

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 82 | Loving Our Neighbors, Part 2: The Homeless

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Ben Sooy



Autumn: Welcome to the Vision for Life podcast, an ongoing conversation between the pastors of Fellowship Denver and the Church at large. Each week we talk about life, faith, the Bible and how to follow Jesus as we go about our daily lives. I'm Autumn, host of the Vision for Life podcast, and we are picking up today with part two of an extended conversation about loving our neighbors, the vulnerable people in our midst, and the work particularly of Mile High Ministries and Joshua Station. So, if you didn't listen to part One, I would suggest going back and listening to that episode before you jump in with today's. But here again is my conversation with Ben, and we are talking now specifically about the work of Mile High Ministries, the work at Joshua Station, and how that work is compelled by the challenge in Scripture to love our neighbor actively.

You mentioned some of these interconnected issues, Ben, that Mile High Ministries focuses on and is attempting to address and encouraging Churches and believers in Denver to come together to help with. The issues you mentioned were the three connected issues of homelessness, housing affordability, and access and social isolation. So, let's pick the conversation back up there, and you can expand a little more on these issues that Mile High Ministries sees and is working to address. The first of those three that I mentioned and that you brought up before, Ben—homelessness. What is the state of homelessness right now in Denver based on research and data and then what you see and experience also in your work?

Ben: Yeah. Well, the data backs this up and the perception that I think that a lot of us have is that homelessness has been on the rise consistently for the last 10 years. And especially our perception is that these sort of visible kinds of homelessness that we see like tent camps, folks on the side of the road, that our perception is that has gotten worse from the pandemic on, right? I don't know if you- I love the Central Denver Library, the public library that's right by the intersection of Colfax and Broadway, and that library was sadly shut down for most of the pandemic, and Kate and I had an experience of like, 'oh great, the library's open again, we're going to have such a good time just hanging out,' and there were always friends and neighbors that were around that maybe struggled with homelessness, but there were all of a sudden just giant tent camps around that were not there the last time we checked out the Denver Central Library, right? So, homelessness is on the rise, that visible kind, but there're limitations to even when we try to even answer the question, how many homeless folks are in Denver Colorado? the best method that we have is a bunch of people going out on one night and just trying to count, literally head count all the people that are either in shelters or sleeping rough on the street. And that does not capture this kind of invisible homelessness of teenagers that are couch surfing, or families that are scraping together money for a motel room, or families that are doubling, tripling up in an extended stay motel, right? So, we actually don't know about this whole world of folks that are maybe one missed paycheck away from sleeping in their car. Or one or two crisis situations—bad days away—from needing a spare bedroom or a spare couch, right?

And you know, I hear a lot from folks that I engage with that like, 'oh yeah,' you know, 'maybe homelessness is on the rise, especially since we made weed legal in Colorado,' and like 'are folks coming to use,' because there's this sort of narrative that we've built up that folks are homeless because of, primarily, caused by a drug or alcohol addiction. But if you look at the statistics, it's only 28% of those who are struggling with homelessness in Denver Colorado who have a drug or alcohol addiction. 100% just struggle that they can't afford housing. So, this problem is on the rise, but it's like, again, we use these sorts of narratives that we're taught of like, because there're useful people and useless people, we try to create a category for why somebody is struggling with houselessness or homelessness, and we usually try to tie it

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to an addiction or maybe a lifestyle choice. Now, you will meet folks that are strung out, you will meet folks who have significant mental health struggles, you will meet folks who can be lumped into this sort of narrative of 'it's because of addiction or a lifestyle choice' or whatever, but based upon my experience of actually meeting families at Joshua Station, one of the things that I've started- this is backed up by no data, so this is just Ben Sooy right now, but I started to think about drug or alcohol addiction as a symptom of a deeper problem than it is a cause. That's not the thing that's destroying your life. The thing that's destroying your life is community and family has broken down for you and you- poverty is poverty of relationships more than its poverty of finances, and so when you—when your life is so stressful and chaotic—like, I also drink four beers on a Thursday night and binge watched four episodes of Netflix, just-

Autumn: -so you have your own coping mechanisms is what you're saying,

Ben: -my coping mechanisms just don't really impact am I going to have housing tomorrow. My coping mechanisms don't really impact my core relationships because I've got stable core relationships where, let's say I am feeling a little surly and a little grumpy, and I mouth off to Kate—Kate's got the stability to just call me on it but then forgive me when I ask forgiveness, right?

Autumn: Kate will not kick you out onto the street.

Ben: Right. Thank God, thank God. So, uh we all have these release valves that we have, whether it's craft beer, or Netflix, or going to the mountains, or whatever we do to feel better about our lives and ourselves when we're stressed out, or anxious, or depressed. And I'm not trying to lower the severity of a drug or alcohol addiction; that's intense, and that's a real thing that needs to be taken seriously for a lot of people. But my growing theory is that this is actually a symptom of a deeper brokenness than it is, this is the, if we just, silver bullet, get them to stop taking drugs or using alcohol or whatever, then that'll solve the problem. So yeah, that's that first piece of homelessness.

Autumn: And I think too that in that- in simply saying, the pressures of life of modern life are such that we all do develop these coping mechanisms, it's wise to be self-reflective and to ask if you yourself use those in a way that is harmful to relationships or not. But when you have a stable network of relationships around you, those are- you don't have to turn to those coping mechanisms as often or rely on them as fully as you do when you're experiencing these in isolation, and we'll talk more about that in a moment. The second of these problems that you mentioned earlier, Ben, is housing affordability and access. This is not a newsflash for anyone living in Denver right now; we all are experiencing this. And how are these two- so homelessness—and obviously homelessness and housing affordability are connected—but what do you see in your work, how is this sort of driving this cycle?

Ben: Well, you know we mentioned earlier that housing in Denver is more expensive than it's ever been, anecdotally, for Kate and I, when we first moved to Denver, we rented a studio apartment in Capitol Hill, kind of around 12th and Downing, and we paid \$600 a month for it, which felt like a stretch for us because I was making like \$24,000 a year or something. And, that same—we looked it up on Zillow—and that same unit is well over \$2,000 a month. And from the pictures on Zillow at least it doesn't look like they've redone the kitchen, they haven't replaced the carpet that looks like it's from an elementary school from the 90s. It is the same unit, but it skyrocketed in 10 years from \$600 a month in rent to over \$2000 a month in rent. So, we have a group of people at Joshua Station where, we charge rent at Joshua Station, it just is 30% of whatever your income is, and—because that's what people who are smart say is affordable housing, if you're paying 30% or less of your income towards housing that's considered affordable, right? Now, the reality is that a

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family stays at Joshua Station, maybe they move from relational chaos into relational stability, maybe they're sort of like learning to let folks in and advocate for them, they're reforming those broken parts of their life there because Joshua Station is a drug and alcohol-free community, they're also continuing to prove to themselves that they don't need drugs or alcohol to sort of cope and manage their own life, there's other beautiful things that they can lean into instead of that. And the situation though- the reality is that somebody graduates Joshua Station after roughly two years, there is no robust affordable housing for them to move into. The best thing that we can hope for is they get Section 8, like a Section 8 voucher, which is a lottery in our city. And we're continuing to build luxury condos and million dollar McMansions in Denver when there's just a huge empty middle of—and especially if, let's say you're getting your life in order and you're starting to work a regular job, you're partnering with Cross Purpose and they're teaching you the skills and connecting and networking with employers, and you've got to really kick butt job out there and all of a sudden you're making too much money to qualify for the federal assistance that you once did, but you make too little to be able to actually afford rent.

A single mom with two kids, in order to afford housing in Denver, Colorado, needs to make \$60,000 a year. A single mom...with two kids...needs to make \$60,000 a year, which is more than I make. And so, we—as an organization, Mile High Ministries—we can start maybe building additional affordable housing communities, which we are, we're building, we just broke ground last Friday on Clara Brown Commons, which is going to be a long- so Joshua Station is a place that you stay for a short term, like two years, Claire Brown is going to be, 'There's no expiration date. This is just an affordable housing community where you can find home, and belonging, and hopefully healing in hospitality here. But we can house, what, 30* families at Claire Brown Commons. And there's just a huge need in our city for more and more- a movement of people who are aware of these issues, and these dynamics, and how they really affect people. Like, do you have a spare bedroom that you can rent for almost nothing? Do you have a basement that could become an apartment for a friend who needs a cheaper place to stay? Do you have a rental property that, instead of viewing it as, 'I'm going to maximize this as just a pure financial investment,' but can I view this rental property as a kingdom investment where it can become a place for someone to stay and actually the rent that they're paying doesn't mean that they're choosing beans and rice or going to a food bank. Like, they chose having stable housing, but that meant that they couldn't afford good and healthy food, right?

Autumn: You had mentioned, Ben, that in this area of housing affordability and access—I love that data point of- just because it's so helpful, I don't love it in the sense of, I don't think it's good, the data point of a single parent, a single mom with two kids, needing to make \$60,000 to afford renting a place in Denver is so helpful and eye-opening, and this is something, because we all have been living in the surge of rising home prices in Denver, anyone who's moved here in the last year particularly, but year and a half really, as home prices have just continued to skyrocket in really amazing jumps, anyone who has moved here and is looking, we've had conversations with them—they talk about how difficult it is, and these are people who are moving *from* a stable situation *into* a stable situation. And so, this one point of housing affordability and access, if we can imagine how difficult it is for someone who has some means, has income, is moving with a job, to find a place suitable for their family in terms of size and cost, how hard it would be if you are in a situation in which you just simply can't be competitive at all, and there are realistically not places available to you. So, I think that we can use that even just to begin to really step into someone else's shoes to develop empathy around how hard it must be to live in a place where it seems that everything is telling you 'you don't belong here,' or 'you can't belong here,' or 'you can't live here the city, this place is not for you.'

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Ben: Yeah.

Autumn: And that actually ties directly into the third of these three interconnected problems, which is social isolation. So how is it that homelessness, housing affordability and access—both of those are so impacted by this third point—how would you explain that connection to social isolation?

Ben: Well, okay, so every good thing that I've ever experienced in my life is because I knew a guy. Like, Dan Perez, who—Daniel and Jennifer Perez, some of you know, members of Fellowship—Dan's been my best friend since I was 19 years old. We met freshman year on the dorm at college. And he's the same guy that introduced me to Kate, who's now my wife. He's the same guy that introduced me to Jordan Fisher, who was the reason why I came back to Denver to work at Hope in Our City. He's the same guy that, we've been doing music together for 15 years, so any sort of creative success or fulfillment that I'm feeling of, 'we're writing good songs in our band,' you know, it's all because of, honestly, Dan. And, Dan is just one guy among a multitude of guys and gals that has been deeply impactful and deeply helpful when my life has gotten difficult or when I've been confused. I just think Kate and I, at the beginning of the pandemic, we both lost our jobs within the same week and we, a month and a half later, as an act of gratitude, wrote down all the people who showed up for us in tangible ways. And it was about 100 people, and the financial gift to us of between two separate people paying for a month of rent for us, people dropping off King Soopers gift cards, and casseroles, and all that sort of stuff—it was about \$10,000 that we were richer after losing our jobs. That existed for us because of a deep interwoven community of mostly Jesus followers who really take this sort of stuff that we're talking about seriously. So, we went through a time of trouble. We lost our jobs. But we had 100 people show up for us, and they were able to hold a costly weight for us both financially and relationally. Not everybody has that.

In some of these, I mentioned this, I think I mentioned a survey where Denver, in 2018, was the third loneliest city in the country. How they got that stat, the info, is they would ask questions of just like straight, are you lonely? Denverites resoundingly say yes. But then there's more nuanced questions like, On a really bad day, at time of a day of trouble where everything goes wrong, how many people could you call on to help you? The most common answer in Denver is zero. Most—and maybe this is because a lot of us moved from elsewhere, and so, when you move to a new city, you're not around family or you're not all around friends that you grew up with. Where you're, in a post Christian city like Denver, where you're making friends, it may not be at a Church community. It may be you're trying to make friends at work or like my Facebook group where we meet up on Tuesday nights to play ultimate frisbee at Wash Park, right?

Autumn: Right, my hiking group. Yeah.

Ben: Yeah, yeah—we need friends at work or at play. And the reality-

Autumn: And maybe too, it's affected by this, what you mentioned also of this tendency in Denver to project a certain image. Maybe it also breaks down because some people feel that they have no one to call that would require a certain sort of vulnerability.

Ben: Yes, because we present well on Instagram and internally we're suffering, right? So, when you show up to work or at in your recreation groups, there's that pressure to be useful at work or to be fun and funny and light at play. And it's really hard when you just go through a breakup or maybe you're like, well, I kind of grew up in Church and now I'm sort of like, am I a Christian? —I don't even know. like there's all these questions and internal confusions and struggles that

we're going through, but it's hard to pivot a lot of our relationships into that true vulnerability. And so, one of the things that we try to do is, I call it mutuality in service, or reciprocity in service, is that when you're trying to be a person that cares for others, you're trying to create- you're attempting to create space for them where they can be honest about their deepest confusions, questions, and struggles, and hopes and dreams and ambitions. One of the ways that you can do that is being honest about your own hopes and dreams and disappointments and struggles and ambitions, right?

So, this also, you know—I don't know if we mentioned this earlier—but another hurdle that I see Church people have when they're trying to engage with their poor or homeless neighbors or whatever is that oftentimes we think about ourselves as up here as the helpers, and the folks that were helping are down there as the receivers, or they're like the help-ees, you know. And, there's distance in that dynamic. But one of the things that I've realized is not only do all of us deeply require help, but like I talked about with our friend Ashley, it's like we can receive help from the most unexpected of directions, right? So, when you're- if you're attempting to start these relationships with folks that are different than you, different background struggle in ways that maybe you don't struggle in, one of the things that's healthy to keep in mind is your own need and your own sense of loneliness and isolation that you bring and your own need for deep belonging and community too. And just be honest about that. Like, my friends at Joshua Station, they can smell someone who is masking up a mile away, and they'll wall up and sort of provide some distance to you.

Autumn: Anyone who has lived in poverty or in a particularly difficult situation for any length of time has often been on the receiving end of this sort of “the helper” relationship. And so, yes, they're accustomed to it, and can definitely sense this sort of that sort of distance, the sort of platitudes that come along with that mentality.

Ben: But if you come with an open heart and some healthy vulnerability, and you come not necessarily looking to fix or change or problem solve for somebody else, but just to be present, there's a host of good stuff that could happen through those relationships that are built, and it's through- our friends at Cross Purpose say this, but they say there's no significant change without significant relationship. And I just—that's tattooed on my heart at this point. You cannot- all the problems that I carry around are not solved without connection with other people. And that's true for our friends that are formerly homeless or actively homeless.

Autumn: So, let's summarize this portion. The problem of homelessness is big, it's rising, we see it all around us and there are many people who are actually living in a state of homelessness without stable housing that we also can't see. You've referenced these before as the almost-homeless or invisible-homeless, Ben. And so, the work of Joshua Station partially addresses this need of homelessness by providing space, transitional housing for people who are transitioning out of homelessness, who need a stable place to live. And then the second aspect of this part of the conversation, what is driving this need, housing affordability and access. One of the specific ways that Joshua Station is working to- rather, Mile High Ministries is working to address that need in our city is by building what you mentioned, the Clara Brown Commons and by talking to other Churches, to landlords, to encouraging them towards doing the things that you mentioned; do you have a place that you could offer to someone that would provide stable housing at an affordable rate? So, encouraging people in our city to ask to reframe that, how can you use what you have if you have a room or a basement or some land or housing unit? How can you use that to actually bring stability to a person or a family? And then the third—social isolation—in the relationships that Joshua Station encourages between the staff, and between some volunteers, and for the people who live there to develop with each other, and the different ways that those are encouraged also working to address this part of the need.

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So, in this last portion, as we round out our conversation today then, there are three terms that I learned at an informational lunch that I attended at Mile High Ministries that I want to close on, and those are the aspects of home, healing, and hospitality, and how the family of God can be present in seeing our homeless neighbors or the nearly-homeless, or the really just vulnerable people, people who are poor, who live in our city, and who may be faced with this crisis. I think you mentioned who maybe are one paycheck away from being evicted from their homes. That is the reality for many people. And so, acknowledging this need in our city, believing that these people are our neighbors, that the expectation of Jesus is that we love them not in a passive way that says, 'I won't harm you,' but in an active way that says, 'how can I help?' And, not though in a way that simply says, 'I will extend something to you as your savior, but in seeing you as a person of value and worth, not just a victim of certain circumstances, or not just a person who has made poor decisions and therefore has to live with these certain consequences, that is someone who carries inherent dignity and value as someone who is my neighbor.' I think these three words help us to sort of see a path forward and to extend real love. And those words again are home, healing, and hospitality. So, let's close there. How is it that we can do this? How can we love the vulnerable people who are our neighbors?

Ben: Yeah. So, home; I think Henri Nouwen says, 'In order to practice hospitality, you got to feel at home in your own house.' You've got to create a free space for somebody else to just be in the state that they're in, but you can only create freedom for somebody else if you also sense that you experience belonging and rootedness, and all that, which is so deeply difficult in a city like Denver where, you know, I can't tell you how many times in the last five years when bad things have happened or a beloved friend moves to Austin, Texas, I'm like, 'should I go too?' You know, like, am I even- do I belong? Do I belong here? So, um, home is creating a free space for yourself and for others. Home is acknowledging that we're all hosts in some capacity. Jesus says, 'when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind,' and I love this because we're all hosts of just whatever area we have, whether it's a small, little table, or a big mansion, or a coffee shop that we go to that's a shared space, we all have circles that we can experience belonging ourselves, but then offer belonging to others. Hospitality, especially if you go back to Hebrews, 'do not neglect to show hospitality of strangers because you've entertained angels unawares,' right? That word in Greek is- well, okay, so when we think hospitality, we often think of this sort of southern style hospitality, which is like, let me impress you by outdoing you, and let me just sort of like- it's not like actual- it's often not an act of service, it's an act of one-upmanship, right, with whoever you're trying to impress, your business partner or whatever.

Autumn: If that is the expectation of hospitality, I am sunk. I cannot

Ben: Right, right. What you can offer is the mess and the chaos of your home, right? And I've mentioned Daniel and Jennifer before, but they host our Fellowship group, and they've got three rowdy boys, and they just open their home up weekly in a way that doesn't try to mask or impress, but in a way that provides a free space for themselves and for others.

Autumn: Oh, I witnessed this on Sunday. One of one of the boys that you were just referencing just walked up to you and said, 'Uncle Ben, can you come to our house this afternoon?' unprompted. And the parent said, without hesitation, 'yeah, totally.'

Ben: And it requires the owning the difficulty of spontaneous plans, people just showing up. And so, in Hebrews, that word that's translated into English as hospitality is- I'm not going to say it in a Greek way, but it's *philoxenia*, which is

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literally love of stranger. It's love of the person who doesn't belong, love the alien, love of the person that you don't know. So, American hospitality we're taught that it's love of the neighbor in the sense of somebody that we already like and want to hang out with or maybe we want to impress or do business with. But in the biblical mindset, hospitality is love of the person that you don't know that, inherent in that idea, is they're probably a little needy, a little vulnerable, in need of some help, right? So just creating a free and open space for someone to just be in the exact spot that they're in, and if they need a quiet place to sit in the corner and just be, or if they need some conversation, if they need some tea and sympathy, whatever it is, that's hospitality. And it's like we all have different little circles that we can practice that in, whether we have a big home or a small home, whether we just have a seat at the corner coffee shop, right?

And then healing, one of my mentors, he talks about a lot that if you're not engaging with the realities of trauma in your work to do poverty alleviation or community building with poor folks, you're missing out on something big. Because, the realities of how somebody ends up homeless or in extreme poverty or whatever, the cause is often a traumatic situation or a traumatic background home-life, whatever, but then the realities of being housing-unstable are in themselves traumatic. And so, realizing that you're not only trying to solve what feels like the quote-unquote "practical problems" that a person is facing like, 'let's get you a job and let's get you stable housing,' that's- we need to do that stuff and we need to do that stuff well, but we also need to deal with the realities of healing holistically, which includes spiritual healing of being reconciled to God through the gospel of Jesus, right?

Autumn: In a recent training that I attended for child development, they were talking about categories of traumatic experiences and adverse childhood experiences, and the person leading the training said that relationships are the way to heal that sort of trauma.

Ben: Yes, yeah. So it's just, we need to create a free and welcoming space for ourselves and for others, and then practice that gentleness of Christ to ourselves and to others in a way that- and, you know, it's like when you try to love people who are hurting; you hurt with them because the stuff that breaks your heart- er, the stuff that breaks *their* heart starts to break your heart because you're connected to them and you care about them. But you also hurt from them sometimes, because hurting people hurt people, and sometimes, like, I don't know if you've ever had an experience with, like—when I was in high school, sometimes it didn't feel safe to be mad at my dad, but I would go and I would be mad at my best friends or mad at the teacher, but the irony is that my best friends at school were the were the people who actually- they weren't the someone who is causing me problems, but they were just safe enough to be able to absorb that heat. And so, sometimes when you're trying to care for somebody who's hurting deeply, you're kind of going to be a punching bag a little bit. You know this from overseeing Children and Family Ministries—we've got little feelings and big emotions, and it's easy to say if it's somebody that's not our own kid, or not somebody who's tied to us in a family sense, to just be like, 'oh man, they are such a problematic, difficult, maybe toxic presence, and I'm just going to pull back from that,' you know? But if you continue- if we, as a culture, continue to pull back from the people who are difficult to love, and they're difficult to love partially because they feel isolated and lonely and they're not sure that folks are going to take care of them ride-or-die, what happens? The marginalized are even more marginalized, the isolated or even more isolated, and our society that's already fragmented in so many multitude of ways continues to just fragment further, right?

Autumn: That's so helpful, Ben. I latched onto one thing you said there about practicing hospitality as love of stranger and that you can do this in the corner of a coffee shop. That sort of extension of presence way of being with someone is

so important. There's an aspect of hospitality that is asking what you have to share, inviting people into your space, into your home, into the reality of your home, not in a cleaned-up presentation sort of way, but in a real kind of sharing of life way. But you also can extend that sort of hospitable presence in other places as well. So, is this invitation *in* and love of stranger, it's a real sharing of your life, and that can happen in a half-hour conversation with someone and that can happen in a repeated way of inviting someone in. So, this extension of ourselves in hospitality can happen in both, in any setting, if we have that posture and this attitude and this determination that is grounded in what Jesus has extended to us, that we will go about our days and our life that way, in a way that extends that sort of love to the people we encounter, whether for a short time, or a short conversation, or in in a longer term investment sort of way. These aspects of home, hospitality, and healing can be a part of how we live, and they can take very directed forms. I'm mindful, as I said, we're going to have several of these conversations and so, our hope in these is not that you have to be invested in every one of these ministries. Our hope is not to say you have to volunteer at Joshua Station and at all of these other potential partners. That is a *wonderful* way to get plugged in to invest in our city. And so, I would say if you're interested in learning about how to become a partner at Joshua Station, or at some of the other ministries that we'll feature, or in a particular area of need in our city, then do that in a way that does drive towards that long term investment that can actually work towards building relationship with people. It could be one person or two people, but that aspect of building relationship will bring so much more hope and healing to someone than dropping off a check, even though it's been said that your checks are also welcome, but your presence is what will really bring about healing. And so, my goal in these is not to say you have to volunteer at all of these places, but to be aware of the needs of our neighbors, and then to ask what our posture towards the vulnerable people around us and among us is, and how it is that we actually live in a way that exemplifies love of neighbor and brings about hope and healing, and that has this effect in our own lives too. When we build these relationships, we reap the benefit and the fruit and the growth of experiencing those relationships.

So, do you have any specific suggestions, Ben? Just to close out our conversation today through the lens of your work, working with vulnerable people and loving them, getting to know them. And then our conversation today, both the need and then how we can work to address that need, how we can shift our understanding and posture to address that need. What would be some just calls to action or suggestions that you have?

Ben: Well, I would guarantee that for anybody who's listening to this, there are already people in your circle, like your regular rhythms of life, who are lonely, isolated, and maybe financially struggling. So, that's a great place to start is just look around at folks that you go to Church with, folks that you work with, folks that you—if you frequent the same corner store coffee shop—folks that you know and meet there. There are already folks in whatever circles that you're in who are- they're not certain that they have ride-or-die steadfast friends, and you can become, by God's Grace, a ride-or-die steadfast friend to them and help them through the highs and the lows of life. If you look around and in your circles and your rhythms you can't think of a single person who is lonely, isolated, financially struggling, whatever, then I would invite you to come to a Thursday night community dinner at Joshua Station where you can show up meet some of our friends, and I would invite you- most of our volunteers, they show up once a month, and once a month doesn't feel like a huge commitment, but you show up once a month for two years to something, like, how deeply transformed by that circle, and how deeply transforming for the circle your presence can be, right? So, in addition to that, we're—at Joshua Station and Mile High Ministries—we're doing a bunch of deeper engagement on some of these like 'what's the theological foundation for how do you love and care for your poor and vulnerable neighbor?' And so, if you want to think big thoughts with me, I would love to do that. If you want to show up and volunteer, if you want to help decorate a room for a new family that's moving into Joshua Station, you have a vision and a dream for space, and home décor, and design,

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and you want to make a space really welcoming for a new family at Joshua Station, I would love to talk. But I think, really, volunteering with us is great, but I would just again encourage that, 'who's already in your circles that is lonely, isolated, and vulnerable?' and what can you do to create home, healing, hospitality with them and with yourself too?

Autumn: Ben, thanks for joining me today. I'm so glad we got to have this conversation and share this with everyone listening. And if you have questions, comments, suggestions about today's episode, or just a suggestion for what you'd like to hear us talk about sometime on the podcast in the future, send all those things anytime to podcast@fellowshipdenver.org. Thanks for joining us on the vision for Life podcast. Thanks to Adam Anglin for our theme music, and to our producer, Jesse Cowan.

**Ben Sooy later clarified Joshua Station can house closer to 80 families.*