

We need to  
*Talk*  
about...

# THE QUARTET OF THE VULNERABLE

Reimagining Outreach to Society's  
Most Defenseless People



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Men in crisply ironed suits ponder their wristwatches to avoid eye contact, millennials feverishly texting do not even notice and mothers pull their little-ones closer as they pass—the diversity of his begrudging audience.

They sneer. They apologize. They grow frightened. They pretend not to see.

He hears the click-clack of high-heeled shoes. He looks painfully into the woman's polished countenance.

She glances down at the man and takes in the blistered face and unwashed clothing. She anxiously grabs at the golden cross hanging from her neck, twisting the chain between her painted nails.

Her naive eyes rotate to the ground.

He exhales heavily and listens to her click-clack away down the pavement.

It is that awkward, pressing moment when sitting at our feet, standing outside our car window or gazing at us through somber photos are society's most marginalized. We walk away.

Drowning somewhere between *'The Bible tells us to give to anyone who asks', 'Do not give them money or they will spend it on drugs'* and *'I'm too busy and far away to help them'* is the church.

In his book, "Justice," Nicholas

Wolterstorff coined the term "The Quartet of the Vulnerable" to describe society's four most defenseless people — the widow, the orphan, the sojourner and the poor.

Like a helpless man on the pavement, the Quartet can be found all around us both in the United States and far across the globe. The Quartet has grown through the years as the suffering of humanity has evolved into an even more diverse evil.

Since Adam Goodwin, junior biomedical engineering major at California Baptist University, began serving the homeless community of Riverside two years ago, he says there is never a chance to fully experience how love and relationships can change hearts when someone is only committed to a once-a-week idea of service.

Goodwin says he has now adopted a lifestyle of a "reckless yes," reaching further than a one-time connection. When asked to help anyone, he has committed to saying 'yes' and doing all that he can — even if it is not always enjoyable.

"It is not glamorous," Goodwin says. "(But) some of the most beautiful and valuable things I am going to come away (with) from my experience at CBU is through saying 'yes' to those difficult, non-glamorous things."

Through sitting on the cold, grimy ground in downtown Riverside and dipping into the relationships with his friends in the homeless community, Goodwin has been challenged in his conversation with the Quartet as he discovers the difficulty of

finding what he has in common with them. Goodwin says that is when he presses on, even if it takes months to get past that stage of the conversation.

Kaycee Cannon, senior international health major and president of the International Justice Mission at CBU, agrees that serving the Quartet can and should be difficult in order to make a difference.

"When you are actually looking to seek justice locally you tend to get involved with people's lives and that can get really, really messy," Cannon says.

A messy lifestyle of service is something with which Cannon is not unfamiliar. Cannon's father and mother have been foster parents for the majority of her life. Sharing her home and family with foster children was a sacrifice that Cannon says was difficult to make during her childhood and, at times, left her with bitter thoughts.

As she grew older, Cannon says the "messy" part of serving foster children helped her understand the reasoning better. It is not messy because of the logistics, it is messy because the foster family must walk with them through their past, present and future struggles.

"Every individual that comes through our doors needs love so complete that we are willing to sacrifice for them instead of ostracizing them because of what they have been through," Cannon says.

Brian Zunigha, director of Discipleship Ministries at CBU, says serving the Quartet and attempting to diagnose the Quartet's

problems is the wrong approach.

"(Saying), 'I know how to fix all your problems. I know what your problems are. I know the heart issue but I have never talked to you,' — that's a problem," Zunigha says.

In the summer of 2015, Zunigha and his family adopted two boys from Ethiopia and are living the burden-bearing, relationship-building lifestyle with their sons. It is not always easy, but it was a decision he says was not made out of guilt, but out of a desire to utilize the space they had in their lives for these little ones.

A mentality of problem-solving is a societal approach that some believe is hindering biblical outreach. Dr. Amy Stumpf, professor of society and religion, says this mentality must shift into a lifestyle of helping to bear the burdens of those around us.

Further than the attitudinal and societal dilemmas that Stumpf says are present, she also says the level of generosity expressed by those who claim to follow Jesus is staggering in relation to the mercy displayed by the work they believe Jesus did on the cross.

"What is surprising to me is not that non-Christians can be kind. What surprises me is that someone who has understood and experienced the generosity of God would ever be stingy — that is what I do not understand — with their time, money, love and affection and priorities. How could that be?" Stumpf says.

Pondering the Syrian refugee crisis

in Europe and a recent Samaritan's Purse video released from its work in Lesbos, an island off the coast of Turkey, Cannon says she has felt pummeled by the situation's details and by the lack of reactions of her Christian, non-Christian, politically left- and right-leaning acquaintances.

"It doesn't matter if your political views fall over here," Cannon says, gesturing her hands to the right and to the left. "You are telling them that you don't care and you are telling them that you matter more than they matter."

IJM focuses on prayer as the top resource in serving the Quartet — specifically for combating worldwide human-trafficking. Cannon says prayer is one of the main protocols for the CBU club in training its members to work both in the U.S. and overseas.

In Matthew Chapter 9, gazing at the harassed crowds that surrounded his ministry, Jesus commands his disciples to pray that God would provide workers for his kingdom. In Chapter 10, the disciples are sent out to do that very work.

"You see action following prayer," Zunigha says. "I would hope that the people who are burdened with this are deeply involved in prayer and out of that, you see action. There is a sovereign God who loves people more than (we) could ever love them."

This God who loves his creation illustrates his incomparable affection for them throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament he chooses Israel — at the time, a nation thought of as scum — to be set apart for his glory.

Stumpf says God shows that he is

different than the gods of other nations by the way he continues to grant mercy to Israel and by the high moral standards he held for them. These standards included the specific, practical ways they served the widow, the orphan, the sojourner and the poor. In doing so, they glorified God.

"Glory means to enhance his reputation," Stumpf says. "So when we are dealing with the poor, the widows, the orphans, the prisoners — how do I enhance God's reputation for the world? And they would say, 'What kind of god is that?'"

While Zunigha says he has seen growth in the compassion that the Generation Y has for the Quartet, he also says there are deeper questions that need to be considered when deciding how to help the Quartet without harming them further.

"What can I do in my community?" Zunigha challenges. "What can I do globally to try to address some of these issues systemically? How can I invest time and resources into that instead of how can I throw change out the window at the next exit?"

"You can do both, but know that to really help people it's going to take more than just your spare change."

As the broken, bleeding and helpless man lying on the pavement watches the young woman walk away, his heart is heavy with rejection. Those who walk the streets have failed him once again, but one man is coming who will heal him, set him on his feet and command him to live.

"And who is my neighbor?"

This is what a lawyer questioned of Jesus in Luke Chapter 10. Jesus led his answer through a story like this one — the good Samaritan — a story of hopelessness, pain and restoration. It is a story that verified the worth of each individual — no matter his or her position or identification — as given by the Son of Man himself. ♦

## How CBU Serves the Quartet

### Office of Spiritual Life (OSL)

Contact:  
951-343-5015

### Mobilization

Serve across the nation and around the world. Applications are located at [calbaptist.edu/go](http://calbaptist.edu/go) and are due Oct. 10 every year.

### Operation Christmas Child

Each November provides an opportunity to pack a shoebox filled with toys, hygiene products, candy and the gospel to orphaned or impoverished children around the world.

### Compassion Ministries

#### Children and Family Outreach Urban Excursion

Serve in local cities during weekend service projects. Applications are available at the beginning of each semester in OSL.

\*Contact OSL for more information on other opportunities not regularly scheduled, such as volunteering to help women at Riverside Life Services.

### Homeless Ministry Connections

Contact:  
Amy Nugent  
[AmyElizabethNugent@gmail.com](mailto:AmyElizabethNugent@gmail.com)

Feed, wash feet, gift shoes and pray for the homeless community of Riverside through the GUMBO Program, Hot Meals Program, Sole Exchange and Prayer Night.

### Colleges and Schools at CBU

Check with your specific college to find service opportunities that will allow you to use your degree to serve the Quartet. Colleges such as the Gordon and Jill Bourns College of Engineering offer various outlets of service related to engineering. If your specific college or school does not offer any opportunities, speak with them about ways you can use your degree to serve.

### International Justice Mission

Contact:  
Kaycee Cannon  
[KayceeLouise.Cannon@calbaptist.edu](mailto:KayceeLouise.Cannon@calbaptist.edu)

Gain knowledge about modern slavery and be inspired to serve no matter where you are located around the globe.

