What does home mean to you?
WHAT COMES TO MIND when you hear the word “Home”? For me, it is family. I don’t know where I’d be without the support and love of my family.

For others I’ve spoken with, it’s things like security, forever, food and traditions just to name a few. The point is, we all think of something when we think of home.

Sadly, many of the men, women and children that come to our shelters have rapidly fading memories of what home was like. Some can’t even imagine having a home again. And with the holidays just around the corner, the pain of homelessness is only made worse.

The very first institution that God created all the way back in the Garden of Eden was not the schools, the government or even the Church. The first institution was the family. That need for nurturing and support is just as vital today as it was then.

This is why stories are so important to us. When we listen to someone’s story, we always listen with restoration in mind. First and foremost, we want every person to be restored to God through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Next, we want them to be restored to the man or woman God created them to be. Then, if possible, we always encourage reconciliation to family and friends. Sometimes that begins with breaking off old, destructive relationships and behaviors. It often times involves letters and painful phone calls. But always, it takes time.

We have seen families and friends restored as a result of God’s work in the lives of many we have served. Not always, but enough of the time to believe it is possible. One of the most beautiful sights in the world to me is to see a graduate of our New Beginnings Recovery Program wave to and give thanks for their family seated in the audience ... and then the hugs and tears after the ceremony. Priceless!

Whatever you think of when you hear the word “Home”, it doesn’t change the fact that we all need one. For the homeless men, women and children we serve every day, it is my prayer that they can find their home.

Every Story Matters,

Steve Sparks
CEO
“EVENTUALLY THE ADDICTION would come back to haunt me,” Armando says as he describes the vicious cycle of his methamphetamine addiction.

During his teenage years he started dabbling in drugs and regularly consumed alcohol. It wasn’t until his later years in high school that he started to use meth. From the first time he used meth, he quickly became addicted to it. “It was very powerful. It took the place of the other drugs I was using.”

In his 20s and 30s, he went from having a nice job and home to unemployment and evictions. Armando, his wife, and daughter would move in with his mother until he could get back on his feet. He’d always reach a place of complacency, but his addiction would return to haunt him and bring him back to the point where his addiction caused him to neglect his responsibilities.

This cycle led to him burning all his bridges by his late 30s. No one wanted him around and he was unable to find employment. Left with limited choices, Armando and his family packed up and moved to Wichita Falls in 2009 to temporarily live with his sister-in-law. She agreed to help them get back on their feet as long as he found a job and kept his sobriety.

Armando managed to get two jobs and an apartment for his family. He kept the jobs for nearly two years and was sober most of the time, but the complacency came back. “Being an addict leads you to be drawn to people who can help you get drugs. That’s what happened when I came here. It started out as a weekend thing, but before I knew it, I was doing it every day.”

Eventually, his wife wanted a better life for herself and the children. They divorced and Armando’s been living on his own since 2013.

For several years he drifted from place to place. Armando was a client at Faith Mission twice before entering the New Beginnings for men program. One morning he was listening to Bob, Men’s Program Director, preach in the chapel. Even though he found the program to be intimidating and heard it was difficult, something prompted him to speak with Bob later that day.

Armando walked into Bob’s office and 30 minutes later he came out with a Steppin’ Up t-shirt. This shirt signifies that someone is in the probationary period of the New Beginnings program.

Armando describes the program as the best thing that ever happened to him. “I needed the structure and the daily Bible studies. I hadn’t been able to say I’ve been completely sober for over a year, since I was in my 20s. The program gave me the tools to stay sober.”

With a clear mind and sobriety, he is able to support his youngest daughter more and be a more involved father. Now he’s looking forward to the rest of his life.

Since joining the program, he surrounds himself with like-minded Christians who hold him accountable and encourage him to stay sober. “I’ve never had friends that could have a good time without doing drugs,” he describes his new community. He’s also repaired all of his damaged relationships due to his addiction. He gives all the glory to God.

Armando graduated from the New Beginnings Addiction Recovery Program in September 2019. He would like to thank the staff at the shelters, the Cowboy Church of Wichita Falls, and the community for helping him on his journey to sobriety. He asks that you please pray for his mother who was recently diagnosed with cancer for the eighth time.
AT THE AGE OF 16 Jackie ran away from home. She was raised by two raging alcoholics and as the oldest of her siblings, she assumed most of the motherly duties after her parents divorced when she was 12 years old.

While living on the streets Jackie met a guy who later became her first husband. After a couple of years married, they welcomed their first child. “I truly started to believe in God because of the love I had for my child. It was so overwhelming.” Unfortunately, their marriage did not work out. Shortly after they had a second child, they split up and Jackie and her children moved to Oklahoma.

A downward spiral led Jackie to meet a man that would be the father of her third child. Due to his drug addiction, it did not work out and after their child was 18-months old, he disappeared from their lives.

 Shortly after the falling out, she met a man who became her second husband. At first, he came across kind and attentive. After a couple years into their relationship, Jackie learned that he was mentally abusive. He pounded the idea that Jackie was a useless person and that there was no hope for her. Her children from her first marriage left to go live with their father after some time.

Jackie started drinking alcohol to cope with the pain from her life. Jackie promised herself she would not be like her parents and abuse alcohol, but during this difficult time in her life, it was something familiar that brought her comfort.

On November 30, 2018, Jackie got on her hands and knees and prayed to God.

“I am ready for you to take me home or show me what I’m supposed to do with my life because I can’t figure it out.” At that point, she was sober for three days until she got the worst muscle spasm of her life. Nothing she tried seemed to ease her pain. Her doctor recently prescribed her new medications, and, on that night, she decided to drink three beers to ease her pain. Jackie has no recollection of what transpired from 5 pm that night to 6:30 am the next morning.

Jackie woke up in a jail cell in a see-through paper gown. She was told she was on suicide watch. She went to jail on a Friday night and on Monday she saw a judge. She was shocked when the judge told her what happened. “It was something I would never do in my right mind.”

It was about 60 degrees inside and the only things in her cell were a concrete bench, a toilet and a sink. She remained in the jail cell and stayed in prayer for five days. When her birthday came around, she prayed to God to let her out of suicide watch and into the general population. A couple hours later, a guard came in and let her out two days early. Jackie received an orange jumpsuit and was taken to A-block.

While she was in the general population, the cells opened at 4 am. She spent her mornings from 4 am to 6 am reading her Bible. Those two hours in the morning became Jackie’s private time in the Word.

Jackie faced spending ten years in jail for her crime. She did not know rehab was an option, but when her lawyer brought up going to Faith Refuge, she took the opportunity. After 61 days spent in jail, Jackie came to Faith Refuge to join the New Beginnings for women addiction recovery program.

For over twenty years, her identity was being a single mother. Her identity was always found in other people. At this point in her life, she did not know who she was.

“I’ve been at Faith Refuge for only six months and for the first time in my life, I’m excited for my future. This is the first time I’ve had a real relationship with God. I’ve grown closer to him, just like I prayed for.”

The classes in the program taught Jackie about the Word and how much Jesus loves us all. “Only because of God’s grace and mercy am I here to have a future and not feel hopeless or worthless for the first time in my life. I know God has a purpose for me being on this earth. I know he has a plan for my life that is greater than anything I’ve ever dreamed of,” says Jackie. “I spent 40 years in the wilderness, and I’ll spend the next 40 in the Promised Land.”