

#3 PROTECT

“WELCOME, WE HAVE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.”

People have fought incredible odds to wind up here.

Here, at a place on 26th and Capitol where broken men, women and children come to grow and flourish. To move beyond survival mode to thriving.

Have you ever been released from jail in the middle of the night? More like the middle of the morning? Try 2:00 am when nothing is open and all you have in your pocket is a \$15 check you can't cash until 9:00 am when the bank opens. Now add to that, it is March in Wisconsin so it is still REAL cold in the middle of the night. You have no choice but to roam the streets until places begin to open back up.

Flashback. James at a young age was abandoned. Not only physically but mentally and emotionally too. His mother didn't keep him safe from the boyfriend who not only molested him continually, but made his siblings perform sexual acts for his pleasure. Emotionally he was expected to cope, heal and function on his own. He quickly learned what it meant to survive by any means necessary. He turned to gangs, drugs, and women. All left him feeling less than and empty. Unfortunately, this part of people's story we often become numb to. It could be because we can't fathom these details and we would rather not attempt to stomach them. Or unfortunately, we have become familiar with the tragedies that people experience through their growing up. Many of us at one point or the other have needed to be protected from a toxic environment, behavior or circumstance.

James roamed the streets of Racine until the next morning when he cashed his check so that he had money to take a bus to Milwaukee.

James invited me into that experience by sharing the following. I didn't know Milwaukee at all - I told the bus driver that I needed to get to the corner of 27th and Capitol. He told me he would get me there. I had the clothes on my back and a couple of personal items with me. I made it to the northside of Milwaukee. I got off the bus and started walking in the direction I thought made the most sense. I see a building that says "Hope Street" and think hmm, maybe they can help me get to Hope House or at least help me call them - I have 5 minutes before I am supposed to show up. He buzzed the door, a friendly voice says "how can I help you?" and James responds, My name is James and I am looking for Hope House.

Hannah responds, "Welcome, we have been expecting you."

Those few words for James were a lifeline. Not just in a physical sense, but an emotional one. He was expected somewhere. Someone was looking forward and anticipating his arrival.

Tears welled up in both of our eyes as James shared his road to Hope Street. I could go on and share how he has been transformed in his time here. How he lights up any room he is in with his contagious smile, passion for life and genuine concern for others. But the thing that James has reminded me, is all the ways we crave to be protected.

Protection is not just against elements, it includes an invitation into something good. Our Father protects us from the condemnation our sin deserves by inviting us into His family. At Hope Street we too get to invite people into an environment that protects the mind, body and soul.

So we protect from the lies we tell ourselves, the physical elements that thwart our safety, and the stereotypes others have labeled us with. We do this, so that together we can remember that someone somewhere has been expecting us, waiting to welcome us home.

At Hope Street we protect from the outside toxic elements because we know our lives depend on it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



James benefited from physical protection but also emotional - what areas in your own life do you see a need for protection in?



In the video, you see members of our community share the different ways we need to be protected - what stood out most to you? Where do you struggle?

NEXT STEP(S)

Our hope with producing this mini documentary series is that conversations would be sparked; but also that people would feel confident as they take next steps to engage. That people would have an opportunity to hear about our small part in seeing our city flourish and be encouraged to explore what their part is. The following are questions and practical next steps as you discover what it means to cultivate a nurturing community; a Greenhouse for People in your own context.



LIKE" US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: @hopestreetministry

Instagram: @greenhouseforpeople // @ShechematHopeStreet

Twitter: @HopeStreet_GFP

YouTube: Hope Street Ministry



VOLUNTEER

Teach a class, create a resume, plan an event. Check out more opportunities at www.HopeStreetMinistry.org/volunteer or contact brooke@HopeStreetMinistry.org

