

A REALITY CHECK CONVERSATION: PART 2

Provided by COPE Ministries and authored by Minister Angela Smith

This particular handout is for everyone. Financial disability can seem impossible to overcome especially if you don't know where to start and/or how to get where you want to go. But, if other disabilities are present that someone can't manage without support, then Social Security Disability Insurance can help. You can find the link to apply at <http://www.churchofphilosophicalexploration.org/resources.htm>. You will need to prove that you are disabled to receive financial assistance. And, at this time the government doesn't recognize financial disability as a qualifying ailment. So, some restrictions apply.

So, to assist those whose primary issue is financial disability in regards to survival and/or comfort, our ministry is providing the following conversation between a "seeker" of services/assistance and a "provider" of service/assistance. The "seeker" is in many ways representative of the majority of the financially disabled who are not otherwise disabled. The "provider" arguably could be Jeff Bezos and if not, then, Bezos should be more like the "provider" as described.

CONVERSATION:

Seeker: I'm financially disabled, homeless, and have no vehicle. But, I'm willing to work and no one will hire me. I'm qualified and apply for jobs that I'm qualified to do. But, because employers think the fact that I am homeless suggests instability or likelihood of unreliability which is simply not true but they won't hire me. What should I do?

Provider: Keep trying. I'm sure your luck will turn around. We don't have any openings right now. Have you tried for public assistance?

Seeker: I am single and have no children. I am not disabled. And, since I can't get a job, I can't get fired so I can't get unemployment insurance. The government suggests I seek help through charitable resources or churches.

Provider: That's tough. I'd hate to be in your shoes. Have you tried the charitable resources and churches?

Seeker: Well, some of them are cults and human trafficking fronts. They pull a "bait and switch" of sorts in saying they will help you stabilize, provide food and shelter, and help you build your resume'. Then, you have to sign all this paperwork and at Teen Challenge that includes a civil rights waiver. So, some make you relinquish your civil liberties and human rights just to get the basics and then they farm you out or use you for fundraising in-house and keep the money. So, I don't feel like I can really get ahead or where I need to be relying on charity or churches. Do you know of any that can help without the human trafficking and exploitation?

Provider: That can't be legal. Did that happen to you? Did you report it?

Seeker: Well, it did happen to me. But, I signed the civil rights waiver and all the paperwork. And, I was technically free to leave at any time. But, they make you believe you have no

rights and agreed to that in signing the waivers and then have a communications blackout period followed by censoring/monitoring all communications with the outside world. And, after they "train", unduly influence you, and the like, you believe you don't have a choice until you realize you do and can just leave. But, they take your identification, shoes, and more and keep it locked up and won't return it to you.

Provider: Did you go to the police when you left and demand the items that were withheld such as your identification be returned to you? Do you have your identification now? What about the farming out to work for others or during fundraising, couldn't you say something then?

Seeker: I did get my identification back and couldn't prosecute for human trafficking. And, the program claims I owed them money and that's why they kept my earnings. So, that presented reasonable doubt because the program has a "company store" and you have to purchase all your necessities at outrageous prices (way more than at the local store) and you can only shop there. For toilet paper and all of that. And, if fundraising, they monitor you while you are on the phone and will disconnect a call if you try to say anything about what goes on.

Provider: So, it sounds like peonage. You are describing debt peonage. Did the program sue you for money they claim you still owe them? Or, did they forgive it? I'd suggest not signing a contract where you waive your rights and avoid any debt peonage schemes. Legitimate nonprofits, including churches, would assist you with job placement where you keep your earnings. Or, that's what would make sense to me.

Seeker: The program forgave it. I just don't know where to get stability so I can get stability without waiving my rights and without signing up for human trafficking or debt peonage or whatever you said. Do you have any suggestions?

Provider: You might be more successful seeking assistance from COPE Ministries. But, I understand they are still under construction (January, 2020). They are certainly understanding of your situation. But, if you leave your application or resume', I'll definitely consider you if a position opens up for which you are qualified. Do you at least have an e-mail address you check at the library so we can contact you if we have an opening?

Seeker: I'll check out COPE Ministries. And, my e-mail address is on the application. Is it all legible enough for you?

Provider: Good idea. And, yes, you have beautiful penmanship. Here's a \$15 gift card for Starbucks. I hope it helps and will be in touch if anything opens up in your ballpark.

Seeker: Thank you for your time and understanding. And, I love Starbucks' hot chocolate. I'm not a big coffee drinker.

Provider: You are welcome and I hope we end up working together. You are a very nice person and I'm surprised at your situation. Were you in foster care or adjudicated or how did you end up in that position?

Seeker: My parents were murdered and no surviving extended family. The person responsible is in prison. My parents were killed when I was 13. The system couldn't find a family home because I was a teen and space is limited so put me in segregated congregate care environments similar to Teen Challenge. When I turned 18, I ended up with a bus ticket back to my hometown or was told I could stay in the program as staff receiving only room and board for my work. So, I returned to my hometown. But, I couldn't find housing and therefore couldn't find work and vice versa. So, I'm homeless and looking for work. I just want an opportunity to not be trafficked and to have a chance at earning enough that I can truly be independent and self-reliant.

Provider: Do you mind if I do a background check on you? If it comes back clear, I'll find a spot for you. Check your e-mail.

Seeker: Go right ahead. The murders made the papers, you have my name and internet access, and everything I've said is true and will check out. I'll look forward to your e-mail.

For more information on COPE Ministries and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> &

<https://www.heal-online.org>