

Dear W.C.,

I am homeless and have two young children. At this time, we are staying at my friend's apartment, but we can only remain here for a short time. Her apartment complex has strict occupancy rules, and if we are still here after the two-week grace period, she will be evicted too.

I lost my job three months ago when my employer downsized the business. Since my youngest child was born prematurely last year, I had missed a lot of work because of doctor appointments, illnesses and therapies. I tried my best to keep everything together, but after losing my paycheck, I quickly fell behind on my bills. I could no longer afford rent, and we lost our apartment.

I have been applying for jobs every day and recently interviewed for one that I am hopeful about. My car needs repairs, and I have almost no gas left. My greatest fear is that if I cannot find somewhere for my children and me to stay, we will have no choice but to live in our car. I have applied for housing assistance, but nothing has become available yet. Every day I worry about what will happen to my children if I cannot find help soon.

Thank you for listening.

Dear Readers,

This mother's circumstances were all too familiar. She did not lose her job because she was irresponsible or unwilling to work. Her employer was forced to reduce staff, and she happened to be one of the employees who may have been easier to let go due to the amount of time she had been forced to take off over the past year. She had used all her available sick days and then some, caring for her premature baby and keeping up with countless medical appointments.

As we talked, I asked more about the apartment where she and her children were staying. She admitted the small apartment was overcrowded. Her friend had opened her door simply because she could not bear to see two young children sleeping in a car. It was an act of compassion, but one that placed her own housing at risk. The landlord had already issued a final warning. If the mother and her children did not leave, the friend would receive an eviction notice herself. Instead of one homeless family, there could be two.

Affordable housing continues to disappear while the cost of nearly everything else continues to rise. Families who were once barely getting by are now finding themselves one

unexpected expense away from losing everything. A job loss, illness, vehicle breakdown, or medical emergency can quickly create a financial crisis that spirals beyond their control.

I was very concerned as the children were still very young and depended entirely on their mother to provide safety and stability. The thought of them spending nights inside a vehicle was heartbreaking as I have visited families that were homeless, living in cars before. The mother also explained that she had been offered another employment opportunity, but starting a new job becomes nearly impossible when you have no permanent address, nowhere to shower, no reliable transportation, and no place for your children to sleep each night. Homelessness creates obstacles that make escaping poverty even more difficult.

We talked about every possible option. I asked whether there were relatives or other friends who might be able to help, but there were none. The father of the children had disappeared months ago when she had become pregnant with her second child. She then mentioned something she and her friend had often talked about over the past year. They dreamed of one day sharing a larger apartment or small home together. Individually, neither woman could afford the cost of housing. Together, however, their combined income could make stable housing possible.

The more we discussed the idea, the more it became clear that this was not simply a temporary solution. It could provide long-term stability for both women and the children.

While we worked toward that goal, we first addressed the immediate crisis. We supplied gift certificates for groceries, diapers, baby wipes, and other necessities she had been struggling to provide. We also provided gas gift cards. To prevent her friend from losing her apartment before permanent housing could be arranged, we paid for a motel room where the mother and her children could stay safely.

Over the next month, we continued working closely with this single mother. We ensured she followed through with obtaining employment and arranged for repairs so her vehicle was once again safe and dependable.

When suitable housing became available, we provided the security deposit along with two months' rent on a three-bedroom apartment large enough for both women and the children. We also purchased new beds so everyone would have a comfortable place to sleep, along with additional gift cards for food, household necessities and clothing to help them settle into their new apartment.

Soon afterward, her friend moved in as well. The furniture and household belongings she already owned helped transform the apartment into a warm and welcoming home instead of

just another empty rental. The friend also offers to watch the children when the mother is occasionally offered the option to work overtime, helping their budget as well. Two struggling women found not only affordable housing, but also the encouragement and support they needed to build a better future together. Most importantly, the children now have a safe place to call home.

Sometimes solving a housing crisis takes a little longer and requires looking beyond the immediate emergency. Instead of simply helping one family survive another month, we searched for a solution that would provide lasting stability. That is what we were able to achieve for these two women and children thanks to you.

Thank you for making The Time Is Now to Help possible and for continuing to care and share with our fellow Americans who have fallen on difficult times. Your compassion provides much more than financial assistance. It provides hope, stability, and the opportunity for families to rebuild their lives. Because of you, lives are changed, children remain safely housed, and brighter futures become possible.

Health & Happiness, Love & God Bless Everyone, Sal

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