Definition:

It is important to recognize that understanding homelessness requires a grasp of several social issues: poverty, affordable housing, disability, and others. Homelessness is simply when people or households are unable to acquire and/or maintain housing they can afford.

Statistics:

- There are **643,067 people** experiencing homelessness on any given night in the United States.
- 12 percent of the homeless population are veterans.
- About 25 percent of the homeless population has serious mental illness, including chronic depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia.
- 46 percent of homeless respondents reported having an alcohol use problem in the past year.
- 38 percent reported a problem with drug use in the past year.
- 42 percent of the homeless population is African-American.

Resources:

- USA Today news story about child homelessness:
- USA Today news story about religious reliefs of homelessness:
- The month of November is National Homelessness and Hunger Awareness Month
- A report from the National Coalition for the Homeless on the criminalization of homelessness:
- The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness report on alternatives to criminalization:
  - [http://www.usich.gov/issue/alternatives_to_criminalization](http://www.usich.gov/issue/alternatives_to_criminalization)
- What do these publications make you think about homelessness?
What is the best method of dealing with this issue?

Taking into consideration the above characteristics of a homeless person (addicted, mentally ill, veteran, African-American), do you think we as Christians have an obligation to care for these individuals?

What Now: Resources for Further Engagement

- Degage Ministries:
  - provides help to homeless individuals in Grand Rapids’ Heartside Neighborhood.

- Heartside Ministy:
  - [http://www.heartside.org/](http://www.heartside.org/)
  - began in 1983 as an outreach center stemming from a household before blossoming into the multi-building ministry center it is today. Heartside provides programs such as Adult Education, Computer Skills, Talking Groups, and an Art’s Space.

- Mel Trotter Ministries:
  - located downtown serves meals, offers addiction help, and provides housing for homeless individuals in Grand Rapids.
  - Mission statement: Mel Trotter Ministries exists to demonstrate the compassion of Jesus Christ toward the hungry, homeless and hurting of the greater Grand Rapids area.

- National Alliance to End Homelessness:

If you have any suggestions or comments on what we can improve, please contact us at slc@calvin.edu or 616-526-6455.