

Discussion Guide for

Under the Overpass

A Journey of Faith on the Streets of America

By Mike Yankoski

Reader,

Thank you for caring enough about the message of *Under the Overpass* to want to think and talk about it. May the Lord bless your questions, doubts, curiosities, and courage for great things in your future! There's probably no genius in the questions that follow, so use them, change them, ignore them...just do your best to tangle authentically with the issues. They matter—a lot—for every committed follower of Jesus.

Grace and peace to you in His matchless name,

Mike

Twenty Minutes Past the World

1. Do you feel like there might be a disconnect between what you say you believe and how you live your life?
2. Is the Lord calling you to journey with Him? What is something in your life that is keeping you from answering His call?
3. Do you believe that God is big enough and caring enough to catch you if you were to walk off the edge of what you know into the unknown? What is an example of a time when the Lord held you as you stepped out in faith?
4. Are you more concerned about what other people think of you than what the Lord is calling you to do? What are some ways this could change?
5. Did the scenes of the fight in Golden Gate Park seem believable to you? Talk about your experiences around street culture in urban areas.
6. What were your thoughts and feelings as you read about Mike and Sam's decision to move out of their comfortable lives and follow Christ into homelessness?
7. What did Mike and Sam do to provide a safety net for the over-the-edge idea? Anything you would have done differently?

Denver

1. Talk about a time when you were *way* outside your comfort zone?
What was it like? Why was it hard? What did you feel like after you made it through? Learn anything?
2. Did any of your assumptions about alcoholics and addicts change after you read about Mike's experience in the Denver Rescue Mission?
What might the Lord teach you about Himself, about yourself, about others if you had been in the same situation?
3. Do Christians in Denver have any part to play in helping Peter stay clean after his graduation?
4. Read the following excerpt (from p. 45) and talk about it:

If we are the body of Christ—and Christ came not for the healthy but the sick—we need to be fully present in the places where people are most broken. And it has to be more than just a financial presence. That helps, of course. But too often money is insulation—it conveniently keeps us from ever having to come face-to-face with a man or woman whose life is in tatters.

5. What is a place near your home that has a lot of broken, lonely, outcast people? Does your church or your youth group have a presence there?
What would it look like to be involved there?

Washington, D.C.

1. What would have gone through your head if you had been standing on the sidewalk in Washington, D.C. realizing that you were homeless for the next twenty-eight days in a city you didn't know? What would strike you as priorities for the next few hours?
2. What emotions does the small boy in the section, "Like a Child" evoke? What would you ask/tell the boy if you could speak to him face to face?
3. How about the con man—how does he make you feel?
4. Talk about this little scene in the section, "Most Important Meal of the Day":

The priest moved quietly around the circle, leaning down to each person. "This is the body of Christ, which was broken for you," she said, looking each in the eye. Then she came around again with the cup. "This is the blood of Christ, which was shed for you." The white of her cloak shone brilliantly against our filth.

5. Does the prayer "Thy Will Be Done" seem genuine when you pray it? What about ourselves do you think we have to consider as we pray this prayer?
6. Are there people in your life that you perhaps think are merely "scenery." Does the fact that they are made in God's image change this?

Portland

1. What is your definition of a typical Christian? Does Sugar Man—addict, dealer, Christian—affect your thinking?
2. Have you ever had a conversation with someone about your faith in Christ because of the life that you were living? What does St. Francis of Assisi's comment, "Preach the Gospel always. If necessary use words" mean to you?
3. Have you ever felt like your dignity had been stripped from you? What did it feel like? How did you get it back? What are some ways we help others feel that they have been treated with dignity?
4. Imagine... You—sparkling clean and in your J. Crew clothes—rush into an establishment and ask to use the bathroom. You—dirty, smelly and ragged—rush into an establishment and ask to use the bathroom. What's the difference? What happens next in each situation? Why?
5. When was the last time that you were at odds with someone close to you? How was it resolved? How should Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 10:17 that "we who are many are one body" affect us in the midst of our misunderstandings and frustrations with others?

San Francisco

1. Why do you think we as humans so dislike coming to the end of ourselves? What benefit do you think might come from having your own resources and abilities proven less sufficient than you had thought?
2. What would it feel like to have your hopes for a safe place to sleep tonight wrenched from you?
3. Have some places or cities ever struck you as unusually spiritually dark and oppressive? Do you think the feeling is just that, or is there a reality at work as well?
4. What is Jesus' response to the people who seem to suffer from mental challenges similar to Henry?
5. Talk about your reaction to Mike's statement:

“God answered our prayers for provision, but we still had to ask these guys for it. We still had to ‘pick up the manna.’”

6. Think about the difference between the two churches in Berkeley. Is one more “Christian” than the other? What are some ways that you can have practical impact for Christ in the lives of people God has placed in your life?

Phoenix

1. If we don't go to church, but instead *are* the church, how does that affect what you think the church should do?
2. What is a time in your life when you missed the opportunity to reach out to someone? How long did it take you to realize it? Could you remedy the situation? What do you think is a way to reach out to people more?
3. What kinds of people in your community are put off by big churches with first-rate facilities, technology and programs? Do you think cultural exclusion is at work, intentionally or otherwise?
4. What did you think of Mr. White Polo Shirt's apology? Why are apologies often so powerful...and so hard to give?
5. Talk about Mike's practical guidelines for giving—or not giving—to panhandlers in the section "On Begging." Do you agree with him? Give your reasons.
6. Are there homeless men or women that you see consistently begging during your weekly routine? Is there a restaurant or a coffee shop close by that would allow you to purchase gift certificates?

San Diego

1. Talk about Bob's longing for home in the section "Shuffling Home."
When have you felt the most homesick? What was it like?
2. What is something that you've longed for in your life? How does longing for something affect how we think of our faith in Christ?
3. In the section "Old Yellers," Mike writes: "Yes, God is alive and well on the streets of America, but so is Satan." Do you agree with him?
What evidences do you see for both sides of that statement in your school or community?
4. What is the most difficult transition that you've ever gone through.
What things about the transition did you find helpful.
5. How do you think of sin in your life? Does it affect you, frustrate you, break you as much as Doug's did? Do you pray for forgiveness and deliverance without being willing to reach out and take it as it is offered?

Coming Back to Normal

1. What is a change that you would like to see in your journey with God?
2. “Wanting More (and More)”—What are the areas of personal consumption (clothes, toys, cars, or other things) that you think may need to change the most if you want to live pleasing to Christ? For people who don’t have much in the way of things, are there other kinds of greed or self-centeredness that they should watch for?
3. “In a very real sense, the problem of homelessness is overwhelming,” Mike writes. What other challenges do we face in our world that seem just too big to deal with? Pick one “overwhelming” challenge and talk about how Christ would have dealt with it. Then try to imagine ways that you, or your faith community, could begin to take steps to live responsibly and courageously for Christ with that challenge in mind.
4. Is God calling you out to journey with Him into a new and different place, one that requires you to fall down before Him and depend completely on Him?
5. Will you go?

[For more life application, check out *My 30 Days Under the Overpass*.]