



STUDY GUIDE

Introduction

DVD: \$24.95
VHS: \$19.95

Includes bonus materials and interviews.

In the U.S., the issue of affordable housing is not so much a matter of people living in shacks as it is the issue of overcrowding, affordability and how far people have to drive to find housing. It's inner cities that are transformed by gentrification, but too expensive for those who've lived there for generations. It's old strip malls increasingly abandoned and replaced by \$800,000 condos and upscale shops. Those who work with the most disenfranchised in our communities know the critical importance of children having a safe and decent place to live in terms of their education, health, feelings of stability, and success in life.

Building on Faith explores these issues and how people of faith are already some of the prime movers to bring about change, not only on an individual level but at a public policy level to create more affordable housing. Much more needs to be done.

Preparation

Building on Faith is 52-minutes long. The DVD includes additional content. You may choose to show the program in its entirety and then discuss or to show it in segments during several sessions. Always preview the sections you plan to use before showing. Use the guide for discussion with small groups, religious education classes, workshops, conferences or support groups. Choose the questions that work best for your group.

PART 1 Introduction to the Problem

1. Reflect on the house you grew up in (or where you spent the most years). In retrospect, do you think it contributed to your feelings about yourself?
2. Have you ever judged someone (or their wealth) on the appearance of their home?
3. On which end of the housing market do you find yourself? Do you ever envy those with better housing, or do you ever feel guilty about the housing you have?
4. What difference does it mean for children to live in stable housing with enough space to live comfortably?



5. Yolanda and Carol tell their stories in this section. What stands out to you about their situations? Did anything surprise you?
6. What do you understand about why the market (private industry) can't solve this problem on its own?

PART 2 **Exploring the** **Issues**

1. Where does the American dream come from? Is it a valid dream for a person of faith?
2. Many countries, Canada for instance, offer no tax break for home mortgage interest. If you itemize your mortgage interest on your tax return, do you ever think of it as a subsidy on your housing, as Jim Dickerson of Manna referred to it? Why or why not?
3. Why is it better to look at improving a whole community rather than just individual homes? Why does Ellen think that the neighborhood in which a person lives is so important?
4. How do people graduate out of homelessness and poverty?
5. How did the problem of inadequate housing change from being one that affects primarily those with very low incomes, to affecting most of the middle class?
6. Brenda Girton-Mitchell says solving the housing problem is "not a lack of capacity, but a lack of will." Do you agree? Why or why not? How can faith groups increase concern and a desire to work at the housing issue?
7. How is the Muslim credo to look out for "40 neighbors" similar to the Christian teaching to "love your neighbor as yourself," and to the teaching of Judaism "not to harden your hearts to the needy"? How can you work towards these goals?
8. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans coordinates volunteers and promotion for Habitat for Humanity across the whole denomination (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America). How can your group maximize its volunteer labor efforts? Why does this increase momentum, volunteers and interest?

PART 3 **Groups Working** **at Solutions**

1. Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church's ministry with the homeless is many faceted, only a small portion of which appears in the documentary. They have a food pantry, clothes closet, job postings and transportation assistance, Internet access, a winter-only shelter to keep people from freezing. Are there any ideas that would work for your own church?



2. Why is it important to address housing needs on both local and national levels?
3. Bob Edgar says, “What we need is the government’s investment in caring for the poor, the private sector’s investment in caring for the poor, coupled with the church’s aggressive action related to the poor.” What is your response to this statement?
4. Mennonite Disaster Service is quickly on the scene after a disaster, but long-term focuses its efforts on meeting unmet needs related to housing after disasters. How could you use this idea in concentrating your groups’ ministry or activity?
5. Each Habitat family who participates in building their home is helping to change the landscape of affordable housing. They not only help themselves, they help others. How can you provide ministries or outreach that taps the time and talents of “people helped” so that they in turn are helping others?
6. Jerome Lawrence talked about how getting a Habitat home was the impetus for his own personal growth. Discuss the varied benefits of this.
7. Habitat for Humanity International is a well-known organization. How many in your group have helped in any aspect of a Habitat build? Did you learn anything new about the organization’s endeavors in this documentary?

PART 4

Where To From Here?

1. David Smith says, “Affordable housing ... comes into being only as a result of conscious, political choice and wise government policy and program development.” What does this mean in practical terms?
2. How can communities affect the building of affordable housing?
3. What are your experiences with housing? Is there anyone in the group who has been homeless? Lived in substandard housing? If they are willing, ask them to tell their story.
4. Do you usually think of full-time blue-collar workers as being homeless? Have you ever figured out how you would cope if your spouse and his or her income suddenly disappeared?
5. What does Nicolas Retsinas mean by “merit good”? How does an improved community improve life for everyone?
6. What zoning issues affecting affordable housing are on a front burner in your community? Is there anything you can do?
7. What kinds of policies can make home ownership more possible for low-income people?



8. Should people of faith support revitalizing old, run-down property for themselves? Why or why not? How does this contribute to more problems?

Wrap Up

1. Do you think substandard housing in the U.S. can be eliminated? Why or why not?
2. How is scaling down your housing expectations a justice and faith issue?
3. How is your faith community active in this area? Where and how could you do more? What do you feel called to do?

Bonus Content

The bonus content on this DVD provides more in-depth commentary on affordable housing issues. These include:

1. Personal stories of experts related to housing
2. Affordable housing
3. Churches working on housing issues
4. Environmental and Native American issues

Organizations mentioned in the documentary:

Habitat for Humanity: www.habitat.org
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Los Angeles: www.habitatla.org/
Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies: www.jchs.harvard.edu
Housing Assistance Council: www.ruralhome.org
Manna, Inc. of Washington, DC: www.mannadc.org/
Mennonite Disaster Service: www.mds.mennonite.net
National Council of Churches: www.ncccusa.org
National Low Income Housing Coalition: www.nlihc.org
National Association of Realtors: www.realtor.org
Recap Advisors: www.recapadvisors.com
Sojourners/Call to Renewal: www.sojo.net
Thrivent Financial for Lutherans: www.thrivent.com
Thrivent Builds Homes with Habitat for Humanity: www.thriventbuilds.com

This study guide produced by:

Mennonite Media

A division of Mennonite Mission Network
1251 Virginia Ave. | Harrisonburg VA 22802
800-999-3534 or 540-434-6701
mm@mennomedia.org | www.mennomedia.org

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