

# LIBRARIES & HOMELESSNESS



## GROUP ACTIVITIES HANDOUT

Libraries are found in most communities across our country. They are publicly funded (paid for by the government through tax dollars) and are available to be used by everyone. You need a library card to use some of the services (take out books, pay for printing fees, etc.). Different municipalities have different rules for who can get a card, but generally they are free for everyone. There is no out of pocket cost on the individual. Libraries offer many different programs that are available to community members.

Have a discussion with your group about libraries. Here are some questions to get you started:

- Where is the closest library to your church?
- When was the last time you went to a library? What did you do there?
- Besides lending books, what are some of the other services that libraries offer?
- What does it take to get a library card in your community? (do you need a permanent address? i.e. can a homeless person get a library card?)

Listen to the CBC Fresh Air radio interview from January 27, 2019 with Nalini Battu on the [Value of Libraries\\*](#) with your youth group.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What was the story that Nalini Battu wanted to share about libraries and homelessness? How was the library helpful to the person she spoke about?
- How would you define the relationship between Nalini and the person's story that she was sharing?
- How can a library serve a street-involved person? Does this apply to the library in your community?
- Nalini talks about what she did was not anything special. What do you think about that?
- Read Matthew 25:40-45 together. What would Jesus say about how Nalini's treated the person who needed some extra support?

A recent book by author Susan Orlean highlights the importance of libraries for the homeless population in many of our cities. She writes, "One of the few places homeless people are welcomed, given access to computers and the Internet, and permitted to dally all day (unless they act out) is a public library. Libraries have become a de facto community centre for the homeless across the

globe. There is not a library in the world that hasn't grappled with the issue of how - and how much - to provide for the homeless. Many librarians have told me that they consider this the defining question facing libraries right now, and that they despair of finding a balance between welcoming homeless people and somehow accommodating other patrons who occasionally are scared of them or find them smelly or messy or alienating." This quote seems to highlight what Nalini Battu speaks of in her interview as well.

For a deeper understanding about libraries, read *The Library Book* by Susan Orlean.

### ALTERNATIVE OPTION

Make contact with the library closest to your church. Ask the staff if your youth group can come and have their youth group time at the library. Talk with the librarians beforehand to see if they could speak about their experience of serving street involved people.

\* Sometimes internet links break or change, if this link does not work, google CBC Fresh Air Value of Libraries. Hopefully you will find a new link!