

BOOK REVIEW

Jesus Among the Homeless: Successful Strategies of Christian Ministers to the Marginalized

Mathis, W. (2023). *Jesus Among the Homeless: Successful Strategies of Christian Ministers to the Marginalized*. Wipf and Stock. # pages.

Jesus Amongst the Homeless has a strong opening, setting the tone for the palpable call for concern for women experiencing homelessness. The context was data-driven, biblically sound, and inclusive of factual descriptions of the dynamics and challenges of homeless women from a historical and present-day point of view. Mathis then differentiates the experiences of homelessness as specific to gender differences while offering supportive statistical data and in-depth support for homeless women in chapter two. Chapter three offers a strong call to action for Christians, explaining that those who live their lives according to the ministry of Jesus must assume responsibility for the poor, widows, and orphans. This is in direct alignment with the Great Commission. Chapter four jumps into the background of Hagar and aligns well with the flow from the prior chapter, but the section titled “Church’s Interpretation” neglects an explanation of how churches are unique in their position to address homelessness. The “Hagar of the Twenty-First Century” section mentions Hagar’s challenges again while also speaking to Ishmael, a child and student of a woman navigating homelessness. This is a great opportunity to flesh out the challenges faced by children of homeless women.

Several areas that may improve Mathis’ theology of homelessness. First, the author could further explore research that specifically compares resources for homeless men in comparison to women. A deeper dive into the issues would also show a greater gap between resources and overlapping challenges for homeless women. For example, how might the statistics on the women vs. men who are amongst those being sex trafficked impact the point in count or “hidden homeless” challenges? This additional context would specifically showcase the call for increasing support for homeless women.

Mathis could also clarify the *why* and *how* spirituality and faith integration differ for men vs. women who are both homeless and experiencing pervasive hopelessness. This will further support the reasons this book maintains the focus on women experiencing homelessness and the

positive ripple effect this could have on the men, children, and communities who are impacted by homelessness.

Overall, this book could be a very compelling addition to Christian social work courses that focus on Homelessness. The book highlights social work’s value of supporting underserved women’s well-being everywhere. God-centered views on the importance of women and children, our human duty to help and uplift the *least of these*, and the blessings that overflow from restoring homeless women are clearly articulated. According to the book of Genesis 2:18 (ESV), through the creation of woman, all mankind would be helped in all that we are purposed to do. Therefore, the goal of targeting homeless women who are at their lowest presents an opportunity for whole communities to be restored mentally, spiritually, relationally, financially, and within this core need for stable housing. As the women experiencing homelessness are uplifted both in secular and religious outlets, this book offers an opportunity for leaders, advocates, and organizations to take heed and more effectively meet the comprehensive needs of homeless women near and abroad.

Reviewer Information

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