

Nothing in this life can't be lost or taken away in a split second. Kara Pendleton faced simultaneous devastating losses, but when she began walking by faith she found the courage and strength to rise above her circumstance and to help lift others along the way.

More Than Homeless

**A Story of Walking in Faith
After Losing Everything**

by Kara Pendleton

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Kara Pendleton

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INTRODUCTION

When the perfect storm of challenges hit almost all at once, Kara Pendleton found herself standing in the virtual midst of the rubble that was once her life. Facing what seemed to be an entire mountain range of challenges, she began navigating the frustrating, crazy, depressing, and sometimes frightening world of homelessness.

She quickly discovered that homelessness and the help available to people like her were not at all what she had previously assumed they were. She also discovered to her horror that an entire community of homeless people lived in her own community, hidden from view and struggling to survive.

Feeling inspired to “out” herself to her readers, fans, and social media followers about her “not-so-glamorous” real life as a published author and freelance writer, Kara was brutally honest about the reality of her situation, as well as what she learned about homelessness along the way.

Choosing to “walk by faith, not by sight,” Kara leaned on her faith to help her remain strong and resilient through the onslaught of ongoing challenges, setbacks, and hardships along the way.

Her story inspired and encouraged her readers, some of whom were in similar situations at the time or had been previously. Her experiences

led her to help and advocating for other homeless, many of whom were severely misunderstood and struggling to find the help they so desperately needed in order to turn around their own situations.

This is her story. This is their story. The good, bad, funny, sad, scary, ugly, inspiring, ... and hopeful.

MY DIRTY LITTLE SECRET: I AM HOMELESS, AND IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU, TOO

September 2

When the perfect storm of trouble hit recently, I found myself losing everything: my job, my health, and my home.

Because I live in a Podunk, USA town, resources for help are limited. Even at that, programs in general across the country are so strained with the INCREASE in demand, that they have to limit their programs to helping only the easiest to help and turn around. I am not that.

My health limits me to working online and the industry is a tough one to find stability in when you are not a staffer. Since I have written news and politics predominantly over the past 17 years, I and my employers are regularly hit with the censorship issues coming from social media, and then advertisers and investors pulling funds.

I have been able to get some help from the usual government and charitable organizations, but it is limited and none of it is financial. I have a very old, barely functional RV to live in, so I am not on the street. I am grateful for that. But many cities don't allow overnight parking and many RV parks won't take older rigs, even if they aren't an eyesore like mine currently is. That is aside from the expense involved in staying at an RV park or campground.

So, for now, I rely on my newfound homeless person network to help me find places I can safely park and not be hassled by cops. Being homeless is a crime....did you know that? “Vagrancy” is one term for it. Additionally, parking overnight in towns, even with permission from property and business owners, can still get you in trouble for violating the town ordinances.

I thought, like a lot of people do, that if bad things hit, “of course” there would be plenty of help available so they could get things turned around. I was very, very wrong. Even people around you may not help you, some because they are struggling themselves, but some because they don’t want to or think you deserve the destitution since you “obviously” aren’t trying hard enough to fix your situation.

When you become homeless, when you lose everything, you discover quickly who actually cares about you. It has been my fellow homeless who have checked on me to make sure I am safe at night and have a hot meal once in a while. It has been them who have made sure to help me get a free hot shower (once) and who have shared their resources to help me do some laundry (once). The rest of the time it is popping into public restrooms, usually in parks, to quickly hand wash a few clothes in the sink or wash my hair, or using baby wipes and hand sanitizer to help stay clean.

For the homeless, of which I am now one, it can be beneficial to work with other homeless to share resources and tips, so we can all eat, shower, and be safe.

Despite how bad my situation is, I have been able to help some of my fellow homeless and it is a great feeling to be able to do so. And no matter how bad my situation is, they don't treat me like I am human garbage-which is something I found myself suddenly facing once people learned my dirty little secret.

Because bad things hit, to some, I now have no worth as a human being. I have been assaulted, too. One man, under the guise of "wanting to help," physically attacked me, attempting to sexually assault me.

Fortunately, I know some self-defense and am much more agile and strong than I appear (I was in an electric wheelchair at the time. Currently, I am on crutches). I was able to stop him, this man who was very strong and was towering over me, with such force, he stumbled backward several feet. I also told him to his face that if he ever attempted anything like that again I would "kick his *ss." He must have believed me because he immediately became apologetic and then suddenly forgot I existed.

Other men have also approached me offering help and then making it clear the help comes at a price-basically me becoming their whore. I have chosen not to take them up on their offers. I am no one's whore. And my desperate situation does not change that.

But men are not the only predators out there targeting the homeless. Women do it, too. It shocked me how many people, male and female,

swooped in trying to take from me-the person who has virtually nothing. The vultures, snakes, and sharks have all been circling, trying to find ways to take advantage of my situation in order to benefit themselves, and at my expense. Some, people who have income and homes, have even stolen from me. It is sickening.

My eyes have been tremendously opened by what homelessness is really like, and I am not even three weeks into it. There are a lot of homeless living in this Podunk town and I had no idea until now. And now I am among them.

Not only do those in the know not want the public at large to know their town has a homeless problem, but to be safe, the homeless have to do what they can to hide and blend in. The person next to you in the parking lot, at the library, or in line at the grocery store may be homeless. They don't all look like bag ladies or strung-out druggies passed out on sidewalks. One in particular looks just like me. That is because one of the homeless IS me.

I don't know what the future holds for me or how long it will take for me to turn my situation around. Right now, I have a ton on me with medical stuff (serious health issues, doctor appointments, testing, hospitals, medications) and some legal matters revolving around or somehow related to my home loss, along with job searching, finding resources, staying safe and out of more "trouble," getting food, household supplies (like toilet paper), keeping fuel in the tank of my 1979 gas guzzler, finding help with showers and laundry, etc.

More bad things keep happening, too....like my phone service suddenly stopped even though everything was okay (they claimed I transferred it to another provider, which I did not, and I can't seem to get them to fix the issue and put my service back on) and not getting my medical card, even though my coverage was not stopped (They supposedly just sent out a "new, replacement" card, even though I never got "the old one.") I constantly have 1,000 fires to put out. I put one out and it pops back up and brings three buddies with it.

Some say I am literally cursed and some say God is "testing" or "refining" me. Um, I could use a little less of whatever this is, ok?

But it isn't all doom and gloom. There have been answered prayers, and angels placed in my path to help me when I simply cannot overcome the challenge in front of me on my own.

For example, when a local pharmacy decided to hold my heart medication prescriptions (all three of them) hostage because they didn't like my medical coverage paperwork showing all three were fully paid for and I had no co-pay, two administrators at the local hospital got involved and got the problem corrected. (They know me and my situation well. Three of my four recent hospital visits have been at this hospital)

I have been blessed with several other helps, too, such as two pieces of clothing, a few household items, and several one-time financial gifts and loans.

It's still bad and I still have a very long, rough road ahead of me with more help needed as I slowly turn this around. BUT, I will get there. I am walking by faith, not by sight, and so far, so good. I'm still alive to fight another day.

I never thought this could happen to me. I was wrong. It can happen to you, too. There is not one thing in this life that can't be taken away in a heartbeat. So, revel in what you have while you have it, plan for bad things even if you think they'll never happen to you, and keep my contact info handy (link to this blog, email addy, phone number-whatever you have). If homelessness happens to you, I may be able to help you not only survive it, but get past it. One way or another, I'll be getting past it myself.

‘GANG BANGERS’ CAME KNOCKING AT MIDNIGHT

September 7

If you read my last post, you know my dirty little secret. I am homeless and living in a very old, barely running, slowly dying RV. I have to find safe places to park in my Podunk, USA town where I won't be hassled by cops at night.

Recently, I was in a store parking lot and there were only a few other vehicles, RVs included, parked there, but there was a lot of space between all of us. It was dark and nearly deserted.

Close to midnight, there was loud banging on my door. ‘Uh-oh,’ I thought. ‘Maybe I’ve worn out my welcome and they don’t want me staying here so much. Where else can I go?’

Yes, I really thought that much in a split second. Although I move around, I don’t have enough places to park to keep it really mixed up, so one particular place is my night home several nights each week. I sweat it all the time that they will decide I’ve worn out my welcome and not let me use their parking lot several non-consecutive nights a week, every week.

When I called out, I heard a male voice, as well as a female one. When I looked outside, I saw a young Hispanic male. He was with a Caucasian female. Both seemed to be in their early twenties.

Apparently, they had accidentally left their car's lights on and now the battery was dead. They asked if 'we' (they assumed I was with someone) could come give them a jump start. Without hesitation, I agreed. That was their first pleasant surprise of the evening.

Apparently, they had approached others and been either ignored or refused help. I quickly threw street clothes on over my sleepwear and hopped up into the driver's seat. Now, at this point, it would have become very obvious to them that I am a solo female.

When I got to their vehicle, I met the third member of their party. He was also a young Hispanic male. However, he had a shaved head and was covered with tattoos on literally every bit of exposed skin. His head, face, neck, arms, and hands were all totally inked up. He looked like a gang member based on some of the ink he had.

A look of apprehension briefly crossed his face when our eyes met. I knew what he was thinking. One look at him and I was gonna hightail it outta there! They would be stranded.

He was wrong.

I did for him what I do for everyone. I flashed him a big, friendly smile and got to work on lining up my rig with their vehicle so we could get them up and running. I caught the look the group exchanged with each other. I'd say it's a safe bet that my choice to stay and help was their second surprise of the night.

In no time flat, we got them up and running. I stuck around and made sure they were okay. They offered to buy me a beer or give me some kind of payment. I politely refused with a smile. I told them it was my pleasure to help them. It genuinely was.

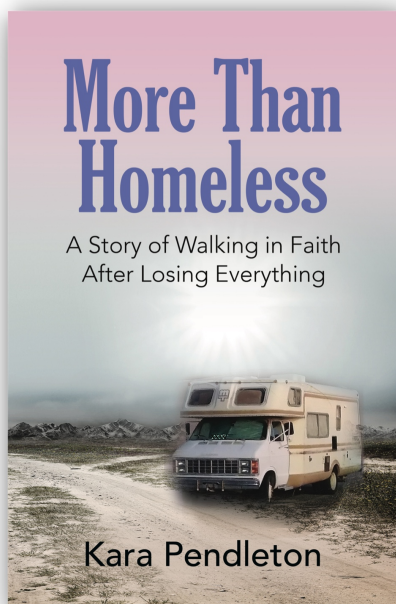
Before we parted ways, I wished them well. The look that crossed the tatted-up young man's face indicated that my genuine well-wishing surprised him.

I don't know what they saw when they saw me. Perhaps a middle-aged, single, white woman who had "brass ones" in her willingness to help them when others would not. Maybe they noticed my cross necklace and saw a Christian doing what Christians are called to do in serving and loving one another. I'll never know.

And what did I see when I saw them? I saw three children of God in need. I saw an opportunity to pay forward some of the kindness that has been shown to me over the years.

And with all of that, in the midst of all of my own hardships, I saw, for a brief moment, an opportunity being given to me to not be the one in need, but to be the one doing the giving. It is a great feeling to give to and serve others and I am grateful that I was blessed with that chance. And it happened when strangers came knocking on my door at midnight in a dark, almost deserted parking lot.

God really does work in mysterious ways, doesn't He? Not only did He bless those three young people with someone who would be so quick to help them, but He gave me the opportunity to be an instrument in His hands in doing so.



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