

*“The Lord provided a deliverer for Israel, and they escaped from the power of Aram. So the Israelites lived in their own homes as they had before” (2 Kings 13:5 NIV)*

This verse describes a time when Jehoahaz was king of Israel. He had not been faithful to the Lord, so God allowed the king of Aram to oppress Israel. Verse four notes that Jehoahaz “sought the Lord’s favor and the Lord listened to him, for [the Lord] saw how severely the king of Aram was oppressing Israel.”

“My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.”

- Isaiah 32:18 NIV

An entire nation (communities, neighborhoods, people) experienced circumstances which left people without “their own homes.” The Lord “provided a deliverer” to free them from their situations and they became housed again. They reached their destination: home. Regardless of other things that happened (as recorded later in this passage), even to the Lord ... *housing matters!*

Various suggestions have been made by scholars for the identity of this “deliverer.” Still, the passage leaves that part a mystery.

When it comes to people in our community, our neighbors, who are without homes ... the 400 or so people each night who are temporarily sheltered, the other 30-40 living out in the elements, or the countless families finding expensive “shelter” in run-down motels or staying with friends or family ... WHO will be their deliverer? Who will get to know them – their situations, their needs, their personalities, their lives? WHO will help them to be able to “live in their own homes as they had before”?

The Lord speaks to each of us in 1 John 3:16, 18: *“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers ... let us not love with words or tongue, but with action and in truth.”*

“Edith is a mother of six who lives in a government housing project and buys groceries with food stamps. I’ve played with Edith’s children in the park, shared meals and phone calls with her and her family, and introduced her to mature Christians outside the community who are committed to Edith in the form of friendship and a weekly Bible study in her home. Because of our willingness to reconcile our lives with Edith and to share our resources with her by relocating to her neighborhood, Edith has become a disciple of Christ. She has been baptized at her local church, regularly shares the gospel with her sister, mother, and neighbors, and now leads family prayer times every night with her children. She is now asking God to show her how she, too, can fulfill the Great Commission in her community.”

- Jo Kadlecek

Congregations in this city/county are comprised of believers who are often seeking to serve the Lord through serving others, ministering to both the tangible and eternal needs. Oftentimes, members of the faith community are already employees of this area’s social service organizations and parachurch ministries. The ministry of the Church can be linked with the services in the community in order to maximize resources of time, talent, and treasure toward the common goal of helping others in need.

Through compassionately connecting with others in need, as well as others in the community already serving those in need, believers can open doors for their church families to carry out “good deeds that create good will that forms the platform for sharing the good news” (Rick Rusaw & Eric Swanson, *The Externally-Focused Church*).

