

Assistance Misconceptions

What We Feel
vs.
What Is Real



MISCONCEPTIONS SERIES

In our community, there are individuals struggling with food insecurity, poverty, and homelessness. There are a lot of misconceptions when it comes to those needing assistance. It is easier to believe a label than see the individual story, the person.

Over the next several weeks, follow along as we look at "Assistance Misconceptions." Together we will try to break stereotypes, share information/stories, and the humanity of people in different situations.

Some points may be challenging, and you find yourself resisting or wanting to argue. In that case, ask yourself if these points of view are things you know firsthand or received from other sources? Is it conviction speaking to your heart?

Open your heart and mind to learn more about what is happening in your community. Then ask God to direct your heart to what He would have you do about it—what role can you play in making change.

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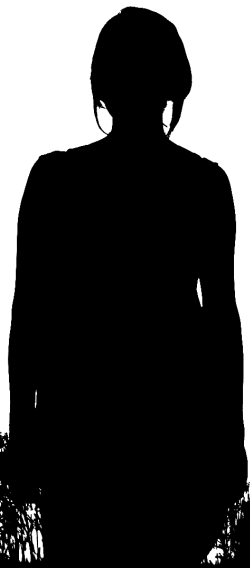
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*"I never
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Assistance
Misconceptions #1

MISCONCEPTION #1
PEOPLE EXPERIENCE POVERTY BECAUSE
THEY DON'T PLAN AHEAD.

One of the most frequent statements spoken by those seeking assistance is *"I never thought this would be me."*

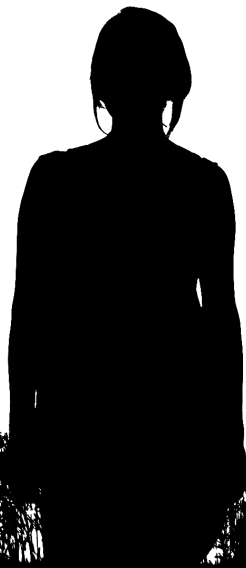
While there are benefits to planning ahead, no one plans on mounting medical bills from cancer or a long-term illness. An accident can change finances in a moment. Death or unexpected divorce can alter every plan that was made. There are no plans for mental illness. Rent is not supposed to suddenly jump by \$300-500/month.

We all know that "rainy days" will come, but to plan for them requires margin in your budget to set something aside. When income barely covers necessities, saving for a catastrophe seems impossible. Insurance has benefits if you can afford it, but still doesn't cover everything a family may need in difficult times.

Life can be hard. Stereotypes and judgmental statements make seeking help even harder. Treating people with compassion and dignity can bring healing and hope for tomorrow. That starts today with how we talk about need, assistance, help, and loving our neighbors.

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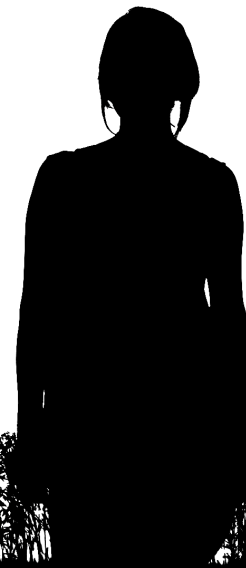
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Assistance
Misconceptions #2



MISCONCEPTION #2
SOCIAL SECURITY & MEDICARE COVER
WHAT SENIOR CITIZENS NEED.

Fixed incomes and rising costs have many senior citizens making tough choices about which bills to pay. Statistics show that 1 in 3 adults aged 65+ are economically insecure (National Council on Aging) and that rate is far higher for women and minorities.

Senior citizen clients seeking assistance often share about medicines they can't afford and still pay the rent. Nurses and social workers from medial offices call about getting their patients food assistance to help ease budget concerns.

Many seniors living on a fixed income (Social Security, pension, investment distribution) find their costs due to the rate of inflation, rising rental costs, and medical care to have exceeded their income. Providing assistance for basic needs like food and clothing can allow seniors to stay in their homes and get care they need.

Loving senior citizens in our community who need assistance looks a look like caring for the widow and loving our neighbors.

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Assistance Misconceptions #3



MISCONCEPTION #3
IF FAMILIES WERE WORKING THEY
WOULDN'T NEED FOOD ASSISTANCE.

A large percentage of families seeking assistance are under-employed rather than unemployed. That means that the wages and benefits they receive do not meet their family's needs.

For some this is due to medical issues, the cost of childcare, the high price of rent, or working jobs that do not pay a living wage. Other families face employment transition issues, a long wait for disability assistance, or a broken immigration system leaving people in process for years and unable to work.

Whatever the reason is, those seeking assistance have been brave enough to ask for help. The Bible repeatedly calls us to care for one another, to share burdens, and demonstrate our faith by our actions. Assistance is simply loving people in difficult situations with kindness and dignity. Love looks like making sure everyone has the necessities.

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Assistance
Misconceptions #4



MISCONCEPTION #4

THERE ARE LOTS OF JOBS AVAILABLE SO PEOPLE SHOULDN'T NEED HELP.

Having a job market with available opportunities is a blessing. However, even in this economy, challenges exist in getting people back to work.

Not all jobs pay a living wage that can support a family with housing costs so high (1/2—2/3 of wages for many). Reliable transportation (limitations of public transportation) and/or childcare poses problems for many seeking employment. Physical limitations narrow job options for those deemed able to work, rather than qualifying for disability. Some may seek temporary assistance between jobs or while recovering from being laid off.

Employment is multi-faceted. Finding out what our neighbors need to get back to work, and empowering them to do so, has long lasting impact. In the process, we can come alongside individuals and families working through financial challenges. This is a piece of what loving our neighbors looks like.

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Misconceptions #5



MISCONCEPTION #5
PEOPLE NEED HELP BECAUSE THEY ARE
LAZY AND DON'T WANT TO WORK.

People seek assistance for a variety of reasons including a significant percentage are unemployed, underemployed, or disabled due to mental illness. Mental illness takes a toll on family resources and relationships, not to mention the significant costs of medication and therapy.

Not all families have the insurance, finances, or relational support to get the help they need. As a community we can come alongside neighbors with assistance while helping them get the resources and care they need.

Every individual deserves dignity in their circumstances and people to champion a brighter future. Removing the stigma of mental illness and walking alongside our neighbors is a privilege. We can choose to cheer on the strength it takes to get from today to tomorrow. There is more to each of our stories than we see today.

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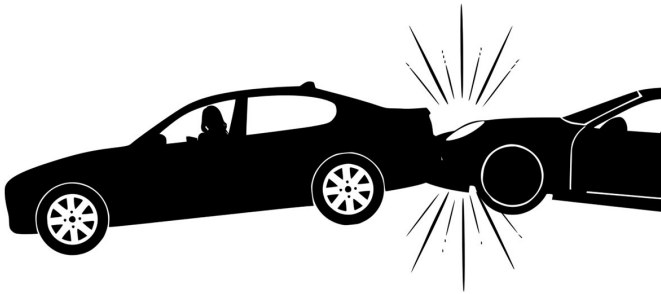
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Assistance Misconceptions #6

MISCONCEPTION #6
ONCE PEOPLE ARE BACK ON THEIR
FEET FINANCIALLY, THEY DON'T NEED
HELP ANYMORE.

The difficult part of under-employment or financial challenges is that it doesn't take much to go from being stable to needing assistance. A car accident, illness, short-term layoff, car repairs, seasonal employment complications (winter w/o snow, rainy summers), seasonal utility bills, or medical bills.

It is very common for those seeking assistance to stabilize for many months/years and need to come back again when circumstances get difficult.

There should be no shame in asking for help and there should be no shame in asking for help **AGAIN**. Loving our neighbors during difficult times, stabilizing families, and plugging people into resources for long-term success will make for a stronger community and church for generations to come.

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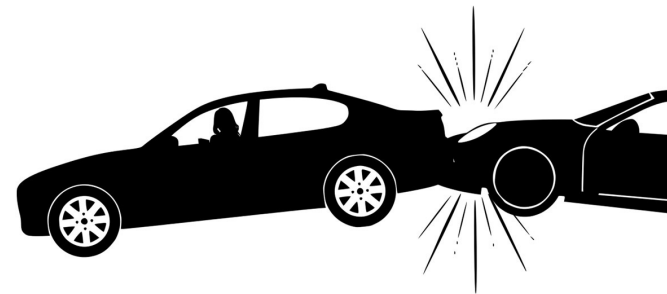
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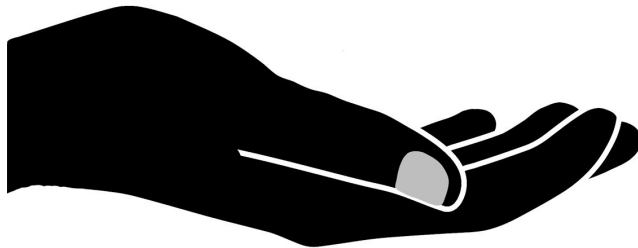
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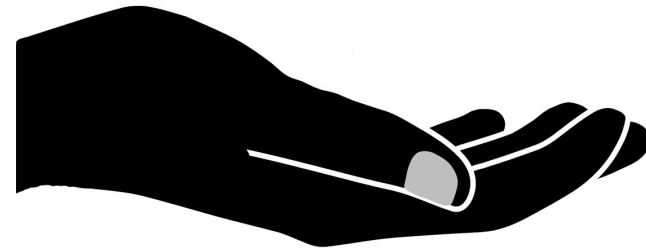
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ASSISTANCE MISCONCEPTION #7
I HAVE MY LIFE PUT TOGETHER. I WILL
NEVER NEED TO ASK FOR HELP.

We can work, plan, and devote our lives to being self-sufficient, but life can be unpredictable. One of the most common phrases people say the first time asking for help is "I never thought that this would be me..." We live like need happens to someone else.

Experiencing need is both heartbreaking and beautiful. It reveals our pride, our control issues, and our desire to live life on our own terms. How we talk about people needing help reveals many of the same things. Seeing beyond ourselves is the beginning of change.

God created us for community and to support one another. Receiving assistance teaches us to be a better giver, gratitude for others and what God provides, and that we are stronger together. Giving teaches us that we are part of a bigger story.

Those receiving assistance would tell you they never wanted to be in the position of asking for help. They would also say they received love at a vulnerable moment in their life, making all the difference for their family. Many have a desire to serve others because of what they have experienced. It is all part of God redeeming our stories for His glory.

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