

Devotion

NOLA 4H: Hearts for the Hungry, Homeless, and Hurting — \$100,000

Leader: God loves us dearly and he has blessed us richly. Most of us feel we have more than we need and all that we want. We know He is always with us. But He is also with the poor and the weak. There are verses upon verses in the Bible about helping the poor and needy. Who cares for them? Isn't it our response to God's goodness to share our blessings with the helpless? Isn't God's command to love our neighbor as ourselves? Scripture tells us ... *We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.* (John 4:19–20).

All: *'For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me'* (Matthew 25:35–36, 40).

Leader: The pastors of this New Orleans neighborhood know the tragedies of life after Katrina. And even though life has not been easy for them since Katrina they know they are more fortunate than many others in their neighborhood. They know they have been blessed by God and that God's children love by serving. They feel it is their duty as children of God to help the helpless. They have taken it upon themselves to return the love of Jesus to their friends and neighbors through food and shelter, through care and compassion. *Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.* (Proverbs 14:31).

All: *Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'* (Matthew 25: 37–39)

Leader: Many of the people in these neighborhoods are struggling with depression, anxiety and health issues as a result of years of homelessness. The pastors and those volunteers assisting them are trying to give their neighbors shelter, medical assistance and counseling to improve their physical and emotional lives. They are telling them about Jesus to enrich their spiritual lives and give them hope. God helps them respond to the needs of the poor and needy, helps them to spread the Good News of salvation. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted ...* (Isaiah 61:1)

All: And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me' (Matthew 25:40).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, guardian of the poor and needy, help the pastors of this New Orleans neighborhood as they reach out to their brothers and sisters in Christ with food, shelter, medical assistance, and comfort. We, as sisters in Christ, can help with our prayers but also with our mites for this grant. May their spiritual needs be met and their hearts be opened to You as the pastors and community work to supply their physical needs. Hear our prayer, gracious Lord, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.