Veterans dealing with the numerous negative issues that impact them and their families through a Firebase operation is a strong point for Centurion Witness

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<sup>9</sup> “Home Page,” Centurion Witness Ministries, accessed March 24, 2023, <https://centurionwitness.org/>.

Ministries. Veterans leave these Firebase missions with a renewed heart, a strengthened spirit, and a desire to help their fellow Veterans in need. Following attendance at a Firebase mission, graduates, with a new Jesus-filled heart, were searching for the prospect of serving other Veterans. From this desire to aid other Veterans, the ministry's homeless Veteran outreach program has expanded beyond Huntsville, Alabama to Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Montana, Tennessee, and Virginia. These locations also participate in the Summer and Christmas support bag giveaway events for homeless Veterans. Currently, Centurion Witness Ministries supports approximately 240 homeless Veterans per year.

#### Homeless Veteran Focus

The focus on the plight of homeless Veterans uncovered a glaring hole in the ministry's efforts. The ministry serves the homeless Veterans' physical needs twice a year, yet it lacks consistent and tangible attentiveness to their spiritual needs. Centurion Witness Ministries is well-positioned to establish and maintain a highly functioning discipleship program focused on homeless Veterans. The ministry possesses the infrastructure, personnel, and financial support necessary to make an impact. The question is how best for the ministry to move forward with a dedicated discipleship effort. Timothy Keller reinforces the need for action in serving Jesus in his book *Center Church*; he points to James 2:15-17 as a definitive example of the requirement to go beyond just telling someone to be warm, fed, and well to the act of helping that person meet those needs.<sup>10</sup> True discipleship comes in the form of serving others through service to Jesus.

As highlighted, the requirement to disciple others is grounded in Scripture. It is most notably found in the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:20, where He instructs His followers to go

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<sup>10</sup> Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 325.

and make disciples. “Go” is an action word requiring movement, activity, and effort. In establishing a discipleship program to support homeless Veterans, the ministry will also adhere to further Scriptural guidance found in Matthew 25:40, indicating that doing for those with the least equates to serving the King. Certainly, homeless Veterans would be considered among those with the least possessions, food, and comfort while also often lacking hope.

Centurion Witness Ministries must ensure that spiritual well-being is not counted among the least, as experienced by homeless Veterans. The ministry must develop a discipleship program focused on homeless Veterans that offers those Veterans a realistic, God-inspired opportunity to seek Jesus and break free from the horrific grip of homelessness. To successfully meet that goal, Centurion Witness Ministries must identify and overcome challenges ahead.

### **Problem Presented**

Homeless Veterans account for a significant percentage of a community’s overall homeless population. Nationally, Veterans account for over 7 percent of the overall homeless population.<sup>11</sup> The February 2022 Point-in-Time summary taken in Huntsville, Alabama demonstrated 36 homeless Veterans were within a counted total of 549 homeless persons, a 7 percent average.<sup>12</sup> These Point-in-Time surveys are a federal government requirement and, while useful, are snapshots intended to detect trends and do not necessarily reflect overall numbers. For example, the January 2023 survey indicated a homeless Veteran population of 48 and a subsequent follow-up July survey indicated a homeless Veteran count of 20 individuals; the January count falls within accounting for 7 percent of the overall counted homeless population, the July survey is lower than the expected average. This divergence is covered in detail later in

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<sup>11</sup> Souza, *The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report*, 60.

<sup>12</sup> “Point-in-Time Summary 2022 All Persons Huntsville/North Alabama CoC AL-503,” NACH, last modified February 22, 2022, <https://nachcares.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-PIT-Count-Details.pdf>.

the paper. For the purposes of this project the project director has decided to maintain utilization of the February 2022 Point-in-Time survey results as was originally planned and referenced throughout this paper. Additionally, research indicates the recorded number of homeless Veterans registers lower than the actual number due to a lack of participation by homeless Veterans in survey activities.<sup>13</sup> Centurion Witness Ministries operates within Huntsville, Alabama to support homeless Veterans and has been confronted with these discrepancies between actual and estimated numbers of homeless Veterans.

There are a great many factors that impact homeless Veterans; these include suicide ideations, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and substance abuse.<sup>14</sup> Currently, Centurion Witness Ministries operates on the periphery of the homeless Veteran community in Huntsville, Alabama. Although the ministry engages with and through other homeless support and Veteran organizations to conduct a twice-annually dedicated item and resource-giving event, there is no dedicated Centurion Witness Ministries mechanism to attain and sustain an ongoing distinct ministry presence with local homeless Veterans. A program designed to bring the truth of Jesus through a discipleship program, on an enduring basis, would highlight a scripturally-based answer for these homeless Veterans and potentially reduce the rate of homeless Veterans in Huntsville. The problem is that Centurion Witness Ministries in Huntsville, Alabama lacks a discipleship program among homeless Veterans to lower the rate of homeless Veterans.

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<sup>13</sup> Jack Tsai and Katherine Kelton, "Service Use and Barriers to Care Among Homeless Veterans: Results from the National Veteran Homeless and Other Poverty Experiences (NV-HOPE) Study," *Journal of Community Psychology* 51, no. 1 (2023): 508.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 511-512.

## **Purpose Statement**

The purpose for this DMIN action project is to establish a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to reduce their homeless rates. This project director assesses that by establishing disciples, by drawing these homeless Veterans to Jesus, they will in turn seek relief from chronic homelessness. The establishment of a discipleship program dedicated to supporting homeless Veterans in Huntsville, Alabama is a key and essential ingredient to Centurion Witness ministries meeting its charter obligation: to serve homeless Veteran brothers and sisters. Manuel Costoya asks, “How does a homeless ministry duly integrate spiritual and material care for unhoused individuals?”<sup>15</sup> This charter obligation for Centurion Witness Ministries is grounded in Scripture and reinforces a shared sense of commitment to those who have served this country through the military. The scriptural guidance comes in the way of serving the least of society, making disciples, and pursuing the spiritual enemy until victorious (Matt. 25:40, 28:19; Ps. 18:37). The requirement to go, find, and help those Veterans in need, to leave no one behind, is embedded within each service member during their time in service; and continues for life.

## **Basic Assumptions**

The first assumption is that every individual questioned for this project will answer the questions honestly. These responses will include the initial determining reply indicating they are, in fact, a Veteran. Not all Veterans have or carry identification indicating their status; as such, the project director must rely upon the respondent’s reliability regarding their Veteran status. A subsequent important question will concern their salvation status.

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<sup>15</sup> Manuel Mejido Costoya, ed., *Land of Stark Contrasts: Faith-Based Responses to Homelessness in the United States* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2021), 20.

The second assumption is that there will be a large enough sample size of homeless Veteran respondents to allow for meaningful analysis. This assumption will also allow the study to produce quantifiably replicable information that can be used by others researching this issue. The North Alabama Coalition for the Homeless indicates a yearly Point-in-Time survey count of approximately forty Huntsville area homeless Veterans over the past five years.<sup>16</sup> This project director aims to access no less than 25 percent of these potential respondents.

The final assumption is that there will be no real possibility of reliably engaging with the same individuals for follow-up information or clarification. This assumption will necessitate that the methods of acquiring information must satisfy all factual requirements of the project within the initial six-week project contact period. The transient nature of the homeless Veterans to be approached negatively impacts any dependable subsequent timeline for access.

### **Definitions**

This project focuses on developing a dedicated discipleship program to support homeless Veterans through Centurion Witness Ministries. Key terms throughout this project are found in verbiage typically used in and around conversations of those familiar with Veterans and Veteran issues, including Veterans, combat, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and suicide ideation. These terms are often used with other listed terms to provide a complete overview of Veterans' challenges.

*Combat.* The Veterans Administration defines combat as “Engaged in armed conflict (in combat or during an occupation or raid).”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “Point-in-Time Summary 2009 to 2022, Veterans Only,” NACH, accessed March 29, 2023, <https://nachcares.org/pit/>.

<sup>17</sup> “Combat Related Special Compensation,” Veterans Administration, accessed March 28, 2023, <https://www.va.gov/resources/combat-related-special-compensation-crsc/>.

*Deployment.* The Veterans Administration defines deployment as

the movement of armed forces...One example would be when a unit based in the U.S. is deployed to another country to enter into a combat zone. Deployment is not restricted to combat; units can be deployed for other reasons such as humanitarian aid, evacuation of U.S. citizens, restoration of peace, or increased security.<sup>18</sup>

*Discipleship.* Discipleship is found in the act of serving the Lord as called throughout one's life; Tammie Grimm notes, "faithful discipleship is lived out along the Christian journey—traversing the pathways up and down hillsides, traveling along pastures and through the valleys that lie in between those mountaintop moments."<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Dodson stresses that pursuing the act of discipleship requires a disciple that is "rational, relational, and missional. They learn the gospel, relate in the mission, and convey the gospel."<sup>20</sup>

*Homeless.* The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines someone being homeless as

an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; such as, a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation, is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs), is exiting an institution where they have resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "What is Deployment?," Veterans Administration, accessed April 1, 2023, [https://www.va.gov/VetsInWorkplace/docs/em\\_deployment.asp](https://www.va.gov/VetsInWorkplace/docs/em_deployment.asp).

<sup>19</sup> Tammie Marie Grimm, "Ordinary, Everyday Discipleship: Banding Together for Faithful Living at Home, Work, and in the World," *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 17, no. 2 (2020): 352.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan K. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 27.

<sup>21</sup> "Homeless Definition," The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, accessed June 7, 2023, [https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition\\_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf](https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf).



*Moral injury.* Medical professionals consider a moral injury to be “A trauma or series of traumatic events, psychological, behavioral, or existential, that creates intrapersonal and interpersonal issues for the individual.”<sup>22</sup> Moral injuries among current and former military members are misunderstood but are known or suspected contributors to other ailments, such as substance abuse, suicide ideations, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

*Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.* Numerous studies and research activities agree that “post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a chronic and debilitating psychiatric condition that can develop following an individual’s exposure to threatened or actual death, sexual violence, or significant injury.”<sup>23</sup> This project director assesses that evidence demonstrates that PTSD also has a primarily ignored or unexplored spiritual component to the ailment.

*Spiritual attacks.* Spiritual attacks should be considered a constant potential threat for followers of Jesus and have proven excessively detrimental to Veterans. Jesus warns of the enemy’s intentions in John 10:10, telling all that the enemy will attack through killing, stealing, and destroying. Don Thorsen states, “Christian spirituality represents a conflict or struggle between spiritual beings, including both human and celestial beings, such as angels and demons.”<sup>24</sup>

*Substance abuse.* Substance abuse is a term utilized to describe the misuse of drugs or alcohol to one’s detriment. For alcohol abuse, “Veterans with and without a history of active duty service or deployment have a similar likelihood of meeting clinical criteria for alcohol

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Cox et al., “Moral Injury in Veterans Application of the Roy Adaptation Model to Improve Coping,” *Advances in Nursing Science* 44, no. 3 (2021): 225.

<sup>23</sup> Bret A. Moore and Walter E. Penk, ed., *Treating PTSD in Military Personnel: A Clinical Handbook* (New York, NY: Guilford Publications, 2019), 22.

<sup>24</sup> Don Thorsen, *The IVP Pocket Reference series: Pocket Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), no pagination, ProQuest Ebook Central.

abuse and dependence.”<sup>25</sup> As applied to drug abuse, “10.5% of Veterans report past year drug use...” substance abuse, or misuse “is associated with a number of negative outcomes, including those related to worse physical health...illness and injury...more risky behaviors... violent/aggressive behavior and risky sexual behavior... greater legal consequences...and increased risk for suicide.”<sup>26</sup>

*Suicide ideation.* Research conducted in attempting to predict suicide attempts has come to focus upon specific characteristics, including “recent onset of suicidal thoughts, duration and uncontrollability of these thoughts, severity of ideation at its worst point, and presence of a suicide plan have all been found to predict increased risk of subsequent suicide attempts.”<sup>27</sup>

*Traumatic Brain Injury.* Traumatic Brain Injury is often referred to by medical professionals as Post-Concussion Syndrome. Results of this syndrome can include “concentration and memory problems, dizziness, headaches, irritability, anxiety, and a range of other physical, cognitive, and emotional symptoms.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Rachel A. Hoopsick et al., “Differences in Alcohol Screening and Alcohol Problems Among United States Veterans Based on Military Service History,” *American Psychological Association, Psychological Services* 19, no. 4 (2022): 710.

<sup>26</sup> Melissa R. Schick et al., “Positive Emotional Intensity and Substance Use: The Underlying Role of Positive Emotional Avoidance in a Community Sample of Military Veterans,” *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* 47, no. 3 (2021): 373.

<sup>27</sup> Matthew K. Nock et al., “Risk Factors for the Transition from Suicide Ideation to Suicide Attempt: Results from the Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers (Army STARRS),” *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 127, no. 2 (2018): 140.

<sup>28</sup> Katherine E. Porter et al., “Postconcussive Symptoms (PCS) Following Combat-related Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) in Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Influence of TBI, PTSD, and Depression on Symptoms Measured by the Neurobehavioral Symptom Inventory (NSI),” *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 102 (2018): 9.

*Veteran.* The US Code, Title 38 USC. § 3.1 (d) defines a Veteran as “a person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.”<sup>29</sup>

*Veterans Administration.* A cabinet-level government department that exists to “fulfill President Lincoln’s promise to care for those who have served in our nation’s military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.”<sup>30</sup> This department manages the various benefits that Veterans earned during their military service to include health care, education benefits, disability compensation, and other assistance programs.

*Veterans Health Administration.* The health care arm of the Veteran’s Administration that “is America’s largest integrated health care system, providing care at 1,298 health care facilities, including 171 medical centers and 1,113 outpatient sites of care of varying complexity (VHA outpatient clinics), serving 9 million enrolled Veterans each year.”<sup>31</sup>

### **Limitations**

Seven major controls imposed upon this project will serve as limitations. These seven limitations are project duration, the narrow population available to be sampled, a location-driven restriction, the nature of the necessary personal interaction with the respondents, the impact of the use of anonymous surveys as a method to gather information, the project as a time-of-day centered event, and, lastly, the tendency for many homeless Veterans to isolate.

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<sup>29</sup> “Definitions,” U.S. National Archives, Code of Federal Regulations, accessed March 27, 2023, <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-38/chapter-I/part-3/subpart-A/subject-group-ECFRf5fe31f49d4f511/section-3.1>.

<sup>30</sup> “About the Department,” U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, accessed March 27, 2023, <https://department.va.gov/about/>.

<sup>31</sup> “Veterans Health Administration,” U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, accessed June 7, 2023, <https://www.va.gov/health/>.

Dedicated attendance at the sessions by the homeless Veterans to be served is the most impactful limitation of the seven. Prolonging project attendance requirements will initially serve as counterproductive to the project's goals. An extended program will offer too many opportunities for outside influences, such as people, drugs, and alcohol, to negatively impact the individual during the project. The haphazard construct of an intervention vehicle in dealing with the various and detailed negative factors impacting homeless Veterans becomes worsened by timeline challenges. Homeless Veterans confront obstacles not typically applicable to others in society.

The second limitation, the narrow population available to be sampled, results from the finite number of homeless Veterans available for contact. As previously noted, Huntsville's government-sampled homeless Veteran population hovers at around forty individuals. Through research and consultation with leaders from three support agencies that offer assistance, there are six to twelve homeless veterans on any given day at one of these three locations. These numbers will necessitate that the project director be available at these three locations at differing times.

The situation described above drives the third limitation: the inability to simultaneously engage with homeless Veterans at different locations to conduct the project. This limitation will require the project director to spread the contact dates out over multiple days. While this interval does offer the chance for homeless Veterans to spread the word to other homeless Veterans, which may increase contact numbers, it also provides an opportunity for non-Veterans to attempt to access the project. This factor receives further description in the delimitations section.

The fourth limitation, the nature of the necessary personal interaction with the respondents, further narrows the project window of availability to gather the appropriate information for the study. The intent is to have the opportunity to interact with the respondents

on-site while the survey is taken and completed; the use of drop-off questionnaires, online access, or third-party initiation would prove to be unfeasible. Personal interaction will provide flexibility in attaining all pertinent information through clarifications and follow-on queries upon the first and anticipated six additional roundtable meetings.

The fifth limitation, the impact of using anonymous surveys to gather information, will eliminate the possibility of re-engaging with the respondents for additional information or as mentioned above, to clarify a muddled response. An inherent trust factor also impacts this limitation. It would be counterproductive to follow up later with questions to an individual who had just had their anonymity assured. This type of follow-up could negatively impact the project director's goal of establishing a discipleship program among Huntsville's homeless Veteran community by introducing a sense of doubt about the project director.

The sixth challenging limitation is the restriction placed upon the project by the factor of the time of day. The time of day most amenable to engaging with homeless Veterans is centered upon their availability before or after meals at the previously mentioned support locations. The evening meals become more challenging for contact with homeless Veterans due to their desire not to miss out on securing a space to sleep for the evening, should they be looking to stay at a shelter location for the night. Additionally, and sadly, the later in the day one contacts people experiencing homelessness, the more likely that person may find the subject audience influenced by drugs, alcohol, or both.

The final limitation is the nature often ingrained within the attitude of many homeless Veterans, which is an over-arching reticence to accept assistance. Often, this outlook goes beyond avoiding assistance to avoiding contact with others altogether. This type of isolation manifests within many VA studies as a significant factor in the elevated suicide rate among

homeless Veterans.<sup>32</sup> Those most hesitant to step forward may be enticed by witnessing their fellow homeless Veteran brothers and sisters displaying a willingness to have found help. Centurion Witness Ministries will also include additional enticements to prompt cooperation, covered in the delimitations section. The ministry must be willing to engage with those homeless Veterans in a way they are most comfortable. It would be essential to have them open to engaging in a discipleship program later when they are more at ease and receptive rather than responding to a project survey at this moment.

### **Delimitations**

The self-imposed constraints that will impact this project center upon ensuring that only homeless Veterans participate in the study and that there is no misconstrued intent regarding the survey results. The project is to be conducted in a manner as to avoid inadvertently acquiring data from members of the broader Huntsville homeless community. This focused information gathering will prevent skewing the results of interviews and questionnaires intended for the limited constituent population of homeless Veterans. Additionally, the project will focus on the immediate needs of the project attendees; there will be no recruitment of future discipleship volunteers until the project's conclusion. Lastly, Centurion Witness Ministries will operate within a given budget for the execution of the project.

The first constraint will require all contact activity for the project's survey portion to occur at one of the three prominent locations in Huntsville where homeless Veterans seek assistance: the Downtown Rescue Mission, First Stop, and the Salvation Army. Although this may partially weight responses, if one assumes those homeless Veterans coming to a location

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<sup>32</sup> Jack Tsai and Xing Cao, "Association between Suicide Attempts and Homelessness in a Population-Based Sample of US Veterans and Non-Veterans," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 73, no. 4 (2019): 349.

may be predisposed to accept the help offered by a discipleship program, this project director is willing to ensure a higher likelihood of engaging with actual homeless Veterans as opposed to potentially artificially weighing the survey results by unintentionally interacting with the broader homeless community. As past events and current recommendations from local homeless advocates advise, approaching the main homeless camps in Huntsville, which surveys suggest may frequently contain more than 500 people, would introduce the project director to an environment wherein some individuals may misrepresent themselves as homeless Veterans, thereby disrupting anticipated valid results of the survey.

The second self-invoked restriction will be using staff and cadre from the previously mentioned local support agencies to identify individuals they know to be homeless Veterans; this positive identification by the staff is essential before an individual receives a survey. The annual Point-in-Time survey required by the federal government to assist in funding distribution provides these local agencies with the real prospect of noting the identities of valid homeless Veterans. Centurion Witness Ministries has previously coordinated with a regionally-focused support organization that assists veterans in acquiring their earned VA benefits. This organization can access the national Veterans database and, as such, could provide a definitive validation of a homeless person's status as a Veteran. This forced function would require the organization to be onsite at the same time as the conduct of the survey; this will require close coordination of the ministry and the regional organization at the time and location of the survey. This is the least likely option the ministry will utilize.

The subsequent self-directed restraint will be the lack of seeking volunteers among the homeless Veteran respondents to assist in starting a discipleship program at the time of the project survey. Although some of the survey questions may assist in identifying a predilection

among individuals to participate in a discipleship program, the pursuit of discipleship members may inadvertently confuse the project's initial participants into wrongfully viewing the weekly roundtable events as a means to gather more participants for immediate inclusion. This misunderstanding would certainly impact the project's recorded methodology. Of note, Centurion Witness Ministries will invite homeless Veterans to join the discipleship program when formed after the roundtable portion of the project is completed.

The final delimitation the ministry will operate under is budget driven. Centurion Witness Ministries will apply a budget of, at most, \$1,000 to this project. This funding will invite cooperation from a population of homeless Veterans who are not always eager to participate with other groups. This funding will be used to purchase and distribute bus transit passes, a highly sought-after commodity by the homeless community in Huntsville, and to acquire and provide food gift cards to local, welcoming restaurants. As a reminder, Centurion Witness Ministries is targeting a participation rate of no less than 25 percent of the local homeless Veteran community, currently postured at approximately 40 individuals overall. This budget can double the target to 50 percent if needed, with some financial flexibility remaining.

### **Thesis Statement**

The terms "hope" and "help" are often inextricably linked by circumstances. Where hope exists, help is engaged; where there is no perceived hope, that situation is often considered void of help. Homelessness presents a situation wherein an individual could be drawn into hopelessness and, therefore, perceive a situation where help does not exist. For a Veteran, this feeling can also be accompanied by a sense of abandonment, by the sense of the loss of a once shared camaraderie. Developing an effective discipleship program for Veterans can restore this shared fellowship.



Through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, hope brings joy and peace that can overcome all obstacles and attacks (Rom 15:13). Delivering this message to homeless Veterans could spark or rekindle the knowledge of God within their lives. This act of discipling could catalyze life-changing decisions and actions among the homeless Veteran community in Huntsville, AL. If Centurion Witness Ministries can effectively produce disciples among homeless Veterans through a discipleship program, then the homeless rate among that population will be reduced.

## CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This project director focused on the impacts that the development of a targeted, adaptable, and caring discipleship program could have upon the homeless Veteran population in Huntsville, Alabama. Homelessness is a powerful weapon the spiritual enemy uses to oppress those caught up within its cycle of despair. This project director will highlight the plight of homelessness and its specific impact upon the homeless Veteran community.

### Literature Review

Homelessness in the United States is an ever-growing challenge; the attributed issues and factors to one being homeless are as plentiful as the recommended solutions to the predicament. In 2022, an assessment found the overall number of homeless people in the US to be over 582,000, according to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Community Planning and Development.<sup>1</sup> Multiple groups from various social, ethnic, and occupational backgrounds encompass that homeless number. One such group is Veterans of the US military. Currently, Veterans account for 7 percent of the overall homeless population; that means, on any given night, over 33,000 Veterans are experiencing homelessness.<sup>2</sup> Within that 33,000, which includes those in shelters and those on the street, approximately 40 percent, or over 13,000 Veterans, are sleeping outside on the streets or in a homeless camp. The project director focused the literature review on the themes of homelessness among Veterans and the recognition of observable factors that impact homeless Veterans, including suicide ideation, PTSD, substance abuse, and the application of a Jesus-centric ministry approach to engaging homeless Veterans through a dedicated discipleship program.

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<sup>1</sup> Souza et al., *The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress* (The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Community Planning and Development, 2022), 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

## Homelessness and Veterans

In simple terms, homelessness is living in a place or location not intended to be occupied; these include vehicles, tents or other non-permanent structures, and overnight or temporary emergency shelters.<sup>3</sup> Homelessness can occur as a result of numerous dynamics which include succumbing to substance abuse, as a consequence of crime or incarceration, the effects of mental illness, unemployment, or not having a sustaining wage.<sup>4</sup> Many with former military service are noticeably impacted by these negative dynamic factors. Housing instability is also a contributing factor to homelessness with those encumbered by housing instability facing a realistic chance of becoming homeless. Housing instability is defined as a lapse in one's "housing security," viewed as "stable occupancy of a decent, safe, and affordable housing unit."<sup>5</sup> Research utilizing the US Veterans Administration's data, indicated there is a total of "290,431 unique Veterans... experiencing homelessness or housing instability in 2021..."<sup>6</sup> Given the number of homeless Veterans previously acknowledged as 33,000 in this paper, that places an additional 257,000 Veterans at risk of becoming homeless.

A 2020 study of homeless Veterans relied upon the following definition, "Homelessness is defined as a Veteran having ever found it necessary, during or after military service, to sleep for any length of time in a shelter, on the streets, or in another non-residential setting because of

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<sup>3</sup> J. Tsai, D. Szymkowiak, and E. Jutkowitz, "Developing an Operational Definition of Housing Instability and Homelessness in Veterans Health Administration's Medical Records," *PLoS ONE* (2022): 3.

<sup>4</sup> Cathy A. Small, Jason Kordosky, and Ross Moore, *The Man in the Dog Park: Coming Up Close to Homelessness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), 139.

<sup>5</sup> Nicole Elsasser Watson and George R. Carter, III, "Toward Implementation of a National Housing Insecurity Research Module," *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research* 22, no. 1 (2020): 233.

<sup>6</sup> Tsai, Szymkowiak, and Jutkowitz, "Developing an Operational Definition of Housing Instability," 1.

having no other place to stay.”<sup>7</sup> The *New York Times* Editorial Staff undertook a deep look at what they believed to be a growing population of homeless individuals; one key component of their study was Veterans. Their extensive investigation determined that Veterans were more likely than non-Veterans to remain homeless once they became homeless.<sup>8</sup> Researchers have not found a definitive link between military service and homelessness, but they have discovered multiple contributing factors.

#### Factors Impacting Veterans and Homelessness

Combat exposure is a unique experience usually not shared outside the Veteran community. Exposure to a combat environment brings an influx and mixture of adrenaline, stress, exhilaration, relief, and in many cases sadness and despair. In the article, “Warring Identities,” the authors state, “In combat, one is trained to be ready to kill, and stoicism in the face of violence is required.”<sup>9</sup> The application of this type of calm and collected demeanor in the face of immense danger can lead to intense stresses following the combat event. In the study “Staring into the Abyss: Veterans’ Accounts of Moral Injuries and Spiritual Challenges,” the authors note that “the responses to trauma from war may mirror that found in the reaction to other troubling events, and can include emotional numbing, isolation and withdrawal, and anger.”<sup>10</sup> This combat exposure has become a focal point for researchers as they attempt to develop an explanation for the link between Veterans and homelessness. Although not yet

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<sup>7</sup> Adam Ackerman, Ben Porter, and Ryan Sullivan, "The Effect of Combat Exposure on Veteran Homelessness," *Journal of Housing Economics*, no. 49 (2020): 4.

<sup>8</sup> The New York Times Editorial Staff, *The Homeless: An Increasing Population* (New York, NY: New York Times Educational Publishing, 2020), 10.

<sup>9</sup> R. Tyson Smith and Gala True, “Warring Identities: Identity Conflict and the Mental Distress of American Veterans of the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan,” *Society and Mental Health* 4, no. 2 (2014): 153.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick W. Sullivan and Vincent R. Starnino, "Staring into the Abyss: Veterans' Accounts of Moral Injuries and Spiritual Challenges," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 22, no.1 (2019): 26.

definitive, there is a connection. Adam Ackerman writes of research he led: “The results indicate that deployed Veterans exposed to combat are at an increased risk of homelessness compared with deployed Veterans not exposed to combat.”<sup>11</sup>

This association between combat exposure and Veteran homelessness is akin to a finely woven thread; one knows something is stitching the material together, but it is so fine almost to be invisible. Moral injuries from combat also serve as a catalyst for the resulting Veteran homelessness. Combat exposure personalizes acts of violence in a fashion that may force one to question their moral underpinnings. Zachary Moon, a professor of theology and psychology at the Chicago Theological Seminary, writes that a vital issue with overcoming moral injuries in Veterans stems from needing to work through the Veteran having been “ritually reformed” during training, literally replacing or layering “multiple moral worlds” within a Veteran’s life.<sup>12</sup> This re-training invites moral conflict and the resulting issues many Veterans endure. A report by Antal and Winnings notes that “moral injury is not a personality disorder but rather a wound suffered by a self-reflective and conscientious moral agent.”<sup>13</sup>

The outcome of a series of fast-acting decisions and life-altering actions required in a combat situation to respond to an intense lethal event can also result in a Veteran questioning their ethical foundations. These moral injuries become a location for guilt and shame to reside within the Veteran. Research indicates these feelings are greatly magnified in Veterans with

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<sup>11</sup> Ackerman, Porter, and Sullivan, "The Effect of Combat Exposure on Veteran Homelessness," 11.

<sup>12</sup> Zachary Moon, “‘Turn Now, My Vindication Is at Stake’: Military Moral Injury and Communities of Faith,” *Pastoral Psychology* 68, no. 1 (2019): 95.

<sup>13</sup> Chris J. Antal and Kathy Winnings, “Moral Injury, Soul Repair, and Creating a Place for Grace,” *The Religious Education Association* 110, no. 4 (2015): 384.

PTSD.<sup>14</sup> Studies demonstrate that moral injuries are often more pronounced in those that profess a belief in a divine being; the resulting shame from failing within the structure of their belief system, and the often-included disillusionment with that same belief system, further erodes the Veteran's well-being.<sup>15</sup>

A study, led by Kathryn Macia et al. focused upon military trauma and homelessness, suggests the self-induced damage from avoiding or resisting help may be symptomatic of “exposure to more interpersonal and military trauma,” with this, in turn, demonstrating “increased feelings of distress and responses to intrusions that could intensify emotion regulation problems and, in turn, lead to longer durations and more episodes of homelessness.”<sup>16</sup> These more frequent periods of homelessness appear to intensify the likelihood of suicidal thoughts or ideations. In addition, inquiries into suicide among homeless Veterans highlight the challenges in accounting for the many factors that may influence selecting suicide as a response mechanism to homelessness. A study to examine suicidal links or causation between homeless Veterans and suicide found that “Homeless Veterans exhibit numerous factors associated with suicide, including elevated risk for psychiatric diagnoses, traumatic brain injury (TBI), traumatization (e.g., combat exposure, military sexual trauma [MST]), and psychosocial stressors.”<sup>17</sup>

The multitude of issues confronting Veterans, particularly homeless Veterans, further disguises this difficult to glean stitching. A study of military Veterans possessing both PTSD and

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<sup>14</sup> Brian S. Powers, "The Bonhoeffer Dilemma: Sanctification as the Increasing Awareness of Moral Chaos," *Scottish Journal of Theology; Edinburgh* 73, no. 2 (2020): 163.

<sup>15</sup> Suzette Brémault-Phillips et al., “Spirituality and Moral Injury Among Military Personnel,” *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 10, (2019): 26.

<sup>16</sup> Kathryn Macia et al., "Cumulative Trauma Exposure and Chronic Homelessness Among Veterans: The Roles of Responses to Intrusions and Emotion Regulation," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 33 (2020): 1017.

<sup>17</sup> Ryan Holliday et al., "A Latent Class Analysis to Identify Subgroups of VHA Using Homeless Veterans at Greater Risk for Suicide Mortality," *Journal of Effective Disorders* 315 (2022): 162.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) were determined to have a “higher lifetime risk for homelessness, violent behavior, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts relative to veterans screening positive for SUD only or neither disorder.”<sup>18</sup> Added to these crippling challenges is the lack of financial resources for homeless Veterans. A study seeking out the correlation between various issues and homelessness among Veterans discovered that there was a connection, statistically, between Veterans receiving compensation for a service-connected disability and chronic homelessness; the lower a Veteran’s compensation for a service-connected disability, the more likely that Veteran would be homeless.<sup>19</sup> The researchers directing this study were unable to demonstrate a definitive, study-proven understanding between the Veteran’s compensation and homelessness; all they determined for certain was that a monetary means connection between financial compensation and homelessness existed.

This issue fits the pattern of negative factors mixing and intertwining to strengthen the grip of homelessness on Veterans. These issues, which include suicide ideation, PTSD, and substance abuse, provide researchers with applicable data to seek answers to this dilemma of Veteran homelessness. Undoubtedly, these inter-woven factors overlap, distort, and strengthen the ability of these attacks to debilitate a homeless Veteran.

### **Suicide Ideation as a Factor**

Many of the risk factors associated with a Veteran becoming homeless also impact their risk of suicide; the reasoning behind this link is still unclear. However, peer-reviewed studies indicate these additional dynamics include a rate of suicide attempts 7.8 times higher than non-

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<sup>18</sup> Shannon M. Blakely et al., “Psychosocial Well-Being Among Veterans With Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Substance Use Disorder,” *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* 14, no. 3 (2022): 427.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Byrne, Ann Elizabeth Montgomery, and Jamison D. Fargo, “Unsheltered Homelessness Among Veterans: Correlates and Profiles,” *Community Mental Health Journal* 52, no. 2 (2016): 152.

homeless Veterans; the studies also show a higher percentage of completed suicide attempts than is experienced nationally among all adults.<sup>20</sup> In fact, as of 2019, the suicide rate for Veterans was 52.3 percent higher than that of non-Veterans.<sup>21</sup> A Rand Health study concluded in 2020 found alarming discrepancies between the numbers of suicides when comparing Veterans to the general population. This study concluded that the suicide rate for 18-34-year-olds was 45.9 per 100,000 for Veterans as opposed to 16.5 per 100,000 for non-Veterans; for 55-74-year-olds it was 30.4 to 17 for the same sample size.<sup>22</sup>

Researchers are unclear as to the exact causes of such elevated numbers. There is a consensus among clinicians, scholars, and social scientists that Veterans that have experienced combat, physical trauma, or the mental stresses of service are more likely to succumb to homelessness and thoughts of suicide than adults in the general population.<sup>23</sup> Veteran suicides have perplexed clinicians for decades upon decades; a study of Union Soldier suicide numbers in the aftermath of the Civil War described ailments ranging from “depression, flashbacks, irritability, sleeplessness, and other indicators” of an incessant affliction.<sup>24</sup>

In his article “Last Straw,” Dr. Lawrence Climo points to the triggers most associated with Veteran suicides: “moral injury, psychic bruising, and guilt;” he expresses frustration at not

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<sup>20</sup> Jack Tsai and Xing Cao, "Association Between Suicide Attempts and Homelessness in a Population-Based Sample of US Veterans and Non-Veterans," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 73, no. 4 (2019): 346-347

<sup>21</sup> Holliday et al., "A Latent Class Analysis," 162.

<sup>22</sup> Rajeev Ramchand, "Suicide Among Veterans," *Rand Health Quarterly* 9, no. 3, (2020): 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ryan Holliday et al., "Preventing Suicide Among Homeless Veterans: A Consensus Statement by the Veterans Affairs Suicide Prevention Among Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Workgroup," *Medical Care* 59, no. 4, suppl 2 (2021): 104.

<sup>24</sup> Larry M. Logue and Peter Blanck, *Heavy Laden: Union Veterans, Psychological Illness, and Suicide* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 218.



being able to uncover that final moment of decision, the “last straw.”<sup>25</sup> An extensive study attempting to determine the most determinative factors impacting Veteran suicides noted that suicide is “an insidiously complex phenomenon.”<sup>26</sup> One study that demonstrated a modicum of hope for homeless Veterans considering suicide indicated that those homeless Veterans who sought assistance from the VHA had a “significant” reduction in “suicide mortality.”<sup>27</sup>

Seeking help is a major step toward receiving help. An issue that stymies research is a noted reticence among homeless Veterans to seek out help or treatment. Research findings highlight various reasons or excuses homeless Veterans will use to avoid seeking help; these include a sense that help is not needed, that there is an attachment of shame or disgrace in pursuing help, or they believe they do not have the required information to step forward for assistance.<sup>28</sup>

### **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as a Factor**

PTSD has proven to be an indicator of a tendency toward homelessness and of an elevated suicide risk across many studies. A look into the personal life of one homeless Veteran highlighted in the book *The Man in the Dog Park* demonstrates this reality. The homeless Veteran, with a deployment to Afghanistan, “began experiencing severe depression after he was honorably discharged from the military... Diagnosed with PTSD, he had frequent episodes of

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<sup>25</sup> Lawrence H. Climo, “Veterans and Suicide: The Last Straw,” *Psychiatric Times* 28 (2019): 1-2.

<sup>26</sup> John R. Blosnich et al., “Social Determinants and Military Veterans’ Suicide Ideation and Attempt: a Cross-sectional Analysis of Electronic Health Record Data,” *Journal of Internal Medicine* 35, no.6 (2020): 1764.

<sup>27</sup> Ann Elizabeth Montgomery et al., “Intervention to address homelessness and all-cause and suicide mortality among unstably housed US Veterans, 2012–2016,” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 75, no.4 (2021): 382.

<sup>28</sup> Jack Tsai and Katherine Kelton, “Service Use and Barriers to Care Among Homeless Veterans: Results from the National Veteran Homeless and Other Poverty Experiences (NV-HOPE) Study,” *Journal of Community Psychology* 51, no. 1 (2023): 513.

fear and depression.”<sup>29</sup> The burden of PTSD can be exceptionally detrimental and frequently debilitating.

The VA acknowledges PTSD as a “significant problem;” their numbers demonstrate “that between 11 and 20 percent of active duty personnel from Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom will be diagnosed each year with PTSD... approximately 12 percent of those from Operation Desert Storm will meet the criteria for a PTSD diagnosis... and about 30 percent of Veterans from the Vietnam War have been diagnosed with PTSD.”<sup>30</sup> Those are staggering numbers, and the results of those numbers impact Veteran suicides, Veteran homelessness, and Veteran issues with drugs and alcohol.

Ackerman et al.’s study found that Veterans who have PTSD “relive traumatic experiences through intrusive, recurrent recollections, flashbacks, and nightmares.”<sup>31</sup> PTSD can also negatively impact a homeless Veteran’s choice of where to spend the night, with the surroundings of a shelter or crowded homeless camp proving too much of a burden upon their senses. A research study that concentrated on homelessness and criminalization efforts by certain communities demonstrated that those who have PTSD could be denied access to shelters due to their existing PTSD conditions.<sup>32</sup>

Hostility is a major factor associated with PTSD, the effects of which could also underpin the attitudes and responses of others toward homeless Veterans. A 2021 study of Veterans with

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<sup>29</sup> Cathy A. Small, Jason Kordosky, and Ross Moore, *The Man in the Dog Park: Coming Up Close to Homelessness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), 13.

<sup>30</sup> Jennifer Davis-Berman, Dene Berman, and Nathan D. Berman, “Outdoor Programs as Treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Veterans: Issues and Evidence,” *Best Practices in Mental Health; Chicago* 14, no. 2, (2018): 10.

<sup>31</sup> Ackerman, Porter, and Sullivan, "The Effect of Combat Exposure on Veteran Homelessness," 3.

<sup>32</sup> Joy H. Kim, "The Case Against Criminalizing Homelessness: Functional Barriers to Shelters and Homeless Individuals' Lack of Choice," *New York University Law Review* 95, no. 4 (2020): 1180.

PTSD demonstrated, “Over time, aggression may erode social support and decrease the quality of one’s interpersonal relationships.”<sup>33</sup> In a related study, Kachadourian and her associates have shown that hostility is a contributing factor to an increase in both suicide ideation and suicide attempts among Veterans.<sup>34</sup>

The draining impacts of PTSD are typically not the result of one event or any single symptomatic experience, but they are cumulative with each event and experience building upon and melding with each other.<sup>35</sup> The challenge to these researchers is in finding a starting point in a homeless Veteran’s life from which to begin. Many studies demonstrate that issues impacting Veterans and homelessness may go back decades, even to their childhood.<sup>36</sup> These long-term lead events become more complicated by the moral injuries many Veterans suffer in war.

Studies have also shown that homeless Veterans afflicted with the challenge of PTSD have quite often had traumatic experiences outside of the military. These distressing trials are frequently cumulative and have taken the form of “childhood abuse, sexual trauma, and intimate partner violence;” all of these instances are potential factors in Veterans becoming homeless.<sup>37</sup> Macia’s study of this “cumulative trauma exposure” indicates a predisposition among Veterans to display poorer responses to traumatic experiences that have then occurred during their military service; these adverse outcomes result in an inability to muster enough core determination to respond to any additional exposure to trauma.<sup>38</sup> As previously mentioned, a significant challenge

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<sup>33</sup> Stephanie Y. Wells et al., “The Impact of Hostility on Quality of Life, Functioning, and Suicidal Ideation Among Male Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder,” *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 34 (2021): 1172.

<sup>34</sup> Lorig K. Kachadourian et al., “Suicidal Ideation in Military Veterans with Alcohol Dependence and PTSD: The Role of Hostility,” *The American Journal on Addictions* 27, no. 2 (2018): 125.

<sup>35</sup> Macia et al., “Cumulative Trauma Exposure and Chronic Homelessness,” 1018.

<sup>36</sup> Holliday et al., “Preventing Suicide Among Homeless Veterans,” 104.

<sup>37</sup> Macia et al., “Cumulative Trauma Exposure and Chronic Homelessness,” 1017.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 1023.

for the project director will be developing a deep enough personal relationship with the homeless Veteran to be able to uncover the starting point for that particular homeless Veteran's struggles, now amplified by PTSD.

### **Substance Abuse as a Factor**

As previously defined, substance abuse is a term utilized to describe the misuse of drugs and/or alcohol to one's detriment. Gordon highlights some of the often unseen influences that drive homeless Veterans to turn to substance abuse in an attempt to solve issues; she writes about the need to "work together to treat patients who are in physical, mental, and spiritual pain... help Veterans who are reluctant to talk about experiences they would rather repress or drown with alcohol and drugs."<sup>39</sup> There is an urgent need to seek out the connectivity between substance abuse and suicide among homeless Veterans. Holliday et al.'s study about preventing suicide among homeless Veterans indicates that "the roots of both suicide risk and homelessness for Veterans experiencing homelessness often extend back decades."<sup>40</sup> Many researchers consider substance abuse within the homeless Veteran community as prevalent and detrimental. Ackerman notes, "research suggests multiple factors, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance abuse disorders among others, increase a Veteran's risk of homelessness."<sup>41</sup>

An additional contributing factor to substance abuse among homeless Veterans was found in a 2021 study focused on Veteran's and their loss of identity and association with other

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<sup>39</sup> Suzanne Gordon, *Wounds of War: How the VA Delivers Health, Healing, and Hope to the Nation's Veterans* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 250.

<sup>40</sup> Holliday et al., "Preventing Suicide Among Homeless Veterans," 104.

<sup>41</sup> Ackerman, Porter, and Sullivan, "The Effect of Combat Exposure on Veteran Homelessness," 2.

military members.<sup>42</sup> Substance abuse is a term utilized to describe the misuse of drugs or alcohol to one's detriment. For alcohol abuse, "Veterans with and without a history of active duty service or deployment have a similar likelihood of meeting clinical criteria for alcohol abuse and dependence."<sup>43</sup> As applied to drug abuse, "10.5% of Veterans report past year drug use..." substance abuse, or misuse "is associated with a number of negative outcomes, including those related to worse physical health...illness and injury...more risky behaviors... violent/aggressive behavior and risky sexual behavior... greater legal consequences...and increased risk for suicide."<sup>44</sup>

Substance abuse is a driving force behind Veterans returning to homelessness after being rescued from that plight. A 2020 study found that substance abuse was the "problem most consistently and strongly associated with the risk of housing loss after rehousing" with persons described as having a "serious mental illness."<sup>45</sup> This same study demonstrated a promising trend in housing stability among previously homeless Veterans with the inclusion of a "peer specialist" to assist with counseling.<sup>46</sup> These positive results of peer-to-peer success served to sustain this project director's attitude toward this project being effective in reaching homeless Veterans.

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<sup>42</sup> Mayra Guerrero, "'It's like a Brotherhood': Thematic Analysis of Veterans' Identity Processes in Substance Abuse Recovery Homes," *Journal of Community Psychology* 49, no. 6 (2021): 1532.

<sup>43</sup> Rachel A. Hoopsick et al., "Differences in Alcohol Screening and Alcohol Problems Among United States Veterans Based on Military Service History," *American Psychological Association, Psychological Services* 19, no. 4 (2022): 710.

<sup>44</sup> Melissa R. Schick et al., "Positive Emotional Intensity and Substance Use: The Underlying Role of Positive Emotional Avoidance in a Community Sample of Military Veterans," *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* 47, no. 3 (2021): 373.

<sup>45</sup> Marsha L. Ellison et al., "Impact of Peer Specialist Services on Residential Stability and Behavioral Health Status Among Formerly Homeless Veterans With Cooccurring Mental Health and Substance Use Conditions," *Medical Care* 58, no. 4 (2020): 308.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

## Struggles and Assistance

These repeated exposures to traumatic experiences can move a Veteran's response from the physical, as in the inability to break free from homelessness, to the spiritual by emanating a "pervasive sense of betrayal" toward "one's country or even God."<sup>47</sup> Sullivan points to the results of this sense of betrayal as resulting in "spiritual distress, spiritual wounding, and spiritual injury."<sup>48</sup> Sullivan notes that the very nature of a Veteran's existence, literally life and death, can be condensed to operating within a spiritual environment; this dangerous nature exists within Veterans with PTSD.<sup>49</sup>

This life-and-death struggle is on display with the result of every Veteran suicide. The Veterans Administration (VA) spends much time, effort, and resources to negate Veteran suicides. Though there is no intent to belittle or refute the work of individuals, there is a potential issue resulting from the fact that the VA is conducting a majority of the screening conducted for suicide ideations within their inherent bureaucratic requirements.<sup>50</sup> One glaring problem with this arrangement is that many homeless Veterans may find themselves accessing a wide array of non-VA services and locations for assistance; and, many homeless Veterans, due to their Veteran status, do not qualify for comprehensive VA assistance.

While it is factual that individuals with a less than honorable discharge from the military do have specific limitations on benefits, mental health assistance and suicide prevention help are available to all who have served. The VA's website offers Veterans with an other-than-honorable discharge an opportunity to seek help; it reads, "Get connected with mental health care—no

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<sup>47</sup> Sullivan and Starnino, "Staring into the Abyss," 27.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>50</sup> Holliday et al., "Preventing Suicide Among Homeless Veterans," 104.

matter your discharge status, service history, or eligibility for VA health care.”<sup>51</sup> Herein, though, mental health is not necessarily spiritual health; and spiritual health is proving to be a research challenge for those typically relying upon government information and statistics for data. The government has not typically positioned its resources to either endorse or operate within a spiritual environment. However, a spiritual environment may be the location for answers to many issues facing homeless Veterans. The VA has been moving toward being more receptive to spiritual challenges faced by homeless Veterans for over five years, with each year bringing more experiences to be cataloged and acted upon positively.

In order to strengthen many of their Veterans Crisis Hotline responses, the VA has embraced a formal “wellness program” that focuses upon many factors, including “emotional, spiritual, financial, social, intellectual, environmental, and occupational wellness.”<sup>52</sup> This wellness program is a starting point for many Veterans seeking help; the challenge remains, as previously addressed, that many homeless Veterans will not reach out for assistance. This issue makes operating within a spiritual environment much more critical to the chaplains the VA employs. Gordon writes, “One of the jobs of a chaplain...is to help Veterans use whatever spiritual tools they have at this time of their life...that would be religious support, and for others it’s going to take a different form.”<sup>53</sup>

Sullivan's work in "Staring into the Abyss" endorses the concept of a spiritual environment. In this research of issues Veterans confront, an equivalence noted between moral and spiritual injuries displays a definitive turn toward homeless Veterans feeling "guilt and

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<sup>51</sup> “Member Benefits,” Veterans Administration, accessed March 2, 2023, <https://www.va.gov/service-member-benefits/>.

<sup>52</sup> Gordon, *Wounds of War*, 190.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

shame, lost trust and betrayal, the search for the forgiveness of self or others, loneliness and withdrawal, anger, and negative changes in spiritual and religious beliefs and practices."<sup>54</sup> A 2021 study that concentrated upon the influences of “religiousness and spirituality” on combat Veterans undergoing residential treatment for PTSD showed that “religious coping, organized religiousness, forgiveness, daily spiritual experiences, and spiritual practices” were all regarded as positive.<sup>55</sup>

Positive results found in this more clinical environment should serve as motivation for engaging with Veterans in a more spiritually-welcoming atmosphere. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) within the VA is responsible for the health and well-being of all Veterans. The VHA operates the most extensive healthcare system in the US, and they have made a concerted effort to become as welcoming, responsive, and attentive as possible. However, the challenge of having homeless Veterans seek help remains a challenge. A study conducted to research preventing suicide among homeless Veterans states, “Recognizing the intersection of homelessness and suicide risk, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is implementing strategies to integrate suicide prevention efforts into its service operations for Veterans experiencing homelessness.”<sup>56</sup>

Researchers recognize the unwillingness of homeless Veterans to utilize the VHA as acting to skew survey results across their many departments, including the suicide prevention efforts mentioned above. These researchers are aware of the gaps in information that non-participation by homeless Veterans creates and are seeking avenues into the closed portions of

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<sup>54</sup> Sullivan and Starnino, "Staring into the Abyss," 28.

<sup>55</sup> Crystal Park et al., "Influences of Religiousness/Spirituality on Mental and Physical Health in OEF/OIF/OND Military Veterans Varies by Sex and Race/Ethnicity," *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 138 (2021): 15.

<sup>56</sup> Holliday et al., "Preventing Suicide Among Homeless Veterans," 109.



homeless Veteran communities. As noted in Holliday et al.'s study, "additional understanding remains necessary...additional information is needed regarding rates of screening, risk factors, and interventions to address suicide risk among Veterans experiencing homelessness who access either VHA or non-VHA care."<sup>57</sup>

The issues produced by a lack of cooperation by homeless Veterans with the people and programs attempting to help are not merely bureaucratic. The lives of homeless Veterans are in even greater jeopardy than those risks brought about by living and sleeping out of doors, away from a structure. The high suicide rate among homeless Veterans receives tremendous attention yet maintains an unsolved status. A 2022 study by Holliday et al. focused on homeless Veterans and VHA usage. It states, "research and services specific to addressing substance use disorders among homeless Veterans remain paramount as a potential mechanism for reducing suicide mortality within this group of Veterans."<sup>58</sup> Researchers view substance abuse as symptomatic of various, often intertwined, factors.

The preceding literature review highlighted the many and varied issues that drive Veterans to homelessness and then serve to keep them ensnared. The following sections will demonstrate the theological and theoretical underpinnings supporting the project. Although the challenges are great, the answer is even more powerful – Jesus.

### **Theological Foundations**

The project director for this DMIN action project aimed to establish a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to reduce their homelessness rates. This paper states that Centurion Witness Ministries has supported homeless Veterans through

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<sup>57</sup> Holliday et al., "Preventing Suicide Among Homeless Veterans," 104.

<sup>58</sup> Holliday et al., "A Latent Class Analysis," 166.

material-focused events. The ministry needed to focus more on its requirement to make disciples. The theological foundations supporting the ministry's mission to make disciples of homeless veterans begins with Matthew 28:18-20.

### The Command to Make Disciples

Making disciples should be at the core of a ministry or church. It is a command directly from Jesus found in Matthew 28:18-20: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (HCSB). Anthony Saldarini notes that the magnitude of the power and supremacy of Jesus is found in these verses.<sup>59</sup>

#### **Matthew 28:18-20**

Followers of Jesus, disciples, are provided a no-nonsense understanding of whom they are serving in verse 18 when Jesus proclaims that "all authority in heaven and earth" has been given to Him. This thought should also give pause to believers to ponder the absolute and indescribable power of Him that gave that authority to Jesus, which is God the Father. Graham Renz contemplates God's power in a philosophically-tinted article that ultimately notes, "God's power manifests not because of some stimulus from without, as is the case with most creaturely powers, but because he wills it to."<sup>60</sup> The manifestation of this incomparable power is then given to Jesus; as Jesus accepts this power He tells His followers to go throughout the entire world

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<sup>59</sup> Anthony J. Saldarini, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible: Matthew*, ed. John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021), 137.

<sup>60</sup> Graham Renz, "What is God's Power?" *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 13, no. 3 (2021): 106.

making disciples. His intent is unmistakable; go, act, and be an agent for change in the lives of others on His behalf.

Rodney Reeves, in his commentary on Matthew, emphasizes that Matthew intimates that a disciple must know the Gospel before they can share the Gospel; he reinforces that the Great Commission is a command to “make disciples of all nations.”<sup>61</sup> Reeves also stresses an important point that other scholars amplify; that this command in Matthew 28 expands the more limited mission found in Matthew 10:6-7: to attend to and heal the “lost sheep of Israel.”<sup>62</sup> Jeanine Brown concurs with this once restricted focus on Israel, highlighted in Matthew 10:6-7, to the exclusion of Samaritans or Gentiles, but notes the shifting of the emphasis at the conclusion of Matthew to include every person.<sup>63</sup>

However, this point about the expansion of the call to engage with the world is not without dispute. Ian Boxall, in his commentary *Matthew Through the Centuries*, references specific queries scholars and theologians have pondered concerning the scale and scope of Matthew 28:18-20. This important question of inclusion and exclusion when sharing the Gospel would appear eclipsed by the guidance and direction Jesus Himself provided. Boxall notes these questions center upon questioning if excluding Jewish people is within God’s plan and if not excluded, does this then require Gentiles to seek the conversion of Jews to Christianity.<sup>64</sup> This paper is not overly concerned with the question of conversion but with the intent of whom to approach with the Gospel, and that intent encompasses all people. In James 2:1-12, James uses

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<sup>61</sup> Rodney Reeves, *Matthew: The Story of God, Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2017), 568.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>63</sup> Jeanine K. Brown and Kyle Roberts, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 89, 426.

<sup>64</sup> Ian Boxall, *Matthew Through the Centuries* (Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2019), 424.

an example of treating a rich man and a poor man coming into a meeting place differently based on their appearance. James warns of exhibiting favoritism, of discriminating against others, and of demonstrating judgment rather than providing love and mercy, as Scripture teaches. The idea of a believer seeking to prevent someone from learning about Jesus is noticeably absurd. The notion of excluding a whole population is unthinkable; if allowed, then someone could seek an exception to include the homeless as those omitted. To drive his point that some seek to exclude persons from the Gospel, Boxall includes a quote from Amy-Jill Levine, whom he describes as an American Jewish New Testament Scholar; she says her understanding of the Great Commission would not include evangelizing the Jews.<sup>65</sup>

This project director disagrees with Levine and will point to the Greek translation of “all nations” (ethnē) as an all-inclusive, all-encompassing term that does not equivocally exclude Jews. Brown writes that Matthew depicts Jews as available and subject to evangelism; she also points out the term "all nations" in Greek (ethnē ) and notes commentators generally agree upon this term to include both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>66</sup>

In addition, this project director will reinforce the earlier point from Matthew 28:18 wherein Jesus proclaims that He has been given “all” authority on heaven and earth; this proclamation supersedes any other semantics. Roy Damanik, in an expansive journal article referencing Jesus and Matthew, writes that Jesus unequivocally intended for disciples to engage with all people, “from every tribe and language.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, this not-so-subtle expansion of the

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<sup>65</sup> Boxall, *Matthew Through the Centuries*, 424.

<sup>66</sup> Brown and Roberts, *Matthew*, 89.

<sup>67</sup> Roy Damanik et al., “An Explanatory and Confirmatory Study about the Spreading of Jesus’ Message Based on Matthew 28:18-20,” *Pharos Journal of Theology* 103, no. 2 (2022): 10.

mission to engage the world with the truth of Jesus found in Matthew eliminates any excuse not to approach a particular person or group of people with the Gospel; this includes the homeless.

### Making Disciples

The power and necessity of making disciples in alignment with the command of Jesus is irrefutable. Mookgo Kgatle sees Matthew 28:18–20 as “a charge” Jesus gave to his disciples to create a perpetual “self-correcting machine.”<sup>68</sup> Understanding the requirement and fulfilling the requirement of Matthew 28:18-20 are two different items. The understanding of the command is simple, and thankfully, the book of Acts highlights the power to fulfill this requirement.

### Acts 2

Acts 2 demonstrates the unfettered power available to those disciples willing to accept the presence, help, and power of the Holy Spirit and to take hold of Jesus and serve others in His name. In his book detailing the book of Acts, David Bauer notes the exceptional importance of the Holy Spirit in all things related to church activities; he writes of the church’s obligation to focus upon “divine will” and “guidance” from God that are key ingredients for ensuring the successful outcome of a church’s focus and efforts.<sup>69</sup> This type of ministry, exemplified in Acts, invites the activities of other believers to further the mission of making disciples.

Grant Osborne, in his study of Acts, states that the description of church life in Acts “produces a truly thrilling church;” he notes the awesome example of sharing, helping, and developing relationships in and around this incredible experience of participating in an active

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<sup>68</sup> Mookgo S. Kgatle, “Globalisation of Missions: An Exegesis on the Great Commission,” *In die Skriflig* 52, no. 1 (2018): 5.

<sup>69</sup> David R. Bauer, *The Book of Acts as Story: a Narrative-Critical Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Publishing, 2021), 143-144.

and growing church.<sup>70</sup> Bauer reminds all that the Holy Spirit that arrives in Acts 2 with “a sound like that of a violent rushing wind,” as was foretold by Jesus in Acts 1:8, is the reason, the power, and the catalyst for the ability of disciples to take the message of Jesus worldwide as commanded in Matthew 28:18-20.<sup>71</sup>

Steve Smith asks believers to seek out the Holy Spirit in his book, extolling how ordinary believers can access extraordinary power by relying upon the Holy Spirit and then following “prompting” as directed.<sup>72</sup> This power and authority is available to all believers; not only is this immeasurable power available, but it is essential to be possessed and utilized by those undertaking a mission of discipleship. In the book *The Holy Spirit*, the authors note that with the departure of Jesus and the arrival of the Holy Spirit, as promised, “that every believer now enjoys the Spirit’s indwelling presence.”<sup>73</sup> It is this indwelling, this presence of the Holy Spirit, that allows and emboldens believers to conduct themselves as disciples, to spread the truth that is Jesus.

### Overcoming Challenges to Serve as a Disciple

Putting on this mantle of discipleship should be done willingly and joyfully, regardless of the challenges or difficulties. James 1:2 informs believers, “Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials” (HCSB). Displaying a joyful attitude while in the pursuit of serving Jesus will bring a needed example to those the disciple serves through their calling; in the case of Centurion Witness Ministries, homeless Veterans.

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<sup>70</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 67.

<sup>71</sup> Bauer, *The Book of Acts as Story*, 76.

<sup>72</sup> Steve Smith, *Spirit Walk (Special Edition): The Extraordinary Power of Acts for Ordinary People* (Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2020), 193.

<sup>73</sup> Greg Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, ed. David S. Dockery, Nathan A. Finn, and Christopher W. Morgan (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020) 58.

Paul, as a shackled prisoner, encourages believers in Ephesians 4:1 to “walk worthy of the calling you have received” (HCSB). Robert Rollock, in his commentary on Ephesians, stresses the importance of this plea in view of the plight of Paul at the time; a chained prisoner punished for his beliefs is calling upon his brothers to keep their heads up, stay focused on the calling, and to walk accordingly as a follower of Jesus.<sup>74</sup> The challenge for most ministries and churches is in the execution of bringing discipleship to others in environments that may simply be uncomfortable, not necessarily dangerous. Michael Green views a disordered environment for witnessing as essential; he cautions against churches slipping into complacency and becoming a “comfortable club,” he notes the focus should always be on active discipleship.<sup>75</sup>

On behalf of Jesus, action is a necessary component of being a disciple, of being a valid ministry. Even so, many Jesus-centric organizations remain stymied by inaction. The ability, or better yet, the willingness, to serve others through serving Jesus requires a certain level of development. Thomas Schreiner’s study of Corinthians demonstrates this requirement for growth brought out of the lessons found in the pursuit of serving others in 1 Corinthians 14. Schreiner notes that pursuing and utilizing various Holy Spirit-provided strengths must be conducted for others, for the congregation, for the ministry, not solely for the wielder of the talent.<sup>76</sup> He writes, “spiritual maturity is not self-absorbed;” he reinforces that tangible growth in the Spirit is exemplified by the level of one’s concern for others and by pursuing to satisfy the needs of

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<sup>74</sup> Robert Rollock, *Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians*, trans. Casey B. Carmichael (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020), 123.

<sup>75</sup> Michael E. Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 333.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 290-291.

others.<sup>77</sup> The benefits of this type of approach to ministry satisfy both the giver and the recipient physically and spiritually.

### Serving Those in Need

Scripture demands using one's blessings to serve others as a disciple in Matthew 25:31-46. This lesson utilizes goats and sheep as examples of the activities of persons that the king will rightly reward: those who serve the king will receive reward and punishment will come to those who do not serve faithfully. The part of the lesson to focus on is how one faithfully serves the king, unmistakably, by doing for others, which in this biblical example is by providing food and drink, clothing, medical assistance, and visiting those in dire straits. Saldarini notes in his commentary, with references as to whether the “needy” is a population restricted only to believers, that current theological emphasis points to judgment based upon how one “loved and cared for those most in need.”<sup>78</sup>

### Matthew 25

Petri Luomanen further illuminates the understanding of whom to serve by validating Matthew’s reference to “the least of my brothers” (Matt. 25:25-40); Luomanen stresses that Matthew is informing believers that “all the needy should be regarded as Jesus' brothers and treated accordingly.”<sup>79</sup> Dealing with, serving, and attempting to connect with the homeless can, at times, appear overwhelming. It would be easy for someone to acknowledge that a problem is so big that their limited effort could not or will not fix the issue. Paul Borthwick is aware of such a debilitating thought, he writes, “Just because we can’t fix a problem doesn’t mean we should

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<sup>77</sup> Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 290.

<sup>78</sup> Saldarini, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, 124.

<sup>79</sup> Petri Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven: A Study on the Structure of Matthew's View of Salvation* (Hemsbach, GE: Druck Partner Rübelmann, 2019), 191.



dismiss it and do nothing.”<sup>80</sup> This requirement to serve one’s brothers is further personalized in the development of a discipleship program for homeless Veterans by the deep-seated notion that all who have served this country through the military are brothers and must therefore be supported and respected.

### **Hebrews 10 and 12**

Ministry work, serving as and building disciples, must be constructed upon the ideal of deeply caring for those the ministry serves, as Jesus would care. Hebrews 10:24 calls upon believers to “be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works” (HCSB). In a commentary on Hebrews, Anthony Thiselton draws attention to the verse above by noting that displaying the concern referenced in Hebrews must be conducted with “interpersonal interaction and mutual support” out of love for those in need.<sup>81</sup> Establishing a discipleship program for homeless Veterans will require the type of interaction and mutual support espoused by Thiselton, and demanded of Scripture: one of love for those in need. David Peterson reinforces this active approach to discipleship by reminding believers of the need to serve God and the Kingdom as found in Hebrews 12:28, “acceptably, with reverence and awe;” Peterson notes that this type of service is an act of confidence in the truth that is God and in respect for His awesome power.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Paul Borthwick, *Great Commission, Great Compassion: Following Jesus and Loving the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 58.

<sup>81</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible: Hebrews*, ed. John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2021), 61.

<sup>82</sup> David G. Peterson, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 311-312.

## James and First Thessalonians

In his commentary on James, Douglas Moo stresses James' requirement of "doing" as being an essential element in the actual practice of being a Christian; he notes that the real test of one's words as a Christian is in the actions that back the comments.<sup>83</sup> Gerald Bilkes echoes these sentiments in his study of the book of James. Bilkes draws attention to the difference between "dead faith" and "genuine or true faith;" he reinforces that words alone will not impact the physical needs of others – meeting those needs requires action.<sup>84</sup> It is in this "doing" that Centurion Witness Ministries is drawn: serving homeless Veterans. Clearly, reaching out to serve, not just to talk, is a biblical requirement.

First Thessalonians 5:13 communicates, "And we exhort you, brothers: warn those who are irresponsible, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone" (HCSB). There is an interesting lesson uncovered in the book *Intercultural Discipleship (Encountering Mission)*. In this recounting of seminary students being immersed into an environment of homeless people, the students are subjected to an individual asking for prayerful intervention to help him overcome his desire to steal—this ask moves some students to being supportive and other students to questioning this man's salvation.<sup>85</sup> This story offers a snapshot into the not-so-subtle difference between discipling and disciplining. Osborne notes that the requirement to "help the weak" is, in actuality, a requirement to be "obsessed" with helping the weak; he reinforces a requirement for the provision of deep assistance for those in need of help

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<sup>83</sup> Douglas J. Moo, Gary Burge, and Andrew Hill, *Commentary on James: From the Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2019), 16.

<sup>84</sup> Gerald M. Bilkes, *Reservoirs of Strength: Lessons from the Book of James* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reform Heritage Books, 2017), 26.

<sup>85</sup> W. Jay Moon and A. Moreau, *Intercultural Discipleship (Encountering Mission): Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 52.

overcoming obstacles and challenges, whether physical or spiritual.<sup>86</sup> The spiritual challenges faced by homeless Veterans are quite often reflective of the trials by fire they experienced in physical combat.

### The Impact of Spiritual Warfare on Discipleship

This project director is convinced by study and experience, and evidenced by Scripture, that Satan is the progenitor of all warfare; “then war broke out in heaven” (Rev. 12:7, HCSB). Satan now moves between the spiritual and the physical bringing calamity through battle. Centurion Witness Ministries adheres to Psalm 18:37 as its Scriptural underpinning for ministry activities, to include support to homeless Veterans. Psalm 18:37 states, “I pursue my enemies and overtake them; I do not turn back until they are wiped out” (HCSB). In his commentary on Psalms, Tremper Longman points out that Psalm 18:37 goes beyond a description of victory; it is an accounting of the results of God’s Will in action.<sup>87</sup>

Robert Aldman highlights the strength found within Psalm 18:37 as related to physical and spiritual battle. He notes, “Yahweh, the only true God, gave David victory over his numerous antagonists.”<sup>88</sup> Aldman also uses his commentary to point to the preparation for battle in the requirements found in Ephesians 6:12-18, typically referred to as preparing for spiritual warfare. In a fascinating article highlighting spiritual warfare in Africa, the author reminds the reader that within Africa, there is witchcraft, evil spirits, demons, and the blurred religious

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<sup>86</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 79.

<sup>87</sup> Tremper Longman, III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 116.

<sup>88</sup> Robert L. Alden, *Psalms - Everyday Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2019), 17-18.

practices of an intertwining of Christianity and Paganism; all within the realm of spiritual warfare.<sup>89</sup>

This article points to Peter's warning in 1 Peter 5:8: "Be serious! Be alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour" (HCSB). Within this warning is the inherent knowledge, to be shared, that there is a dangerous enemy in proximity. There is also a built-in acknowledgement that an understanding of the enemy and the enemy's ways are beneficial to ensuring the successful outcome of a battle. Through this focus on conducting ministry work with homeless Veterans as in spiritual battle, individual victories can be fought for and won by overcoming a homeless Veteran's addictions, ailments, issues, and the lies of the enemy.

#### Know the Enemy

Knowing one's enemy is a key ingredient for successfully engaging in battle, as knowing oneself is equally important. Sun Tzu, the military leader and tactician from 2500 years ago, wrote "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles...If you know not the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."<sup>90</sup> These thoughts on warfare have been followed by successful warriors for twenty-five centuries. The principles of battle here are true and applicable in the physical fight. By amplifying and adhering to Scripture, the principles of physical battle can be utilized in the spiritual fight as well. 1 Peter 5:8 verifies the spiritual application: "Be serious! Be alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour" (HCSB).

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<sup>89</sup> Amos Y. Luka, "Spiritual Warfare in Africa: Towards Understanding the Classical Model in Light of Witchcraft Practices and the Christian Response," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023): 1-9.

<sup>90</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed. James Clavell (New York, NY: Delacorte Press, 1983), 18.

As previously mentioned, this project director is convinced by studying the Word, experiencing warfare, and hearing from others regarding physical and spiritual battles that Satan is the progenitor of all warfare. As the enemy, Satan is active in spiritual warfare. The enemy has, throughout history and in the world today, engaged in deadly battles. C. S. Lewis reminds believers of one of the enemy's approaches to battle in *The Screwtape Letters*. He writes, "I have explained that you can weaken his prayers by diverting his attention from the Enemy Himself to his own states of mind about the Enemy."<sup>91</sup> Speaking here as the demon uncle to a nephew engaging with a human, the "his" is the frail human, and the enemy's approach is worldwide.

General Carl Von Clausewitz, a German officer often referred to as the father of modern warfare, was first in battle as a twelve-year-old boy; he later became chief of the Prussian War School. Clausewitz wrote his treatise, *On War*, to highlight the intricacies and note the simplicities of warfare. *On War* is still taught today at military training institutions the world over, including in the US. A derivative of this work is the *Principles of War*. In these principles, Clausewitz notes that "Warfare has three main objects: (a) To conquer and destroy the armed power of the enemy, (b) To take possession of his material and other sources of strength, and (c) To gain public opinion."<sup>92</sup>

Here is what Jesus said about the enemy in John 10:10: "A thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance" (HCSB). This project director is struck by the definitive description of the enemy's mission: to steal, kill, and destroy. These remarkably align with the principles of war set forth by Clausewitz, and they

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<sup>91</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, annotated ed. (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013), 33.

<sup>92</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, *Principles of War*, ed. Hans W. Gatzke (Harrisburg, PA: The Telegraph Press, 1942), 45.

reinforce the teachings of Tzu to know both one's enemy and oneself. Believers would benefit in embracing these teachings related to physical warfare and then applying those lessons in the spiritual fight by relying on Scripture as foundational guidance. It is certainly not coincidental that in Ephesians 6:12-18, Paul teaches focusing for warfare in the spiritual realm while utilizing an example of a Roman soldier's physical preparation for warfare utilizing available tools and equipment. Iain Duguid indicates that the armor of God is "quite literally" armor that was "designed for and worn by God...to defend and protect us against Satan's onslaught...worn in the decisive battle on our behalf."<sup>93</sup> Duguid's approach describing divinely-worn armor is not typically found in publications and offers a powerful and unique perspective on how a Jesus-follower should equip for battle. This project director also finds interest in the military terminology utilized in the *Holman Christian Standard Bible* in the preceding verse, Ephesians 6:11, wherein the believer is told to prepare "so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil."

Tactical advantages lead to operational victories and strategic successes. The enemy is looking for a foothold at the tactical level. Ephesians 4:27 warns of this danger. In military terms, a foothold is an area where a force secures a piece of terrain to then advance a larger attack.<sup>94</sup> Homeless Veterans have been attacked and ensnared by the enemy and are now being tortured. The enemy has established a foothold in the lives of many homeless Veterans and is now pouring in reinforcements. It is incumbent upon followers of Jesus, churches, and ministries to step into the fight and engage with the enemy on behalf of homeless Veterans.

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<sup>93</sup> Iain M. Duguid, *The Whole Armor of God: How Christ's Victory Strengthens Us for Spiritual Warfare* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 16.

<sup>94</sup> United States Army, "Appendix J - Selected Battle Drills," accessed June 19, 2023, <https://www.moore.army.mil/Infantry/DoctrineSupplement/ATP3-21.8>.

This project director holds the position that a church or ministry should be viewed and operated as a forward operating base (FOB). A FOB is a military term used to denote a location utilized to conduct tactical operations in an area; notably, this location is routinely in enemy territory. A FOB is a location where soldiers re-arm, re-fit, re-load, and then move out of the confines to conduct new operations. A FOB is not a place for long-term inactivity, and it certainly is not a location where one waits for the enemy to manifest an attack against it. The FOB is action-driven and results-oriented, just as a church or ministry should be in the conduct of their missions. If church and ministry leaders would ponder their operations as being based upon spiritual warfare, then they would know that the church is in enemy territory. Prayer could be viewed as a spiritual artillery strike designed to deny, disrupt, or destroy the enemy. Ministry activities could be undertaken as strike missions deeper into enemy territory. The question becomes, is the church or ministry actively conducting operations outside of the walls of the FOB or simply waiting for the enemy to show himself?

Centurion Witness Ministries is well-positioned to actively engage in and grow a discipleship program dedicated to serving homeless veterans with a FOB-like focus. Matthew 28:18-20 serves as an overarching Scripture regarding forming a discipleship program; the other verses utilized herein assist in refining the ministry's ability to focus upon homeless Veterans. The theological underpinnings for a discipleship program are undeniable; the theoretical foundations are also essential to execute the program as effectively as possible.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

There is a natural cross-over between the theological and the theoretical found within the guidance of Matthew 28:18-20. Michelle Morris notes that the verse is essentially a “concise checklist” for those seeking to be a disciple; it tells the believer to seek a lifelong commitment to

“Go. Make disciples. Baptize. Teach.”<sup>95</sup> These directions serve as a simplistic template for developing a discipleship program, but simple does not equate to easy. God’s guidance to Noah to build the ark, found in Genesis 6:14-22, is simple enough—God even provides directions on material, size, and cargo—but the resulting labor to fulfill God’s requirements was not easy.

#### Pristine Ideas versus Untidy Actions

Ted Rivera describes working within a ministry dedicated to helping the homeless as “challenging” and “intimidating,” and that the work does not routinely result in encouragement.<sup>96</sup> Factors impacting ministries seeking to serve the mostly underserved are noted in the book, *Discipleship in Community: A Theological Vision for the Future*; the authors identify the necessity to bring the focus of Jesus and His ministry on those in the “margins” identified as including “outcasts,” those that are “sick,” and those readily identifiable as “poor.”<sup>97</sup> Discipleship programs and recommendations on how best to build one are plentiful; however, most of the references pertain to programs oriented toward a church, not a separate ministry, and certainly not guidance toward a ministry dealing primarily with a homeless community.

For example, Greg Ogden's work in *Discipleship Essentials* provides an excellent overview of developing a discipleship program for members within a stable structure, such as a church.<sup>98</sup> Ogden provides ample, church-relatable examples of the difficulties encountered while

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<sup>95</sup> Michelle J. Morris, *Gospel Discipleship Participant Guide: 4 Pathways for Christian Disciples* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2020), 25.

<sup>96</sup> Ted Rivera, *Reforming Mercy Ministry: A Practical Guide to Loving Your Neighbor* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 38.

<sup>97</sup> Mark E. Powell, John Mark Hicks, and Greg McKinzie, *Discipleship in Community: A Theological Vision for the Future* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2020), 37.

<sup>98</sup> Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019).



becoming or serving as a disciple. He eventually arrives at a functional, established church as the vessel for growing disciples. Within Appendix A of his book, *Discipleship Essentials*, Ogden calls for a ministry to consist of a life investment, transferability, purposefulness, flexibility, and preparation.<sup>99</sup> It appears the individuals encountered, and the locations accessed, while serving a homeless community do not fit neatly within Ogden's more comfortable church setting. Ogden's model, while descriptive, is only partially applicable to the needs of what is, essentially, a street ministry.

J. T. English also provides an overview of developing an effective discipleship program in his work *Deep Discipleship*; again, if that program is church-focused. This book contains a workable outline for a church or ministry to utilize, but it reads as a guide to a comfortable, more pristine type of environment than one might expect from a homeless camp. English writes, "Churches that are pursuing a culture of deep discipleship are intentionally commissioning their disciples into the church, the home, their neighborhoods, the workplace, and the nations."<sup>100</sup> This description does not appear to prepare a future disciple for witnessing to others that are cold, hungry, scared, and prepared to quit on life.

To further contest this ill-fitting theme, it is important to note that English writes, "Discipleship is not just a program but a total reorientation to reality."<sup>101</sup> His work does not seem to include the reality that many, in fact over 580,000 people across the US, will not have a place to sleep on the night that this portion of the thesis is being written.<sup>102</sup> The environment that encompasses homelessness includes hunger, poor health, poor hygiene, and fear for one's well-

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<sup>99</sup> Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 219-221.

<sup>100</sup> J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020), 3(r).

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, vvii.

<sup>102</sup> Souza et al., *The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report*, 2.

being. So, this project director must take issue with the overall impact of English's book on those outside of his intended audience.

However, as noted, portions of his guidance on discipleship program development apply to the requirements of many churches and perhaps ministries. These include his recommendations as they pertain to the structure of a program: the requirement of a predictable nature within a program, the necessary accountability of the ministry members to those served, the required accessibility of the program to those in need, the nature of the community that the program should serve, and the pursuit of excellence while serving Jesus.<sup>103</sup>

To ensure clarity, this project director is not disparaging the work and application of the guidance contained within these two authors' works. Many such books and articles focus on discipleship efforts within a church, as one would expect; this project director believes these tutelages to be lacking in focus on the fullest scope of the church's mission. The real work of a church and ministry should take place outside of the confines of the church building. Thus, while in disagreement with the overall focus of Ogden and English, there remain workable outlines contained within both works that are suitable within a less demanding environment than serving homeless Veterans in their daily lives.

Project Muse, a database used for all humanity research groups affiliated with Johns Hopkins University, describes parachurch organizations as a rapidly growing segment of the approach to ministry within the United States, identified by groups recognized as "heavily evangelical...focused on providing religious goods and services" with the crux being "outside of

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<sup>103</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 13.

any congregational or denominational sponsorship.”<sup>104</sup> In a different study conducted by the aforementioned researchers, they identified six significant focus areas of parachurch organizations: “(1) media production; (2) religious education, counseling, and preaching; (3) social and humanitarian services; (4) networking and fellowship; (5) mission work; and (6) advocacy and consulting.”<sup>105</sup>

Indeed, some or all the six areas identified are available for task application to churches willing to dedicate time and resources to the missions noted. This type of effort may prove too taxing, either financially or in the realm of “people” expenditures, for a church to pursue. Alternatively, perhaps, as this project director has uncovered during research of parachurch events, churches choose to benefit from others focusing on needs outside of typical church concentrations. There would appear to be mutually beneficial activities taking place within ministry circles; these constructive activities address a need, provide focus to a parachurch organization, and opens an opportunity for a church to access those both helping and receiving help. However, research has indicated underlying tensions between churches and parachurch organizations.

In a 2020 article exploring *The Church and Parachurch*, K. T. Resane points to arguments made by critics of parachurch activities as these types of organizations having “no scriptural justification” for their work or their presence.<sup>106</sup> Resane puts forth that a number of theologians contend that “Christ is building his church, not his parachurch” and that “all the good

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<sup>104</sup> Christopher P. Scheitle, Erica J. Dollhopf and John D. McCarthy, “Spiritual Districts: The Origins and Dynamics of US Cities with Unusually High Concentrations of Parachurch Organizations,” *Social Science History* 41, no. 3 (2017): 505.

<sup>105</sup> Erica J. Dollhopf, Christopher P. Scheitle, and John D. McCarthy, “Initial Results from a Survey of Two Cohorts of Religious Nonprofits,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54, no. 1 (2015): 507.

<sup>106</sup> K. T. Resane, “The Church and the Parachurch: Can the Two Dialogue in Order to Agree?” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 41, no. 1 (2020): 4.

things that parachurch ministries are doing can be and should be done under the oversight of the local church.”<sup>107</sup> This project director would submit that those theologians attempting to develop, or further push, a wedge between a church and a parachurch organization do so with a disregard to Jesus’ own words found in John 17:20-22: “I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their message. May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me. I have given them the glory You have given Me. May they be one as We are one” (HCSB). Jesus says here that it is the message, not the delivery method, that is important and certainly not the location of the initiation of the activity; even the messenger is not to be the focus for those serving the Lord, as a talking donkey attests to in Numbers 22. The underpinnings of the work must always be Jesus, not a particular church or ministry.

Keith Wasserman writes of his focus on discipling to the homeless with attempts to “become homeless to understand” in his book, *Good Works*.<sup>108</sup> The focus of the third chapter is explaining his real experiences with immersing himself into homelessness and in highlighting impactful insights and tough solutions to the challenges faced by those called to disciple the homeless. Wasserman is very clear that he is in no way factually homeless and that he has a way out of situations should they turn for the worse; he provides a perception of the plight of homelessness most will, thankfully, never experience. Of the need to help the homeless, Wasserman states, “We don’t need a grand vision; we simply need to begin.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Resane, “The Church and the Parachurch,” 4.

<sup>108</sup> Keith Wasserman and Christine D. Pohl, *Good Works: Hospitality and Faithful Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2021), 43.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

Michael Moynagh stresses the belief that churches should move to those in need of Jesus, not wait for people to approach the church; he writes that churches should be willing to go “to the edge” with Jesus.<sup>110</sup> This guidance would appear to reinforce the strengths that lay within a parachurch ministry. The Bible is clear on the active requirement of discipleship; believers are told to “Go” throughout the world (Matt. 28:18) to “the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, HCSB). Parachurch activities, such as Centurion Witness Ministries, provide a platform from which to go and do with specific mission callings at the forefront of their activities, unencumbered by anything other than serving Jesus as He has commanded His followers to do.

### The Difference between Talking and Doing

Not all churches are content to strengthen their church ministries by focusing within their church walls. Examples of being a disciple outside the church are available worldwide. Some churches in South Africa, where the hungry and needy are plentiful, are drawn to serving their local homeless community by their desire to serve Jesus better. The need to serve the homeless drives a growing reinterpretation of the church and its role in their local communities. Marinda van Niekirk writes, “The process of discipleship is a two-way learning experience. Vulnerable people have a lot to give and to teach... This can become true even in shelters.”<sup>111</sup> The takeaway for ministries is to move forward, to go to where the need exists. This approach also calls upon ministries to seek out those they serve for input and participation.

The book, *Real-Life Discipleship*, reminds those with discipleship as an aspiration that making disciples requires a going and doing demeanor and work ethic; making a disciple is not

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<sup>110</sup> Michael Moynagh, *Being Church, Doing Life: Creating Gospel Communities Where Life Happens* (Oxford, UK: Monarch Books, 2014), 138.

<sup>111</sup> Marinda van Niekirk, “Dignity, Justice and Community as a Baseline for Re-Interpreting Being Church in a Corona-Defined World,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies; Pretoria* 77, no. 4 (2021): 7.

based upon a “sit and listen” technique.<sup>112</sup> One study conducted in the United Kingdom, focused on the broader subject of teaching discipleship, found that the inclusion of others, either in tandem or small groups, strengthened the overall outcome of the discipleship activity through the creation of closer bonds for the participants.<sup>113</sup> To further this notion of the strength of relationships in discipleship, Andrew Hayes notes that we should view discipleship as personal and relational and not merely as a utility system to fix those in need, but rather as neighbors intentionally helping neighbors.<sup>114</sup>

Building relationships is also the theme of Kevin Nye’s comments that emphasize ministries can better project caring by developing relationships with the homeless as opposed to merely providing items; it is what he refers to as an intentional “relationship-first approach” when seeking to help the homeless.<sup>115</sup> The lesson here for ministries seeking to develop a discipleship program is to build relationships with those the ministry serves. Preston Sprinkle, in his book *GO*, writes that believers and churches have become too focused on programs and not intently focused enough on relationships; he notes that this loss of proper focus has resulted in a weakening of effective discipleship.<sup>116</sup>

The preceding paragraphs highlight various forms of engagement capable of execution outside of the confines of a church building. Connectivity is one of the variables that can

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<sup>112</sup> Jim Putman et al., *Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual: Equipping Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 39.

<sup>113</sup> John Eeva, Naomi Nixon and Nick Shephard, “Life-Changing Learning for Christian Discipleship and Ministry: A Practical Exploration,” *Practical Theology* 11, no. 4 (2018): 305.

<sup>114</sup> Andrew Hayes and Stephen Cherry eds., *The Meanings of Discipleship: Being Disciples Then and Now* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2021), 175.

<sup>115</sup> Kevin Nye and Terence Lester, *Grace Can Lead Us Home: A Christian Call to End Homelessness* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2022), 53.

<sup>116</sup> Preston Sprinkle, *GO: Returning Discipleship to the Front Lines of Faith* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2016), 42.

contribute to a more robust discipleship program; connectivity also presents a formidable challenge to ministries serving a homeless community. However, and perhaps surprisingly, this project director has found through conversations and observation that a large portion of the homeless community in Huntsville possesses cellular phones. These phones provide an available tool to initiate contact with individuals or groups, provide insight and input into challenges, and provide a better sense of community among homeless Veterans. A study in New York focused on church's adaptations to providing discipleship and strengthening a sense of community via phones and social media during Covid protocols. This study found that “building a strong sense of engagement requires the formation of a healthy sense of community.”<sup>117</sup> Initiating even the most simplistic of phone groups could strengthen both the connectivity within the homeless Veteran community and the efforts of ministries as they serve that group of burgeoning disciples. While this tool will not be an essential ingredient of the project's approach in the execution portion of the study, it remains available for inclusion and application to the ministry's efforts beyond the project.

Initial connectivity with the homeless community also presents a challenge. The nature of daily activities focused first upon survival, places the remainder of the day into a fluid situation. Working to overcome the realities of life challenges to homeless Veterans while bringing the promises of a fulfilled discipleship program will necessitate a focused, compressed project timeline. As such, implementing a discipleship program will require a flexible approach to execution with a minimalist approach to time constraints.

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<sup>117</sup> Jacob Dunlow, “Digital Discipleship: A Study of How Churches in New York Used Technology for Adult Discipleship During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 18, no. 3 (2021): 462

Various locations that adhere to a 12-step program will utilize a “seven-week behavioral spirituality intervention” identified as “Knowing Your Higher Power.”<sup>118</sup> The program is intended to enhance the impact participants receive in attending a 12-step program. The restricted seven-week timeline produces a maximum impact in an environment compressed by time, people, and distractions; the initial study took place in 2007 and consisted of seven, 45-minute weekly meetings.<sup>119</sup>

A study to determine the effects of homelessness on cardiac patients also considered the realities of life as a homeless person in their study. The study noted that individuals missed appointments due to a lack of transportation, no permanent housing location, and no area where belongings could be adequately secured while attending a session appointment; of note, these interview sessions averaged 57 minutes in length and included one follow-up interview.<sup>120</sup> These same limited-time factors will influence attendees at this project’s locations while the project director is attempting to provide a spiritual environment underpinning to the homeless Veteran’s daily lives.

### Unique Approaches to a Unique Community

One must be cautious with terminology when dealing and engaging with a unique community, such as homeless Veterans. In the case of homeless Veterans, many are hesitant to be associated with a group or gathering that appears to be rules-oriented; even uttering the term program could be off-putting. Matthew Dickerson undertakes an approach to disciple-making

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<sup>118</sup> Carman S. Gill and Robert R. Freund, *Spirituality and Religion in Counseling* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 167, Kortex.

<sup>119</sup> Anthony E. Brown et al., “Association of Spirituality and Sobriety During a Behavioral Spirituality Intervention for Twelve Step (TS) Recovery,” *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* 33 (2007): 613.

<sup>120</sup> Ashkay Pendyal et al., “When You’re Homeless, They Look Down on You”: A Qualitative, Community-based Study of Homeless Individuals with Heart Failure, *Heart & Lung* 50 (2021): 81.



and developing a discipleship program that deemphasizes the term program.<sup>121</sup> Dickerson is not implying that programs are not important, but the ministry must resist the tendency to utilize checklists and the like; he argues that this method of deemphasizing the term “program” enhances working toward helping others become disciples by incorporating activities that are intentional, personal, and genuine.<sup>122</sup> The project director understands the advice above and will give careful consideration to the moniker given to engagement with the homeless Veteran community.

A personal approach, sans a program atmosphere, is what Operation Nightwatch brings to the homeless in Seattle; this organization provides nightly meals on the streets and, among other support activities, runs a communication center that assists with finding emergency shelter for the homeless.<sup>123</sup> Manuel Costoya identifies five practices that Operation Nightwatch undertakes in their ministry efforts; these five focus areas apply to the discipleship program Centurion Witness Ministries intends to develop. These five practices of Operation Nightwatch base their approach on praying with the homeless, consistently being present for the homeless, speaking with the homeless, building relationships with the homeless, and telling others about the needs of the homeless.<sup>124</sup> The project director assesses that by incorporating these five procedures into ministry activities, Centurion Witness Ministries will be able to modify the scale and scope of the exemplified operation applied to the homeless Veteran community in Huntsville, Alabama.

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<sup>121</sup> Matthew Dickerson, *Disciple Making in a Culture of Power, Comfort, and Fear* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 113.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-115.

<sup>123</sup> Manuel Mejido Costoya, ed., *Land of Stark Contrasts: Faith-Based Responses to Homelessness in the United States* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2021), 280.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 280-281.

An additional recurring theme this project director has noted is the tendency for churches and ministries to seek out short-term achievements to increase personal and organizational feelings of success. Centurion Witness Ministries is guilty of executing too few missions to support homeless Veterans over too great of a time between events. In her study of a comprehensive recovery program for the homeless, Robin Caldwell notes, "to see true change in an individual's life, the focus must be on long-term, transformational change, not solely on alleviating the short-term consequences of homelessness."<sup>125</sup> By applying a similar multi-stage model exemplified by Operation Nightwatch, Centurion Witness Ministries will build a mechanism to create a sustainable and effective discipleship program to serve the homeless Veteran community in Huntsville, Alabama.

### **Conclusion**

Studies, research, and captured personal stories indicate that homeless Veterans find themselves in such a potentially devastating predicament due to poor choices and often due to circumstances and events that are beyond their complete control. Bringing assistance, comfort, and encouragement to these homeless Veterans is Centurion Witness Ministries' charter. The ministry intends to catalyze life-changing decisions and actions among the homeless Veteran community in Huntsville, Alabama. If Centurion Witness Ministries can effectively produce disciples among homeless Veterans through a discipleship program, then the homeless rate among that population will be reduced.

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<sup>125</sup> Robin Caldwell, Rebecca Meraz, and Robert Sweeney, "Homeless No More: A Christ-Centered, Comprehensive Homeless Recovery Program," *Journal of Christian Nursing* 35, no. 4 (2018): 230.

This mission brings with it an enormous challenge; nationally, Veterans account for over 7 percent of the overall homeless population.<sup>126</sup> There are currently approximately 40 homeless Veterans in Huntsville, Alabama which has a counted total of 549 homeless persons, a 7 percent average.<sup>127</sup> Homeless Veterans suffer various physical, emotional, and spiritual ills due to suicide ideations, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and substance abuse.<sup>128</sup> Centurion Witness Ministries is dedicated to designing a mechanism to attain and sustain an on-going distinct ministry presence with local homeless Veterans. The problem is that Centurion Witness Ministries in Huntsville, Alabama lacks a discipleship program among homeless Veterans to lower the rate of homeless Veterans.

This DMIN action project aims to establish a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to bring them to Jesus and to reduce their homeless rates. Establishing a discipleship program dedicated to supporting homeless Veterans in Huntsville is essential to Centurion Witness ministries meeting its charter obligation: to serve homeless Veteran brothers and sisters. This obligation for Centurion Witness Ministries is grounded in Scripture and reinforced through a shared sense of brotherhood to those who have served this country through the military. The scriptural guidance comes in the way of serving the least of society, making disciples, and pursuing the spiritual enemy until victorious (Matt. 25:40, 28:19; Ps. 18:37). There is an embedded requirement within each service member to go, find, and help those Veterans in need; leave no one behind.

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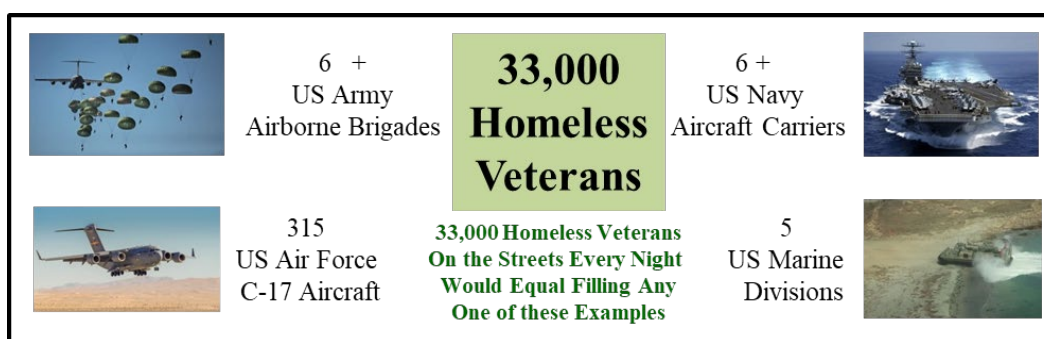
<sup>126</sup> Tanya D. Souza et al., *The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress (Part 1)* (The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Community Planning and Development, 2022), 60.

<sup>127</sup> "Point-in-Time Summary 2022 All Persons Huntsville/North Alabama CoC AL-503," NACH, last modified February 22, 2022, <https://nachcares.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-PIT-Count-Details.pdf>.

<sup>128</sup> Tsai and Kelton, "Service Use and Barriers to Care Among Homeless Veterans," 511-512.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This DMIN project intervention design resulted from observing and desiring to counter the spiritual effects of homelessness by addressing the social, mental, and emotional impacts of homelessness on this nation's Veteran community, with a concerted focus on Huntsville, Alabama. Homelessness is an ongoing and exceedingly destructive and perplexing reality across the US. In the US, homelessness directly affects over 580,000 people on any given night.<sup>1</sup> As previously addressed in chapters one and two, 33,000 of those 580,000 people are Veterans. That equates to homeless Veterans accounting for over 7 percent of the homeless population within the US.<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 1.** Perspective of Homeless Veteran Numbers to Known Quantities.

This project director asserts that reaching the homeless Veteran population via a discipleship effort designed to bring focus to the multi-faceted spiritual attacks brought by the enemy is an essential step toward breaking the grip homelessness has on the Veteran population. The problem is that Centurion Witness Ministries in Huntsville, Alabama lacks such a discipleship program among homeless Veterans to lower the rate of homeless Veterans. Therefore, this project director aims to establish a discipleship program to bring this needed

<sup>1</sup> Tanya D. Souza et al., *The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress (Part 1)* (The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Community Planning and Development, 2022), 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

focus to multi-faceted spiritual attacks on homeless Veterans to break the grip homelessness has on the affected Veterans and to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to bring them to Jesus and to reduce their homeless rates.

Previous studies this project director has examined have focused on homeless Veteran issues through the lenses of psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, medical professionals, counselors, legal practitioners, and government-backed research teams; ministry professionals have not been at the forefront of these studies. This project will utilize a primarily qualitative intervention, with some quantitative elements incorporated from using a Likert scale in the homeless Veteran surveys. The intervention will utilize surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and targeted discussions of two groups of stakeholders: homeless Veteran participants and location support staff participants.

The intended result of this project is the development of a discipleship program designed to highlight the spiritual attacks the enemy brings against Veterans and to bring Jesus into the lives of these homeless Veterans. This newfound perspective will provide a glimpse into the life Jesus intends for them to enjoy and will serve as a catalyst in breaking them free of homelessness. This discipleship program will assist homeless Veterans in overcoming their debilitating homelessness by accepting help in becoming free of this physically manifested spiritual attack. Jesus warns in John 10:10 that the enemy is intent on stealing, killing, and destroying; Jesus understands the enemy. Karl Payne writes, “Jesus clearly recognized the difference between physical disease and maladies, deformation, epilepsy, and spiritual demonic bondage...He successfully healed all of the above.”<sup>3</sup> These homeless Veterans are physically

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<sup>3</sup> Karl I. Payne, *Spiritual Warfare: Christians, Demonization and Deliverance* (Alexandria, VA: Republic Book Publishers, 2021), 42.

suffering from an attack originating in the spiritual realm. This project, and the resulting long-term discipleship program, will provide a stable mechanism that can bridge the gap between what is often available generically to a homeless person and what can be targeted to fully meet the needs of a homeless Veteran.

### **Intervention Design**

The project director intends for this project to be viewed through the lens of evangelism as the guiding factor and focus of discipleship, as opposed to more of an equipping function of discipleship. The ministry efforts detailed in developing this discipleship program will center on following and relating Scriptural examples of Jesus' teachings while establishing personal relationships with homeless Veterans. Applying this evangelistic emphasis of discipleship would be to draw homeless Veterans to Jesus and have them accept Him as their Savior, with a follow-up step of breaking free from homelessness. Malan Nel argues that discipleship and evangelism are inclusive of each other.<sup>4</sup> This ministry's focus will be heavily weighted toward evangelism instead of a discipleship emphasis based on equipping the homeless Veterans through education, processes, and discipling tools. In his article on evangelism and discipleship, Frederik Coetzee writes that others should view those following an evangelistic model of discipleship through the understanding that "faithful presence (being), loving service (deeds) and words of hope at appropriate times (speaking)," are applicable means of faithfully serving the Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> All homeless Veterans encountered will be considered non-Jesus followers until corroboration of Salvation through their actions or testimony. The initial survey asks the homeless Veterans about

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<sup>4</sup> M. Nel and W. J. Schoeman, "Rediscovering 'Disciplemaking' and the Role of FaithSharing," *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75, no 4. (2019): 4.

<sup>5</sup> Frederik R. L. Coetzee, Malan Nel, Johannes J. Knoetze, "Evangelism as an invitation to missional discipleship in the kingdom of God," *Verbum et Ecclesia; Pretoria* 44, no. 1 (2023): 1.

their salvation status; the project director will consider the survey results as a starting point to guide the roundtable session discussions about Jesus.

As previously acknowledged, this intervention aims to establish a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to reduce their homeless rates. The objectives of this project are to bring homeless Veterans to Jesus, to decrease Veteran homelessness, to establish ongoing relationships with homeless Veterans, to assist homeless Veterans in overcoming specific factors impacting their continued homelessness, to instill an atmosphere of inclusion and care among homeless Veterans, and to provide biblically-based mentorship and guidance to homeless Veterans through discipleship.

#### Pre-Intervention

The project's pre-intervention phase will focus on securing permissions, participants, and consent. One month before executing the on-site portion of the intervention plan, the project director will conduct separate meetings with the appropriate decision-makers at the desired project activity locations: the Downtown Rescue Mission, First Stop, and the Salvation Army. During these meetings, expected to last no more than one hour per meeting, the project director will provide an overview of the intervention plan and describe the cooperation the location would be expected to provide, including time available, rooms, assistance in identifying valid homeless Veterans, and other support as required. Verbal concurrence from the appropriate decision-maker will result in delivery of the formal IRB permission request form (Appendices A-C) and subsequent response form for that location (Appendices D-F).

After receiving written confirmation from the location decision-makers via the IRB-approved response form, portions of the two weeks preceding the on-site intervention activities will result in recruiting homeless Veteran participants that utilize the three designated support

locations identified above. The project director will provide some personal background information and will inform the homeless Veteran of the more structured activities upcoming by distributing an IRB-approved recruitment flyer (Appendix K). The distribution of thank you items as compensation for cooperating in the upcoming survey will be discussed during these conversations. These thank you items include metro one-month bus passes and food gift cards to restaurants near homeless support locations. Once screened for meeting participant criteria, homeless Veterans will receive an IRB-approved consent form (Appendix G) for their review and signature confirming their status as a project participant.

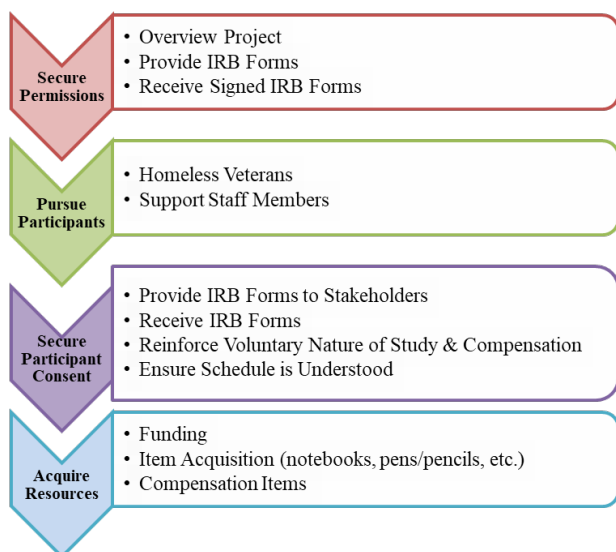
Formal recruiting efforts will also occur among the support staff at the three project locations; again, while screening for participant criteria, an IRB-approved recruitment flyer (Appendix L) will be provided. Upon gauging interest, an IRB-approved consent form, location specific (Appendices H - J), will be provided for review and signature to the support staff participants. Note, recruiting activities of any kind will not commence until the project director has received the completed IRB-approved permission response form from the appropriate decision-maker at the three project locations.

Within the week before project execution, the project director will retrieve any outstanding consent forms from the two stakeholder groups: homeless Veterans and location support staff. Also, the project director will confirm with the designated location approval authority that all agreed-upon areas will be available throughout the intervention. The project director will also ensure that all required intervention resources have been acquired and are ready for use. These resources will include paper and a printer for surveys, questionnaires, interview outlines, consent forms for the participants, permission forms for location approval, schedules, and posters, pencils/ink pens for participant interaction with surveys and questionnaires,



notepads for the project director to record interview results and homeless Veteran participants to record thoughts, funding to purchase participant involvement thank you compensation items of bus passes and food cards and meals for the project director, and transportation for the project director to/from intervention locations.

Adherence to the pre-intervention checklist (Appendix Q) will ensure an effective transition into the intervention phase of the project.



**Figure 2.** Overview of Pre-Intervention Phase (See Appendix P for Full Checklist).

### Intervention

This project, and the resulting long-term discipleship program, will provide a vehicle that can bridge the gap between what is available generically to a homeless person and what is essential to fully meet the intertwined needs of a homeless Veteran. Engagement with homeless Veterans throughout this six-week intervention plan centers upon three unique focus areas with their execution together as one cohesive program; these three areas are Personal Discipleship Activities, Spiritual Warfare Awareness, and the utilization of a Provision Engagement System

Personal Discipleship Activities will bring a gospel-guided approach to the issue of Veteran homelessness. Through these activities the project will be able to introduce the homeless

Veteran to Jesus through word and deed. The project director will assist them in identifying the involvement of Jesus in their lives, which is often unknown to them. Personal engagement through prayer and conversational engagement will be critical aspects of this step.

Spiritual Warfare Awareness will provide the project director to reinforce the importance of homeless Veterans learning the truth about their circumstances. A focus area will be the understanding of the impact of spiritual warfare in their lives. The project director will assist them in seeing how, through spiritual attacks, they have been beaten down to the point of surrender by the spiritual enemy. Since these homeless Veterans are former military members, the project director can use verbiage related to combat that will resonate with their previous experiences as a Soldier, Sailor, Marine, or Airman that will illuminate the effects of spiritual warfare on their lives. This relational teaching will also offer the opportunity to reach deeper into their personal lives, reinforcing the first step, personal discipleship.

Applying the Provision Engagement System will bring the project director in closer proximity to these homeless Veterans. The project director will provide the opportunity to meet the physical needs of the homeless Veteran community more effectively and continually, as opposed to the twice-a-year sustenance support engagements the project director's ministry currently conducts.



**Figure 3.** Blend of Ministry Focus Areas for Homeless Veteran Support.

These three focus areas will provide a unique recipe for engaging homeless Veterans to establish a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to reduce their homeless rates in Huntsville, Alabama. These focus areas constitute a continuous loop; wherever a homeless Veteran enters the framework, the other two elements are available for utilization in short order. Personal discipleship activities and authentic engagement with homeless Veterans are rare; here, they will be a cornerstone activity. The inclusion of teaching about the realities and impacts of spiritual warfare is also not often seen or used when dealing with homeless Veterans. This focus area will illuminate portions of their lives that will bring the challenges they have faced into focus in a way these Veterans have not experienced. Finally, including a better-managed system of providing a timelier provision of sustenance items will be an opportunity for further and more frequent engagement with homeless Veterans and will ease their personal needs so they can better focus on the spiritual.

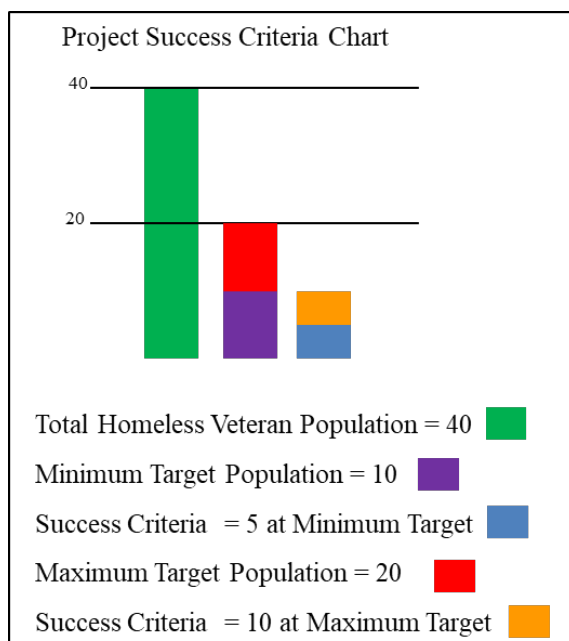
#### Evaluation Criteria

The criteria for success will be that between five and ten homeless Veteran participants seek assistance with ending their homelessness due to the activities of the project director and the discipleship program they encounter as part of the project. The homeless Veteran community in Huntsville is assessed as in the range of forty individuals. The designated minimum for the project to target inclusion in the intervention is 25 percent, or ten individuals. The ministry has a delimitation restriction of \$1,000 for the project; this funding anticipates spending \$50 per participant on the thank you items previously addressed. That expenditure will cover \$30 for a 30-day metro bus pass and \$20 on a food card to a local homeless-friendly restaurant.<sup>6</sup> Meeting

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<sup>6</sup> The project director considers a homeless-friendly restaurant to be a location where there is no alcohol served and where the management and staff are welcoming toward the homeless.

that delimitation boundary of \$1,000 would account for 50 percent of the approximate local homeless veteran population, or twenty individuals. Given the hesitancy or outright resistance of homeless veteran population, or twenty individuals. Given the hesitancy or outright resistance of homeless Veterans seeking assistance, a 50 percent success rate among homeless Veteran participants would be evidence of a successful outcome of this intervention. Given current planning numbers, this would result in between five and ten individuals seeking help to break free from homelessness following the activities of the discipleship program during the project.



**Table 3.1.** Success Criteria Overview.

With Veterans moving to end their homelessness, the seeking assistance portion of the criteria highlighted above can take one of four possibilities. The first is for the homeless Veteran to engage with the VA directly; the VA has specific programs designed to get Veterans off the streets and into homes. They also have programs targeting the factors most often attributed to contributing to homelessness among Veterans. The second possibility is for the homeless Veteran to engage with a support organization that serves as a designated conduit to the VA. Locally, those organizations include Still Serving Veterans, the American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization. The third acceptable possibility for homeless Veterans to

meet the criteria is engaging with the Downtown Rescue Mission by entering their long-term, on-site program to overcome homelessness. The final recognized option for the project is for the homeless Veteran to engage with First Stop and their in-house program to assist with ending homelessness. Seeking to break free from homelessness by pursuing any of the four possibilities designated above will meet the seeking assistance portion of the measurable project criteria.

### Tools

To gather data and measure the effects of the intervention, the project director will apply guidance and suggestions contained in Tim Sensing's book, *Qualitative Research*.<sup>7</sup> The first tool utilized will originate from the issue of sampling; the project director intends to sample all of those who choose to participate that meet the established criteria as a homeless Veteran or a staff member with an established record of supporting homeless Veterans. As discussed, at the most, this project would have 40 participants in the study; this is the recognized extent of the entire homeless Veteran population in Huntsville. The project's goal (See Table 3.1.) is to reach 25 percent of the population (10 participants), with a 50 percent reach (20 participants) as an unlikely but welcomed potential. A 50 percent participation rate of 20 individuals is also the cap due to a self-imposed delimiting funding factor. Therefore, a random sampling method would be unnecessary since the project will have a limited and relatively small number of potential participants. With a predetermined population of targeted participants theoretical sampling is also not applicable. Purposive sampling is the closest, definition-wise, to meeting the project's needs, but the project director will not disregard or dismiss anyone that meets the criteria of the study.

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<sup>7</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Method Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: WIPF & Stock, 2011).

The second tool the project director will apply is the use of questions. The project director understands and agrees with the need to ask open-ended questions. The questions must allow the person asked to interject their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and opinions. The question should not result from the project director's attempt to impose their predetermined response to the question.

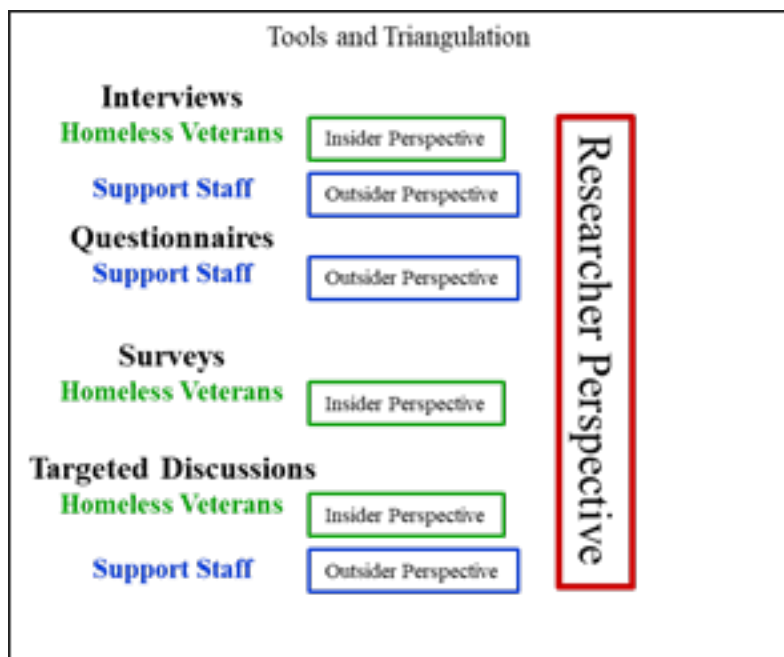
The next tool the project director will implement will be observations. What one says and what one does are only sometimes congruent. A focused observer can look for those areas where someone's facial expressions, posture, mannerisms, demeanor, or word use are out of sync with the other observed factors. These moments allow the observer to dig deeper by asking additional open-ended questions for clarification. The observer must not imply that a participant is lying, misleading, or holding back information; often, the participant is unaware of the discrepancy the observer has noticed. A gentle redirect here, through a properly phrased open-ended question, can have an incredible impact.

Interviews, questionnaires, and surveys will also be tools the project director will utilize. The interviews will be a centerpiece of the project; for homeless Veteran participants, the interviews will center on the question, "Why are you homeless?" For the support staff participants, the interviews will center on the question, "Why do you think Veterans are homeless?" As the project director works through the interviews, these questions will serve as the base to feed the necessary back-and-forth conversations between the participants and the project director. Given the nature of the primary stakeholders, homeless Veterans, and the project director's desire to develop the most effective discipleship program possible, the project director will conduct semi-structured interviews. This format will offer the project director the position of asking open-ended questions of the participant while maintaining a framework that will produce

answers most applicable to the project. Due to the nature of the environment wherein these homeless Veterans live and function, the project director will not be conducting group interviews at the beginning of the project. The project director's experience has shown that a portion of the homeless population can be set off emotionally and sometimes physically at the least triggering event. Participating in a group interview in the early stage of the project may provide just the venue for such a negative occurrence either on-site or, more disturbingly, in an out-of-site location such as the homeless camp. The project director will conduct a group interview at the project's conclusion when homeless Veteran participants have had five weeks to acclimate to the situation, each other, and the project director. Of note, the project director will utilize roundtable discussions during the six-week project with the homeless Veterans to initiate and conduct discussions. These roundtable discussions will not carry the same impetus as an interview but will be viewed as an opportunity for participants to choose their participation level.

The project director will also use questionnaires containing open-ended questions. The project director will distribute these questionnaires before interviewing that participant; the reasoning is two-fold. First, the project director desires for the participant to have time to mull over their answers as they fill out the questionnaire. Secondly, the project director anticipates that the questionnaire will prompt deeper responses from them in the interviews. Providing a longer-term response vehicle, such as a questionnaire, to the homeless Veteran participants is not a viable or desired option. There is a distinct likelihood that the questionnaire could be misplaced or acquired by someone not affiliated with the project; additionally, the project director does not want the homeless Veterans to have time to contemplate their answers prior to the project director's interview with them. Their responses may become what they think the project director wants to hear as opposed to an immediate reaction to a question.

The project director will also use surveys as a tool for this project. Homeless Veteran participants will receive their survey after their initial interview. The surveys will focus on the impacts of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), moral injuries, and substance abuse. The project director desires to understand the scale and scope these factors have on the lives of the homeless Veterans in Huntsville, Alabama.



**Figure 4.** Illustration of Tools and Triangulation.

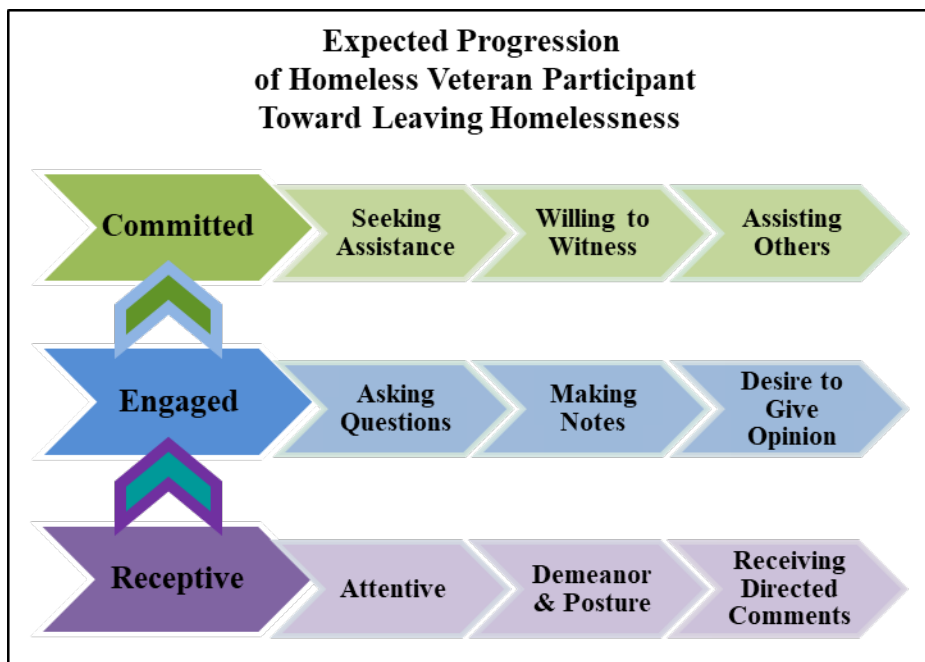
#### Triangulation of Data

Triangulation is essential to gathering data for this project.<sup>8</sup> The homeless Veteran participants in the project will provide an insider point of view. They will provide valuable input through their interviews, surveys, and responses in targeted discussions. The support staff at the three prominent locations where homeless Veterans seek assistance will provide the outsider perspective. Through their questionnaires and interviews, these support staff participants will provide a unique view of the issues homeless Veterans face daily. The project director will

<sup>8</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72-78.



provide the necessary researcher's viewpoint through observations and field notes taken along the path of the anticipated six-week project. The project director will be responsible for requesting, receiving, and assembling all the data accessed by the project.



**Figure 5.** Expectation of Progress.

#### Week One

The intervention phase of the project will begin the first week of the initiation of the planned on-site events; this is referenced as Week One. Week One will consist of conducting interviews with the homeless Veteran participants (Appendix M), providing surveys to homeless Veteran participants (Appendix P), distributing the initial compensation items to the homeless Veteran participants, and issuing questionnaires to support staff participants (Appendix O). These events will occur at the three designated locations on different days of the week, i.e., the Downtown Rescue Mission on Monday, First Stop on Tuesday, and the Salvation Army on Wednesday. The activities described within this intervention section will pertain to all three locations. They are mirror-like representations of activities executed during the intervention phase of the project at each location.

Each week the project director will arrive at the designated location for that day at least thirty minutes before the project's start time; 8:00 a.m. is the expected start time for each day. The early arrival will allow time for additional coordination of activities or to receive updates from the location staff. The project director will begin that coordination meeting with prayer. The project director will then move to the designated project mission area to conduct the day's activities. This practice of arriving early, de-conflicting issues with the staff, praying, and occupying the area designated for the project's mission use will be repeated daily at every location. Additionally, each day will involve an opening and closing prayer with the participants.

The initial interviews with the homeless Veteran participants are a key and critical portion of the overall project. The personal interactions with the homeless Veterans and their responses to the interview questions will highlight the initial tone for the project director to gauge the most effective way to conduct personal relations moving forward. The interview questions for the homeless Veterans will center upon identifying the factors they believe have caused and are maintaining their homelessness. These initial interviews will take approximately one hour per interview. For this engagement, the activities at the Downtown Rescue Mission will be expected to be of the longest duration in Week One due to the presence of the largest number of homeless Veterans, which, on any given weekday, is approximately 12-20 homeless Veterans. This number is followed by First Stop, with 8-12 homeless Veterans per day, and the Salvation Army, with a daily expectation of 6-8 homeless Veterans. There are no expectations that the project director will reach a full quota of potential participants at any one of these locations; however, should prospects be exceeded, then the project director is prepared to accommodate the more significant numbers by expending an additional day of Week One at that location.

The interviews with the homeless Veterans will physically occur at the locations agreed to by the supporting location; these will be a room, office space, or similar area that provides a comfortable and secure location to ensure privacy. The project director will take and maintain field notes and record the homeless Veteran's responses to the interview questions. The initial compensation items, the food gift cards, will be provided to the homeless Veteran participants after their interview as a thank you for completing the interview. Also, upon completing the interview, per the IRB-approved consent form, member checking the notes at the interview's conclusion to ensure accuracy will be allowed. Prior to the departure of the homeless Veteran participant a day and time will be agreed upon for the next week to continue with their ascribed participation in the project. These interviews should take one hour per homeless Veteran participant.

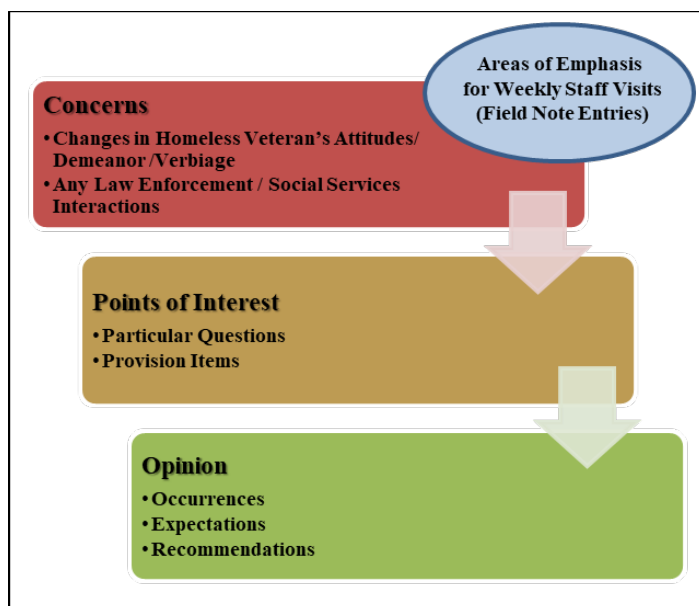
Additionally, the project director will establish a weekly pattern that will consist of the project director encouraging the homeless Veteran to seek Jesus as their Savior and to pursue assistance in breaking free from homelessness by engaging with the VA, or a support organization that serves as a designated conduit to the VA. Locally, those organizations are Still Serving Veterans, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization, the Downtown Rescue Mission, and First Stop. The project director will conduct a follow-up each week to determine how many homeless Veterans sought assistance breaking free from homelessness the preceding week. Figure 6 identifies information activities to be conducted with homeless Veteran participants weekly.

Weekly Status Notes to Determine Events, Trends, Indicators				
Group Overview		Receptive	Engaged	Committed
	This Week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Last Week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Questions	Group asked about next week's roundtable – focus area			
Issues	None Reported			
Guidance	Answered roundtable question Ensured contact info was up-to-date in case of severe weather			
Activities	B# sought assistance from First Stop on Thursday			
Update names of participants that accepted Jesus the previous week. Overall # Update names of participants that sought assistance the previous week. Overall # Where was help sought? Identify contributing factors. What prompted the action?				
Participant A#		Receptive	Engaged	Committed
	This Week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Last Week	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Questions	A# asked about the day's Scripture A# wanted to know what kind of help was available			
Issues	A# works occasionally as a day laborer A# needs new work gloves			
Guidance	Answered Scripture question Informed where and what kind of help is available Asked about glove requirements (passed glove issue to support staff for assistance)			
Activities	None Observed / Reported			
Did A# accept Jesus the previous week? Did A# seek assistance the previous week? Where was help sought? Identify contributing factors. What prompted the action?				
Participant B# Overview				
Participant C# Overview				
Participant D# Overview				

**Figure 6a.** Repetitive Information Activities with Homeless Veteran Participants.

The project director will hand-deliver the questionnaires for the support staff participants on the corresponding day of the homeless Veteran interviews at that location. A review of the document will accompany the distribution of the questionnaires to ensure there are no questions or misunderstandings about the contents. Before the project director's departure, a day and time will be agreed upon for the following week to retrieve the completed questionnaire from the support staff participant. Return of the questionnaires and clarifying questions, if any, should take fifteen minutes per support staff participant.

The project director will remain flexible as to the daily execution of tasks due to the inherent nature of the non-standard timeline maintained by many homeless Veterans. However, the intent is to be consistent about activities and corresponding days of the week. Before leaving a location, the project director will post a schedule for the following week in a prominent, agreed-upon place. Figure 7 reflects the recurring weekly interactions with the Support Staff.



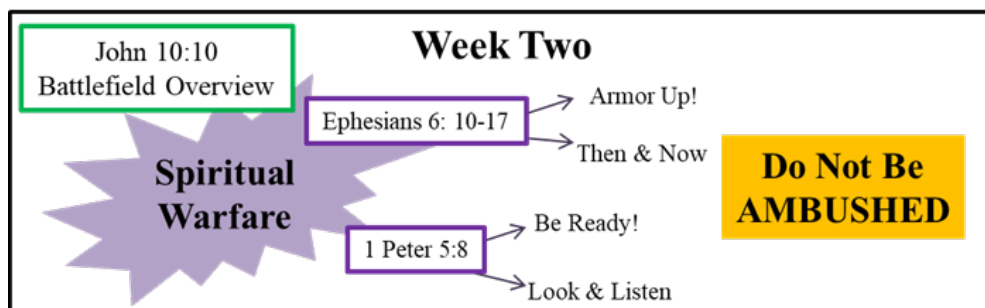
**Figure 7.** Recurring Weekly Interactions with the Support Staff.

## Week Two

The intervention phase of the project will continue with Week Two. Week Two will begin with initiating on-site group contact activities with homeless Veterans. These group events are roundtable events with no applied pressure for active participation, but engagements with the project director and other participants will be encouraged.

The Week Two roundtable will be the initial group event with the homeless Veterans. The project director will ensure that all participants understand that all comments will be welcomed and that no Veteran will be denied permission to participate in the discussions, within

decorum. The project director will also clarify that there will be no condemnation or personal judgment against the Veterans at the roundtable.



**Figure 8.** Depiction of Week Two Roundtable Emphasis.

The Week Two roundtable for homeless Veterans will focus on Spiritual Warfare. John 10:10 will demonstrate the differences between what the enemy wants for the participants and what Jesus desires for them in their lives. Ephesians 6:10-17 will be the Scripture utilized for much of the roundtable. References in Ephesians will allow for introducing the concept of spiritual battle while utilizing the homeless Veteran's personal experiences in the US Armed Forces to personalize the teaching points. Information and guidance from 1 Peter 5:8, included in the session, is a well-timed warning to be alert to the presence and intentions of the enemy. Again, the homeless Veteran's former lives will allow them to put their current circumstances into perspective.

Additionally, homeless Veterans will see the presence of Jesus in their lives. The project director will provide broad examples of how a participant may have been exposed to Jesus engaging in their life without full knowledge of the event. The project director expects to garner specifics from the homeless Veteran participants. 1 Peter 5:6-7 will be used to show the power of being humble and accepting of the Lord's favor, and Psalm 103:3-5 will demonstrate that, thankfully, the Lord gives from love, not retribution. Additionally, the project director will utilize John 3:16 to demonstrate to the homeless Veterans that this Scripture is directed at them

personally. It will inform them that how they have lived thus far does not indicate how much God loves them; instead, it results from the enemy's attacks on their lives. The project director will use these conversations to encourage the homeless Veterans to accept the Lord's help and the help of outside agencies in breaking free from homelessness. This initial roundtable will take approximately one hour and a half.

After the roundtable with the homeless Veteran participants, a survey, which the project director will explain will be collected anonymously, will be given to the participants for completion before their departure. The survey will be focused on gathering information regarding the recognized major contributing factors to homelessness among Veterans: PTSD, TBI, moral injuries, and substance abuse. The surveys will be collected by the project director and assessed during the week. The subject of suicide ideations will not be addressed in the survey. Immediate follow-up with a Veteran may not be possible, and the risk of triggering a negative event will not be undertaken at this meeting. For perspective, the Week Four roundtable will focus exclusively on suicide ideations and provide the requisite time for observation and to engage in any needed intervention. See Figure 6 for information activities to be conducted with homeless Veteran participants weekly.

Week Two will also result in retrieving the questionnaires left with the support staff participants the previous week. The project director will ensure that the respondent understands all information provided on the questionnaire. Retrieval of the questionnaires and discussions will take up to thirty minutes. Before departure, the project director will finalize a day and time for the following week's interview. The project director will ensure that the respondent understands all information provided on the questionnaire. Retrieval of the questionnaires and discussions will take up to thirty minutes. Prior to departure, the project director will finalize a

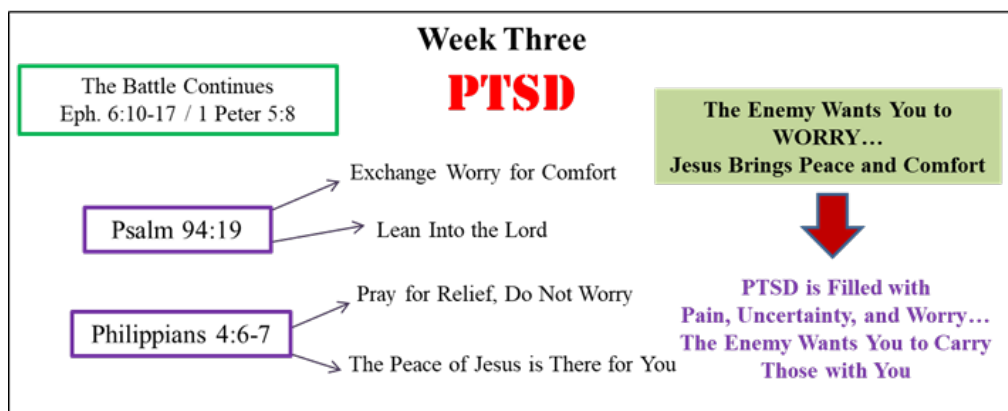
day and time for the following week's interview. See Figure 7 for recurring weekly interactions with the Support Staff.

### Week Three

Week Three will highlight a roundtable event for the homeless Veteran participants that will focus on spiritual warfare's role in PTSD, a debilitating and, often, life-changing ailment. Whether diagnosed, undiagnosed, or misdiagnosed, the effects of PTSD can carry over into every aspect of a person's life. Numerous studies, reflected within this paper, have pointed to PTSD as a major contributing factor toward homelessness for Veterans. This Week Three roundtable will address PTSD as the physical manifestation of spiritual attacks.

The Week Three Scriptures of Ephesians 6:10-17 and 1 Peter 5:8 will lead into the discussion; additionally, Psalm 94:19, where exchanging worry for comfort is discussed, and Philippians 4:6-7, indicating that worry is soon to be over and God's peace is at hand, will drive roundtable interactions. The project director anticipates that by this week the level of comfort between the participants and the project director will be such that less-guarded discussions will occur. Additionally, the project director expects that the subject of PTSD will draw pointed conversations; the project director will have reviewed the homeless Veteran participant's surveys from Week Two by this time and will have a realistic expectation of the recorded impacts of PTSD on the participants. The roundtable will take approximately one hour. See Figure 6 for information activities to be conducted with homeless Veteran participants weekly.





**Figure 9.** Depiction of Week Three Roundtable Emphasis.

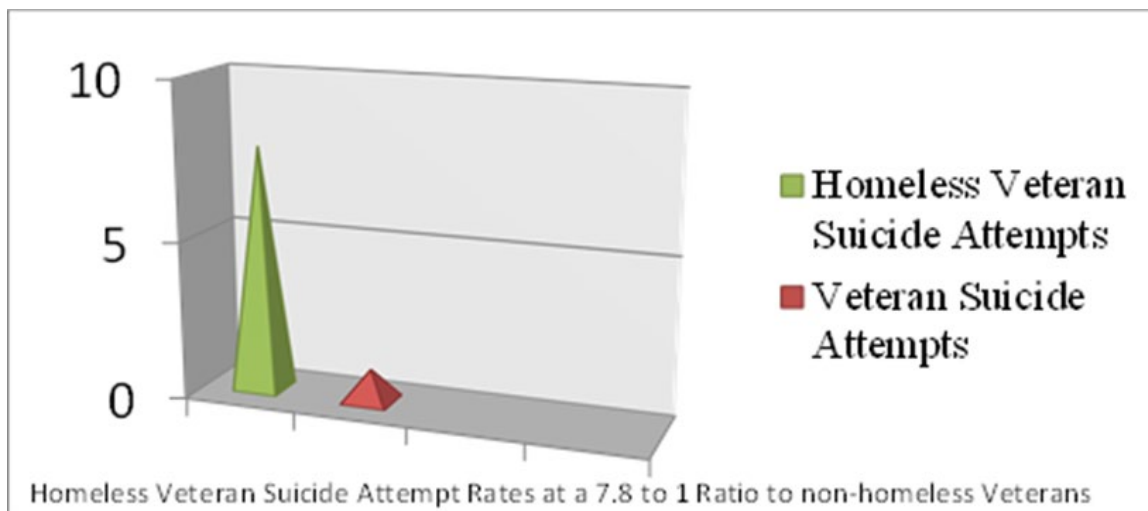
The project director will also visit the support staff participants to gather any additional information the support staff participant would desire to contribute. This quick-check visit should take at most fifteen minutes per participant. See Figure 7 for recurring weekly interactions with the Support Staff.

#### Week Four

Week Four will continue with a roundtable focus for the homeless Veteran participants on spiritual warfare with a concerted focus on suicide ideations. Suicide is a devastating reality for Veterans, especially those that are homeless. As previously stated in this paper, peer-reviewed studies indicate that a homeless Veteran's rate of suicide attempts is 7.8 times higher than non-homeless Veterans; the studies also show a higher percentage of completed suicide attempts than is experienced nationally among all adults.<sup>9</sup> That suicide attempt number amplifies the realization that the suicide rate for Veterans is recorded as 52.3 percent higher than that of non-Veterans.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Jack Tsai and Xing Cao, "Association Between Suicide Attempts and Homelessness in a Population-Based Sample of US Veterans and Non-Veterans," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 73, no. 4 (2019): 346-347

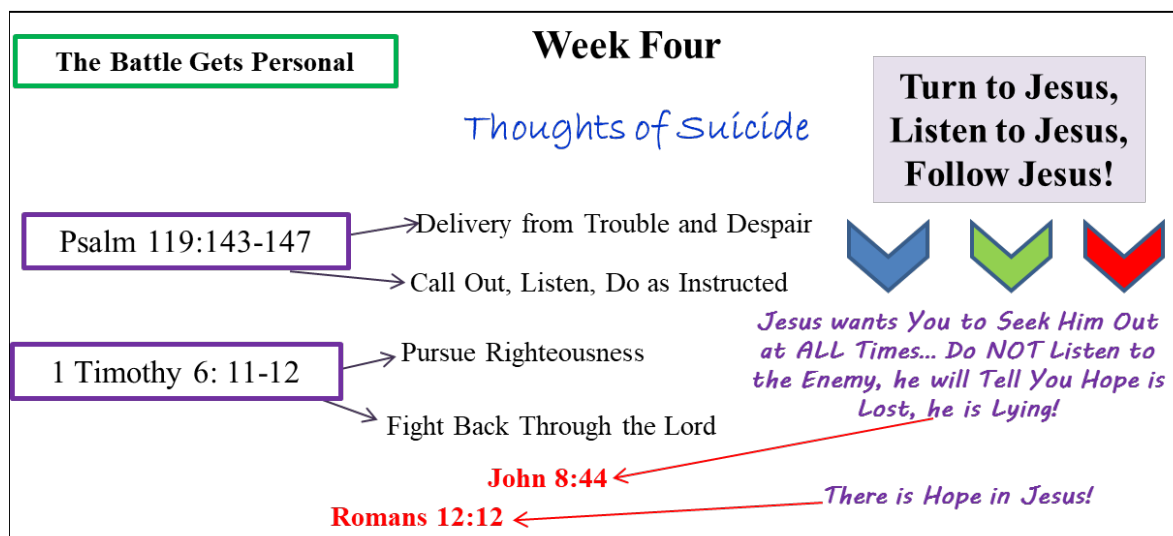
<sup>10</sup> Ryan Holliday et al., "A Latent Class Analysis to Identify Subgroups of VHA Using Homeless Veterans at Greater Risk for Suicide Mortality," *Journal of Effective Disorders* 315 (2022): 162.



**Table 3.2.** Suicide Attempt Statistics among Homeless and Non-Homeless Veterans.

The project director expects this roundtable to potentially impact the homeless Veteran participants more personally than previous roundtables. Statistically, even if one of the participants has not contemplated suicide, they know someone who has either considered or accomplished the act. The project director will be prepared for a more emotionally charged roundtable and will look for any participants who need steering toward mental health counseling following the session.

The Week Four Scriptures will include a review of the previous week's Scriptures for context and then will focus on Psalm 119:143, wherein the deliverance from trouble and despair is assured by leaning into the Lord. Furthermore, 1 Timothy 6:12 will be utilized to turn the homeless Veteran participant's focus toward engaging in the fight, as they did in the military.



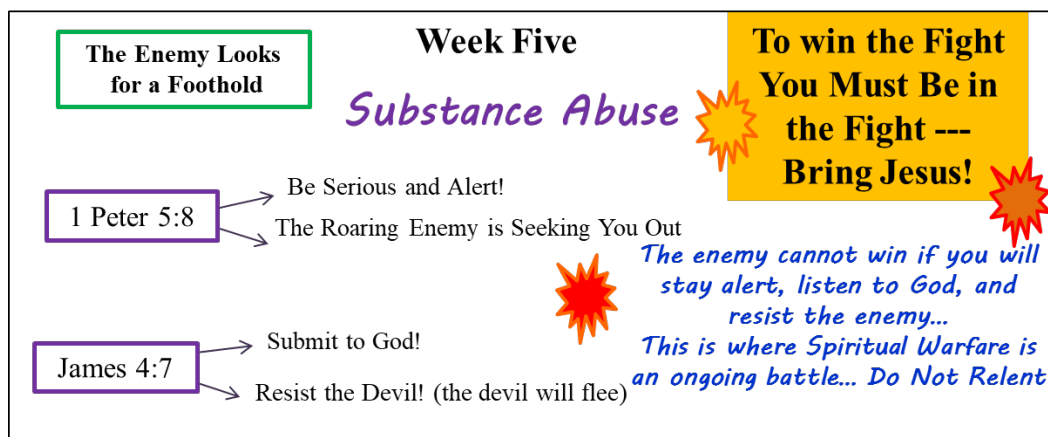
**Figure 10.** Depiction of Week Four Roundtable Emphasis.

The project director will need to be aware of the potential distraction of field note-taking during what may result in a more emotionally driven roundtable. Due to the reasons mentioned above that may elongate this session, this roundtable will take up to one and a half hours. See Figure 6 for information activities to be conducted with homeless Veteran participants weekly. Again, while on-site, the project director will also visit the support staff participants to gather any additional information the support staff participant would desire to contribute. See Figure 7 for recurring weekly interactions with the Support Staff.

#### Week Five

Week Five may prove to be the most challenging of the spiritual warfare roundtable weeks, with the focus area being substance abuse. Undoubtedly, many homeless Veterans suffer from the negative results of alcohol and drug abuse. Substance abuse is not a stand-alone ailment, as previously recorded; substance abuse, or misuse “is associated with a number of negative outcomes, including those related to worse physical health...illness and injury...more risky behaviors...violent/aggressive behavior and risky sexual behavior... greater legal

consequences...and increased risk for suicide.”<sup>11</sup> The project director views this roundtable as an opportunity for the homeless veteran participants to develop a deeper understanding of the negative consequences of their drug and alcohol abuse.



**Figure 11.** Depiction of Week Five Roundtable Emphasis.

1 Peter 5:8 will be reintroduced as a Scriptural warning directly related to their circumstances. James 4:7, calling upon these homeless Veteran participants to resist the devil and turn fully to God, will be underscored. The project director chose to move these discussions to the end of the roundtable portion of the project to have the homeless Veteran participants as prepared as possible to accept these biblical truths and to turn toward seeking tangible assistance with their homelessness.

Additionally, Week Five will see the distribution of sundry and sustenance items to the homeless veteran participants; these items will be targeted donations and will not count against the project’s delimitation funding. The giving of provisions is the third of the ministry’s focus areas: the provision engagement system. Facilitating the delivery of these items is expected to provide a further example of God’s presence in the homeless Veteran participants’ lives and

<sup>11</sup> Suzette Brémault-Phillips et al, “Spirituality and Moral Injury Among Military Personnel,” *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 10, (2019): 373.

strengthen the bond between participant and project director. The project director will demonstrate and reinforce God's love toward the homeless Veterans through word and deed.

This roundtable event will be an extended version lasting at least an hour and a half. A reminder of the following week's group interview with the homeless veteran participants will include the assurance that the remaining compensation items, metro bus passes, will be distributed at that time. See Figure 6 for information activities to be conducted with homeless Veteran participants weekly. Week Five will close the weekly visits to the support staff participants to gather any additional information the support staff participant would desire to contribute. See Figure 7 for recurring weekly interactions with the Support Staff. A designated day and time will be confirmed for the following week's group interview with support staff participants.

#### Week Six

The formal portion of the intervention phase of the project will conclude with Week Six. Week Six will include group interviews with homeless Veteran participants and, separately, support staff participants. Additionally, upon completion of the homeless Veteran participant's group interview, the final compensation items of metro bus passes will be distributed. These group interviews will serve as the culminating event for the two stakeholder groups; the project director will have broad, open-ended questions within which to frame the group interview sessions but will remain open to allow the conversations to go in the direction the participants' desire, within the project director's discretion.

The project director will utilize the initial portion of the group interview session with the homeless Veterans to recap the previous roundtable events. After the homeless Veteran group interview, in addition to dispensing the compensation items, the project director will make a final

appeal for any homeless Veterans that have not yet committed to seeking assistance with breaking free from homelessness to do so immediately. The project director is anticipating that this final event, the group interview session with the homeless Veteran participants, would be expected to last for one hour and a half. See Figure 6 for information activities to be conducted with homeless Veteran participants weekly. The roundtable weekly activities will close with a prayer; the project director is anticipating the homeless Veterans will lead the prayer.

Before the group interview, the project director will summarize the previous week's events with the support staff participants. The group interview will be the final opportunity for the support staff to recall conversations, articulate measures considered or applied, and to provide recommendations to the project director. The project director is anticipating that this final event, the group interview session with the support staff participants, would be expected to last one hour.

The project director assesses six weeks as a reasonable trial period for evaluating the intervention. There is an enormous trust factor to overcome in dealing with the homeless community in general; the acknowledged reticence of homeless Veterans amplifies this hesitancy to be receptive to any assistance. The project director further assesses that adhering to the personal type of engagement during the recruitment portion of the project will result in a sustainable number of willing homeless Veteran participants to join in the project. The project director understands that having the desired participant numbers will not automatically translate into complete project success per the criteria. The failure to observe any positive intervention results within the first six weeks will be significant, indicating that positive results were most likely not to materialize regardless of the extended timeframe applied.

### Assemble/Assess

Weeks Seven and Eight provide an opportunity to assemble and assess all data from the previous six weeks. The products developed during these final two weeks of the project will be an essential element of the entire intervention phase. Overall success is reaching or exceeding the success criteria. However, the expected impact of spending six weeks dedicated to assisting homeless Veterans in their pursuit of breaking free from homelessness will have a lasting influence on the project director and those Veterans.

Application of the Intervention Phase checklist (Appendix R) will strengthen the overall effectiveness of the six-week intervention project. Weeks 1-6 depict activities replicated at each designated project location: the Downtown Rescue Mission, First Stop, and the Salvation Army. Weeks 7-8 are stand-alone time frames. At the conclusion of this process of data collection, assessing, organizing, and coding, the project director will be prepared to execute the implementation of the intervention design.

### **Implementation of the Intervention Design**

The implementation of the intervention design proved to be challenging in large part due to the inconsistencies of the participation of the homeless Veterans. This result was not completely unexpected; research for this thesis had demonstrated the unwillingness of homeless Veterans to participate in studies of any kind.<sup>12</sup> Those research studies that include delving into instances of substance abuse or suicide ideation, as does this thesis project, have proven to be especially difficult to garner substantive participation from the homeless Veteran population.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ryan Holliday et al., "Preventing Suicide Among Homeless Veterans: A Consensus Statement by the Veterans Affairs Suicide Prevention Among Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Workgroup," *Medical Care* 59, no. 4, suppl 2 (2021): 104.

<sup>13</sup> Tsai and Cao, "Association between Suicide Attempts and Homelessness," 349.

Despite these inherent challenges, the intervention design was accomplished and the results are expected to be helpful to future studies.

One item not articulated during the intervention plan but utilized during the project execution was the procurement and use of a distinctive email address and separate phone number for communications. The project director wanted to ensure an uncluttered means of contact between the participants and the project director. Although every homeless Veteran assured the project director they would maintain contact via the new email and phone number, none did follow through. The staff participants maintained contact through previously utilized means. While the additional measures were not utilized, the project director does assess that the potential usage outweighed the minimal additional costs of the items.

#### Permissions/Surveys/Questionnaires

All permissions to conduct the project were requested and received prior to execution. One of the requests proved to be challenging due to an unexpected personnel change at the decision-making level. This timeline extension nominally impacted the start point for the project's execution. A complete overview of the permissions and agreements can be found in Appendix S; names and titles were removed from the notes to retain privacy.

The initial data collection for this thesis project through surveys and questionnaires was conducted as planned, with one modification to account for the hesitancy of homeless Veteran participation. The minor adjustment to planned events allowed for homeless Veterans to make themselves available during any day of the week for the week the surveys and questionnaires were initially administered, instead of only one day for responding to the questions. Nine homeless Veterans verbally committed to conducting the surveys and questionnaires; of those nine, six followed through with their commitment. Of those six, one individual answered the



initial questions then departed the area without returning for subsequent sessions; that individual was arrested and could not, therefore, attend follow-on sessions.

Another person had to be removed from the process due to the project director's recognition that this individual was not a Veteran, and thus did not meet the participation criteria. It is important to note here that this individual possessed neither malice nor a genuine desire to deceive, but that they were convinced in their addled state that they did indeed serve. The project director spoke with the staff at that individual's location to ensure the staff was aware of the individual's status, and to recommend that the individual receive further monitoring of their well-being. In addition, the project director did provide that individual with the food card incentive as was promised in exchange for answering the initial inquiries; although the survey and questionnaire were discarded, it seemed unfair to punish the individual for their on-going issues.

Each of the three designated locations had two support staff personnel agree to participate in the initial questionnaires and in follow-up interviews. These six individuals were provided with the initial take-home questionnaire. The support staff that agreed to participate in the project all had experience in supporting homeless Veterans and were all motivated about the potential value in implementing the project's findings within their support locations. One staff participant opted not to partake in the project due to their opinion that they did not spend enough time specifically focused on the homeless Veterans to comment.

#### Pseudonyms and Location Obfuscation

The pseudonyms chosen for the five participants were Allen, John, Larry—the individual arrested following the survey/questionnaire, Steve, and Walt; none of the names approximate the true name of the individual, nor does the first initial serve as an indicator of an individual's true

name. The locations were chosen to be identified by a color, with none of the colors identified or associated with any of the three sites: the locations are Blue, Green, and Purple. Pseudonyms for staff participants are Charles, Greg, Lisa, Nancy, Tim, and Vicki. Like with the Veterans' names, these utilized names do not approximate the true name of the individual, nor does the first initial serve as an indicator of an individual's true name. Vicki subsequently asked to be removed from the study.

#### Roundtable Sessions and Staff Discussions

The roundtable sessions were carried out at the designated locations at Location Purple and Location Green; Location Blue produced no homeless Veteran participants, but their staff did take part in the project. The locations were adequate to the need and provided the privacy necessary to carry out the desired discussions. The participants were comfortable with the utilized atmosphere.

Discussions with the support staff participants were carried out both prior to and post activities of the roundtable sessions. The weekly pre-session discussions proved to be effective in gauging the possible attitudes of the participants. Post-session discussions provided a platform to discuss potential issues impacting homeless Veteran participants in the week ahead. Although there were no homeless Veteran participants from Location Blue, the project director did maintain contact with Location Blue staff participants via visits, phone calls, and email exchanges. The insight from Location Blue staff participants proved to be thoughtful and impactful to the project.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

The execution of this DMIN project intervention design resulted in the development of a discipleship program that highlighted the spiritual attacks the enemy brings against homeless Veterans and reintroduced Jesus into the lives of homeless Veterans. The intervention project countered the spiritual effects of homelessness on affected Veterans by addressing the social, mental, and emotional impacts of homelessness on their lives. Results demonstrated that 75 percent of participating homeless Veterans accepted assistance in overcoming their debilitating homelessness. Initial surveys and subsequent conversations indicated that 100 percent of the homeless Veterans had professed a belief and acceptance of Jesus as their Savior. The remainder of this chapter will provide details about the results of the intervention project on the lives of these targeted homeless Veterans.

### **Collective Results**

#### **Pre-Intervention**

The activities of securing permissions, participants, and consent, conducted in the pre-intervention phase of the project, mostly aligned with the anticipated results articulated in chapter three. No modifications were necessary to meet the permissions and consent portions of the pre-intervention phase. Acquiring participants became a challenge and was outside of anticipated difficulties.

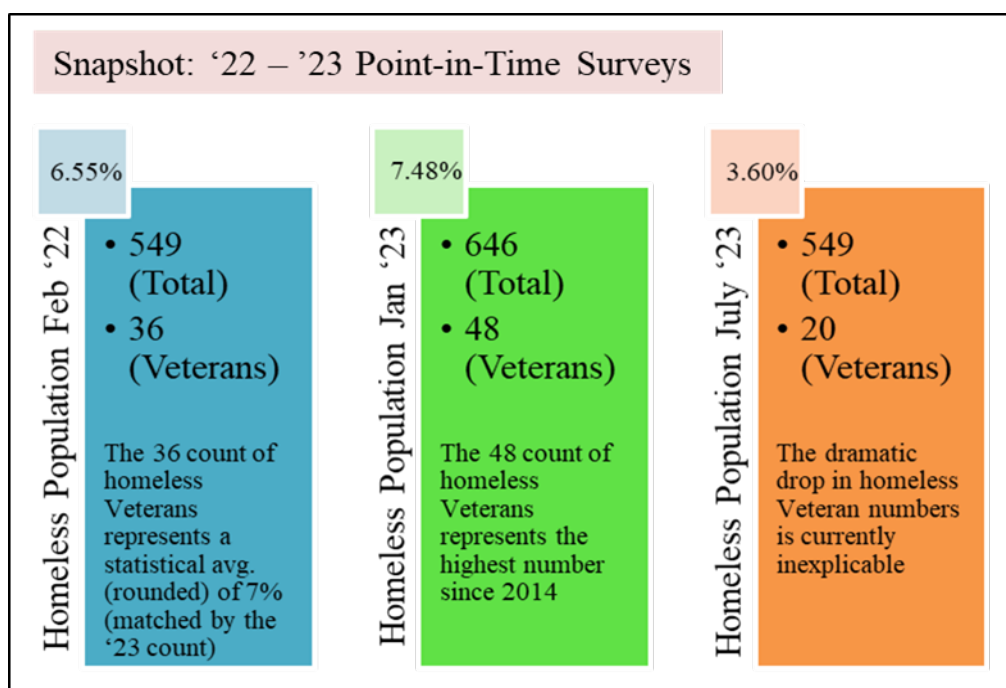
#### **Permissions**

Securing permissions was accomplished within two weeks of the initial contact with representatives at the primary locations: Location Green, Location Purple, and Location Blue (see Appendix R for details). The most prolonged delay in retrieving a signed permission agreement was due to a significant change in leadership at Location Blue. None of the locations

expressed concerns with any portion of the project criteria or conduct parameters. Each location was enthusiastic in its acceptance of the project's execution, and each expressed anticipation in seeing the project's end results.

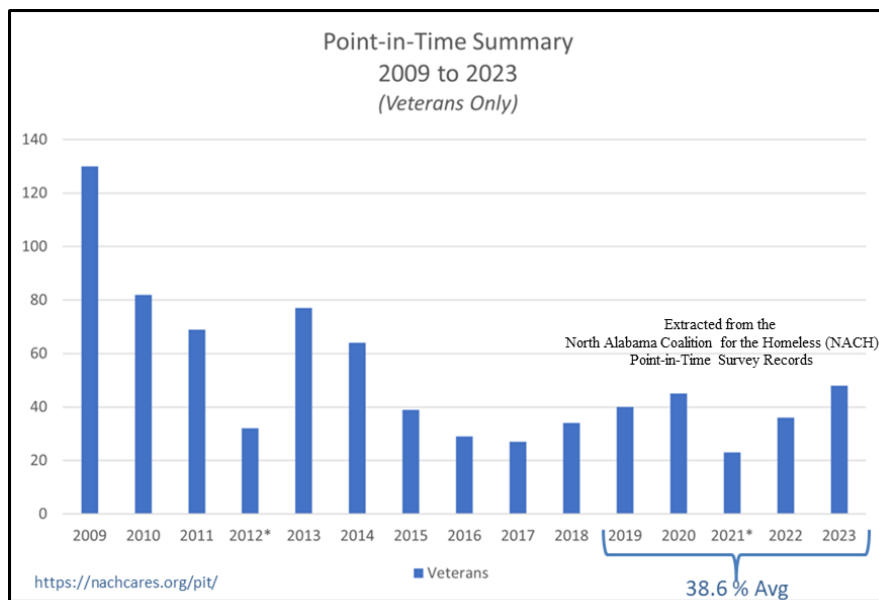
## Participants

Obtaining project participants proved to be an unexpected challenge. The project director had planned to meet the project success criteria of having five to ten homeless Veterans out of a participation population of ten to twenty seek assistance with ending their homelessness due to the activities of the discipleship program they encountered as part of the project. The expectation included that all homeless Veterans seeking assistance to break free from homelessness would also have sought Jesus as their Savior. A significant change in the local homeless Veteran population from the winter to the summer of 2023, both in absolute numbers and in their computational averages, impacted expectations.



**Figure 12.** Homeless Veteran Population Change.

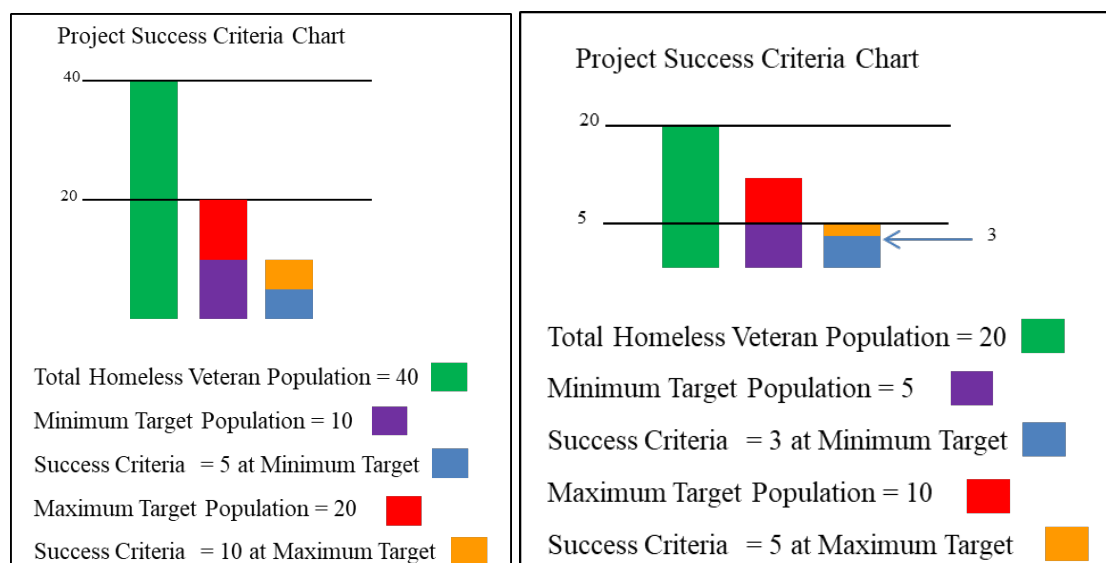
The local homeless Veteran population had maintained an approximate 40-person average for the past five years with a nearly 7 percent rate, which meets the national average for homeless Veterans amid an overall homeless population for a given area.



**Table 4.1.** NACH Point-in-Time Summary.

A mid-summer point-in-time survey found that the physical homeless Veteran population had dropped from 48 to 20, resulting in an overall homeless Veteran average number of 3.6 percent. This result was unexpected by local agencies that support the homeless and was a completely unforeseen and surprising event for the project director. The conduct of a mid-point survey was unknown to the project director. The project director became aware of the July survey when discussing the incredible challenge of meeting the number of expected homeless Veterans willing to participate in the project in mid-September. Charles, at Location Green, realized that the project director had yet to be made privy to the conduct or results of the unofficial mid-summer survey. Charles explained that this survey was for internal use to those organizations that conduct the annual, official point-in-time survey. It became clear at this point that the expected participation numbers would be impossible to meet due to the just-realized

change in status due to becoming aware of the unofficial summer survey. Although unofficial, the numbers were still valid. The project director decided to continue the project as planned with these modified numbers since the initial raw numbers for execution were no longer viable. Modifications were made to the expected available and participant numbers to replicate the percentages planned within the project's intervention design. Here are the original and adjusted project success criteria charts.



**Table 4.2.** Original (Left) and Modified (Right) Success Criteria Chart.

The adjusted target audience of 10 maximum and 5 minimum (Table 4.2, Modified) were statistically equivalent to the original criteria of 20 and 10 homeless Veterans (Table 4.2, Original). The minimum success target was adjusted to 3 since it would be impossible to account for half a person in this project, as in 2.5 of 5 (Table 4.2, Modified). Nine homeless Veterans and six support staff participants agreed to participate in the project. Five of the nine homeless Veterans who had verbally committed to participating followed through on those commitments. Four of the six support staff members who agreed to participate remained engaged throughout the project. The inclusion of five homeless Veteran participants met the success criteria of 5 at Minimum Target (Table 4.2, Modified). However, one initial participant was subsequently jailed

for the project's duration. This adjustment brought the homeless Veteran participation population down to 4, one above the success criteria of 3 at Minimum Target (Table 4.2, Modified). The project continued unabated.

### **Consent**

Obtaining consent for conduct and participation proved to be the least challenging of the pre-intervention phase activities. Six homeless Veterans signed consent forms. One individual was eliminated from the project due to the recognition that they were not a Veteran. Although one additional participant missed the roundtable sessions due to incarceration, they had signed a consent form, completed the initial survey and questionnaire, and received the initial food card incentive. The project's appropriate sections utilized this individual's survey and questionnaire. Six support staff personnel signed consent forms, with one later asking to be removed from the project and one leaving their position. The intervention phase of the project began following the completion and retention of the permission forms, participant identification, and consent forms.

### **Intervention**

The intervention phase of the project mainly unfolded as planned and highlighted in chapter three. The surveys and questionnaires for the homeless Veterans were well received and answered what appeared to be true in their responses. Some discrepancies developed between questionnaire answers and conversations undertaken in the roundtable sessions; the project director would view these as progress and because of developing relationships during the roundtable sessions. Salient input to the project resulted from the take-home questionnaires provided to the support staff participants. The six-week roundtable sessions validated the week-to-week focus areas and provided impactful and helpful results for the homeless Veteran participants.



**Figure 13.** Six-Week Focus Overview.

Triangulation of the data, a key element of research espoused by Sensing, was achieved by gathering information from three distinct points of perspective: insider, outsider, and researcher.<sup>1</sup> As planned, the homeless Veteran participants in the project provided the insider point-of-view through interviews, surveys, and roundtable discussions. The support staff at the three prominent locations where homeless Veterans seek assistance provided the outsider

<sup>1</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research, A Multi-Method Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: WIPF & Stock, 2011), 72-78.



perspective; although they are involved with assisting homeless Veterans, they are not enveloped by the realities of homelessness and can, therefore, provide an outsider perspective. The project director provided the necessary researcher's viewpoint through observations and field notes taken along the path of the completed six-week project, and through interactions with both the insiders and outsiders participating in the project.

### Homeless Veteran Surveys

The surveys provided to the homeless Veteran participants sought to determine the presence and impact of PTSD, TBI, moral injuries, and substance abuse in their lives. These surveys were anonymous, hence the referenced number rather than the pseudonym. The four survey questions appeared in two parts; part one asked whether the homeless Veteran suffered from the highlighted ailment, and if so, part two asked to what extent that ailment's impact was on their life.

### PTSD

PTSD was acknowledged by three of the five homeless Veteran participants, numbers 2, 3, and 4. A combined impact score of 11 out of a possible 15 demonstrated the effect of the presence of this negative challenge. Another perspective is that 60% of the respondents found PTSD to affect their lives, with 40% of the respondents describing the impact of PTSD as either Devastating or Distressing. Week Two of the project addressed PTSD.

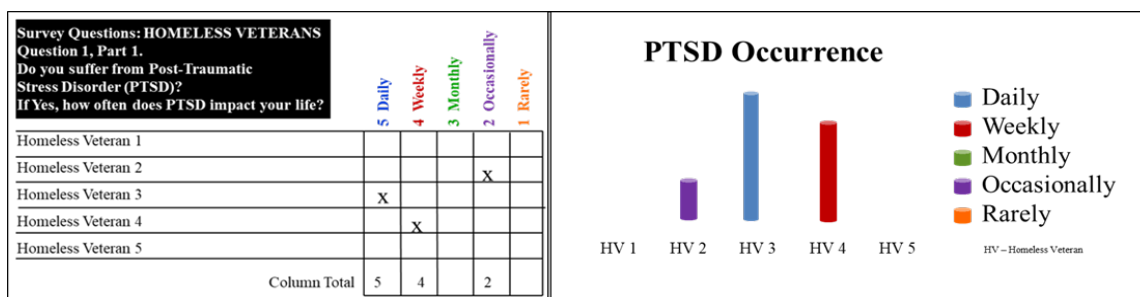


Figure 14. PTSD - Question One, Part One.

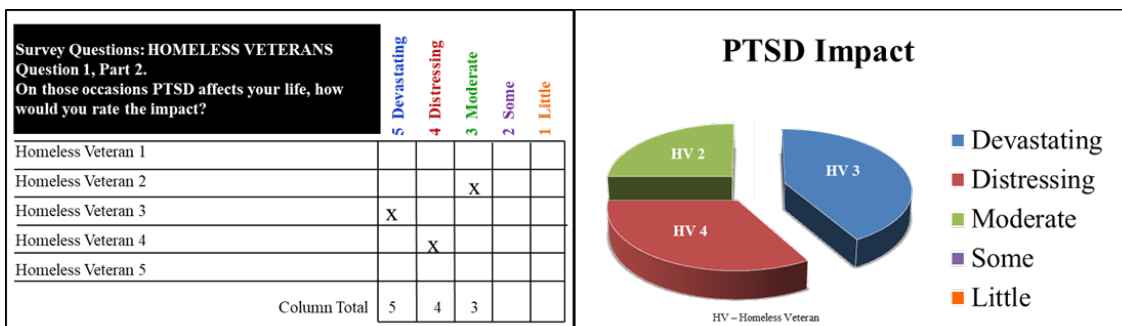


Figure 15. PTSD - Question One, Part Two.

TBI

TBI also impacted three of the five, or 60 percent, of the homeless Veteran participants, again accounting for participants 2, 3, and 4. Those professing to suffer from TBI had a combined impact score of 7 out of a possible 15. Respondent 3 indicated that TBI had a Distressing effect on their life. Weeks One and Two of the project highlighted TBI.

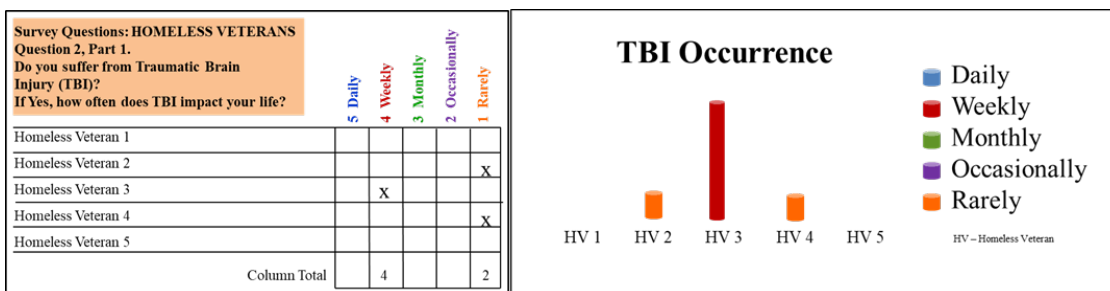


Figure 16. TBI - Question Two, Part One.

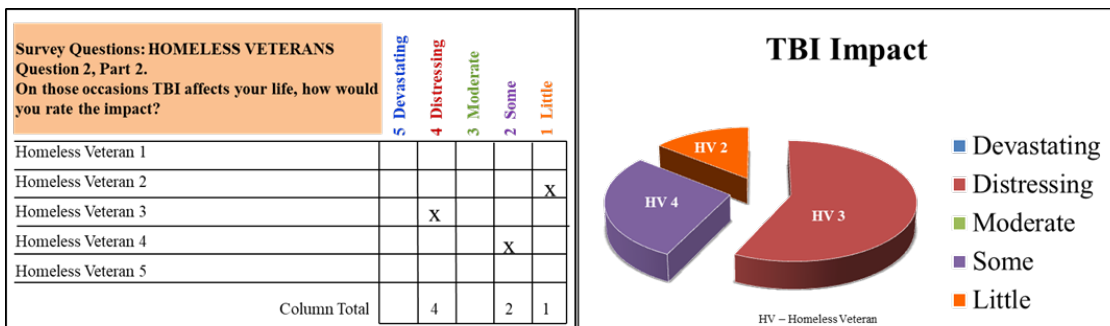


Figure 17. TBI - Question Two, Part Two

### Moral Injuries

The results of moral injuries afflicted two of the five homeless Veteran participants, numbers 3 and 4, providing for an overall occurrence rate of 40 percent. The severity of the impact on their life from moral injuries covered the extreme portions of the highlighted spectrum: Devastating for Participant 3 and Little for Number 4. Participant number 3 indicated a Daily and Devastating occurrence and impact of their moral injuries. The two respondents suffering from TBI had a combined impact score of 6 out of 10. Week One discussions highlighting Spiritual Warfare included discussions of Moral Injuries.

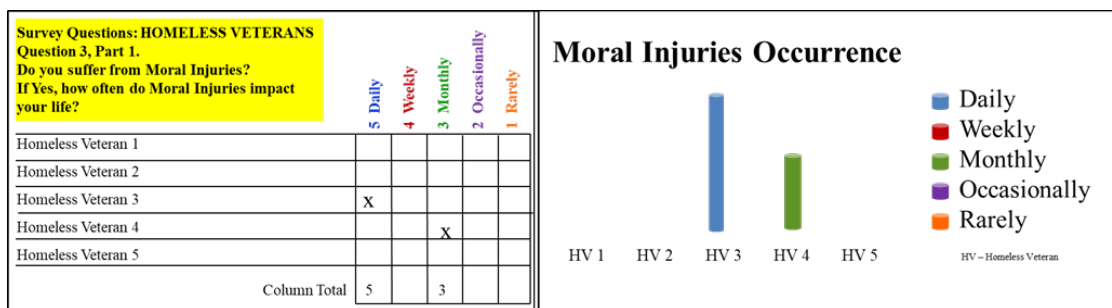


Figure 18. Moral Injuries - Question Three, Part One.

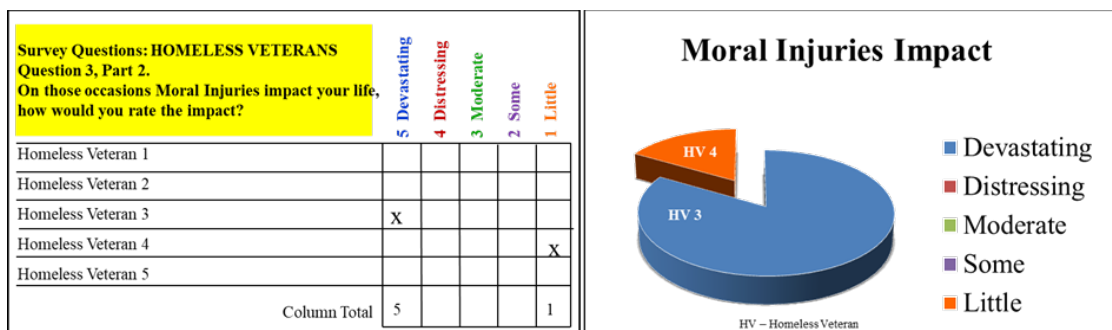


Figure 19. Moral Injuries - Question Three, Part Two.

### Substance Abuse

Substance abuse proved to be the issue with the most affirmative responses. Four out of five participants, 80 percent, admitted to issues with substance abuse; only participant 5 did not respond in the affirmative. Of interest, participant 5 did not admit to having or being impacted by any of the four items within the survey. Two of the participants, numbers 1 and 4, admitted to a

Devastating impact on their lives from substance abuse. Participants 2 and 3 chose Some and Little to describe the impact of drugs and alcohol on their lives. Of those four professing to suffer from substance abuse, there was a combined impact score of 13 out of a possible 20 score. Substance abuse proved to be the most agreed upon issue affecting the lives of these homeless Veteran respondents, with an 80 percent rate of occurrence. Substance abuse was the focus of the roundtable in Week Five.

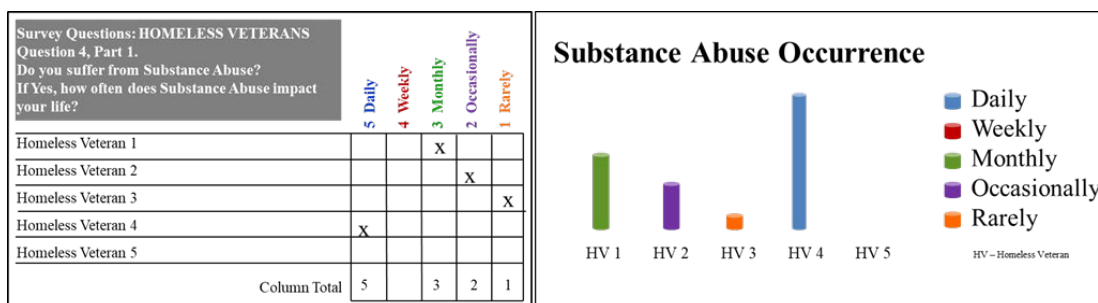


Figure 20. Substance Abuse - Question Four, Part One.

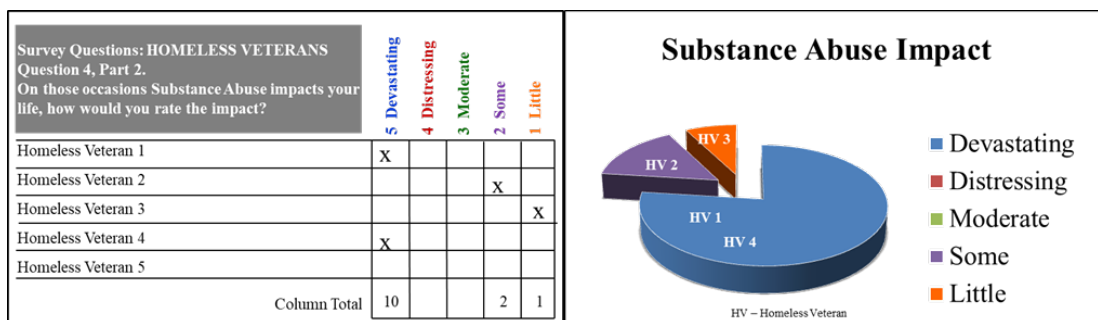


Figure 21. Substance Abuse - Question Four, Part Two.

### Questionnaires

Homeless Veterans and support staff participants received questionnaires in Week One. The questionnaires for the homeless Veterans were completed on-site and concluded with a \$25 food card as an incentive for participation. Support staff received questionnaires as a take-home event.

## Homeless Veteran Questionnaires

Homeless Veteran participants received a form containing twenty questions. The project director assisted Steve at Location Purple and Allen at Location Green with filling out their answers. Both Steve and Allen requested assistance due to issues they have that degrade their ability to maintain concentration on written items. These answers also include the responses from Larry, the participant who was subsequently arrested and jailed. The replies from the homeless veteran participants were extremely short; their comments were so compact that the project director decided there was no need for a separate appendix entry. The questionnaire highlights are color-coded, Purple and Green, by location. Figure 24 is an encapsulation of their answers.

Question:	Steve:	Walt:	John:	Allen:	Larry:
1. Why are you homeless?	Lost my house, went to jail for a year	Circumstances beyond my control	Lost my house in 2005	Moved back to Alabama from Maryland (Y2K) – parents had lost their house	Because I went to jail and chase drugs
2. When did you serve in the U.S. Armed Forces?	1980-1984 (Reserve 85-87) Army	Dec 1970 – March 1986 Air Force	September 1978 Marines	1977-1981; entered at 17 with a waiver Army	04-09
3. Why did you leave the service?	Time for me to get out, wasn't for me	I got court-martialed; (BCD) discharge	Wanted to go on to other things	Commitment ended – wanted to move on	Enlistment up
4. What was your discharge status?	Honorable	Bad Conduct Discharge	Honorable	Honorable	Honorable
5. Where did you serve?	Ft. Campbell, 101 <sup>st</sup> Airborne	Mississippi, Florida, Alaska, Colorado, Vietnam	Camp Lejeune	Ft. Gordon	Korea, Ft. Lee, Iraq
6. What was the best experience of your service?	Sex - groupies	Just being able to serve my country	Going overseas	Being near the coast	Getting a Bronze Star
7. What was the worst experience of your service?	Called names – racial slurs	Being court-martialed	Not sure	Not really a worst or bad	Losing my mother
8. Are you employed now? (If yes, describe that employment) (If no, why are you not employed?)	No (stroke 10 years ago, disability)	Retired 2013, receiving SSAN benefits	No	No	Yes
9. When did you last seek assistance from the Veterans Administration? (If never, why not?)	2 months ago	Never – I have no benefits	2 months ago	Counseling	Last month
10. Why did you need help?	Medical assistance	Getting my discharge	Housing	Help with housing	Place to stay

		upgraded			
11. What help was provided by the Veterans Administration?	Medical help	None	None	I'm waiting for them to let me know	Everything from housing to clothes
12. When did you last seek help from a local agency? (If never, why not?)	Today	1990 – no assistance whatsoever	4 months ago	Today (weekly) here	Last 2 months
13. Why did you need help?	Place to stay and eat, get clothes	There are times when I become totally flustered	Camp Lejeune contaminated lawsuit	Housing, food, clothing – been at shelter for 5 years	Place to stay, clothes, food
14. What help was provided by the local agency?	All above	None	Seeking judgment	Above	Place to stay, clothes, food
15. When was the last time you were drunk?	2 months ago	2013	40 years	1 year–I might drink a bit here or there	Every day
16. When was the last time you were high?	1 month ago	3 months ago	40 years	Few months ago - weed	Today
17. Have you ever heard of spiritual warfare?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
18. Can you describe spiritual warfare in your life?	When you receive God and He tells you what to do and the devil says f*** God, I'll give you cocaine, whiskey, and beer	Accepting Christ as my Savior	Dealing with evil and bad things while being a Christian	It don't affect me as I get older – I love God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit; but, once in a while Satan will just kind of play with me	Yes...
19. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus as your Savior?	Yes, 10 years ago baptized	Yes	Yes	More or less, saved about 20 years ago	Yes and No
20. What would you want others to know about you?	I'm a good guy, really a great guy – I try to help people I meet until they mess with me – I don't like to be messed with	I am a God-fearing man – believe Jesus Christ as my Savior – most of all I am a good person with no malice at all for anyone	That I am honest and trustworthy	Nothing bad, I am the same person, no bull crap – I am the same person everywhere, they can just see me as I am	I am more than meets the eye

**Figure 22.** Homeless Veteran Questionnaire Responses.

Opinions provided in the Homeless Veteran questionnaire responses appeared without concern for other people's opinions; they seemed mostly forthright. Glaring exceptions to this observation occurred in responses to questions one and sixteen. Only Steve and Larry admitted to any culpability in their actions being a root cause of their homelessness. Interestingly, every participant acknowledged responsibility for their homelessness during the roundtable sessions.

Additionally, only John and Larry were truthful in conveying the timeline of drug use; John admitted to being clean and sober, and Larry admitted to using drugs on the morning of the questionnaire. Again, all other participants openly admitted to much more frequent and current drug use than their initial response conveyed as the project continued.

The project director had expected some clouding of the facts in completing the questionnaires; this concern proved to be mostly unfounded. For those questions with some holdback, developing relationships between the project director and the homeless Veteran participants during the six-week roundtable sessions provided a venue that produced open and honest discourse. Taking time to develop these relationships produced a more effective project.

#### Support Staff Questionnaires

Support staff participants also received a questionnaire during Week One of the project. The questionnaire contained fourteen questions for support staff participants to answer; the participant's responses included any previous branch of service, the length of current employment/volunteering at their current support location, and the location of any previous work with homeless Veterans. Appendix T contains a verbatim transcription of the questionnaire results; Greg's response to question four is the exception. A pseudonym replaces his actual location reference. Again, the questionnaire highlights are color-coded by location: Green, Blue, and Purple. Figure 25. is an abbreviated representation of the five participants' answers to the support staff questionnaire.

Question: 1. Why do think Veterans become homeless?	Charles: Will not ask for help	Tim: Unable to cope with traumatic experiences	Lisa: PTSD; they want to be left alone	Nancy: Lack of helpful mental health support, post service	Greg: Poor life choices, lack of hope
2. Why do think Veterans remain homeless?	Struggles with mental illness and drug abuse	Lack of knowledge of resources and mistrust	Prefer not to be involved with society	Pride and a mistrust of VA	Lack of knowledge of benefits, lack of hope
3. What is the most effective homeless program or method you have experienced	Veteran outreach and mentorship programs, and	Those that advocate and walk beside them through	Shelters	Progressive holistic Mental Health	Housing

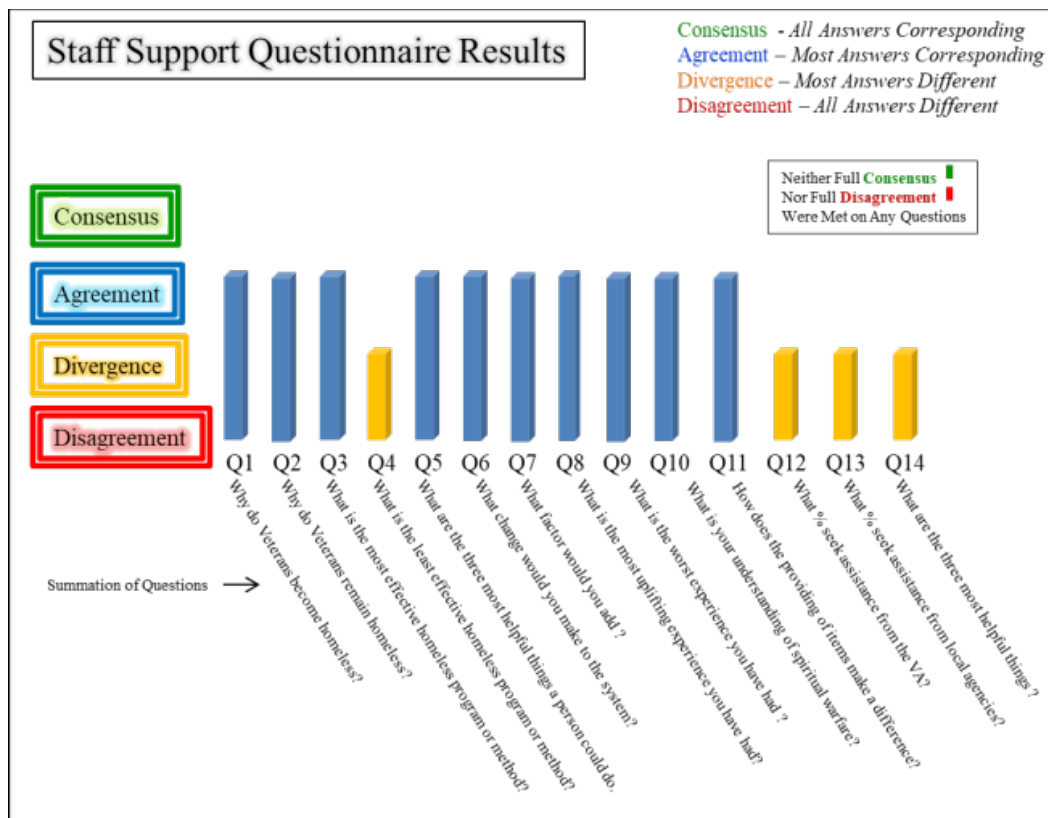
that positively affects Veterans? (If not experienced then witnessed; if not witnessed then are aware of)	educating Veterans on their benefits	the processes			
4. What is the least effective homeless program or method you have experienced that negatively affects Veterans? (If not experienced then witnessed; if not witnessed then are aware of)	Ones where veteran clients are given an abundance of material items, but spiritual or mental concerns are never addressed	Provided housing without further help dealing with issues	No specific answer	Being "pushed" toward medication	Providing care packages for Veterans without engaging with the Veterans
5. What are the three most helpful things a person could do to make a homeless Veteran more comfortable in their daily life?	Educate about agencies, encourage seeking help, help them find a stable community	Work with them, challenge them in moving forward, listen to them	Tents, socks, a good backpack	Listen to them, give them some way to work toward an achievable goal, let them be helpful in their community	Prayer, education, encourage others to engage beyond care packages
6. What change would you make to the system you currently function in that would increase the likelihood a homeless Veteran would seek help to end their homelessness?	More outreach done at my agency by other veteran specific agencies	Be more intentional in confirming a Veteran's status to provide resources more quickly	A shelter dedicated to Veterans	Increasing time in our program to allow for more intensive help	More agencies being proactive rather than reactive
7. Research studies identify Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Suicide Ideations, Substance Abuse, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Moral Injuries as the most prominent factors impacting homeless Veterans - what factor would you add to this list, and why?	Veterans can fail to adopt life skills that translate into the civilian world	Distrust and frustration with the government support system	Mental Health	Disenchanted with VA or government run programs	Loss of hope
8. What is the most uplifting experience you have had while assisting a homeless Veteran?	Connecting homeless Veterans to resources they have access to	Helping a Veteran get their own apartment	Seeing a Veteran get access to housing	Re-housing a Veteran	Seeing a Veteran move on with their life and helping others to do the same
9. What is the worst experience you have had while assisting a homeless Veteran?	Seeing Veterans refuse services	Frustration with the system helping a Veteran's family	Knowing they died in the streets	Watching their health decline and die before getting help	A disconnect between myself and the individual since I have a hard time understanding what all they had to go through
10. What is your understanding of spiritual warfare?	Everyone around us is engaged in spiritual warfare, whether they	It affects everything around us, all the time	When the enemy is trying to thwart any efforts to progress	An attack on the essence of your character /soul	Ephesians 6:12; it is real.



	see it or not				
11. How does the providing of (support items – sustenance items – comfort items - food items) make a difference in a homeless Veteran's life?	It can provide an immediate impact on days where someone is struggling physically	Meeting a direct need while not enabling further homelessness is important	Very appreciative	It gives them self-worth	I think in the moment it's a good thing
12. What percentage of homeless Veterans seek assistance from the Veterans Administration?	20%	I would imagine it a low percentage	Don't know	Don't know the exact percentage, but minimal	I would say a small amount
13. What percentage of homeless Veterans seek assistance from local agencies?	5%	I believe a low percentage	30%	Less than half	Unknown
14. What are the three most helpful things an organization could do to make your support of homeless Veterans more effective?	Partner with agencies that specialize in working with homeless Veterans; encourage Veterans to go to these agencies; provide spiritual mentorship and teach life skills	Make us aware of opportunities that can benefit or help Veterans, make us aware of referrals for help, have Veterans help walk others through the processes to live independently	Build a wing/section exclusively for Vets	Funding for case management., volunteers that want to listen	Gain good information and confidence in supporting organizations when there is a time to point veterans to resources. Understand clients better. Make thing more personal

**Figure 23.** Support Staff Questionnaire Highlights.

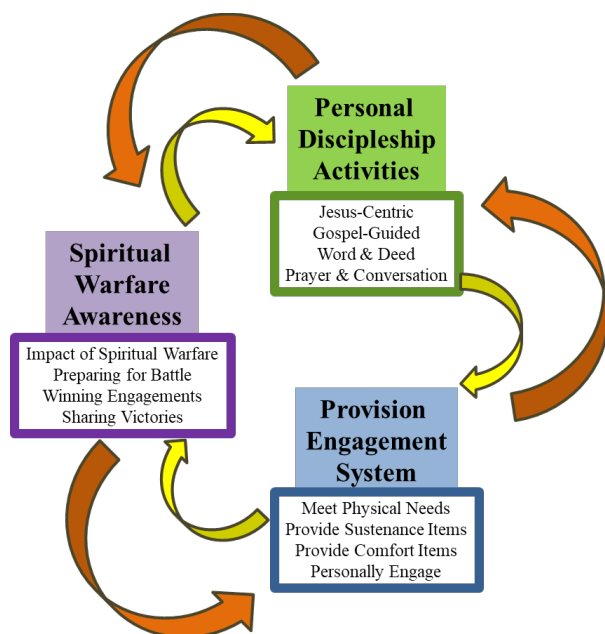
Support staff questionnaire responses were noticeably equivalent across the board. The consistency of the results was somewhat surprising to the project director due to the variances in support locations and the homeless Veteran clients supported, both in number and demeanor. In response to opinions, this agreement suggests an underlying and consistent set of needs of homeless Veterans that can be met or affected by various support providers. The project director had expected responses to be comparable based on locations, with Green similar to Green, due to the particular and varying project sets and rules applied at the three support locations. This pattern of responses suggests that results here are project rather than location driven.



**Figure 24.** Support Staff Questionnaire Results.

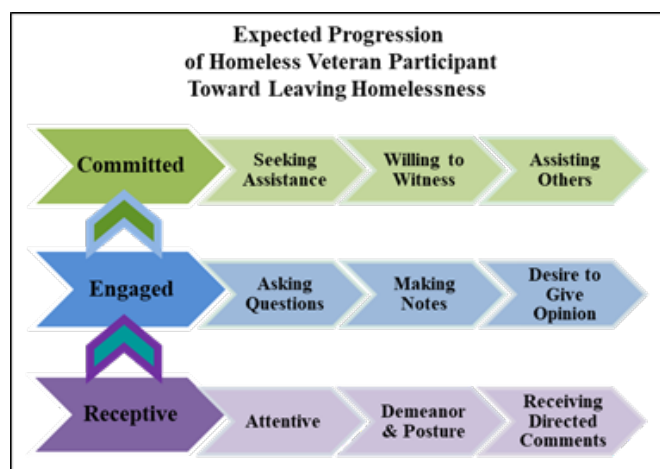
### Roundtable Sessions

The Roundtable Sessions proved invaluable in reaching the homeless Veterans through conversations and the introduction of Scripture. The results of these roundtable sessions validated the project's intervention design of observing and desiring to counter the spiritual effects of homelessness by addressing the social, mental, and emotional impacts of homelessness on this nation's Veteran community, with a concerted focus on Huntsville, Alabama. Applying a blended ministry approach to Spiritual Warfare Awareness, Personal Discipleship Activities, and a Provision Engagement System addressed in chapter three was successful in the roundtable sessions. Roundtable sessions in weeks two through six included using a printed placard to highlight Scriptures, focus on key points and maintain the timeline.



**Figure 3.** Blend of Ministry Focus Areas for Homeless Veteran Support.

The goal of the six-week agenda was to progressively move the homeless Veteran participants through the assessed three stages of expected progression toward leaving homelessness. These three stages are Receptive, Engaged, and Committed.



**Figure 5.** Expected Progression of Homeless Veterans.

The project director developed weekly status notes to assist in determining the progression of the homeless Veterans. Initially, the intervention plan called for both a group and individual status determination of progression; however, due to the limited size of the participant group at each location, the decision was made to focus solely on the individual status changes

week-to-week. These weekly status notes proved to be an effective reflection, review, and evaluation tool.

Weekly Status Notes to Determine Events, Trends, Indicators				
		Receptive	Engaged	Committed
Participant	This Week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Last Week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Questions				
Issues				
Guidance				
Activities				

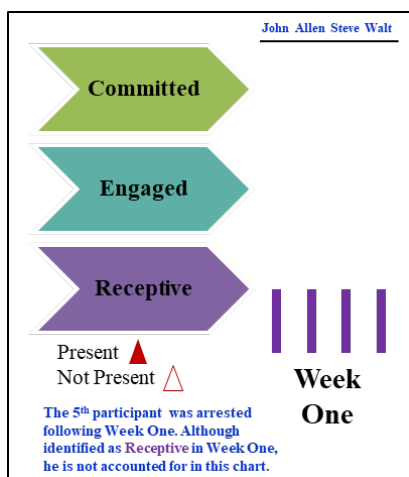
**Figure 6b.** Modified Weekly Status Notes.

A complete recapitulation of the six-week status notes can be found in Appendix U. Following are the week-to-week highlights from the roundtable sessions with a focus on major discussion areas, assessed participant's progression status, and the evaluated Events, Trends, and Indicators for the week; an event is a one-time occurrence, a trend is a repeat occurrence signifying a potential pattern, and an indicator is an event with enough instances of occurrence as to indicate a calculated response to a situation. Each Roundtable Session employed a unique printed placard to highlight significant points and Scriptures utilized within the session.

#### Week One

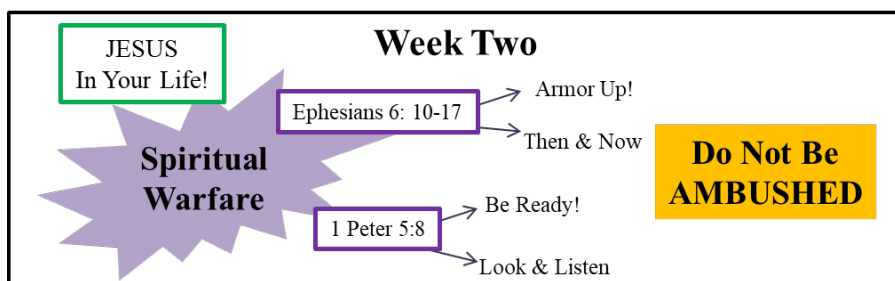
Week One consisted of conducting surveys and questionnaires for the homeless Veterans. As previously mentioned, the homeless Veteran participants were mostly open in their questionnaire responses. Oddly, and surprisingly to the project director, the homeless Veteran participants did not seem as forthcoming while answering the surveys, which was especially odd given that the surveys were anonymous. Follow-up discussions indicated that there had been some hesitation in answering the surveys; no specific reason was given or uncovered.

Assessments resulting from the first week demonstrated that all homeless Veteran participants were *Receptive* to the project.



**Figure 25.** Week One Progression Assessment.

Week Two



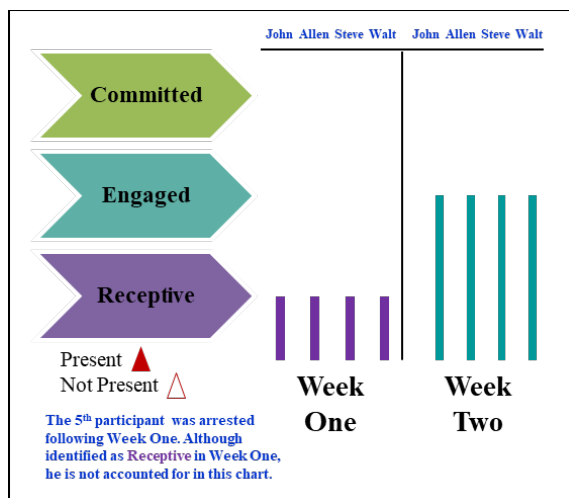
**Figure 26.** Placard Utilized for Week Two Roundtable.

The Week Two Roundtable focused on Spiritual Warfare. One of the participants expected at Location Green was not present; he had been arrested and remained in custody for the remainder of the project. The other two participants at Location Green, John and Allen, admitted knowing that spiritual warfare was active in their lives. John discussed shame's role in the enemy's ability to mount an attack against someone. At the same time, Allen indicated that relying on the Bible was the only way to prevent enemy actions.

At Location Purple, Steve and Walt conducted different assessments of their battle with Spiritual Warfare. Walt agreed that spiritual warfare was a factor in his life, while Steve said that

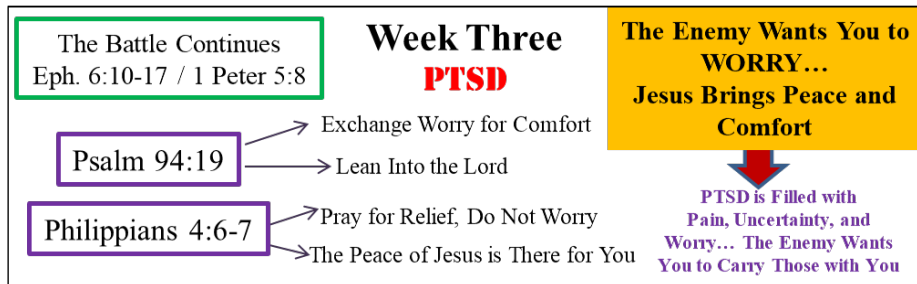
he was not sure about spiritual warfare in his life, but if it was there, then he deserved it. Steve also said that he carries a strong addiction to crack cocaine and does not feel “worthy” of God’s help. The notion of worthiness became a discussion point during the session.

At the conclusion of this week, the project director made assessments for Events and Trends. At the same time, Indicators did not surface for evaluation due to insufficient data from previous sessions. All attendees were assessed to be within the *Engaged* range of progression for Events. Regarding Trends, none of the participants shied away from the questions or discussion points. There was no apparent dilution of the truth in their answers, although Steve had a distorted view of the weight of spiritual warfare on his life. It was too early to assess Indicators, as only one full roundtable was concluded by this point.



**Figure 27.** Week Two Progression Assessment.

## Week Three



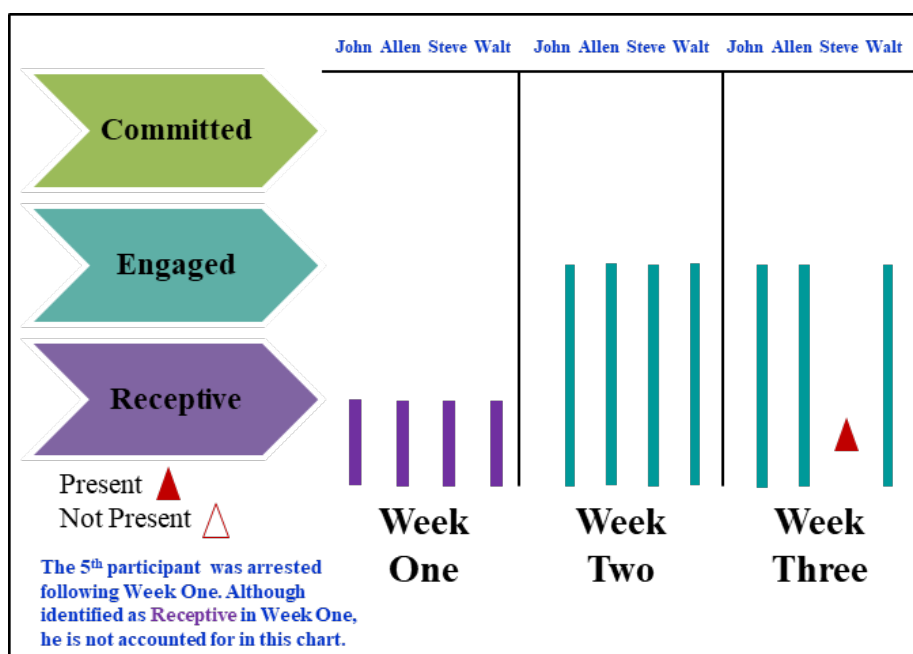
**Figure 28.** Placard Utilized for Week Three Roundtable.

The Week Three Roundtable focused on PTSD; the project director expected that PTSD might be an area of concern for all participants. The two remaining participants at Location Green, John and Allen, differed on PTSD impacting their lives. John admitted that PTSD was a significant factor in his life and that it often manifested in anger and frustration at individuals and events. Allen was not sure that he suffered from PTSD; he could not point to an event where he might have developed PTSD.

Steve, at Location Purple, has an incessant and debilitating drug addiction; the project director asked about the origins of that ailment. Steve said that he did not remember a specific incident; he also denied any PTSD. It was clear to the project director that Steve was under the influence of drugs or, perhaps but not likely, reacting to a complete lack of sleep. Walt was very clear in his acknowledgment of PTSD in his life. His PTSD was a result of his reactions to a Bad Conduct Discharge from the U.S. Air Force in 1986. Both John, at Purple, and Walt, at Green, expressed their desire to receive help to overcome their PTSD.

Events, Trends, and Indicators received assessments. For Events, one participant, Steve, appeared to be under the influence of drugs or reacting to a complete lack of sleep. A change occurred in Trends. Most participants, 3 out of 4, remained in an evaluated *Engaged* progression; the other participant reverted to a "present" condition. Of interest to the project director, Location Green appears to provide a more stress-free environment for participants to wait before

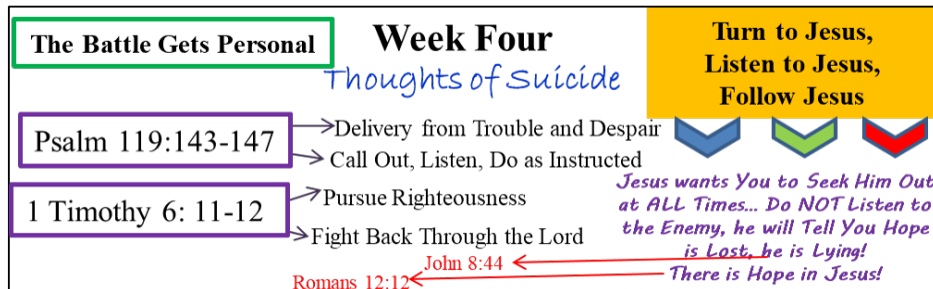
conducting a roundtable. The environment at Location Green is not as sullen or depressing as Location Purple, as amplified by the surroundings and the other homeless individuals on-site. This reflection does not constitute a negative judgment on the staff or facilities at Location Green, but there is a palpable difference in the environment. Before the project's conduct, the director was aware that there was a noted difference in the homeless clientele present at the various locations. How much the environment drove individual responses during the roundtable sessions is unknown. The initial assessment of Indicators showed that on-site staff at both locations knew of or could sense an impending issue with a participant and could provide a heads-up to the project director.



**Figure 29.** Week Three Progression Assessment.



## Week Four



**Figure 30.** Placard Utilized for Week Four Roundtable.

Given the Week Four roundtable subject of Suicide Ideation, the project director was hyper-sensitive to any comments or changes in demeanor that might signal one of the participants was in danger of harming or killing themselves. Of note, this subject's sensitivity is why Suicide Ideations was not addressed in the opening survey; the project director did not want to trigger a response from the survey inadvertently and then not be present for an immediate and deeper discussion. This subject was anticipated to produce an intense roundtable; this anticipation did not prove out. Only one of the four participants admitted to having ever contemplated suicide. Due to past ministry experiences and research, the project director had expected a higher incident rate of suicide attempts or contemplation.

As previously addressed, the rate of suicide attempts is 7.8 times higher for homeless Veterans than non-homeless Veterans; the studies also show a higher percentage of completed suicide attempts than is experienced nationally among all adults.<sup>2</sup> To strengthen that fact, as of 2019 the suicide rate for Veterans was 52.3 percent higher than that of non-Veterans.<sup>3</sup> A Rand Health study concluded in 2020 that the numbers of suicides, when comparing Veterans to the

<sup>2</sup> Jack Tsai and Xing Cao, "Association Between Suicide Attempts and Homelessness in a Population-Based Sample of US Veterans and Non-Veterans," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 73, no. 4 (2019): 346-347

<sup>3</sup> Ryan Holliday et al., "A Latent Class Analysis to Identify Subgroups of VHA Using Homeless Veterans at Greater Risk for Suicide Mortality," *Journal of Effective Disorders* 315 (2022): 162.

general population of a 100,000 sample size, for 55-74 year olds was 30.4 to 17 for the same sample size.<sup>4</sup> The age population for this project was 58 to 74 years old. The only participant in their 30s was Larry, who was jailed and unavailable for additional discussions.

John, at Location Green, admitted to having attempted suicide by hanging and using a gun; these events were some “years ago,” according to John. John submitted that he no longer feels drawn to suicide but that he still suffers from the PTSD that triggered the suicide attempts. The project director ensured that John no longer harbored thoughts of suicide and recommended seeking counseling at a VA-provided venue or affiliated mental professional. John expressed an openness to consider outside help should he again be drawn toward suicide. Allen, at Location Green, stated that he did not, nor had ever had any thoughts of suicide.

Neither of the participants at Location Purple, Steve and Walt, admitted to thoughts of suicide. Steve was, again, overly lethargic and appeared to be suffering because of substance abuse. Walt did say that while he is never suicidal, he does occasionally want to react out of frustration and hurt someone. The project director ensured that Walt was not preparing to act in anger or frustration toward someone in particular.

As to assessments for Events, the same participant was, again, incapacitated by an apparent reaction to drug use and was further negatively impacted by an ongoing personal hygiene issue. For Trends, all other participants remained assessed as *Engaged* and buoyant in their conduct. An interesting Indicator emerged: 3 of 4 participants were now anticipating the arrival of the project director and were looking forward to the engagement.

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<sup>4</sup> Rajeev Ramchand, “Suicide Among Veterans,” *Rand Health Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (2020): 2.

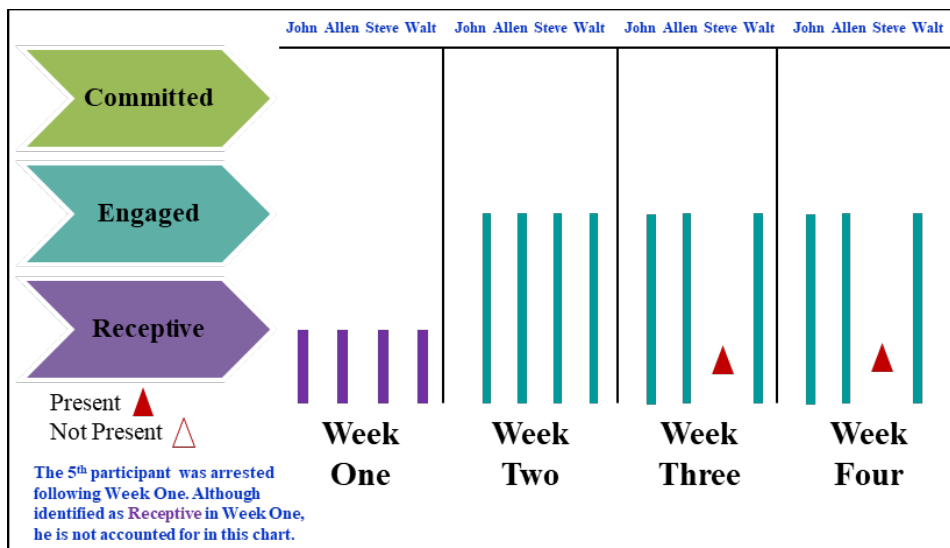


Figure 31. Week Four Progression Assessment.

Week Five

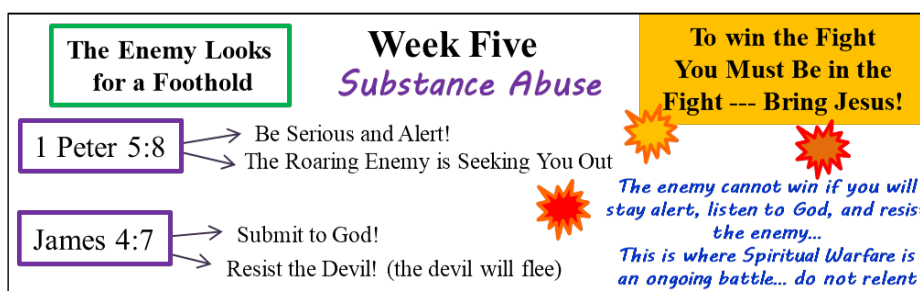


Figure 32. Placard Utilized for Week Five Roundtable.

Discussions from the weeks leading to the Week Five Roundtable left little doubt that each participant would be able to share personal stories of the impacts of Substance Abuse on their lives. John, at Location Purple, said that he had been “clean and sober” for forty years but that forty years ago, he had partaken in all forms of drugs and alcohol. Allen said, “I’ve been drinking forever,” and Allen also admitted to a devastating heroin addiction that had plagued him for twenty years.

At Location Green, the impact of Substance Abuse was evident straight away; Steve had left the location in what the staff and the other participant described as a search for drugs. Here, following two weeks of lethargy, the negative impact of Substance Abuse on Steve’s life was

demonstrated at the very beginning of the roundtable. Walt readily admitted to struggling with drugs and alcohol. Walt expressed that he has attended Narcotics Anonymous meetings off and on, and he states that he enjoys a series of very short-term successes.

Assessed Events were that one participant was missing to attempt to access drugs. As to Trends, the remaining three participants all admitted to issues with drugs and alcohol. For assessed Indicators, Substance Abuse impacted all other areas of the participant’s lives and issues.

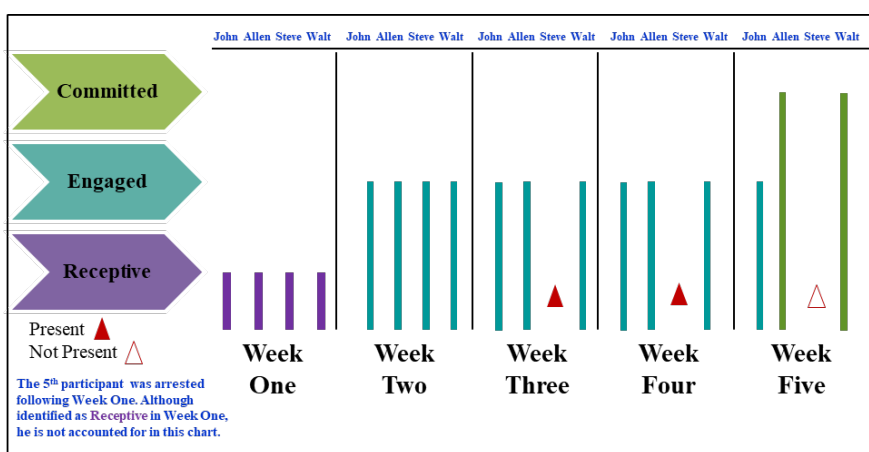


Figure 33. Week Five Progression Assessment.


Week Six

Final Week: Questions/Input

- Would you recommend this program become a permanent occurrence at this location? Please, expand your answer beyond yes/no.
- What were the three most impactful benefits - if any - of this program?
- How would you increase program participation numbers?
- Would this program be effective if conducted at the homeless camp? (If yes, what modifications – if any - would need to be made to the program? If no, what factors would be working against the program?)
- What is your biggest take-away from this program?

Figure 34. Placard Utilized for Week Six Roundtable.

Week Six focused on the close-out questions above and included discussions and the distribution of a wallet-sized card with the pertinent Scriptures discussed during the previous roundtable sessions. Wallet-sized cards were provided as a tool to reinforce the Scriptures that had been used during the roundtable sessions to underscore all salient points; the importance of maintaining these cards on their person was made inextricably clear to the participants.

 <p>Ephesians 6:10-17 Armor Up for Battle</p> <p>Psalm 94:19 Exchange Worry for Comfort</p> <p>Philippians 4:6-7 The Peace of Jesus is There for You</p> <p>Psalm 119:143-147 Delivery from Trouble and Despair</p> <p>1 Peter 5:8 Be Serious and Alert</p>	<p>1 Timothy 6: 11-12 Pursue Righteousness</p> <p>John 8:44 The Enemy is a Liar</p> <p>James 4:7 Resist the Enemy</p> <p>Romans 12:12 There is Hope in Jesus!</p> <p>John 3:16 For God so Loved YOU!</p>
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**Figure 35.** Wallet-sized Card Distributed during Week Six Roundtable.

A capture of all homeless Veteran participants' complete answers to the close-out questions can be found in Appendix T, under Week Six. Here is a summation of the answers to the questions.

Question:	Steve:	Walt:	John:	Allen:
1. Would you recommend this program become a permanent occurrence at this location?	Yes	Yes, but I don't think you'll get participation.	A strong "yes" to recommending the program continue.	Agreed with the program becoming a permanent fixture.
2. What were the three most impactful benefits of this program?	The food card and the hat.	"Talking about things in my life..." the incentives were nice and appreciated, called the pro-bono law group to seek assistance with his military discharge.	It helped to talk things through; allowed to "look deeper into pinpoints" that brought about being "irritable and impatient."	"I know one day a week things are going to get better." The roundtable session gave him the ability to "get through the week."
3. How would you increase program participation numbers?	To provide "more gift cards" to increase numbers.	Yes to incentives, but a person would have to "see where he could benefit"	"It would be tough to do because most Vets are loners."	Wholeheartedly agreed with John's assessment.

		from attendance.		
4. Would this program be effective if conducted at the homeless camp?	No; "Too many drugs and too many people angling at getting something" to make a homeless camp a poor choice for the program.	No; "You could look for people to participate, but you wouldn't want to be there for meetings.	No; "You could look for people to participate, but you wouldn't want to be there for meetings.	No; there was "a different mind-set" of homeless Veterans that lived at the homeless camp.
5. What is your biggest take-away from this program?	"Glad for the kindness and the gifts."	Happy to "get a sense of value back" in his life. He also expressed thanks for being able to get help with changing his military discharge status.	"More awareness of the enemy" and he had become more aware of "different tools to use" and a "way out of the attacks."	He had added to his "tool kit."

Figure 36. Homeless Veteran Close-out Questions Summation.

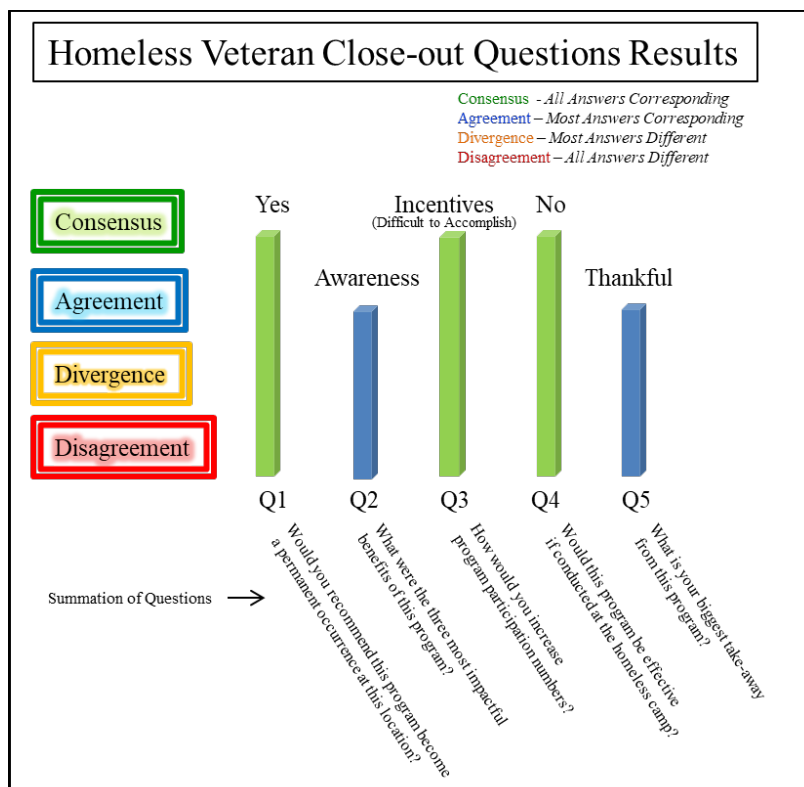
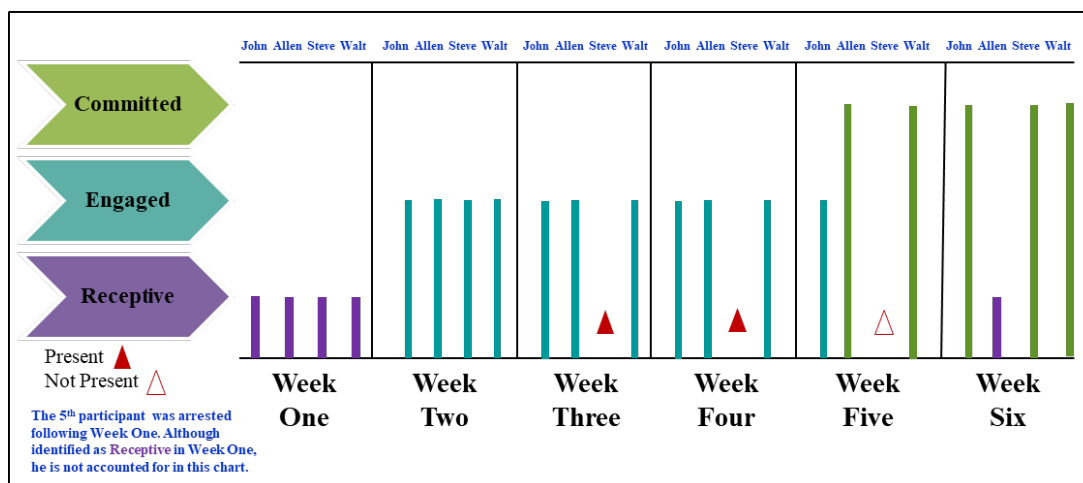


Figure 37. Homeless Veteran Close-out Questions Results.

Final assessments for Events, Trends, and Indicators were conducted. All participants were present for Events, with 3 of 4 actively engaged in the discussions. As to Trends, 3 of the 4 participants had all engaged with an outside agency to seek help with an ongoing homeless issue. Indicators: Consistent, caring contact with these homeless veterans made a difference in their lives. Seventy-five percent of participants sought help from outside agencies with their homelessness. This outcome exceeded the stated goal of the project to achieve a 50 percent success rate of homeless Veteran participants seeking assistance from outside agencies to end their homelessness.



**Figure 38.** Week Six (Final) Progression Assessment.

#### Support Staff Participants

The five close-out questions were discussed with the staff participants and then provided via email to allow adequate time to ponder the questions. This method of attaining feedback proved useful in securing more thoughtful responses. Location Purple provided the following responses.

(Greg)

Question 1. I would say yes. I think that having a specific focus on veterans from veterans would be a great blessing to those in need.

Question 2. Hope from other veterans, open dialogue, and a safe place for veterans to be.

Question 3. Continue to let veterans know that it exists as well as encourage the ones who were in it to spread the word.

Question 4. I don't believe it would be simply because there are a bunch of individuals who don't want to be seen or are nomadic, so a consistent client base would be challenging.

Question 5. More veterans need assistance and don't know where to turn to or know what information is out there.

Location Green provided the following (one of the staff members at this location, Charles, departed prior to the provision of these questions; he was unavailable for contact).

(Tim)

Question 1. I do believe that some kind of mentorship would be very beneficial in working with the homeless population. It would have its challenges though.

Question 2. A. I believe the time spent in the group was very good for the clients to talk about things that they normally wouldn't talk about with staff or other homeless (talk with a peer).

B. It was a time where the client could look forward to and be excited about.

C. It was good for the client to know someone cared about them enough to set aside time each week to meet with them.

Question 3. Participation is hit or miss so I would think some type of big incentive might help. Once a few go through it, they could help facilitate another group in recruitment.



Question 4. I think it would be very difficult to have at a camp. One issue would be the weather, another would be safety.

Question 5. Again, I do believe that mentorship could be a great motivation and encouragement for those in homelessness.

Although Location Blue did not host weekly roundtable sessions, its staff remained dedicated to serving the homeless Veteran community. They maintained contact with the project director to answer questions and address ongoing issues. As such, they were also provided with the five close-out questions. Their answers are below.

(Lisa)

Question 1: Yes, it gives the veteran an opportunity to take stock in their situation and be accountable.

Question 2: The main impact is a veteran will know that there is help.

Question 3: Offering this tool whenever a veteran new to our facility and the Huntsville area.

Question 4: No, offering it to them in a camp doesn't give them any incentive to move from where they're at; if they want to change then they must make the effort.

Question 5: I haven't seen this done before, I'm not sure what "Operation Stand-down" did in this community, but it was only a weekend event and then it was gone until the next year. At least with this kind of ongoing program, word of mouth success stories travels fast, so maybe other homeless veterans may want to be involved.

(Nancy)

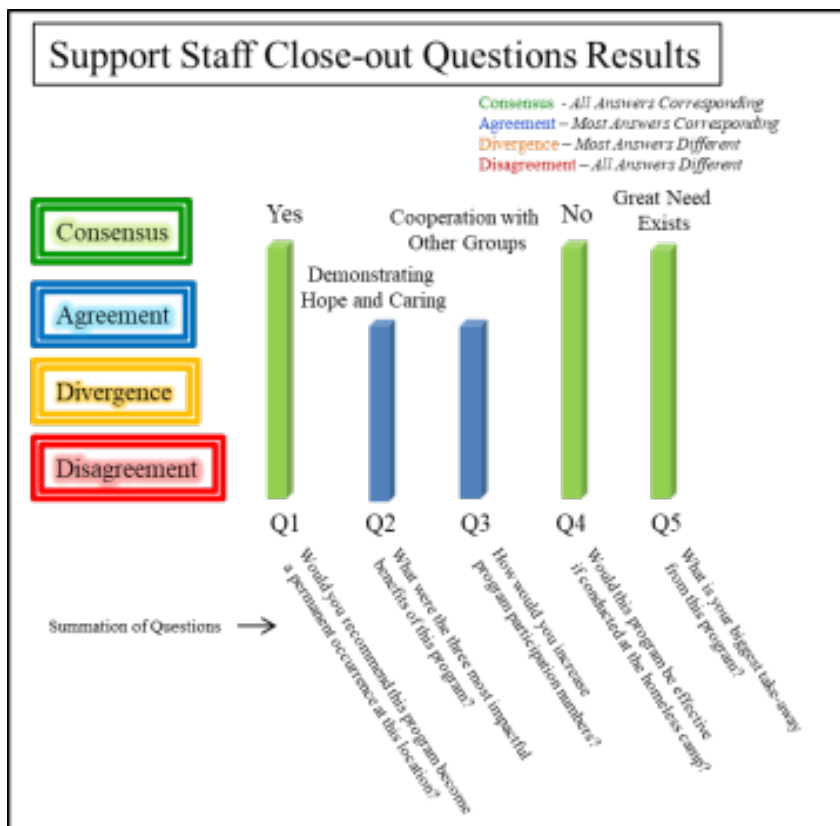
Question 1. Yes, I believe this program provides an essential service to veterans, and I would love to expand the services we're able to connect our veterans with.

Question 2. Building a positive professional relationship with an agency of similar conviction. Connecting veterans with an agency dedicated to making lasting change in their lives. Connecting veterans with an agency that promotes mental health awareness in a positive light, and showing them by example (from other veterans), that they don't have to stay in the same cycle they've become used to.

Question 3. Connecting with more agencies, both in the non-profit and government areas.

Question 4. I honestly am not certain how effective it would be in a camp setting, but I think the biggest obstacle would be the stigma with mental health treatment, and the hyper-cautious nature unsheltered homeless veterans often display toward anything that might be government-affiliated.

Question 5. That there is always such a strong need among veterans, and that there are always individuals that are passionate about making a difference in their lives.



**Figure 39.** Support Staff Close-out Questions Results.

### Data Analysis

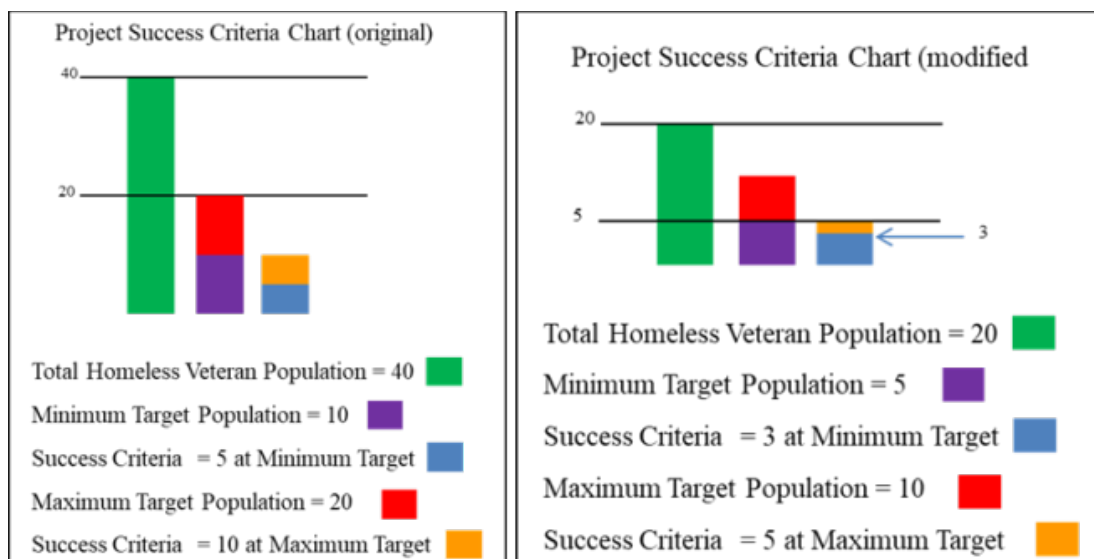
The tools planned for and utilized during this project, communicated in chapter three, will be assessed in this section. The tools applied were Sampling, Questions, Observations, Interviews, Questionnaires, and Surveys. The intent will be to highlight areas where expectations were met and where expectations diverged from the originally considered outcomes. The project director applied guidance and suggestions from Sensing's book *Qualitative Research* to gather data and measure the effects of the intervention.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*.

## Sampling

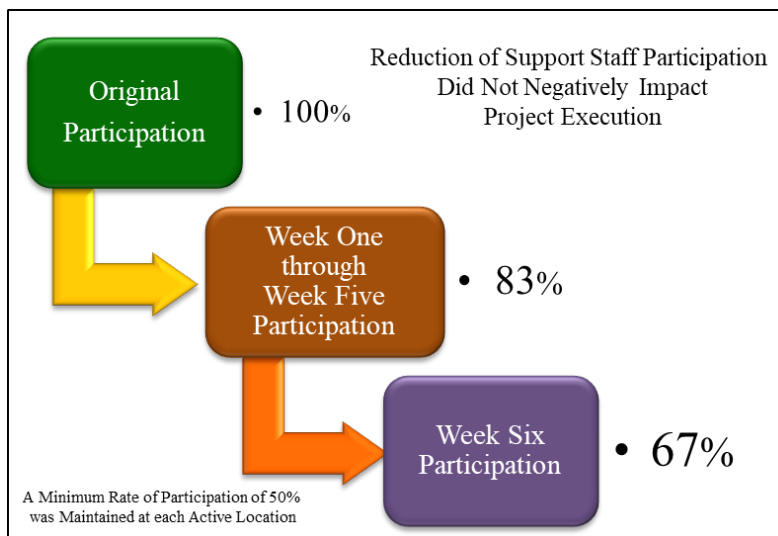
The project director intended to sample all those potential participants who met the established criteria as homeless Veterans or staff members with an established record of supporting homeless Veterans. As discussed, at the most, this project would have had 40 homeless Veteran participants in the study; this was the recognized extent of the entire homeless Veteran population in Huntsville. The project aimed to reach 25 percent of the homeless Veteran population (10 participants), with a 50 percent reach (20 participants) as an unlikely but welcomed potential. The project's goal for support staff participation was to reach 2 people at each of the three designated locations for a total of 6, with 6 serving as a 100 percent participation rate.

As highlighted, the pool of potential homeless Veteran participants was drastically cut from 40 to 20. This alteration significantly revised the numbers available to the project director. However, the change in circumstances still allowed for a continuation of the project as planned by accounting for and executing the project via utilizing exact percentages from the planned numbers to the utilized numbers. The project's new goal was still to reach 25 percent of the population, with 5 participants being the designated number, with a 50 percent reach of 10 participants as the more unlikely scenario.



**Table 4.2 (Modified).** Original (Left) and Modified (Right) Success Criteria Chart.

The goal of 6 support staff participants, providing a 100 percent participation rate, was initially achieved. One individual stepped away from the process early, bringing the participation rate to 83 percent. This staff support participation rate lowered to 67 percent late in the process when an additional support staff participant hurriedly changed employment and locations and, in so doing, severed all contact with Location Green. This change in support staff participation did not negatively affect the conduct of the project. Although not previously articulated, the project director would have felt the project's goals would have been satisfied by having at least one support staff participant from each of the three designated locations, thereby providing a 50 percent participation rate. This planning exclusion should have been included in the original planning numbers.



**Figure 40.** Support Staff Participation.

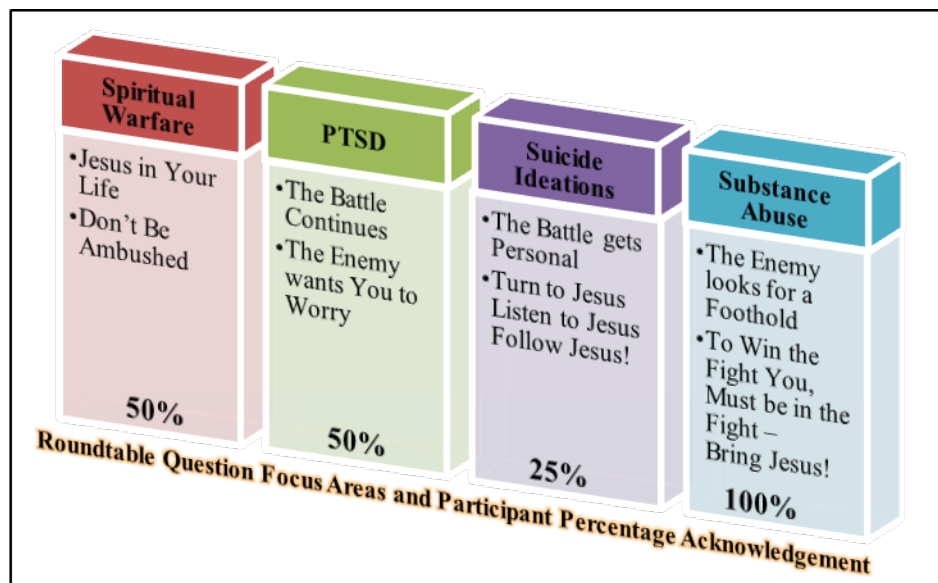
Purposive sampling, selecting “people who have awareness of the situation and meet the criteria and attributes that are essential to your research” remained the designated method for identifying participants.<sup>6</sup> Selection criteria were unaffected by the change in the homeless Veteran population numbers. To participate as a qualifying homeless Veteran, one must have previously served in the United States Armed Forces, regardless of discharge status, and are currently living in a place or location not intended to be permanently occupied, such as a tent, a vehicle, an emergency shelter, homeless camp, etc. (see Appendix G). All support staff participants met the designated project criteria. To participate as a qualifying support staff member, one must have a status as a person who aids or supports homeless Veterans at least once per week for at least one year; see Appendix H.

### Questions

The second tool the project director applied was the use of questions. Questions took two primary forms during the project; the first form was the use of printed questionnaires, covered later, and the second was the application of open-ended questions to gather information and drive

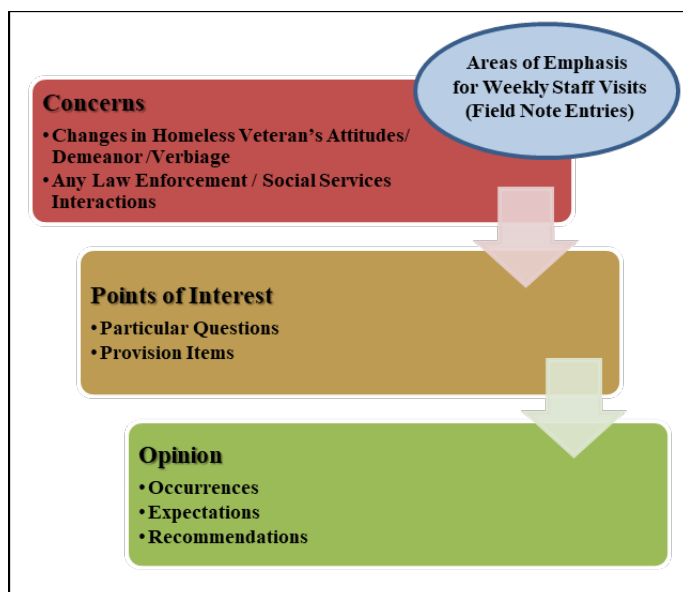
<sup>6</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 83.

discussions during the roundtable sessions. The execution of the roundtable sessions included Scripture highlights and built-in talking points designed to spur discussions. These question focus areas were Spiritual Warfare, PTSD, Suicide Ideations, and Substance Abuse.



**Figure 41.** Roundtable Session Question Focus Areas.

The project director would highlight the session's subject matter with an orientation on targeted Scriptural references and then ask questions to draw out conversation and reflection. The project director was looking for the homeless Veteran participants' thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and opinions. Questions used to drive discussions with the support staff were fluid but adhered to planned areas of emphasis on concerns, points of interest, and opinions.



**Figure 7.** Recurring Weekly Interactions with the Support Staff.

Overall, the questions portions of the project unfolded as the project director had anticipated. It became necessary, on occasion, to draw certain homeless Veterans into the roundtable conversations to better prepare them to break free from homelessness. Questions put forward to the support staff participants required much less, if any, coaxing to engage in discussions.

### Observations

The next tool the project director utilized was observations. The project director attempted to maintain the same demeanor throughout the six-week process when engaging with the various participants. The intent was to provide a steady and expected bearing each week, thereby eliminating one potential factor to consider if any participants exhibited a change in behavior, attitude, or discourse.

Observations of the homeless Veteran and support staff participants began upon first contact seeking participation in the project. The project director established a baseline for engagement and measured all other contact opportunities with this event as the starting point.



These contact engagement and observation opportunities continued with administering the surveys and questionnaires for the homeless Veteran participants and distributing the take-home questionnaire for the support staff participants.

As planned, most of the observation activities centered on conducting the roundtable sessions. These sessions provided one hour to one hour and a half of contact between the project director and the homeless Veteran participants each week. Additionally, the project director utilized time before and after the roundtable sessions to interact with the staff participants. Throughout, and according to the project plan, the project director examined the participants' facial expressions, posture, mannerisms, demeanor, and word use to assess the roundtable sessions' impact on the participants accurately.

Observation Focus	John	Allen	Steve	Walt
Facial Expression	Alert, Aware	Inquisitive	Tired	Alert, Aware
Posture	Protective, Guarded	Relaxed	Slumped	Confident
Mannerisms	Eyes moving back and forth to check surroundings	Listened intently, responded to prompts	Distracted, Lethargic	Focused, Leaned into Conversation
Demeanor	Receptive, Confident	Unconcerned, Trusting	Appeared under the influence of a substance	Receptive, Troubled
Word Use	Articulate, Recited Scripture	Difficulty expressing a point	Slow, short, only responded when prompted	Articulate, Ability to weave thoughts into subject

Observations from Week Two Roundtable

**Figure 42.** Week Two Roundtable Observations.

Observation Focus	John	Allen	Steve	Walt
Facial Expression	↑ Relaxed	↔ Receptive	↔ Tired, Resigned	↔ Relaxed
Posture	↑ Relaxed	↔ Relaxed	↔ Leaning back, hands in lap	↑ Relaxed, Confident
Mannerisms	↑ Listened Intently, Expressive engagement	↔ Listened intently, responded to prompts	↔ Distracted, Lethargic,	↑ Listened Intently, Expressive engagement
Demeanor	↔ Receptive, Confident	↑ Unconcerned, Trusting, Enthusiastic	↔ Distorted, Confused	↑ Receptive, Confident, Eager
Word Use	↔ Articulate, Recited Scripture	↑ Focused but halting	↑ Slow, Close-out comments included thankfulness	↔ Articulate, Ability to weave thoughts into subject

**Observations from Week Six Roundtable**

Changes Noted From Week Two to Week Six

- ↑ Improved
- ↔ No Change = Positive
- ↔ No Change = Negative
- ↓ Declined

**Figure 43.** Week Six Roundtable Observations with Assessed Changes.

### Interviews, Questionnaires, and Surveys

Interviews, questionnaires, and surveys were all tools the project director employed for the project. As articulated, the interviews became a vital component of the project. However, they became co-mingled with conducting the questionnaires and providing the surveys, and then with the ongoing roundtable sessions; this met with the initial plan to conduct semi-structured interviews. The first question for homeless Veteran participants in the questionnaires was, "Why are you homeless?" The first question for support staff participants was, "Why do you think Veterans are homeless?" These answers drove discussions in the first roundtable session with homeless Veteran participants during Week Two and in discussions with staff participants to explore the presence of spiritual warfare in the lives of homeless Veterans.

This method of weaving responses from the questionnaires and surveys into the roundtable discussions and support staff conversations was repeated weekly. Additionally, the project director had intended to be more directive during a close-out interview, which had been planned and articulated as a group interview; this part of the plan was not conducted as envisioned. The project director was concerned, pre-intervention, about the possibility of triggering a negative response in a group interview session. As the six-week project unfolded, it became clear that the two groups of participants would not respond in a physical or verbally confrontational manner to one another's comments or opinions; therefore, the status quo utilized for the roundtable sessions was substituted for any formal type of group interview setting. This slight alteration in the execution of the project did not distract from the overall results; in fact, it proved to be helpful in ensuring a full and robust discussion at the conclusion of the project.

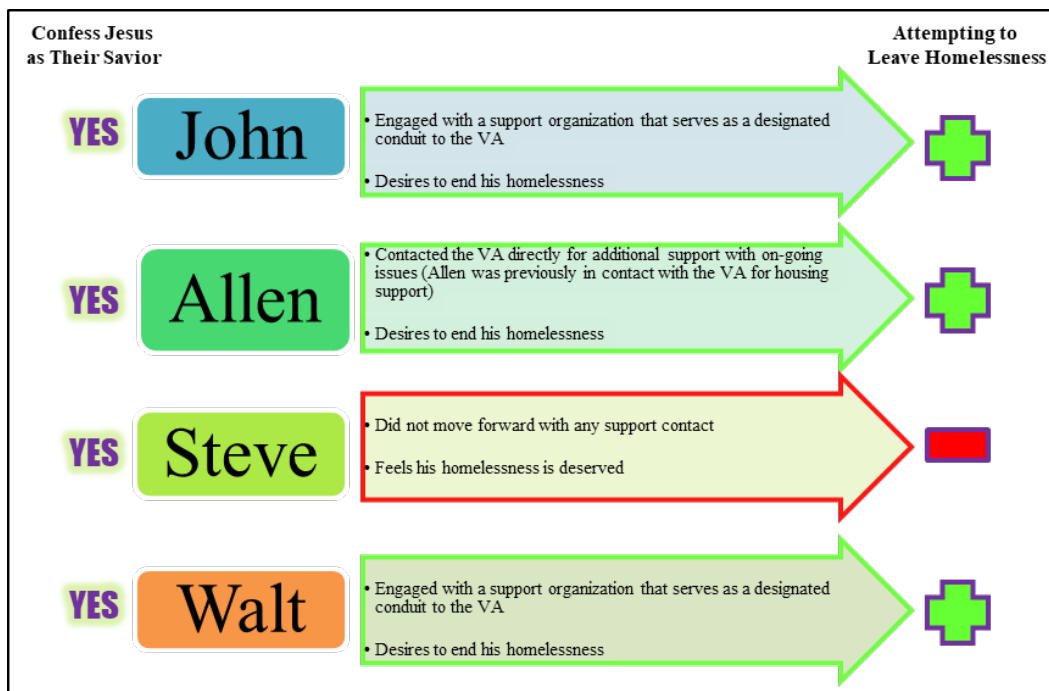
As mentioned, surveys became a baseline for follow-up roundtable discussions about PTSD, TBI, moral injuries, and substance abuse. Although the surveys were anonymous, it became clear to the project director which participant had most likely filled out which survey. The project director never asked a participant to restate their responses to the survey. Additionally, as mentioned, it appeared to the project director that the homeless Veteran participants had been less forthcoming in the anonymous surveys than in the questionnaires, which merely obfuscated their identities.

### **Summary of Results**

The results of this DMIN action project successfully met the stated purpose of establishing a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to reduce their rates of homelessness. The success criteria to validate that a homeless Veteran had taken steps to end their homelessness required engagement in one of the following four steps. The first

was for the homeless Veteran to contact the VA directly. The second possibility was for the homeless Veteran to engage with a support organization that serves as a designated conduit to the VA. The third acceptable possibility for homeless Veterans to meet the criteria was engaging with the Downtown Rescue Mission by entering their long-term, on-site program to overcome homelessness. The final recognized option for the project was for the homeless Veteran to engage with First Stop and their in-house program to assist with ending homelessness. Seeking to break free from homelessness by pursuing any of the four possibilities designated above met the seeking assistance portion of the measurable project criteria. The homeless Veteran participants in this project achieved a 75 percent success rate of engagement, thereby exceeding the stated success rate goal of 50 percent.

For clarification, Allen had previously established a relationship with the VA about gaining housing. He was encouraged via the project and followed through in contacting the VA with a desire to establish a healthcare relationship with them. With this new contact venue counted as a new form of engagement, the project reached a 75 percent successful engagement rate. Given Allen's ongoing contact with the VA for housing-specific issues, the project director felt it might be disingenuous to count Allen as a new engagement success without his acceptance of additional VA assistance. Given this achievement, 3 out of 4 homeless Veteran participants expressed a desire and took positive actions to break free from their chronic homelessness. As to their seeking Jesus for salvation, each participant expressed and defined their relationship with Jesus as their Savior in the Week One Questionnaire and the Week Two roundtable discussions.



**Figure 44.** Final Results of Project Intervention.

The project director confirms that applying the combination of surveys, questionnaires, and discussions across the six-week project timeline was necessary to achieve a positive end result. Eliminating any of these elements would have proven detrimental to the fact-finding portion of the project and to the real-world results the project initiated. Weekly interactions generated by the project spiritually lifted the homeless Veteran and support staff participants. The project director would argue that the resulting statistics of the project's intervention display a successful outcome; however, the true success of the project is to be proven by continued discipleship activities within the homeless Veteran community.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The issue of homelessness in the US is widespread and debilitating to numerous affected individuals and communities. Research demonstrates that many homeless Veterans go about their lives with little to no direct spiritual intervention from Jesus-centric organizations for assistance or comfort. This DMIN action project set out to disrupt those parameters in Huntsville, Alabama. This project demonstrates that a discipleship program can be successful by bringing Jesus to homeless Veterans while leading them away from chronic homelessness. This project should be seen and employed as a starting point for other ministries and researchers to identify a pathway into their homeless Veteran community more quickly.

### Research Implications

Most of the research available points to a psychological, social, or another secular approach to understanding and treating Veteran homelessness. This project validated that a ministry approach as the central methodology applied to relieving the suffering of homelessness among Veterans equates to success. The implementation of this project indicates that adherence to this project's formation and execution in other parts of this country to attain similar, successful results is warranted. Undoubtedly, a dire and persistent need exists for ministry intervention, or discipleship, into the lives of homeless Veterans. Statistics demonstrate that 7 percent of a homeless population within a given locality will consist of homeless Veterans. As identified, homelessness directly affects over 580,000 people across the US on any given night.<sup>1</sup> Of these 580,000, over 33,000 are Veterans; homeless Veterans account for over 7 percent of the

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<sup>1</sup> Tanya D. Souza et al., *The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress (Part 1)* (The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Community Planning and Development, 2022), 2.

homeless population within the US.<sup>2</sup> These statistics place the burden on ministries that are willing to engage with the call to serve homeless Veterans squarely in the middle of the guidance found in Matthew 9:37, where Jesus states, “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few” (HCSB).

Ministries desiring to determine the need and applicability in their community by applying the general parameters found within this project will become a welcomed addition to the lives of homeless Veterans. Undoubtedly, both challenges and rewards await ministries that choose to confront Veteran homelessness. Impacted areas of this project include local homeless Veterans, the support staff at the utilized locations, Centurion Witness Ministries, and the broader group of organizations that support the Huntsville, Alabama homeless community.

#### Homeless Veterans

Nine local homeless Veterans, 45 percent of the potentially available homeless Veteran community of 20, were contacted to participate in this project. Six accepted, with one dropped following recognition that they were misrepresenting themselves as a Veteran. One other was subsequently jailed and could not participate fully in the project. However, four local homeless Veterans, 20 percent of the potentially 20 available homeless Veterans, had their lives positively impacted by the conduct of this project. Three of those four participants, 75 percent, took positive concrete actions to free themselves from chronic homelessness.

As addressed in chapter four, three of the four homeless Veteran participants expressed a sincere desire to break free from chronic homelessness. The fourth and most uncooperative participant was convinced that they deserved homelessness as punishment. The project director assesses that this participant may well maintain this distorted belief until they can successfully

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<sup>2</sup> Souza et al., *The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment*, 60.

address their debilitating drug and alcohol use. The project director would argue that additional weekly contact with the participants would have strengthened the session's lasting impacts.

#### Support Staff

Four of the initial six, 67 percent, of the support staff participants completed the entire project; this accounted for at least one staff participant from each of the three designated locations contributing weekly. The weekly interactions between the support staff participants and the project director served as an outlet for the staff to offer opinions regarding the status and attitudes of the homeless Veteran participants and to provide salient advice for moving the project's purpose forward. The project director had only allotted a fifteen-minute window for weekly conversations with the support staff; even so, there were occasions when the discussions were completed under intense time constraints due to pending, immediate job requirements for the staff member. Utilization of the developed concerns, points of interest, and opinions chart became a very useful tool.

#### Centurion Witness Ministries (CWM)

CWM strengthened its two-fold mission to serve Veterans by functioning in the key role of this project. One CWM mission parameter focuses on homeless Veterans, as described, and the second mission activity concentrates on Veterans and still serving military members suffering from spiritual attacks. Many of the roundtable session's focus areas and Scriptural highlights originated from the ministry's outreach to Veterans and military members suffering from spiritual attacks. Applying the lessons learned from executing the mission against the backdrop of Veteran homelessness strengthened both ministry mission corridors. Many of the Veterans CWM serves are afflicted by PTSD, TBI, moral injuries, and suicide ideations; these two groups are often separated only by the scourge of homelessness.



## Homeless Support Organizations

A broad range of organizations support the homeless community in Huntsville, Alabama to include a specially designated and trained group of police officers. These law enforcement officers are well-versed in the needs of the homeless community, and their contact operational tempo and demeanor demonstrate their training. The project director was gratified to find these disparate groups to be so welcoming of the efforts of this project. In addition, attitudes displayed by individuals from the various organizations were uplifting and sharing in nature; no intent was demonstrated to protect one organization's focus at the expense of another's priorities. These organizations stand united in the fight against the devastating results of homelessness.

### **Research Applications**

The topic of research applications will be highlighted by a review of the project's problem, purpose, literature review, and method of completion. These subjects will emphasize areas where others may briefly view how the process unfolded and select areas of applicability in their project or ministry activity. These must be viewed through the lens of having taken place in Huntsville, Alabama; each municipality will have its quirks to sort through to ensure success.

### **Problem**

The problem is that Centurion Witness Ministries in Huntsville, Alabama lacked a discipleship program among homeless Veterans to lower their rate of homelessness. Other locations with a homeless population, which accounts for most cities in the US, also have homeless Veterans for which to be concerned. Stated throughout this paper is the fact that homeless Veterans account for over 7 percent of the homeless population within the US.<sup>3</sup> To determine the number in a particular area, visit the Housing and Urban Development exchange

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<sup>3</sup> Souza et al., *The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report*, 60.

website at <https://www.hudexchange.info/> and look for the “Point-in-Time Count and Housing Inventory Count.” Then, one must only enter the city or geographic area of concern to find the homeless Veteran numbers. This undertaking is a good starting point for ministries and churches looking to determine if a need exists in their location—it almost certainly does—and then to identify what that need may require in the form of people and resources.

This project chose to address spiritual warfare, PTSD, suicide ideations, and substance abuse as issues of concern and consequence to homeless Veterans. These same issues are most likely applicable in whatever city, town, or other location where a ministry mission is considered. These are not the only areas of concern, but they have been shown to carry the preponderance of damaging effects on the homeless Veteran population.<sup>4</sup>

#### Purpose

The purpose for this DMIN action project was to establish a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to reduce their homeless rates, thereby satisfying the problem stated above. Centurion Witness Ministries is a Veteran-centric, Veteran-run organization; as such, there was a decided tilt toward a military mindset and template in executing this project. Earlier, this paper addressed the requirement to go, find, and help those Veterans in need, to leave no one behind. This focus is harbored out of adherence to Scripture and as a result of military service and, as such, embedded within each military member during their time in service. That focus on helping other Veterans continues for life. While undoubtedly true for Veterans, this mission emphasis does not eliminate or diminish the calling for others to serve homeless Veterans. Ministries and churches desiring to disciple homeless Veterans need

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<sup>4</sup> Jack Tsai and Katherine Kelton, "Service Use and Barriers to Care Among Homeless Veterans: Results from the National Veteran Homeless and Other Poverty Experiences (NV-HOPE) Study," *Journal of Community Psychology* 51, no. 1 (2023): 511-512.

only turn to the guidance found in Matthew 25:40, serving the least of society, Matthew 28:19, making disciples, and Psalm 18:37, pursuing the spiritual enemy until victorious.

### Literature Review

The project director focused the literature review on the themes of homelessness among Veterans and the recognition of observable factors that impact homeless Veterans, including PTSD, TBI, substance abuse, suicide ideations, and moral injuries. Research efforts were conducted to contrast traditional ministry activities with parachurch organizations. As addressed in this paper, discipleship programs and recommendations on building one are plentiful; however, most of the references pertain to programs oriented toward a church, not a separate ministry, and certainly not guidance toward a ministry dealing primarily with a homeless community. The project director recommends that any ministry or church stepping into this mission conduct research on parachurch activities and street ministry. Additionally, those areas where recommendations for structure, accountability, and resourcing are applicable should be utilized. However, the project recommends that those organizations seeking to work with homeless Veterans remember that the physical environment, subject matter, and language will not always be as comfortable or pleasant as a church social gathering.

### Methodology

This DMIN project intervention design resulted from observing and desiring to counter the spiritual effects of homelessness by addressing the social, mental, and emotional impacts of homelessness on this nation's Veteran community, with a concerted focus on Huntsville, Alabama. The project director concluded that the social, mental, and emotional impacts of homelessness, certainly on homeless Veterans, were observed to be intertwined. The effects of

spiritual warfare were exceptionally noticeable and palpable in each participant's lives and reflected demeanor.

### Social

The social aspects of the homeless Veteran community became a fascinating revelation to the project director. There were, essentially, two groups of homeless Veterans to be identified. The first group tended to cluster around one of the overnight shelters and sought out meals, a place out of the weather during the day, and a place to sleep at night. These shelters maintain restricted entry and exit procedures and have a rules atmosphere. The second group of Veterans would be considered homeless camp-based; these individuals did not approach the shelters for sustenance or comfort. This second group maintained a daily proximity to the homeless camp, venturing out only for short periods. Despite the homeless camp's inherent dangers and vaguely lawless aspects, this second group was satisfied with maintaining their surroundings. None of the individuals from this second group participated in the project.

### Mental

There proved to be, through the admissions of the participants, a preponderance of homeless Veterans with mental challenges. These challenges mainly manifested in degraded reasoning and conversational skills. It was difficult to ascertain which limitations were the result of physical trauma, as in TBI, and those instances related to years and decades of drug and alcohol abuse. While this issue of physical trauma versus substance abuse arose during roundtable discussions, it was nevertheless difficult to arrive at a definitive conclusion.

### Emotional

The project participants displayed a mostly even emotional demeanor during the roundtable sessions, but their discussions portrayed areas of their lives where they were

emotionally distraught. These emotionally charged discussion points centered mainly on those areas where they felt betrayed by the VA, other support agencies, and, in limited occurrences, their country. Again, it was a challenge here to determine if the genesis of their emotional turmoil was physically or mentally induced; however, the project director has no doubt that these issues are buoyed and amplified by spiritual issues.

### **Research Limitations**

This research project was limited by seven factors: project duration, the narrow population available to be sampled, a location-driven restriction, the nature of the necessary personal interaction with the respondents, the impact of the use of anonymous surveys as a method to gather information, the project as a time of day centered event, and the tendency for many homeless Veterans to isolate. This propensity toward isolation was perhaps the most challenging limitation. These seven items proved to be valid limitations.

#### **Project Duration**

The project's total duration was ten weeks, with four weeks accounting for pre-intervention activities. The concerns addressed focus on the six-week period of the project's contact with the homeless Veteran participants. This six-week interval served as ample time to establish contact and achieve relationships with the participants. However, it did not prove sufficient in length to allow the project director to ensure that the participants followed through on the guidance and recommendations. An academic project of this nature would not have necessarily overcome this issue. Unknown to both the project director and the participants was the time required between making an appointment with an organization providing support to a homeless Veteran and being able to attend that appointment. There was a minimum of 12 weeks between a scheduled appointment and appointment attendance due to the overwhelming demand

on the support organizations. The local support organizations support all Veterans, and housing status is not always a factor in scheduling decisions. Of note, the project director spoke with one of the support providers and got confirmation that the participant would receive the first call back to fill any dropped appointment time at that organization. So, the duration of the project was sufficient in proving the underlying thesis but not far-reaching enough in calendar time to view all potential positive outcomes.

#### Narrow Available Population

The concern over a narrow population proved to be revelatory. As discussed previously, there was a vast difference between the expected available population, with challenging numbers, and the actual available population, with dreadful numbers. However, and thankfully, the near impossible proved to be more than sufficient for the project. It would have been interesting to have experienced the dynamics of larger group interactions. However, the project director would assess that the percentages attained concerning outcomes would not have been dramatically affected. The project director will look forward to interacting with increased group numbers as the discipleship program moves from project to reality.

#### Location-driven

The project locations were selected based on their current activities and capacity to support homeless veterans. These locations provided ready-made venues for the conduct of the surveys, questionnaires, and roundtable sessions, as well as providing a central location for contact with the support staff participants. The project director had initially been troubled by the fact that access to the homeless camp would be limited; however, results of conversations and questionnaires demonstrated that this concern was unfounded, given the challenges identified in attempting to conduct the project away from the designated locations.

### Personal Interaction Requirement

The intent, proven out, was to have the opportunity to interact with the respondents on-site while the surveys and initial questionnaires were administered; this initial interaction led to a seamless transition into the follow-on roundtable sessions. As discussed, the homeless reality of the participants negated the use of drop-off surveys and questionnaires, online access, or third-party initiation of the sampling. Although the project director established a dedicated email address and phone number exclusively for use during the project, none of the participants initiated contact via these means. Therefore, on-site, face-to-face personal contact became the only method of interaction.

### Limited Time of Day

The limited time of day was a factor, but it was not detrimental to the conduct of the project. Mid-mornings proved to be the most advantageous time to meet with the participants at the designated locations. This time benefitted from the participants' presence at the locations post-breakfast and pre-lunch; it was an opportune time to limit distractions. Evenings would have presented too many distractions; these would include seeking out a confirmed place to sleep to the real danger of surrendering to the desire to seek out drugs and alcohol.

### Participant Isolation

Anchoring the final limitation of this research is the issue of homeless Veteran isolation. The project director is aware, through personal experience, the conduct of ministry activities, and research, that many Veterans are hesitant to accept assistance. Homeless Veterans are often plagued by issues that, when intensified by the traumas of homelessness, can mimic the reactions to combat. In the study "Staring into the Abyss: Veterans' Accounts of Moral Injuries and Spiritual Challenges," the authors note that "the responses to trauma from war may mirror that

found in the reaction to other troubling events, and can include emotional numbing, isolation and withdrawal, and anger.”<sup>5</sup> Homelessness, and the negative impacts of that life, can lead to the devastating effects of isolation. As discussed with the homeless Veteran participants, seeking “solitude,” a quiet place to be with the Lord, is different than “isolation,” an area where the enemy thrives. Isolation is removal from others, from the Lord, from hope; isolation is a technique to use on prisoners of war. Thankfully, Luke 4:18 relates that Jesus said He is here to free those captured; His presence prevents enemy isolation. These homeless Veteran project participants now know this truth.

### **Further Research**

The project director was intrigued by information gaps that became apparent during the conduct of the project. These gaps were not intended to have been addressed by the project, but were nonetheless of interest. These areas include the utility of ministry activities at a homeless camp, the impacts that limited transportation capabilities have on homeless Veterans, and the results of being able to experience an elongated line of contact with the homeless Veterans.

#### **Utility of Ministry at a Homeless Camp**

As discussed, the project director was surprised by the revelations from both the homeless Veteran and support staff participants that conducting this project at the homeless camp would be inefficient and ill-advised given the challenges addressed, which included drug use, personal scheming, and potential violence. This challenge draws the project director to the undertaking. Studying other ministries or churches' attempts at conducting discipleship activities within a homeless camp would be interesting. Research on this subject is exceptionally limited

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick W. Sullivan and Vincent R. Starnino, "Staring into the Abyss: Veterans' Accounts of Moral Injuries and Spiritual Challenges," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 22, no.1 (2019): 26.



and suggests that this type of targeted activity is rare. This project director is intent on pursuing a discipleship mission at the local homeless camp within God's Will and Guidance.

#### Impact of Limited Transportation

The project director was unaware of the scope of the immense transportation challenges facing the homeless until this project began. One of the reasons the project director included a 30-day metro bus pass as an incentive was due to learning of the outsized value of this prized commodity to the homeless community. Once reflected upon, it becomes clear that many, if not most, without a home also have no vehicle. The overwhelming majority of the homeless community moves about on foot; a select few possess a coveted bicycle. The term coveted is not a throw-away term; bikes are valuable items, and they are protected to the extent that violent confrontations occur over bicycle security. This limited transportation has proven to negatively impact homeless Veterans from meeting appointment times at the various locations where they are scheduled to occur. It would be interesting to chart the difference between the trend lines of homeless Veterans with and without dedicated transportation capabilities. Thus far, the only known potential participants would be in the without category.

#### Trend Line of Extended Contact

This project, by design, included a limited timeline of contact with homeless Veterans. It would be of interest to see the results of an extended contact timeline. Although this project produced positive results in six weeks, it is unclear how much more could have been accomplished with more time. This question is especially concerning given the reticence of one of the participants to move beyond feeling that they deserved the plight and punishment of homelessness due to their life choices. On each occasion the participant muttered this thought, the project director addressed it as an error in the application of the Gospel truth. It would be of

interest to see the results of continued, focused contact with this individual. Additionally, as mentioned, it would be beneficial to account for the results of the appointments the homeless Veterans made with support organizations to assist in breaking free of their homelessness. At the time of the conclusion of this six-week effort, there remain questions as to the final outcomes and dispositions of the participants as they move forward with their adjusted view of life.

### Final Reflections

As covered at the beginning of this paper, Centurion Witness Ministries was founded in 2011 in Huntsville, Alabama to serve the local homeless community. Now, many years later and with many challenges confronted, the ministry maintains a focus on homeless Veterans. However, the ministry questioned the reality of that focus given that the ministry only spent two occasions a year, during the summer and at Christmas, with definitive activities serving homeless Veterans. It became clear that conducting two events a year did not meet the requirements of providing true ministry and discipleship to these homeless Veterans. This project has provided a way forward for future ministry efforts and for a methodology for executing an effective discipleship program for homeless Veterans. Sensing notes that the “so what” of research is found in demonstrating the relevancy of a study.<sup>6</sup> He later addresses the “what next,” and counsels the researcher to think through the steps that will follow the completion of the project.<sup>7</sup>

This project director has had the framework of what, so what, and now what reinforced into their cognitive framework throughout decades of military service. The “what” of this project addressed whether Centurion Witness Ministries could effectively produce disciples among homeless Veterans through a discipleship program, thereby reducing the homeless rate; that

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<sup>6</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Method Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: WIPF & Stock, 2011), 212.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

answer was yes. The project's "so what" demonstrated the positive evangelistic impact that a dedicated discipleship program could have upon a homeless Veteran community through the intensive efforts of a six-week project through surveys, questionnaires, and deliberate roundtable sessions. Through focused activities, the "now what" for the ministry is in answering the mission necessity to engage with the homeless Veteran community, as Jesus calls all Christians to do in Matthew 28:18-20, and providing an example for others who are intent on serving the homeless Veteran community.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**PERMISSION REQUEST – LOCATION REMOVED**

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7 July, 2023

Mrs. D. Doe  
Position Removed  
Address Removed

Dear Mrs. Doe,

As a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The title of my project is “Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program” and the purpose of my project is to establish a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to reduce their homeless rates.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my project at the LOCATION REMOVED and to contact members of your organization and the homeless Veterans that seek assistance from your organization and to invite them to participate in my six-week project study.

Participants will be asked to contact me to schedule an interview and then to complete the attached questionnaire for staff members, and the attached survey for homeless Veterans. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to EMAIL REMOVED. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

B. Keith Poole, Jr.  
President/CFO  
Centurion Witness Ministries

**APPENDIX B**  
**PERMISSION REQUEST – LOCATION REMOVED**

---

7 July, 2023

Mr. D. Doe  
Position Removed  
Address removed

Dear Mr. Doe,

As a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The title of my project is “Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program” and the purpose of my project is to establish a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to reduce their homeless rates.

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Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to EMAIL REMOVED. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

B. Keith Poole, Jr.  
President/CFO  
Centurion Witness Ministries

**APPENDIX C****PERMISSION REQUEST – LOCATION REMOVED**

---

7 July, 2023

Ms. D. Doe  
Position Removed  
Location Removed

Dear Ms. Doe,

As a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The title of my project is “Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program” and the purpose of my project is to establish a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to reduce their homeless rates.

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Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to EMAIL REMOVED. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

B. Keith Poole, Jr.  
President/CFO  
Centurion Witness Ministries

**APPENDIX D**  
**PERMISSION RESPONSE – LOCATION REMOVED**

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10 July, 2023

B. Keith Poole, Jr.  
President/CFO Centurion Witness Ministries  
Address Removed

Dear Mr. Poole:

After careful review of your project proposal entitled “Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program” I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at the LOCATION REMOVED.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

I grant permission for Keith Poole to contact LOCATION REMOVED support staff members to invite them to participate in his project study.

I grant permission for Keith Poole to contact homeless Veterans that utilize facilities at the LOCATION REMOVED to invite them to participate in his project study.

I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Mrs. D. Doe  
Position Removed  
Location Removed



**APPENDIX E**  
**PERMISSION RESPONSE – LOCATION REMOVED**

---

10 July, 2023

B. Keith Poole, Jr.  
President/CFO Centurion Witness Ministries  
Address Removed

Dear Mr. Poole:

After careful review of your project proposal entitled “Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program” I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at LOCATION REMOVED.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- I grant permission for Keith Poole to contact LOCATION REMOVED support staff members to invite them to participate in his project study.
- I grant permission for Keith Poole to contact homeless Veterans that utilize facilities at LOCATION REMOVED to invite them to participate in his project study.
- I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Mr. D. Doe  
Position Removed  
Address Removed

**APPENDIX F**  
**PERMISSION RESPONSE – LOCATION REMOVED**

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10 July, 2023

B. Keith Poole, Jr.  
President/CFO Centurion Witness Ministries  
Address Removed

Dear Mr. Poole:

After careful review of your project proposal entitled “Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program” I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at the LOCATION REMOVED.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

I grant permission for Keith Poole to contact LOCATION REMOVED support staff members to invite them to participate in his project study.

I grant permission for Keith Poole to contact homeless Veterans that utilize facilities at the LOCATION REMOVED to invite them to participate in his project study.

I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Ms. D. Doe  
Position Removed  
Address Removed

## APPENDIX G

### CONSENT – HOMELESS VETERANS

**Title of the Project:** Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program

**Principal Investigator:** B. Keith Poole, Jr., Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Project Study

You are invited to participate in a project study. To participate as a qualifying homeless Veteran, you must have previously served in the United States Armed Forces, regardless of discharge status, and are currently living in a place or location not intended to be permanently occupied (such as a tent, a vehicle, an emergency shelter, homeless camp, etc.). Taking part in this project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this project.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to see if the establishment of a discipleship program among homeless Veterans will reduce their homeless rates.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in an in-person, note-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour. You will be offered the opportunity to review notes with me at the conclusion of the interview to ensure accuracy, known as member checking. This, member checking, will take an additional 15 minutes.
2. Participate in a personal survey that will take no more than 30 minutes.
3. Participate in conversational roundtable events once per week for eight weeks. These sessions will take between 30 minutes and 1 ½ hours per event.
4. Participate in an open group interview with other participants at the conclusion of the project. This group interview will be note-recorded and will take no more than 1 ½ hours. The opportunity to member check the interview will be offered at the conclusion of the group interview; this will take up to an additional 30 minutes.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study include: discovering one or more options to follow to break free from homelessness, strengthening their personal spiritual belief system, and identifying their role in helping other homeless Veterans.

Benefits to society include: highlighting the challenges of being a homeless Veteran for others to know, and identifying those methods of assistance that are most helpful to homeless Veterans. Participating will also allow future projects leaders the opportunity to study the methodology followed in this project to determine if the information could be beneficial to serving homeless Veterans where that project leader lives.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. The risks involved in this study include the possibility of psychological stress from being asked to recall and discuss prior trauma that you have experienced, witnessed, or heard described. To reduce risk I will begin each event with a covering prayer, I will monitor participants for any changes in their demeanor, and I will discontinue the interview if needed. I will provide referral information for counseling services to those that request or require those services.

During this study, if I receive information about or identify intent for you to harm yourself or others, I will report it to the appropriate persons.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Project records will be stored securely, and only the project director will have access to the records.

- Participant responses to surveys will be anonymous.
- Participant responses to interviews will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in group interview settings. While discouraged, other members of the group interview may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group. As with personal interviews, responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer in a locked room. Hardcopy notes will be stored in a locked drawer in a locked room. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and all hardcopy records will be shredded.

### **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. At the conclusion of the personal interview and initial survey, participants will receive one \$20 food card to a local restaurant for completing both events. At the conclusion of the group interview toward the end of the project

full-time participants (those attending eight consecutive weekly sessions) will receive a \$30 metro bus pass.

### Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with LOCATION REMOVED, the LOCATION REMOVED, LOCATION REMOVED, the LOCATION REMOVED, or the project director. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the project director that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your survey materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the project director at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Group interview data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the group interview will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

### Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The project director conducting this study is Keith Poole. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at Number Removed or at Email Removed. You may also contact the project director's faculty sponsor, Name Removed, at Email Removed.

### Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a project participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the project director, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. INFORMATION REMOVED.

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### Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records.

The project director will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

## APPENDIX H

### CONSENT – SUPPORT STAFF, LOCATION REMOVED

**Title of the Project:** Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program

**Principal Investigator:** B. Keith Poole, Jr., Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Project Study

You are invited to participate in a project study. To participate as a qualifying support staff member, you must have a current status as a person that provides assistance or support to homeless Veterans at least once per week for at least one year. Taking part in this project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this project.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to see if the establishment of a discipleship program among homeless Veterans will reduce their homeless rates.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in a personal questionnaire that will take no more than 1 hour. This questionnaire will be left with you and retrieved within five days of distribution.
2. Participate in an in-person, note-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour. You will be offered the opportunity to review notes with me at the conclusion of the interview to ensure accuracy, known as member checking. This, member checking, will take an additional 15 minutes.
3. Participate in a weekly as-needed meeting with the project director; this will take 15 minutes.
4. Participate in an open group interview with other participants at the conclusion of the six week project. This group interview will be note-recorded and will take no more than 1 hour. The opportunity to member check the interview will be offered at the conclusion of the group interview; this will take up to an additional 30 minutes.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study include: being afforded the opportunity to provide your opinions and insights to assist homeless Veterans struggling to break free from homelessness, strengthening your personal spiritual belief system, and identifying others that could assist in helping other homeless Veterans.

Benefits to society include: highlighting the challenges of being a supporter of homeless Veterans for others to know, and identifying those methods of assistance that are most helpful to homeless Veterans. Participating will also allow future project leaders the opportunity to study the methodology followed in this project to determine if the information could be beneficial to serving homeless Veterans where that project leader lives.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. The risks involved in this study include the possibility of psychological stress from being asked to recall and discuss prior trauma that you have experienced, witnessed, or heard described. To reduce risk I will begin each event with a covering prayer, I will monitor participants for any changes in their demeanor, and I will discontinue the interview if needed. I will provide referral information for counseling services to those that request or require those services.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Project records will be stored securely, and only the project director will have access to the records.

- Participant responses to questionnaires will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Participant responses to interviews will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in group interview settings. While discouraged, other members of the group interview may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group. As with personal interviews, responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer in a locked room. Hardcopy notes will be stored in a locked drawer in a locked room. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and all hardcopy records will be shredded.

### **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Support Staff participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with LOCATION REMOVED., the LOCATION REMOVED, or the



project director. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the project director that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your survey materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the project director at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Group interview data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the group interview will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The project director conducting this study is Keith Poole. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at Number Removed or at Email Removed. You may also contact the project director's faculty sponsor, Name Removed, at Email Removed.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a project participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the project director, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. INFORMATION REMOVED.

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**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The project director will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

## APPENDIX I

### CONSENT – SUPPORT STAFF, LOCATION REMOVED

**Title of the Project:** Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program

**Principal Investigator:** B. Keith Poole, Jr., Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Project Study

You are invited to participate in a project study. To participate as a qualifying support staff member, you must have a current status as a person that provides assistance or support to homeless Veterans at least once per week for at least one year. Taking part in this project project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this project.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to see if the establishment of a discipleship program among homeless Veterans will reduce their homeless rates.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in a personal questionnaire that will take no more than 1 hour. This questionnaire will be left with you and retrieved within five days of distribution.
2. Participate in an in-person, note-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour. You will be offered the opportunity to review notes with me at the conclusion of the interview to ensure accuracy, known as member checking. This, member checking, will take an additional 15 minutes.
3. Participate in a weekly as-needed meeting with the project director; this will take 15 minutes.
4. Participate in an open group interview with other participants at the conclusion of the six week project. This group interview will be note-recorded and will take no more than 1 hour. The opportunity to member check the interview will be offered at the conclusion of the group interview; this will take up to an additional 30 minutes.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study include: being afforded the opportunity to provide your opinions and insights to assist homeless Veterans struggling to break free from homelessness, strengthening your personal spiritual belief system, and identifying others that could assist in helping other homeless Veterans.

Benefits to society include: highlighting the challenges of being a supporter of homeless Veterans for others to know, and identifying those methods of assistance that are most helpful to homeless Veterans. Participating will also allow future project leaders the opportunity to study the methodology followed in this project to determine if the information could be beneficial to serving homeless Veterans where that project leader lives.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. The risks involved in this study include the possibility of psychological stress from being asked to recall and discuss prior trauma that you have experienced, witnessed, or heard described. To reduce risk I will begin each event with a covering prayer, I will monitor participants for any changes in their demeanor, and I will discontinue the interview if needed. I will provide referral information for counseling services to those that request or require those services.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

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- Participant responses to questionnaires will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Participant responses to interviews will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in group interview settings. While discouraged, other members of the group interview may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group. As with personal interviews, responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer in a locked room. Hardcopy notes will be stored in a locked drawer in a locked room. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and all hardcopy records will be shredded.

### **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Support Staff participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with LOCATION REMOVED., LOCATION REMOVED, or the

project director. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

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#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

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#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a project participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the project director, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. INFORMATION REMOVED.

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*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

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Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

## APPENDIX J

### CONSENT – SUPPORT STAFF, LOCATION REMOVED

**Title of the Project:** Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program

**Principal Investigator:** B. Keith Poole, Jr., Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Project Study

You are invited to participate in a project study. To participate as a qualifying support staff member, you must have a current status as a person that provides assistance or support to homeless Veterans at least once per week for at least one year. Taking part in this project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this project.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to see if the establishment of a discipleship program among homeless Veterans will reduce their homeless rates.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in a personal questionnaire that will take no more than 1 hour. This questionnaire will be left with you and retrieved within five days of distribution.
2. Participate in an in-person, note-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour. You will be offered the opportunity to review notes with me at the conclusion of the interview to ensure accuracy, known as member checking. This, member checking, will take an additional 15 minutes.
3. Participate in a weekly as-needed meeting with the project director; this will take 15 minutes.
4. Participate in an open group interview with other participants at the conclusion of the six week project. This group interview will be note-recorded and will take no more than 1 hour. The opportunity to member check the interview will be offered at the conclusion of the group interview; this will take up to an additional 30 minutes.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study include: being afforded the opportunity to provide your opinions and insights to assist homeless Veterans struggling to break free from homelessness, strengthening your personal spiritual belief system, and identifying others that could assist in helping other homeless Veterans.

Benefits to society include: highlighting the challenges of being a supporter of homeless Veterans for others to know, and identifying those methods of assistance that are most helpful to homeless Veterans. Participating will also allow future project leaders the opportunity to study the methodology followed in this project to determine if the information could be beneficial to serving homeless Veterans where that project leader lives.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

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### **How will personal information be protected?**

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- Participant responses to questionnaires will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
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- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in group interview settings. While discouraged, other members of the group interview may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group. As with personal interviews, responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer in a locked room. Hardcopy notes will be stored in a locked drawer in a locked room. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and all hardcopy records will be shredded.

### **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Support Staff participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with LOCATION REMOVED., the LOCATION REMOVED, or the



project director. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the project director that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your survey materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the project director at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Group interview data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the group interview will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The project director conducting this study is Keith Poole. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at Number Removed or at Email Removed. You may also contact the project director's faculty sponsor, Name Removed, at Email Removed.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a project participant?**

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*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

## APPENDIX K

## RECRUITMENT FLYER – HOMELESS VETERANS

# Project Participants Needed

## Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program

- Are You a Veteran?
- Are You Currently Homeless?

If you answered **yes** to each of the questions listed above, you may be eligible to participate in a project study.

The purpose of this project study is to establish a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to reduce their homeless rates.

Participants will be asked to:

- \*Participate in an in-person, note-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour.
- \*Participate in a personal survey that will take no more than 30 minutes.
- \*Participate in conversational roundtable events once per week for eight weeks. These sessions will take between 30 minutes and 1 ½ hours per event.
- \*Participate in an open group interview with other participants at the conclusion of the six week project. This group interview will take no more than 1 ½ hours.

Benefits include:

- \*Discovering one or more options to follow to break free from homelessness
- \*Strengthening your personal spiritual belief system, and identifying your role in helping other homeless Veterans.

**Participants will receive a \$20 food gift card and a 30 day metro bus pass.**

If you would like to participate, contact the project director at the phone number or email address provided below.

A consent document will be given to you when you meet with the project director.

Keith Poole, a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Please contact Keith Poole at Number Removed or Email Removed for more information.**

LOCATION REMOVED

LOCATION REMOVED

LOCATION REMOVED

## APPENDIX L

# Project Participants Needed

## RECRUITMENT FLYER – SUPPORT STAFF PARTICIPANTS

### Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program

- **Do You Support Homeless Veterans as a Staff Member?**
- **Have You Conducted this Support for at Least One Year?**

If you answered **yes** to each of the questions listed above, you may be eligible to participate in a project study.

The purpose of this project study is to establish a discipleship program to develop disciples among homeless Veterans to reduce their homeless rates.

Participants will be asked to:

Participate in a personal questionnaire that will take no more than 1 hour.

Participate in an in-person, note-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour.

Participate in an open group interview with other participants at the conclusion of the six week project. This group interview will take no more than 1 hour.

Benefits include:

Assisting homeless Veterans in discovering one or more options to follow to break free from homelessness.

Strengthening your personal spiritual belief system, and identifying your role in helping homeless Veterans.

If you would like to participate, contact the project director at the phone number or email address provided below.

A consent document will be given to you when you meet with the project director.

Keith Poole, a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Please contact Keith Poole at Number Removed or Email Removed for more information.**

LOCATION REMOVED

LOCATION REMOVED

LOCATION REMOVED

**APPENDIX M**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – HOMELESS VETERANS**

- Interview will include a request to provide: age, marital status, previous branch of service, employment (if any), location where sleeping.

1. Why are you homeless?
2. When did you serve in the US Armed Forces?
3. Why did you leave service?
4. What was your discharge status? (If it was not an honorable discharge, then why not?)
5. Where did you serve?
6. What was the best experience of your service?
7. What was the worst experience of your service?
8. Are you employed now? (If yes, describe that employment) (If no, why are you not employed?)
9. When was the last time you sought assistance from the Veterans Administration? (If never, then why not?)
10. Why did you need help?
11. What help was provided?
12. When was the last time you sought assistance from a local agency? (If never, why not?)
13. Why did you need help?
14. What help was provided?
15. When was the last time you were drunk?
16. When was the last time you were high?
17. Have you ever heard of spiritual warfare?
18. Can you describe spiritual warfare in your life?
19. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus as your Savior?
20. What would you want others to know about you?

## APPENDIX N

### QUESTIONNAIRE – SUPPORT STAFF

**This Questionnaire is being given as a “take home” event. The questionnaire will be retrieved in accordance with the appointment time agreed to with the project director.**

- Participants will be asked to include previous branch of service (if any), length of current employment /volunteering at their current support location, location of any previous work with homeless Veterans.

- Interview direction will depend upon the depth of the answers to the following questions provided in the questionnaire. The intent is to have the participant expand upon their answers.

1. Why do think Veterans become homeless?
2. Why do think Veterans remain homeless?
3. What is the most effective homeless program or method you have experienced that positively affects Veterans? (If not experienced then witnessed; if not witnessed then are aware of)
4. What is the least effective homeless program or method you have experienced that negatively affects Veterans? (If not experienced then witnessed; if not witnessed then are aware of)
5. What are the three most helpful things a person could do to make a homeless Veteran more comfortable in their daily life?
6. What change would you make to the system you currently function in that would increase the likelihood a homeless Veteran would seek help to end their homelessness?
7. Research studies identify Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Suicide Ideations, Substance Abuse, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Moral Injuries as the most prominent factors impacting homeless Veterans - what factor would you add to this list, and why?
8. What is the most uplifting experience you have had while assisting a homeless Veteran?
9. What is the worst experience you have had while assisting a homeless Veteran?
10. What is your understanding of spiritual warfare?
11. How does the providing of (support items – sustenance items – comfort items - food items) make a difference in a homeless Veteran’s life?
12. What percentage of homeless Veterans seek assistance from the Veterans Administration?
13. What percentage of homeless Veterans seek assistance from local agencies?
14. What are the three most helpful things an organization could do to make your support of homeless Veterans more effective?

## APPENDIX O

### SURVEY QUESTIONS – HOMELESS VETERANS (PRE/POST INTERVENTION)

1. Do you suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)? Circle: Yes / No

If yes, how often does PTSD impact your life?

Circle Your Answer

1   2   3   4   5

1. Rarely.
2. Occasionally.
3. Monthly.
4. Weekly.
5. Daily.

On those occasions PTSD affects your life, how would you rate the impact?

Circle Your Answer

1   2   3   4   5

1. Little Impact.
2. Some Impact.
3. Moderate Impact
4. Distressing Impact.
5. Devastating Impact.

2. Do you suffer from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)? Circle: Yes / No

If yes, how often does TBI impact your life?

Circle Your Answer

1   2   3   4   5

1. Rarely.
2. Occasionally.
3. Monthly.
4. Weekly.
5. Daily.

On those occasions TBI impacts your life, how would you rate the impact?

Circle Your Answer

1   2   3   4   5

1. Little Impact.
2. Some Impact.
3. Moderate Impact
4. Distressing Impact.
5. Devastating Impact.

3. Do you suffer from Moral Injuries? Circle: Yes / No

If yes, how often do Moral Injuries impact your life?

Circle Your Answer

1   2   3   4   5

1. Rarely.
2. Occasionally.
3. Monthly.
4. Weekly.
5. Daily.

On those occasions Moral Injuries impact your life, how would you rate the impact?

Circle Your Answer

1   2   3   4   5

1. Little Impact.
2. Some Impact.
3. Moderate Impact
4. Distressing Impact.
5. Devastating Impact.

4. Do you suffer from Substance Abuse? Circle: Yes / No

If yes, how often does Substance Abuse impact your life?

Circle Your Answer

1   2   3   4   5

1. Rarely.
2. Occasionally.
3. Monthly.
4. Weekly.
5. Daily.

On those occasions Substance Abuse impacts your life, how would you rate the impact?

Circle Your Answer

1   2   3   4   5

1. Little Impact.
2. Some Impact.
3. Moderate Impact
4. Distressing Impact.
5. Devastating Impact.



## APPENDIX P

### CHECKLIST – PRE-INTERVENTION PHASE

#### Securing Permissions

- Conduct Separate Meetings with Decision-makers (Downtown Rescue Mission, First Stop, Salvation Army)
  - Provide Overview of Project
  - Detail Anticipated Support Requirements from Their Location
    - Time to Conduct Project Activities
    - Rooms (or equivalent space) to Conduct Project Activities
    - Assistance in Verifying Authentic Homeless Veterans
- Provide IRB-approved Permission and Response Forms
- Coordinate for a Follow-on Meeting to Clarify any Issues
- Receive IRB-approved Response Form with Permission to Proceed

#### Pursuing Participants

- Seek Out Homeless Veterans (Downtown Rescue Mission, First Stop, Salvation Army)
  - Greet and Broadly Discuss the Project
  - Screen for Criteria (To participate as a qualifying homeless Veteran, one must have previously served in the United States Armed Forces, regardless of discharge status, and is currently living in a place or location not intended to be permanently occupied; such as a tent, a vehicle, an emergency shelter, homeless camp, etc.)
  - Provide an IRB-approved Recruitment Flyer (concurrent with screening)

- Answer Questions
- Provide Clarity as to Compensation Items
- Seek to Receive Interest
- Provide IRB-approved Consent Form
  - Ensure an Understanding of Voluntary Participation
- Coordinate for Attendance at the First Project Event (at the location they most frequent or are most comfortable with appearing)
- Receive IRB-approved Consent Form with Their Affirmation to Participate
- Seek Out Support Staff (Downtown Rescue Mission, First Stop, Salvation Army)
  - Greet and Broadly Discuss the Project
  - Screen for Criteria (To participate as a qualifying support staff member, one must have a current status as a person that provides assistance or support to homeless Veterans at least once per week for at least one year)
  - Provide an IRB-approved Recruitment Flyer (concurrent with screening)
    - Answer Questions
    - Seek to Receive Interest
  - Provide IRB-approved Consent Form
    - Ensure an Understanding of Voluntary Participation

- Receive IRB-approved Consent Form with Their Affirmation to Participate

#### Securing Participant Consent

- Homeless Veterans - Receive IRB-approved Consent Form with Their Affirmation to Participate
  - Coordinate for Attendance at the First Project Event (at the location they most frequent or are most comfortable with appearing)
  - Remind them of the Contact Information on the IRB-approved Recruitment Flyer
  - Ask if they have Additional Friends/Acquaintances to Contact that may meet the Participant Criteria
  - Ascertain their Preferred Contact Methodology (record phone number/email address, if any)
  - Remind them of First Project Time and Location – Assure them all Resources will be Provided
- Support Staff - Receive IRB-approved Consent Form with Their Affirmation to Participate
  - Coordinate for Distribution of the Questionnaire During Week 1
  - Remind them of the Contact Information on the IRB-approved Recruitment Flyer
  - Ask if they have Additional Friends/Acquaintances to Contact that may meet the Participant Criteria

- Ascertain their Preferred Contact Methodology (record phone number/email address, if any)
- Remind them of the Interview to Follow Questionnaire Retrieval

#### Acquiring Resources

- Ensure all Necessary Resources have been Acquired No-Less-Than One Week Prior to Beginning the Project
  - Required Items
    - Paper
    - Printer (Permission Forms, Consent forms, Flyers, Surveys, Questionnaires, Schedules)
    - Pens and Pencils (Project Director and Participants)
    - Notepads (Project Director and Participants)
    - Compensation Items (Metro Bus Passes and Food Gift Cards)
    - Funding (Project Director's Transportation and Meals)
    - Targeted Donations for Provision Items (Week Six)

**APPENDIX Q**  
**CHECKLIST – INTERVENTION PHASE**

Week One

- Arrive Designated Location (30 Minutes prior to start time)
  - Pray with Staff
  - Coordinate with Staff
    - Confirm Room Availability
    - De-Conflict Issues
    - Ensure Materials for that Day
- Conduct Interviews with Homeless Veteran Participants (1 Hour per Participant)
  - Greet and Pray with Veterans
  - Provide Overview of Interview Procedures
  - Conduct Interview
  - Maintain Field Notes / Record Observations
  - Provide Initial Compensation Item (gift food card)
  - Coordinate for Week Two Roundtable
  - Conduct Member Check of Notes (if interest)
  - Confirm their Preferred Contact Methodology
  - Encourage Veteran to Seek Help
  - Pray with Veteran before Their Departure
- Provide Support Staff Participants with Questionnaire (15 Minutes per Participant)
  - Greet and Pray with Staff Member

- Provide Questionnaire and Answer any Inquiries
- Maintain Field Notes / Record Observations
- Coordinate for Day/Time to Retrieve Questionnaire the Following Week
- Conduct Member Check of Notes (if interest)
- Confirm their Preferred Contact Methodology
- Post a Schedule for the Following Week in a Prominent, Agreed-upon Place

#### Week Two

- Arrive Designated Location (30 Minutes prior to start time)
  - Pray with Staff
  - Coordinate with Staff
    - Confirm Room Availability
    - De-Conflict Issues
    - Ensure Materials for that Day
- Conduct Roundtable Event with Homeless Veteran Participants (1 Hour Total)
  - Greet and Pray with Veterans
  - Distribute Notebooks and Pens
  - Provide Overview of Roundtable Concept
  - Conduct Roundtable – Spiritual Warfare Overview
    - Focus Area John 10:10
    - Focus Area Ephesians 6:10-17
    - Focus Area 1 Peter 5:8

- Draw Veterans into Discussions
  - Maintain Field Notes / Record Observations
  - Address Questions and/or Concerns
- Confirm the Next Week's Roundtable Time/Place
- Conduct Member Check of Notes (if interest)
- Confirm their Preferred Contact Methodology
- Determine the Number of Veterans that Sought Help that Week (record help type and location)
- Make Plea for Homeless Veteran Participants to Seek Help
- Pray with Veterans
- Retrieve Questionnaires from Support Staff Participants (30 Minutes per Participant)
  - Pray with Staff Member
  - Ensure Answers are Understood
  - Maintain Field Notes / Record Observations
  - Coordinate for Interview the Following Week
  - Conduct Member Check of Notes (if of interest)
  - Confirm their Preferred Contact Methodology
- Post a Schedule for the Following Week in a Prominent, Agreed Upon Place

### Week Three

- Arrive Designated Location (30 Minutes prior to start time)
  - Pray with Staff
  - Coordinate with Staff
    - Confirm Room Availability

- De-Conflict Issues
  - Ensure Materials for that Day
- Conduct Roundtable Event with Homeless Veteran Participants (1 Hour Total)
  - Greet and Pray with Veterans
  - Review Previous Week's Roundtable
  - Conduct Roundtable – Spiritual Warfare PTSD
    - Focus Area Psalm 94:19
    - Focus Area Philippians 4:6-7
    - Draw Veterans into Discussions
    - Maintain Field Notes / Record Observations
    - Address Questions and/or Concerns
  - Confirm the Next Week's Roundtable Time/Place
  - Conduct Member Check of Notes (if interest)
  - Confirm their Preferred Contact Methodology
  - Determine the Number of Veterans that Sought Help that Week  
(record help type and location)
  - Make Plea for Homeless Veteran Participants to Seek Help
  - Pray with Veterans
- Visit with Support Staff Participants (15 Minutes per Participant)
  - Pray with Staff Member
  - Conduct Conversation Eliciting their Thoughts
  - Maintain Field Notes / Record Observations



- Coordinate for Short Face-to-Face Meeting the Following Week
- Conduct Member Check of Notes (if interest)
- Confirm their Preferred Contact Methodology
- Post a Schedule for the Following Week in a Prominent, Agreed Upon Place

#### Week Four

- Arrive Designated Location (30 Minutes prior to start time)
  - Pray with Staff
  - Coordinate with Staff
    - Confirm Room Availability
    - De-Conflict Issues
    - Ensure Materials for that Day
- Conduct Roundtable Event with Homeless Veteran Participants (1 ½ Hours Total)
  - Greet and Pray with Veterans
  - Review Previous Week's Roundtable
  - Conduct Roundtable – Spiritual Warfare Suicide Ideations
    - Focus Area Psalm 119:143
    - Focus Area 1 Timothy 6:12
    - Draw Veterans into Discussions
    - Maintain Field Notes / Record Observations
    - Address Questions and/or Concerns
  - Confirm the Next Week's Roundtable Time/Place
  - Conduct Member Check of Notes (if interest)

- Confirm their Preferred Contact Methodology
- Determine the Number of Veterans that Sought Help that Week  
(record help type and location)
- Make Plea for Homeless Veteran Participants to Seek Help
- Pray with Veterans
- Visit with Support Staff Participants
  - Pray with Staff Member
  - Conduct Conversation Eliciting their Thoughts
  - Maintain Field Note / Record Observations
  - Coordinate for Short Face-to-Face Meeting the Following Week
  - Confirm their Preferred Contact Methodology
- Post a Schedule for the Following Week in a Prominent, Agreed Upon Place

#### Week Five

- Arrive Designated Location (30 Minutes prior to start time)
  - Pray with Staff
  - Coordinate with Staff
    - Confirm Room Availability
    - De-Conflict Issues
    - Ensure Materials for that Day
- Conduct Roundtable Event with Homeless Veteran Participants (1 ½ Hours Total)
  - Greet and Pray with Veterans
  - Review Previous Week's Roundtable

- Conduct Roundtable – Spiritual Warfare Substance Abuse
  - Focus Area I Peter 5:8
  - Focus Area James 4:7
  - Draw Veterans into Discussions
  - Maintain Field Notes / Record Observations
  - Address Questions and/or Concerns
  - Conclude Roundtable Sessions
- Confirm the Next Week’s Group Interview Time/Place
- Conduct Member Check of Notes (if interest)
- Confirm their Preferred Contact Methodology
- Determine the Number of Veterans that Sought Help that Week  
(record help type and location)
- Make Plea for Homeless Veteran Participants to Seek Help
- Pray with Veterans
- Visit with Support Staff Participants (15 Minutes per Participant)
  - Pray with Staff Member
  - Conduct Conversation Eliciting their Thoughts
  - Maintain Field Notes / Record Observations
  - Coordinate for Group Interview the Following Week
  - Conduct Member Check of Notes (if interest)
  - Confirm their Preferred Contact Methodology
- Post a Schedule for the Following Week in a Prominent, Agreed Upon Place

## Week Six

- Arrive Designated Location (30 Minutes prior to start time)
  - Pray with Staff
  - Coordinate with Staff
    - Confirm Room Availability
    - De-Conflict Issues
    - Ensure Materials for that Day
- Conduct Group Interview Event with Homeless Veteran Participants (1 ½ Hours Total)
  - Greet and Pray with Veterans
  - Provide Overview of Roundtable Lessons Learned
  - Conduct Group Interview
    - Utilize Previous Interview Questions and Roundtable Discussion Points as Group Interview Launch Point
    - Draw Veterans into Discussions
    - Maintain Field Notes / Record Observations
    - Address Questions and/or Concerns
    - Conclude Group Interview
  - Distribute Final Compensation Items (metro bus passes)
  - Conduct Member Check of Notes (if interest)
  - Confirm their Preferred Contact Methodology for follow-on Contact
  - Determine the Number of Veterans that Sought Help that Week (record help type and location)

- Make Final Plea for Participants to Seek Help
- Pray with Veterans
- Conduct Group Interview with Support Staff Participants (1 Hour Total)
  - Pray with Support Staff Group
  - Provide Overview of Previous Week's Activities
  - Conduct Group Interview
    - Utilize Interview Questions and Previous Discussions with Support Staff Members as Start Point for Group Interview
    - Draw Support Staff Participants into Discussions
    - Maintain Field Notes Record Observations
    - Conduct Member Check of Notes (if interest)
  - Confirm their Preferred Contact Methodology for Follow-on Contact
- Post Project Director's Contact Information in a Prominent, Agreed Upon Place

#### Weeks Seven & Eight

- Assemble All Project Data
  - Review Interviews
  - Review Questionnaires
  - Review Surveys
  - Review Field Notes
- Assess All Project Data
  - Conduct Data Analysis

**APPENDIX R**  
**PERMISSIONS AND AGREEMENTS - NOTES**

The permissions and agreements from the three locations articulated within the project's IRB submission are complete. Highlights of the meeting activities follow:

29 August 2023 – Downtown Rescue Mission

- Met with *name removed (title removed)* and *name removed (title removed)*
- Meeting took place at the Downtown Rescue Mission (DRM) from 1000 to 1050 hours
- Project Director provided an overview of the project and copies of all IRB paperwork (Due to the layered bureaucracy at DRM the project director felt it necessary to “over” provide documentation for ease of explanation to the actual decision-maker)
- Meeting was productive – DRM participants were interested in assisting the project
- Questions centered on assurances that the project was voluntary
- Meeting concluded with pledge DRM leadership would be sought out for final approval (that decision-maker is on-site, but difficult to access)
- Project APPROVED 1 September (meeting 5 September to retrieve signed consent)

30 August 2023 – First Stop

- Met with *name removed (title removed)*
- Meeting took place at First Stop from 0900 to 0940 hours
- Project Director provided an overview of the project and copies of IRB paperwork related to permissions, consent, and recruitment
- Meeting was successful – Project APPROVED 30 August - First Stop agreed to host the project at their location (consent signed)
- No outstanding questions remained

-Meeting concluded with an agreement to meet the week of 4 September to post recruitment flyers

30 August 2023 – Salvation Army

-Met with *name removed* (*title removed*)

-Meeting took place at the Salvation Army mission center from 0955 to 1030 hours

- Project Director provided an overview of the project and copies of IRB paperwork related to permissions, consent, and recruitment

-Meeting was productive – Salvation Army is enthusiastic about hosting the project at their location

-No outstanding questions remained

- Meeting concluded with pledge that Salvation Army uniformed leadership would be sought out for final approval (that leadership is at the Salvation Army Headquarters, off-site)

(Answer is expected by the close of the week – 1 September) (Update: approval expected on/about 5 September)(Further update: senior leader is planning to retire; new leadership is not officially in place until October. *name removed* is working to gain approval no later than 8 September) (Update: Final approval to conduct the project at the Salvation Army was obtained on 14 September)

**APPENDIX S**  
**SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS**

1. Why do you think Veterans become homeless?

Charles: I believe some veterans become homeless because they have been trained to rely on themselves and to [sic] often times not ask for help. In military culture asking for help can sometimes be perceived as weakness. I think also some veterans fail to learn skills that translate over to civilian life and may trouble transitioning.

Tim: There are many different reasons how Veterans become homeless. Probably the most common that I've seen is they are unable to relieve of cope with a trauma in their life. This is mainly due to PTSD, Moral injury, or other mental conditions and/or substance abuse disorders.

Lisa: Post traumatic stress, wed to being alone – trained to live on the outskirts.

Nancy: Lack of helpful support post service (i.e. mental health intensive casework).

Greg: I think that it is a combination of several factors. I think that poor life choices affect the individual. I believe that support for the veterans are difficult in terms of reaching the individuals. I think hope is growing dimmer and dimmer amongst the population of veterans.

2. Why do think Veterans remain homeless?

Charles: I believe some veterans remain homeless due to their struggles with mental illness, substance abuse, or both. I believe some remain homeless because they can be stubborn or feel embarrassed to ask for help. I think others may have a trouble admitting to themselves that they are actually homeless and not in a great position in life.

Tim: Many remain homeless because of not knowing the resources that are available to them and/or they are embarrassed to ask for help. There are others that do not trust the government or the system that can provide assistance.

Lisa: Prefer not to be involved w/society. They feel or appear defeated.



Nancy: Sometimes pride, usually a strong dislike of VA/Mental health services.

Greg: I think that some want to remain in that state, but not all. I think that there is a lack of education concerning what benefits the individual veteran has. I also think that many feel let down by agencies so there is not much hope in believing in something that is by design supposed to help.

3. What is the most effective homeless program or method you have experienced that positively affects Veterans? (If not experienced then witnessed; if not witnessed then are aware of)

Charles: During my time working at a local shelter/recovery program I think one of the most effective ways to help veterans out of homelessness is through veteran outreach programs, mentorship programs, and educating veterans on the benefits they can receive.

Tim: The most effective are those that advocate and walk beside them through the processes. I believe that knowing someone believes in them and is fighting for them helps them tremendously.

Lisa: Shelters – they can handle shelter.

Nancy: Progressive holistic Mental Health – Specifically counseling therapy. They want to talk & be heard. They want to be productive.

Greg: That's a hard question for me. I have seen some help with housing, but that's really it. I've seen others who only focus on one aspect of care for veterans that if they don't know how to assist, then they don't. There are some good ones that do come through, but I've seen more success in the regular world and programs than with Veteran specific programs.

4. What is the least effective homeless program or method you have experienced that negatively affects Veterans? (If not experienced then witnessed; if not witnessed then are aware of)

Charles: The least effective homeless programs are the ones where veteran clients are given an abundance of material items, but spiritual or mental concerns are never addressed.

Tim: The least effective is a housing first approach. If they are just given a place to stay without dealing with the issues that lead them to homelessness will typically lead to them losing their housing. This will frustrate them and give them more reason to distrust and lose hope.

Lisa: Not aware.

Nancy: Being “pushed” toward medication. Also being involved in programs that are too structured. It often creates complacency.

Greg: I don’t want to talk negative about any one program or anything else, but it hurts when various groups want to help assist, so their version of assisting is by sending care packages here to [Location Purple] in hopes that it helps the Veterans. In all honest [sic], I believe it’s more to make the giver feel better that they did a service for a veteran than actually helping out.

5. What are the three most helpful things a person could do to make a homeless Veteran more comfortable in their daily life?

Charles: Educate a homeless veteran about agencies that are there to help them. Encourage them to seek that help. Work to find them a stable community.

Tim: I’m not sure what 3 things would make them comfortable. Working with those in homelessness, I think it is important to challenge them in moving forward and not encourage them to be comfortable. I think the best thing you can do is listen to them.

Lisa: Tents, socks, good backpack.

Nancy: Listen to them, give them some way to work toward an achievable goal, let them be helpful in their community/demographic as well.

Greg: 1) Prayer 2) Be educated 3) Encourage more agencies, entities, and religious groups to be more supportive other than care packages.

6. What change would you make to the system you currently function in that would increase the likelihood a homeless Veteran would seek help to end their homelessness?

Charles: I would like to see more outreach done at my agency by other veteran specific agencies.

Tim: We could probably be more intentional in asking them their veteran status and be able to give them veteran resources quickly. The veteran specific organizations have a lot more veteran specific resources than we do so I encourage them to pursuit [sic] those while supporting them anyway I can.

Lisa: A shelter dedicated to veterans needs.

Nancy: Increasing the time in our program, while providing more individual & intensive case management.

Greg: I would like to see more agencies being proactive rather than reactive. I think if people would come visit the Veterans where they are, there would be a boost in productivity and hope for them.

7. Research studies identify Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Suicide Ideations, Substance Abuse, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Moral Injuries as the most prominent factors impacting homeless Veterans - what factor would you add to this list, and why?

Charles: I would add that veterans can fail to adopt life skills that translate into the civilian world. So many veterans that ETS think that 'military experience' alone is enough to help them have a stable civilian life. I think often times that just isn't true.

Tim: In my opinion, the listed issues are the most prominent factors in veterans becoming homeless. I believe a distrust and frustration with the government/system as a factor in them not seeking resources/help and stay in a homeless state.

Lisa: Mental health.

Nancy: Disenchanted with VA or government run programs. Feeling forgotten & unimportant exacerbates some mental health issues & self worth.

Greg: I would say loss of hope. I think that (personally) there has been an uptick of distaste for veterans unlike the past.

8. What is the most uplifting experience you have had while assisting a homeless Veteran?

Charles: Connecting homeless veterans to resources they have access to.

Tim: My most uplifting experiences the few times I've been able to assist a veteran through the process of them getting their own apartment. The relief that they have when they can finally close a door, take a shower, and sleep without having their guard up.

Lisa: Helping a person (vet) get housing.

Nancy: How do you narrow it down to one experience when you're able to re-house a veteran? They're life-altering experiences.

Greg: To see them move on with their lives while also wanting to pour back into the Veteran community and bring their brothers with them into success.

9. What is the worst experience you have had while assisting a homeless Veteran?

Charles: Seeing veterans refuse services.

Tim: I tried to assist a veteran's mother is trying to change her son's discharge. He received a traumatic brain injury overseas but it was undiagnosed. He began to act out and received an Un-

honorable [sic] discharged [sic]. Since he had no documentation to say it happened while enlisted, no one would look into it for him.

Lisa: Knowing they died in the streets.

Nancy: Watching their health decline, and often times pass while waiting on housing.

Greg: A disconnect between myself and the individual since I have a hard time sympathizing with them concerning what all they had to go through

10. What is your understanding of spiritual warfare?

Charles: Everyone around us is engaged in spiritual warfare, whether they see it or not.

Tim: Being in the ministry myself, and spending years overseas, I am very aware of spiritual warfare. I believe it affects things around us all of the time. I also personally believe that drugs can be a gateway to the spiritual world and opens up doors to demonic activity.

Lisa: When the enemy is trying to thwart any efforts to progress.

Nancy: It is too much for one answer, but an attack on the essence of your character/soul.

Greg: Ephesians 6:12. It's real.

11. How does the providing of (support items – sustenance items – comfort items - food items) make a difference in a homeless Veteran's life?

Charles: I think it can provide an immediate impact on days where someone is struggling physically. However, I think for many veterans in Huntsville they aren't in need of physical support items, but these items can be a way to build rapport.

Tim: Providing things for those in homelessness, including veterans, is a very delicate issue. I believe the majority of this is enabling those in homelessness to expect others to give them things rather than moving forward in providing for themselves. I do think it is important to meet

someone's direct need in trying to help them move toward independent living. (small snack pack, restaurant gift card, blanket, jacket...).

Lisa: Very appreciative.

Nancy: It gives them self worth.

Greg: See answer 4. I think in the moment it's a good thing. Support like that is always encouraged, but I would love to see better care. The other obstacle is giving the items to the veterans since it is almost a revolving door here.

12. What percentage of homeless Veterans seek assistance from the Veterans Administration?

Charles: 20%

Tim: I do not know what percentage of Veterans seek assistance with the VA but I would imagine it a low percentage.

Lisa: Don't know.

Nancy: Don't know the exact percentage, but minimal.

Greg: I have heard mostly negative reviews from veterans concerning the VA. I would say a small amount.

13. What percentage of homeless Veterans seek assistance from local agencies?

Charles: 5%

Tim: I believe a low percentage seek help with other agencies. Almost all Veterans I have worked with have to be encouraged to contact places continually. Many still do not follow through.

Lisa: 30%

Nancy: Probably less than half.

Greg: If they are, they don't communicate that with me.

14. What are the three most helpful things an organization could do to make your support of homeless Veterans more effective?

Charles: Partner with agencies that specialize in working with homeless veterans. Encourage veterans to go to these agencies. Provide spiritual mentorship and teach life skills.

Tim: Helpful things for other organizations to do is to make us aware of opportunities that can benefit or help Veterans, make us aware of referrals we can send them for certain help, and/or have fellow Veterans help walk them through the processes necessary to get housing and live independently.

Lisa: Build a wing/section exclusively for vets.

Nancy: Funding for case management. Volunteers that want to listen.

Greg: Gain good information and confidence in supporting organizations when there is a time to point veterans to resources. Understand clients better. Make thing more personal.

**APPENDIX T**  
**PROJECT NOTES – WEEKS ONE THROUGH SIX**

**Notes – Week One**

Initial contact with the homeless Veterans for the purpose of filling out the questionnaires and surveys were conducted on 25 and 26 September. In addition take-home questionnaires were also provided to support staff participants from the three selected locations. Of the nine homeless Veterans that had verbally committed to answering the questionnaires and surveys, five followed through on those commitments. All six of the support staff that agreed to participate took the questionnaires to complete.

The three homeless Veteran participants at Location Green (Allen, Larry, and John) were open in their engagement and did not demonstrate any attempt to hide or alter any applicable data pertaining to either the questionnaires or surveys. Allen suffers from, what the staff describes as, an inability to be clear in reference to detailed recall of conversations or events. Larry struck the project director as willing to address any subject with whatever detail the answer requires, however, Larry did not display the inherent level of participation interest as the two other attendees. John was open and friendly, but wary of others in the location surroundings.

The two homeless Veteran participants at location Purple (Steve and Walt) were also exceptionally open in their engagement. Walt was very forthright in disclosing the challenges he deals with on a daily basis; he did not attempt to turn away from his responsibilities, but he did express a belief that the initial punishment resulting in his separation from the military may have been too harsh, given the circumstances. Steve's major concern was centered upon if whether or not the food card incentive was ready for immediate use (it was).

All homeless Veteran participants met the criteria to be considered "Receptive" in accordance with Figure 5, Expectation of Progress, located within the project thesis report.



Additionally, all homeless Veteran participants expressed having a personal relationship with Jesus; the remaining weeks of the project will seek to uncover the scale and depths of those relationships. The project director is curious as to the number of homeless Veterans that will actually follow-through with the project's duration. All six participating support staff members took a questionnaire to answer.

### **Notes – Week Two**

#### Homeless Veteran Participants

Week Two activities began 2 October at Location Green. Allen and John were eager to be brought into the area where the Week Two discussions were to occur. Larry, as was sadly expected, was not present at the location.

The Week Two roundtable session at Location Green was conducted in accordance with the project timeline in chapter three of the thesis. The session began with a prayer focused on asking the Holy Spirit to infuse Allen and John with the truth. Scripture in support of the subject matter, Spiritual Warfare, was focused on John 10:10, Ephesians 6:10-17, and Peter 5:8.

The project director opened the session by discussing Spiritual Warfare within the context of one's daily lives. The utilization of the Scriptures, highlighted above, allowed for the subject to be contextualized within the framework of good versus evil. John noted that the enemy, Satan, uses shame to his advantage in attacking all of us. John noted that temptation and shame go hand-in-hand and he quoted 1 Corinthians 10:13, verbatim, in support of his point. John said that we must all "be prepared for the temptations;" this was in response to a talking point made by the project director that being ambushed in physical combat can equate to being ambushed in Spiritual Warfare. Allen drew attention to the fact that "although the Bible was

written thousands of years ago it feels like it was written for what we are all going through right now.”

The project director noted the importance of wearing one’s “spiritual warfare goggles,” akin to night vision goggles when preparing to see the full scope of the battlefield in the spiritual realm. The project director recommended utilizing these spiritual goggles while dressing for battle as highlighted in Ephesians. John added that “without the armor, you’re vulnerable.” He also recommended that we should all “pray that the Lord lets us see what the enemy is up to.” Allen agreed and noted that “you’ve got to be ready for the attack, peace doesn’t last.”

All of the Scriptures utilized in the session were reinforced one more time. John added, “lots of folks wander around dead inside; you’ve got to know Jesus.” He used 1 John 5:11-12 to discuss the need to know Jesus, the Son, to have life. The project director then closed the session with a prayer focused on bringing peace, comfort, and joy to Allen and John until next week’s session. The project director presented John with a Centurion Witness Ministries logo backpack he had requested the week prior.

Week Two activities continued on 3 October at Location Purple. Steve and Walt were both waiting in a larger holding room to be taken to the meeting room. A support staff member assisted in bringing Steve, who has mobility issues, to the meeting room.

The Week Two roundtable session at Location Purple was also conducted in accordance with the project timeline in chapter three of the thesis. The session began with a prayer focused on asking the Holy Spirit to open Steve and Walt’s hearts to the truth. Scripture in support of the subject matter, Spiritual Warfare, was focused on John 10:10, Ephesians 6:10-17, and Peter 5:8.

The project director opened the session by discussing Spiritual Warfare within the context of one’s daily lives, drawing on examples from the previous week’s interaction with

Steve and Walt to highlight spiritual battles in their lives. Walt noted, in relation to spiritual warfare, that “it’s a struggle every day.” The project director moved the discussion along these lines of thought by utilizing John 10:10 as a baseline highlighting the desired results of the enemy and Jesus; with the enemy seeking to “kill, steal, and destroy” and Jesus wanting all to enjoy an abundant life. Ephesians 6:10-17 was then used to demonstrate how the fight unfolds in the spiritual world, during this discussion Walt exclaimed, “first of all you’ve got to be aware, then you’ve got to stay suited up.” Here, Walt was highlighting the warning from Peter, found in Peter 5:8, in reference to being aware of the enemy; interestingly, the project director had not yet articulated Peter 5:8 within the conversation.

Part of the continuing dialogue centered upon the “how” one prepares for and conducts battle in the spiritual fight. Walt noted, “my mom used to tell me, you’ve got to stay prayed up, baby.” Steve agreed with this sentiment but stated that he was not very good at remembering to pray. In an attempt to dig deeper into Steve’s experience with spiritual warfare he noted that he knew he was a target of the enemy. He noted that the enemy had developed a strong grip on his life through crack cocaine. Steve stated, “I’ve been smoking crack since 1987. I love it!” When confronted about the inclusion of “I love it” in his statement, Steve confessed that crack brought short-term joy to his otherwise difficult life. When the project director asked him if he thought that this was the life Jesus had intended for him, a reference back to John 10:10, Steve said that he “didn’t know for sure.” The project director reminded Steve that this life was not what Jesus had intended for him; the project director went on to remind him that Jesus was right there with him, always, regardless of the circumstances. The project director prayed and asked that the next time that Steve was drawn to grab hold of a crack pipe that he would be able to see Jesus right

there with him. Steve said that he would be “looking” and that if he saw Jesus he would not smoke the crack.

The discussion of spiritual attacks and their mirror-like comparison to physical warfare turned toward Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Since this will be the focus of week three discussions, dialogue here did not progress much beyond an acknowledgement that both Steve and Walt suffer from PTSD. When asked if seeking help was something they had tried, or were open to exploring, Steve stated, “I don’t want to get help because I don’t want to open that wound again.” The project director reminded Steve that perhaps the enemy was using the memory of the wound to prevent him from seeking out Jesus for full and complete healing. The project director then closed the session with a prayer focused on bringing peace, comfort, and joy to Steve and Walt until next week’s session; an added prayerful plea was made to let Steve see Jesus this week to keep him away from crack.

#### Support Staff Participants

The project director retrieved the questionnaires from Charles and Tim at Location Green and then conducted a quick pre-session and post-event interview meeting with these two participants. There were no issues reported. Both were open to discussing their questionnaires in detail upon the project director’s review. The project director also gathered the completed questionnaires from Lisa and Nancy at Location Blue. Lisa and Nancy expressed their confusion and sadness at why so many homeless Veterans do not seek out assistance.

## Notes – Week Three

### Homeless Veteran Participants

The Week Three sessions commenced 9 October at Location Green. Allen and John were both on-site and were happy to move to the location where the session would be conducted. They had both had an uneventful week.

The Week Three roundtable session at Location Green was conducted in accordance with the project timeline in chapter three of the thesis. The session, as does all sessions, began with a prayer focused on asking the Holy Spirit to be present for our gathering and that Allen and John would find peace and comfort through leaning into Jesus. Week Three's focus was on Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, with the Scriptures highlighted being Psalm 94:19 and Philippians 4:6-7.

John had previously mentioned suffering from PTSD due to a training accident wherein he had suffered a knee injury due to grenade shrapnel. John believes that the VA has not responded to his needs in a satisfactory manner; he is, in fact, rather upset with the lack of support he has received from the VA. The project director strongly recommended that John seek out free professional assistance with his VA claim through the local Veteran's advocacy group, Still Serving Veterans (SSV). Allen denies suffering from any PTSD; the project director recommended that, due to his circumstances of being chronically homeless, that he should remain open to the idea that PTSD may be impacting his life. Allen agreed to be open to seeking the truth. The project director also noted, through a focus on this week's Scriptures, that the enemy wants individuals to carry around the pain, uncertainty, and worry that come from suffering from PTSD. John added that "suffering" was also included in what the enemy wants

individuals to carry. Allen added that the enemy is “looking to make things hard on you,” that “satan will mess with you and stretch stuff out.”

The project director asked John and Allen to picture themselves carrying around all the “chips” that the enemy had provided – pain, uncertainty, worry, and suffering – and to see themselves handing all that over to Jesus in exchange for peace and comfort. They both saw the utility in viewing challenges in that manner. Although, Allen added, “old slew-foot has a good way of having us keep carrying something that’ll hurt us.” To that, John added, “wounds will fester, physical or spiritual.”

This led into a discussion of what, if anything, would be beyond the reach of Jesus to heal; the agreed upon answer was that there was not anything beyond the ability of Jesus to heal. Both John and Allen acknowledged the need to seek help with issues, but both also acknowledged that help was hard to seek. Both were strongly encouraged to open themselves up to make appointments with SSV for help with the VA; both agreed to seek appointments. The project director volunteered to find a point of contact at SSV for them to reach. The session closed with a prayer and with the provision of some snack items for John and Allen.

The Week Three roundtable at Location Purple was conducted on 10 October. Both Steve and Walt were present, and both were glad to participate in this week’s session. As always, the session began with focused prayer. Since Walt had mentioned at the close of week two that he suffered from PTSD, Walt was asked to give an overview of his PTSD issues.

Walt was very open with his PTSD; his PTSD stems from his court-martial and bad conduct discharge from the service in that late 1980’s. Walt stated that his discharge “haunted” him and that he was “hanging onto PTSD by wearing my discharge like a badge of dishonor.”

Walt noted that “being a Christian was the only thing saving me.” Interestingly and unknown to the participants, next week’s roundtable will focus on suicide ideation.

Steve rejected any notion that he suffered from PTSD. The project director noted that Steve’s incessant and debilitating drug addiction had a beginning somewhere, finding that origin will help him to better battle against his ailment. Steve said that he would be “willing to seek the Lord,” but that he does not believe that he is “worthy to hear.” Again, here, the discussion relied heavily upon the presented Scriptures and included a discussion of the benefits of giving away pain, uncertainty, worry, and suffering – from John’s comments of the 9th – in exchange for the peace and comfort offered by Jesus (exchange those chips).

Walt again mentioned the toll that his discharge has taken on his life. Walt said, “the court-martial broke me.” The project director asked Walt if he would be willing to give all of those feelings away to Jesus; Walt stated, “it’s easy to hang onto the pain in a place like this (Location Purple) where folks around you don’t care.” When asked about “folks around you” that “don’t care,” Walt clarified that he meant the other homeless people. Walt said, “my BCD has made me physically and mentally sick.”

The project director had looked into some information from VA websites the previous weeks and shared that with Walt in an attempt to bring some hope to his plight. The project director strongly recommended that Walt seek out the services of SSV to see what professional help was available. Walt agreed to seek help and the project director agreed to attempt to identify a point of contact at SSV for Walt to reach. Steve declared he was not ready for help. The project director asked Steve if he had seen Jesus, as discussed in week two, prior to his undertaking his drug use – Steve said, “I didn’t see Him.” The project director ensured Steve that Jesus was there, and not to give up on seeing Him. The roundtable closed in focused prayer.

### Support Staff Participants

Last week, Larry was not present at the Location Green for the session; Tim, one of the staff participants, informed the project director that Larry was absent because he had been arrested the previous week and remained in jail. There was much discussion with Charles and Tim as to the significant drop in Veterans (from 48 to 20) in the January and July Point-in-Time Surveys. There was no consensus as to the reduction in numbers; they both saw the results as perplexing. Greg, at Location Purple, surmised that the dramatic loss in numbers could have been as the result of the city of Huntsville making a concerted effort the previous fall to close down a homeless camp site. Greg's opinion is that homeless Veterans simply moved on to more hospitable surroundings; Greg noted that this was an opinion and that he has no data to support his inkling. Neither Lisa nor Nancy were available for contact this week due to their workloads in preparing for Location Blue's upcoming winter support requirements for the homeless.

### Notes – Week Four

#### Homeless Veteran Participants

Week Four began with the weekly roundtable at Location Green the morning of 16 October. Once again, Allen and John were both already on-site and were motivated to move to the session location. They both reported a typical week, although they acknowledged that the weather's turn to cooler temperatures was concerning. The project director had spoken with a staff member at Still Serving Veterans (SSV) and had gathered information regarding appointments, an auxiliary VA location, and a point of contact number for a local law group that performs pro-bono legal assistance for homeless Veterans. This information was passed on to Allen and John.



The Week Four roundtable at Location Green was conducted in accordance with the project timeline with a focus on Suicide Ideation. Psalm 119:143-147 and 1 Timothy 6:11-12 were the highlighted Scriptures; John 8:44 and Romans 12:12 were both utilized to strengthen the points presented. John admitted to attempting suicide by hanging and by the use of a gun; these events were some “years ago” according to John. John submitted that he no longer feels drawn to suicide, but that he does still suffer from the PTSD that triggered the suicide attempts. Allen stated that he had never contemplated suicide. When asked why he thought he was able to avoid thoughts so many homeless Veterans endure, Allen said, “I thank God for giving me another day, I’m not going to listen to Satan.” Both John and Allen agreed that for Veterans, PTSD is the most common point of initiation for thoughts of suicide that Veterans encounter. The project director ensured that John no longer harbored thoughts of suicide, and the roundtable closed with a review of the remaining two weeks and a focused prayer.

The roundtable session at Location Purple for Week Four took place on 17 October. Both Steve and Walt were available and made their way to the meeting room. Walt was eager to engage in discussion while Steve was overly lethargic and appeared to be suffering as the result of substance abuse. Steve had also undergone a very close haircut during the preceding week; the project director was later informed by the staff participant, Greg that Steve had to undergo the haircut due to the presence of lice. Greg also informed the project director that Steve’s overall personal hygiene was becoming an issue for Steve and for those around him. Discussions as to various remedies available through VA-affiliated agencies were discussed. The project director will attempt to find any answers available that may be helpful to alleviating Steve’s plight.

As mentioned above, the project director had spoken with a staff member at Still Serving Veterans (SSV) and had gathered information regarding appointments, an auxiliary VA location,

and a point of contact number for a local law group that performs pro-bono legal assistance for homeless Veterans. This information was passed on to Steve and Walt. Walt was especially thankful to receive the information regarding the pro-bono legal group that could assist him with his BCD appeal.

The roundtable concerning Suicide Ideation was initiated and Walt said that even with all of his trials and troubles, from his BCD to drug use, that he had never contemplated suicide. When asked why he was able to avoid the scourge of Veteran suicide, Walt stated, “Job has a powerful message – don’t give up hope!” The project director also drew attention to one of the Scripture points from Romans 12:12 where holding onto hope is encouraged. The project director asked Steve if he had ever thought about suicide and Steve said, “No suicide, I just want to survive.” He later stated, “I don’t want to die.” The project director reiterated the message from John 10:10 covered in previous weeks and asked Steve if he thought he was living life as Jesus intended, or if he was succumbing to the enemy’s mission to steal, kill, and destroy. At this point Steve was fading out of the conversation, when asked more forcefully if he was living as Jesus intended Steve answered in a low tone, “No, sir.”

When Walt was asked about his on-going struggles, Walt did say that while he is never suicidal that he does occasionally want to react out of frustration and hurt someone. When asked for specifics Walt acknowledged that his anger is brought about by the circumstances of being around others that will not be accountable to themselves or others. Walt said that he attempts to do what is right and to follow the rules, but that he has to be in a situation where he has “to watch some guy [soiling] and [soiling] himself.” [Vulgar comment removed] Walt’s frustration was obvious in his tone and verbiage. The project director asked Walt and Steve how to reach and teach others to cope; Walt said to tell them, “I know you’ve got dark days, don’t lose your

faith in Jesus Christ.” Steve was not willing to provide an answer other than, “I don’t know.” The project director again asked Steve if he saw Jesus when he was getting ready to smoke crack, he said no; but, the project director did get Steve to admit that he could “feel” Jesus there and that fact was a good start. The project director encouraged Steve to keep looking for Jesus; Steve said that he would keep looking. The roundtable closed with a quick overview of the two weeks remaining and a focused prayer.

#### Support Staff Participants

Tim, at Location Green, provided insight into the struggles that homeless Veterans have in accessing assistance to engage with the VA. The lag times between appointments and the inability of homeless Veterans to be able to make and keep appointments present on-going challenges. Charles was off-site and unavailable for comment. Again, due to an approaching mission at Location Blue, neither Lisa nor Nancy were available for face-to-face updates. At Location Purple, Greg provided the update on Steve (described above) and noted that Vicki was uncomfortable in attempting to provide salient information regarding on-going homeless Veteran issues due to her main focus being elsewhere in the organization. The project director agreed not to pursue information from Vicki for inclusion in the project.

#### Notes – Week Five

##### Homeless Veteran Participants

The Week Five roundtable, 23 October, at Location Green began with Allen as the only participant. John had not been seen by the staff or other individuals at Location Green. Allen was excited about an upcoming meeting with a HUD-VASH representative to finalize his housing; he was a bit mentally scattered but receptive to moving to the meeting location on-site. The meeting

began approximately 15 minutes later than scheduled to allow Allen to complete his breakfast meal.

Allen readily admitted to succumbing to drugs and alcohol, although now he states he is mostly “attacked” by alcohol. Allen said, “I’ve been drinking forever” and Allen also admitted to a devastating heroin addiction that had plagued him for twenty years; Allen noted that he had moved away from a strong heroin addiction fifteen years ago. He said that the “horse was hard to kick, but every once in a while it comes back to get me.” The project director asked about the prompters that brought heroin back into his life now; Allen noted that drinking and having some money available lowered his resolve to stay away from heroin. The project director pointed out that the enemy will continue to attack Allen, even in his new place, and that he must be aware of the attacks to come and of the preparations required to fight off the enemy. The project director reviewed applicable Scriptures with Allen. At this point, approximately 20 minutes into the session, John appeared and began to participate. John had been attempting to arrange transportation for a friend of his from the bus station to Location Green; he was successful in his task.

John noted that he had been “heavy into crank” when younger due to his lifestyle and life choices. These years of being a “hang around” with a well-known 1% motorcycle club had distorted his value system. John stated that he came from a good family with a good moral underpinning, but that partying with drinking and drugs pulled him away from what he knew was right. John noted that he had been “clean and sober” since the 1980’s but admitted that his PTSD had a grip on him to draw him toward hopelessness and thoughts of suicide. The project director engaged with John in reference to his suicide ideations, given that the last week’s session was suicide ideation focused; John reinforced that he had not harbored suicidal thoughts for some

years (this was consistent with his previous week's comments), but that he knew the enemy was "working" on him.

Toward the conclusion of the roundtable the VA HUD-VASH representative arrived to have Allen sign documents for his apartment. The project director happily agreed to let Allen step away to take care of this important business. Allen was jubilant upon signing his papers and the project director noted that this good news and action seemed to encourage John to maintain steadfast in his pursuit of new housing. The session closed with a prayer of thanks and coverage against the enemy's attacks and a reminder that next week would conclude the six-week project. At the conclusion of the session Allen and John were given an additional \$25 food card, a cold-weather beanie, and snacks.

The Location Purple session, 24 October, also began with one individual, Walt. Steve had been seen earlier by support staff and other individuals at Location Purple, but was not present for the roundtable. Walt surmised that Steve had been drawn to an off-site location that had the promise of drug use attached.

The discussion of substance abuse, Week Five's focus, may have been beneficial for Steve. Walt readily admitted to struggling with drugs and alcohol. Walt stated, "The enemy wants to get you, and I can see myself sinking into the muck and mire." He went on to say, "For me, drugs, alcohol, and women, they go hand-in-hand; the enemy has so many tools." The discussion turned to the "tools" the enemy has at his disposal and how he wields them to do harm. Walt acknowledged that "addiction" was hard to overcome because "addiction and other issues go together." The project director asked Walt, why do people listen to the enemy? He noted that one's environment plays a large role in how effective the enemy can be in his attacks. Walt stated, "When you're around negativity all the time it wears on you."

Walt admitted that he was “clean” for 2.5 years in the 1990’s following a six month stay in a rehabilitation facility. He said he had a three week lapse at the end of the 2.5 years of sobriety and that he had not been able to sustain sobriety since that time. Walt has attended Narcotics Anonymous meetings off and on, and that he would enjoy very short-term success; but that it was always “easier to step away from the right path.” He did agree to pursue a VA-directed drug and alcohol program if he can be accepted into the VA system. At the conclusion of the session Walt was provided with an additional \$25 food card, a cold-weather beanie, and snacks. Steve appeared as Walt and the project director were departing the meeting location. Steve was in no shape for a discussion, so the project director reminded Steve on next week’s roundtable and then also provided him with a \$25 food card and a cold-weather beanie (the snacks that were intended for Steve had already been given to Walt, due to Steve’s absence).

#### Support Staff Participants

There was no actionable comments or issues from Location Green. The staff at Location Purple inquired as to any assistance from the VA that might be applicable to a recent homeless Veteran arrival. The project director provided the staff with the appropriate contact information for the homeless Veteran to utilize to receive the benefits they had earned. A discussion in reference to Steve’s absence and current hampered state was also discussed.

#### **Notes – Week Six (Final Week)**

The final session, Week Six, took place on 30 October at Location Green. Both John and Allen were already on-site and were happy to be contacted to move to the meeting room for the last roundtable. After some discussions on how their previous week had unfolded, they were asked to answer the close-out questions; they both concurred.

The five final week close-out questions were: 1. Would you recommend this program become a permanent occurrence at this location? Please, expand your answer beyond yes/no. 2. What were the three most impactful benefits of this program? 3. How would you increase program participation numbers? 4. Would this program be effective if conducted at the homeless camp? (If yes, what modifications – if any - would need to be made to the program? If no, what factors would be working against the program? 5. What is your biggest take-away from this program?

John was a strong “yes” to recommending the program continue. He said that the sessions had “helped in areas wher I’ve never looked.” He said that he was able to take a closer look at his PTSD and that he could “see trigger points easier and know better what I’m up against.” Allen agreed with the program becoming a permanent fixture at Location Green; he thought it would benefit all that participated. He said, “right now, I can put it all together; I am into a team.”

As to question two and the most impactful benefits of this program, John noted that it helped him to talk things through, and that the talking had given him “the ability to dig deeper into myself.” He also said that he was “seeing my self-character better.” He also pointed to the program as allowing him to “look deeper into pinpoints” that brought about him being “irritable and impatient.” Allen said, “I know one day a week things are going to get better.” He said that knowing the roundtable session was going to take place on Monday gave him the ability to “get through the week.”

Increasing program numbers was the focus of question three. John said that “it would be tough to do because most Vets are loners.” Allen wholeheartedly agreed with John’s assessment.

Neither John nor Allen could think of any concrete methods to increase the number of program participants.

The project director was somewhat surprised by the answers to question four across the board, from homeless Veterans to support staff participants. The overwhelming response to whether or not the program could be effective if conducted at the homeless camp was, no. John said that there were “too many drugs and too many people angling at getting something” to make a homeless camp a poor choice for the program. Allen strongly agreed with John and added that “you could look for people to participate, but you wouldn’t want to be there for meetings. John agreed to the idea of looking for participants at the homeless camps, but to conduct the program at a firm location.

In reference to the biggest take-away from the program, question five; John said he had “more awareness of the enemy” and that he had become more aware of “different tools to use” and a “way out of the attacks.” Allen noted that he had added to his “tool kit.” The session concluded with the provision of the promised 30-day metro bus passes, snacks, and a prayer directed at covering these two men with blessings, protection, and discernment.

The final session at Location Purple was conducted on 31 October. Steve and Walt were on-site and both were prepared for the Week Six roundtable. Steve appeared more lucid than he had been in the previous three weeks; with the previous week having been absent.

Both participants agreed that the program should continue at Location Purple. Steve answered with a short, “yes sir,” while Walt had expanded thoughts. Walt said, “Yes, but I don’t think you’ll get participation. Some guys just don’t care enough to do something about where they are.”



In answering question two, as to the impactful benefits of the program; Steve said the “food card and the hat.” Again, here, Walt provided extended comments; he said that “talking about things in my life that were negative, being able to spill the bad things and feel better” were of a major benefit to him personally. Walt also noted that the incentives were nice and appreciated, but that he “would have attended anyway.” He also credited the program with encouraging him to call the pro-bono law group to seek assistance with his military discharge.

Both Steve and Walt agreed that increasing participation numbers, question three, would be difficult. Steve said to provide “more gift cards” to increase numbers. Walt agreed with the provision of incentives, but he said to have someone stay with the program that person would have to “see where he could benefit” from attendance.

Neither participant saw the conduct of the program at the homeless camp as being productive, per question four. Steve simply said, “Don’t think so.” Walt noted that there was “a different mind-set” of homeless Veterans that lived at the homeless camp. That also both agreed that overcoming the constant stream of drugs and drug use at the camp would be too distracting.

Question five asked the participants about their biggest take-away from this program. Steve’s demeanor softened here, and he said that he was “glad for the kindness and the gifts.” Walt stated that he was happy to “get a sense of value back” in his life. He also said that he was glad to be able to “overcome a hesitance to get help” and to “let God take this.” Walt also expressed thanks for being able to get help with changing his military discharge status. As with Location Green, the session at Location Purple closed with giving the participants the promised 30-day metro bus passes, snacks, and a prayer directed at covering these two men with blessings, protection, and discernment.

### Support Staff Participants

The final questions were discussed with the staff participants; given the operational tempo and immediate job requirements at the various locations, the decision was made to provide the close-out questions via email to allow for more thoughtful input from the staff participants. Charles, at Location Green, had unexpectedly taken a position at a government organization and was unavailable for a discussion, or the provision of the close-out questions. The remaining four support staff participants answered and returned the requested input. The answers to the close-out questions from the staff participants at Locations Purple, Green, and Blue follows:

(Greg – Location Purple)

Question 1. I would say yes. I think that having a specific focus on veterans from veterans would be a great blessing to those in need.

Question 2. Hope from other veterans, open dialogue and a safe place for veterans to be.

Question 3. Continue to let veterans know that it exists as well as encourage the ones who were in it to spread the word.

Question 4. I don't believe it would be simply because there are a bunch of individuals who don't want to be seen or are nomadic, so having a consistent client base would be challenging.

Question 5. More veterans need assistance and don't know where to turn to or know what information is out there.

Location Green provided the following (one of the staff members at this location, Charles, departed prior to the provision of these questions; he was unavailable for contact).

(Tim – Location Green)

Question 1. I do believe that some kind of mentorship would be very beneficial in working with the homeless population. It would have its challenges though. Some of those would be if the clients show up, clients getting too dependent on the mentor, the client trying to take advantage of the mentor.

Question 2. A. I believe the time spent in the group was very good for the clients to talk about things that they normally wouldn't talk about with staff or other homeless (talk with a peer).

B. It was a time where the client could look forward to and be excited about.

C. It was good for the client to know someone cared about them enough to set aside time each week to meet with them.

Question 3. Participation is hit or miss so I would think some type of big incentive might help. Once a few go through it, they could help facilitate another group so they could be key in recruitment.

Question 4. I think it would be very difficult to have at a camp. One issue would be the weather, another would be safety. Attendance would be difficult in the camp because people are very fluid while at the camps. Individuals come and go depending on who is at or around the camps. I believe some would be uncomfortable if they are seen meeting with a group.

Question 5. Again, I do believe that mentorship could be a great motivation and encouragement for those in homelessness. This could possibly motivate them to a point to better themselves and put forth the effort to move forward.

Although Location Blue did not host weekly roundtable sessions, their staff remained dedicated to serving the homeless Veteran community and maintained contact with the project

director in answering questions and addressing on-going issues. As such, they were provided with the five close-out questions; here are their answers.

(Lisa – Location Blue)

Question 1: Yes, it gives the veteran an opportunity to take stock in their situation and be accountable.

Question 2: The main impact is a veteran will know that there is help.

Question 3: Offering this tool whenever a veteran new to our facility and the Huntsville area.

Question 4: No, offering it to them in a camp doesn't give them any incentive to move from where they're at, if they want to change then they must make the effort.

Question 5: I haven't seen this done before, I'm not sure what "Operation Stand-down" did in this community, but it was only a weekend event and then it was gone until the next year. At least with this kind of ongoing program, word of mouth success stories travels fast, so maybe other homeless veterans may want to be involved.

(Nancy – Location Blue)

Question 1. Yes, I believe this program provides an essential service to veterans, and I would love to expand the services we're able to connect our veterans with.

Question 2. Building a positive professional relationship with an agency of similar conviction. Connecting veterans with an agency dedicated to making lasting change in their lives. Connecting veterans with an agency that promotes mental health awareness in a positive light, and showing them by example (from other veterans), that they don't have to stay in the same cycle they've become used to.

Question 3. Connecting with more agencies, both in the non-profit and government areas.

Question 4. I honestly am not certain how effective it would be in a camp setting, but I think the biggest obstacle would be the stigma with mental health treatment, and the hyper-cautious nature unsheltered homeless veterans often display toward anything that might be government-affiliated.

Question 5. That there is always such a strong need amongst veterans, and that there are always individuals that are passionate about making a difference in their lives.

**APPENDIX U**  
**QUESTIONS, ISSUES, GUIDANCE, ACTIVITIES,**  
**EVENTS, TRENDS, INDICATORS**

Week One (Location Green)

(John)

Questions: Would it be possible to get an additional food card?

Issues: Too many rules if seeking help from the VA.

Guidance: Asked John to consider seeking specific help for housing.

Activities: Make preparations to meet next week at the same day and time. John was within the *Receptive* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

(Allen)

Questions: Are we going to meet every week?

Issues: None relayed.

Guidance: Recommended Allen continues to accept assistance from the Location Green staff.

Activities: Make preparations to meet next week at the same day and time. Allen was within the *Receptive* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

Week One (Location Purple)

(Steve)

Questions: Is the food card active right now?

Issues: Possesses physical ailments from years of substance abuse and homelessness.

Guidance: Asked Steve to consider seeking specific help for substance abuse.

Activities: Make preparations to meet next week at the same day and time. Steve was marginally within the *Receptive* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

(Walt)

Questions: Are we going to meet here every week?

Issues: Those he sought help from in the past were unresponsive.

Guidance: Asked Walt to articulate what specific assistance he required.

Activities: Make preparations to meet next week at the same day and time. Walt was within the *Receptive* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

Events, Trends, Indicators

Events: Food cards were focus area. All agreed to next week's meeting. Project director asked all participants to consider accepting help.

Trends: Too early to assess – only event was a survey and questionnaire.

Indicators: Too early to assess – only event was a survey and questionnaire.

Week Two (Location Green)

(John)

Questions: How do you prevent shame from influencing your actions?

Issues: Avoiding temptations that are detrimental.

Guidance: John quoted 1 Cor. 10:13 to reinforce battling temptation. The project director reminded John (and Allen) that the enemy will use shame as a weapon when one gives in to temptation.

Activities: Work on staying “armored up” and be prepared for next week’s roundtable. John was within the *Engaged* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

(Allen)

Questions: Allen did not offer any questions for the roundtable. Allen was asked if he followed any particular pattern to stay away from trouble.

Issues: How to avoid the enemy’s attacks.

Guidance: Allen noted that the “Bible was written for what we’re going through right now.” The project director agreed and recommended staying Biblically-grounded, adding that Jesus fought back against Satan by utilizing Scripture. Project director stressed again the importance of Allen staying connected to the support staff at Location Green.

Activities: Work on staying “armored up” and be prepared for next week’s roundtable. Allen was within the *Engaged* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

Week Two (Location Purple)

(Steve)

Questions: Steve offered no questions for input. Steve was asked about his apparent on-going substance abuse issues.

Issues: Carries a strong addiction to crack cocaine; does not feel “worthy” of God’s help.

Guidance: Project director provided insight into how to ask for Jesus’ help in battling his addictions. Project director asked Steve to look for Jesus whenever he was tempted to smoke crack.



Activities: Seek help for addiction, look for Jesus, and look forward to next week's roundtable. Steve remained marginally within the *Engaged* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

(Walt)

Questions: Walt wanted to know how to ask for help without opening old wounds.

Issues: Battling the enemy required focused prayer – seeking the Lord in prayer for help often brings up bad memories. PTSD is an on-going issue (Week Three focus is on PTSD).

Guidance: Don't let the enemy use an old wound to keep you from Jesus.

Activities: Stay "prayed up," do not focus on the past; plan to attend next week's session.

Walt was solidly within the *Engaged* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

Events, Trends, Indicators

Events: All attendees were within the *Engaged* range of progression.

Trends: None of the participants shied away from the questions or discussion points.

There was no apparent dilution of the truth in their answers.

Indicators: Too early to assess – only one full roundtable conducted.

Week Three (Location Green)

(John)

Questions: John wanted to know how to best obtain help from the VA regarding his PTSD.

Issues: Admits to suffering from PTSD; is upset with the lack of perceived support from the VA.

Guidance: The project director encouraged John not to carry the pain, uncertainty, and worry that comes from suffering from PTSD. The project director also strongly recommended that John open himself up to receiving help from the local SSV organization.

Activities: John will be waiting for contact information to reach SSV from the project director. John was solidly within the *Engaged* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

(Allen)

Questions: Allen was questioned as to why he does not believe he has been impacted by PTSD (given his long-term chronic homelessness).

Issues: Allen continues to suffer from memory and cognitive difficulties. It is unclear through discussions with Allen and the Location Green support staff whether or not his lack of clarity is due to trauma, long-term substance abuse, other factors, or a combination of many factors.

Guidance: The project director recommended that Allen continue accepting assistance from the staff at Location Green and that, further, he seek out assistance from the local SSV organization in corresponding with the VA.

Activities: Maintain his steadfast faith in Jesus and be looking forward to next week's session. Allen will await contact information regarding SSV from the project director. Though he displayed occasional confusion, Allen was solidly within the *Engaged* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

Week Three (Location Purple)

(Steve)

Questions: The project director noted that Steve's incessant and debilitating drug addiction had a beginning somewhere, finding that origin will help him to better battle against his ailment. Steve was asked about suffering from PTSD; Steve denied any PTSD

Issues: Steve appeared to be under the influence of drugs or reacting to a complete lack of sleep. Steve's on-going substance abuse impacts his judgment, demeanor, and beliefs.

Guidance: The project director asked Steve if he had seen Jesus, as discussed in week two, prior to his undertaking his drug use – Steve said, "I didn't see Him." The project director ensured Steve that Jesus was there, and not to give up on seeing Him.

Activities: Look for Jesus. Remember that there will be a session the following week. Steve was barely within the *Receptive* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness; it would be more accurate to describe him as present.

(Walt)

Questions: Walt is seeking answers to assist in his BCD issues with the VA.

Issues: Walt admits to PTSD from his court-martial and BCD. Walt said, "The court-martial broke me." He is looking for a place of his own; he says being in his current environment makes it "easy to hang onto the pain."

Guidance: Walt was provided information the project director gleaned from various VA websites that indicated individuals with a BCD had an opportunity to receive "good credit" for their enlistment. Walt was encouraged to receive this information.

Activities: The program director asked Walt to seek out assistance from the local SSV organization in corresponding with the VA. Walt agreed he will await contact information

regarding SSV from the project director. Walt was solidly within the *Engaged* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

#### Events, Trends, Indicators

Events: One participant appeared to be under the influence of drugs or reacting to a complete lack of sleep

Trends: The majority of participants, 3 out of 4, remained in the *Engaged* mode and fully answered all questions and participated without apparent obfuscation of the truth. One participant was merely present, a choice not included in the original assessment chart. Location Green appears to provide a more stress-free environment for participants to wait at prior to the roundtable.

Indicators: On-site staffs at both locations know of, or can sense an impending issue with a participant and can provide a heads-up to the project director.

#### Week Four (Location Green)

(John)

Questions: John wanted to know who or what organization could help him be approved for an in-town apartment.

Issues: John admitted to having attempted suicide by hanging and by the use of a gun; these events were some “years ago” according to John. John submitted that he no longer feels drawn to suicide, but that he does still suffer from the PTSD that triggered the suicide attempts. John also wanted assistance in helping him be approved for an in-town apartment. The project director ensured that John no longer harbored thoughts of suicide.

Guidance: John was put in touch with a Location Green staff member that assisted him in reaching out to a group affiliated with the North Alabama Coalition for the Homeless (NACH) that could help him look into approvals for the apartment.

Activities: John was given information from SSV regarding appointments, an auxiliary VA location, and a point of contact number for a local law group that performs pro-bono legal assistance for homeless Veterans. John was solidly within the *Engaged* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness

(Allen)

Questions: Allen was asked about suicide ideations; he denied any thoughts of suicide.

Issues: When asked why he thought he was able to avoid thoughts so many homeless Veterans endure, Allen said, "I thank God for giving me another day, I'm not going to listen to Satan." Allen is similarly interested in receiving housing; he is in the process of approval for a location at this time. Allen, sometimes, seems unaware that he is in the process of provided a place to live. The project director discussed this issue with members of the Location Green staff; they are aware of the confusion and they have a member dedicated to helping Allen.

Guidance: Allen was asked to maintain in constant contact with Location Green and Location Blue staff members.

Activities: Allen was given information from SSV regarding appointments, an auxiliary VA location, and a point of contact number for a local law group that performs pro-bono legal assistance for homeless Veterans. Allen was solidly within the *Engaged* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness

Week Four (Location Purple)

(Steve)

Questions: Steve was asked if he saw Jesus before he smoked his crack pipe; Steve answered, no.

Issues: Steve was overly lethargic and appeared to be suffering as the result of substance abuse. Steve had also undergone a very close haircut during the preceding week; the project director was later informed by a staff participant that Steve had to undergo the haircut due to the presence of lice. Greg also informed the project director that Steve's overall personal hygiene was becoming an issue for Steve and for those around him

Guidance: The project director again asked Steve if he saw Jesus when he was getting ready to smoke crack, he said no; but, the project director did get Steve to admit that he could "feel" Jesus there and that fact was a good start. The project director encouraged Steve to keep looking for Jesus; Steve said that he would keep looking.

Activities: Steve did not want the information from SSV regarding appointments, an auxiliary VA location, and a point of contact number for a local law group that performs pro-bono legal assistance for homeless Veterans. Steve had digressed into an area not captured by the progression chart; he was merely, present.

(Walt)

Questions: Walt asked about the information the project director had sought; he was happy there was positive movement.

Issues: Walt denied any suicide ideations, but he is growing increasingly frustrated by his surroundings. When Walt was asked about his on-going struggles, Walt did say that while he is never suicidal that he does occasionally want to react out of frustration and hurt someone. When

asked for specifics Walt acknowledged that his anger is brought about by the circumstances of being around others that will not be accountable to themselves or others. The project director ensured that Walt was not preparing to act in anger or frustration toward someone in particular.

Guidance: Walt was especially thankful to receive the information regarding the pro-bono legal group that could assist him with his BCD appeal. The project director strongly encouraged Walt to reach out to SSV, the VA auxiliary location, and the pro-bono legal group. Walt stated that he would.

Activities: Walt was given information from SSV regarding appointments, an auxiliary VA location, and a point of contact number for a local law group that performs pro-bono legal assistance for homeless Veterans. Walt was solidly within the *Engaged* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness

Events, Trends, Indicators

Events: The same participant was, again, incapacitated by an apparent reaction to drug use and was further negatively impacted by an on-going personal hygiene issue.

Trends: All other participants remained *Engaged* and buoyant.

Indicators: 3 of 4 participants were now anticipating the arrival of the project director and were looking forward to the engagement.

Week Five (Location Green)

(John)

Questions: John was asked about his drug and alcohol use. John noted that he had been “clean and sober for 40 years.” John did admit to a former life that included heavy drinking, “crank” use, and plentiful marijuana usage. John attributed this previous lifestyle to the people with whom he associated and to the overall environment within which he operated.

Issues: John does continue to be affected by suicide ideations when he finds himself isolated and concerned about his future living arrangements and his challenges with PTSD.

Guidance: John was reminded that the enemy will continue to relentlessly badger John into believing that suicide is a viable option to “fix” his challenges.

Activities: In accordance with the project engagement plan, John was given an additional \$25 food card, a cold-weather beanie, and snacks. John remained solidly within the *Engaged* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness (Allen)

Questions: Allen was asked about his drug and alcohol use.

Issues: Allen readily admitted to succumbing to drugs and alcohol, although now he states he is mostly “attacked” by alcohol. Allen said, “I’ve been drinking forever” and Allen also admitted to a devastating heroin addiction that had plagued him for twenty years

Guidance: Allen was reminded to avoid the prompters of drinking and using available money to stay away from heroin

Activities: In accordance with the project engagement plan, Allen was given an additional \$25 food card, a cold-weather beanie, and snacks. Allen moved to the *Committed* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

Week Five (Location Purple)

(Steve)

Questions: Steve was not present.

Issues: Walt and the Location Purple staff intimated that Steve had departed the site in search of drugs.

Guidance: None provided.



Activities: Steve was subsequently located in another portion of Location Purple. In accordance with the project engagement plan, Steve was given an additional \$25 food card and a cold-weather beanie; additional snacks had already been provided to Walt in Steve's absence. Steve deteriorated further into an additional uncharted area of the progression chart – not present.

(Walt)

Questions: Walt was asked about his drug and alcohol use.

Issues: Walt readily admitted to struggling with drugs and alcohol. Walt has attended Narcotics Anonymous meetings off and on, and that he would enjoy very short-term success.

Guidance: Walt was reminded of the need to stay away from, what he knows to be, negative influences. He was encouraged to lean into Jesus when he felt threats coming on. He agreed to pursue a VA-directed drug and alcohol program if he can be accepted into the VA system

Activities: In accordance with the project engagement plan, John was given an additional \$25 food card, a cold-weather beanie, and snacks. Walt moved to the *Committed* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

Events, Trends, Indicators

Events: One participant was missing; it was assessed that he was attempting to access drugs.

Trends: The remaining three participants all admitted to issues with drugs and alcohol.

Indicators: Substance abuse impacted all other areas of the participant's lives and issues.

Week Six (Location Green)

(John)

Questions: Five close-out questions were asked: 1. Would you recommend this program

become a permanent occurrence at this location? Please, expand your answer beyond yes/no. 2. What were the three most impactful benefits of this program? 3. How would you increase program participation numbers? 4. Would this program be effective if conducted at the homeless camp? (If yes, what modifications – if any - would need to be made to the program? If no, what factors would be working against the program?) 5. What is your biggest take-away from this program?

Issues: John noted that he can see “trigger points” that lead him into anger and his PTSD. He said that he could see his self-character more clearly.

Guidance: John was prompted to lean into Jesus and Scripture during the way ahead, and to avoid enemy “ambushes” at all costs.

Activities: John was given the promised 30-day metro bus pass and a pocket-sized takeaway of the Scriptures utilized during the project. John moved to the *Committed* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

(Allen)

Questions: Five close-out questions were asked: 1. Would you recommend this program become a permanent occurrence at this location? Please, expand your answer beyond yes/no. 2. What were the three most impactful benefits of this program? 3. How would you increase program participation numbers? 4. Would this program be effective if conducted at the homeless camp? (If yes, what modifications – if any - would need to be made to the program? If no, what factors would be working against the program?) 5. What is your biggest take-away from this program?

Issues: Allen was thankful for this one day of the week where he could gain strength through being reminded of how much the Lord cares for him.

Guidance: Allen was encouraged to continue to avoid the enemy and to seek out Jesus; he was further reminded to use the pocket-sized Scripture reminders as strength for the day.

Activities: Allen was given the promised 30-day metro bus pass and a pocket-sized takeaway of the Scriptures utilized during the project. Allen remained solidly in the *Committed* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

Week Six (Location Purple)

(Steve)

Questions: Five close-out questions were asked: 1. Would you recommend this program become a permanent occurrence at this location? Please, expand your answer beyond yes/no. 2. What were the three most impactful benefits of this program? 3. How would you increase program participation numbers? 4. Would this program be effective if conducted at the homeless camp? (If yes, what modifications – if any - would need to be made to the program? If no, what factors would be working against the program?) 5. What is your biggest take-away from this program?

Issues: Steve was lucid during this roundtable and offered short answers to the questions.

Guidance: Steve was reminded to look for Jesus whenever he was around drugs and to ask Jesus for help. He was encouraged to use the Scripture hand-out as a guide.

Activities: Steve was given the promised 30-day metro bus pass and a pocket-sized takeaway of the Scriptures utilized during the project. Steve moved back into the *Receptive* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness.

(Walt)

Questions: Five close-out questions were asked: 1. Would you recommend this program become a permanent occurrence at this location? Please, expand your answer beyond yes/no. 2.

What were the three most impactful benefits of this program? 3. How would you increase program participation numbers? 4. Would this program be effective if conducted at the homeless camp? (If yes, what modifications – if any - would need to be made to the program? If no, what factors would be working against the program?) 5. What is your biggest take-away from this program?

**Issues:** Walt was thankful for the opportunity to view old problems through a new, God-inspired lens. He acknowledged having made contact with the pro-bono law group and was looking forward to getting help with his discharge status.

**Guidance:** Walt was strongly encouraged to maintain contact with the legal group and to accept any help the VA might agree to provide. As with the others, he was prompted to use the Scriptures provided as fuel, strength, and protection.

**Activities:** Walt was given the promised 30-day metro bus pass and a pocket-sized takeaway of the Scriptures utilized during the project. Walt remained solidly in the *Committed* range of expected progression of homeless Veteran participants toward leaving homelessness

Events, Trends, Indicators

**Events:** All participants were present with 3 of 4 actively engaged with the discussions.

**Trends:** 3 of the 4 participants had all engaged with an outside agency to seek help with an on-going homeless issue.

**Indicators:** Consistent caring contact with these homeless Veterans made a difference in their lives. 75% of participants sought help from outside agencies with their homelessness.

# IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Date: 12-12-2023

**IRB #:** IRB-FY22-23-1740  
**Title:** Homeless Veterans and the Impacts of a Dedicated Discipleship Program  
**Creation Date:** 6-10-2023  
**End Date:**  
**Status:** Approved  
**Principal Investigator:** Keith Poole  
**Review Board:** Research Ethics Office  
**Sponsor:**

## Study History

<b>Submission Type</b> Initial	<b>Review Type</b> Exempt	<b>Decision</b> No Human Subjects Research
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## Key Study Contacts

<b>Member</b> Keith Poole	<b>Role</b> Principal Investigator	<b>Contact</b> [REDACTED]
<b>Member</b> Keith Poole	<b>Role</b> Primary Contact	<b>Contact</b> [REDACTED]
<b>Member</b> Kevin Gift	<b>Role</b> Co-Principal Investigator	<b>Contact</b> [REDACTED]