

## Giving to Panhandlers

One chilly autumn evening as Vicky is walking home from a restaurant she is approached by a disheveled man who introduces himself as Tom. Explaining that he does not have anywhere to sleep, Tom asks if she has any money to spare. Tom says he needs the money for a warm meal and a bed at the local homeless shelter. It is not an unlikely story, as many homeless shelters charge a small fee to their patrons.<sup>1</sup>

Vicky has a few extra dollars in her pocket. Despite being sympathetic to Tom's situation, she is worried about how Tom might use the money. Might he use it to get drunk or take drugs? If so, she wonders, would that mean she should not give him the money? She also finds herself wondering how he became homeless in the first place, and whether he is responsible for his current situation. Not wanting to start a long dialogue, Vicky apologizes to Tom, wishes him luck, and continues on her way home.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

- (1) Was Vicky's choice to not give money to Tom morally justified? Why or why not?
- (2) What moral duties do we have, if any, to the less fortunate?
- (3) When, if ever, are we morally obligated to make sacrifices for the well being of another person?
- (4) If Vicky could buy Tom a meal, rather than just give him money, so that there was no issue about him using the money for drink or drugs, should she?

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<sup>1</sup> [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-03-25-homeless\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-03-25-homeless_N.htm)

