

Think About It

1. Has Lushkoff become a beggar by circumstance or by choice?

Answer: Lushkoff becomes a beggar by circumstances. He was a singer who used to sing in the choir. Choir is sung in the church. He lost his job because of alcohol abuse. After he was out of rehabilitation centre the social stigma of being a drunkard prevented him from getting a job. To make ends meet he had resort to begging.

2. What reasons does he give to Sergei for his telling lies?

Answer: He says that if he would tell the truth people would not give alms. We can correlate it with the way beggars dress and crib about being hungry for days. In some bigger cities there are criminal gangs keeping an army of beggars. They do the required cosmetic make up and drop off beggars at strategic traffic points. They train those beggars to cry properly so that people would show mercy on them. At the end of the day the gang lord gets a hefty commission out of day's booty.

3. Is Lushkoff a willing worker? Why, then, does he agree to chop wood for Sergei?

Answer: Lushkoff is weak out of malnourishment and alcoholism. He knows he is not strong enough to work. But once Sergei detects his lies then he is feeling ashamed. His conscience pushes him to agree for chopping wood.

4. Sergei says, "I am happy that my words have taken effect." Why does he say so? Is he right in saying this?

Answer: Sergei thinks that because of his timely advice Lushkoff could get rid of begging and is financially independent. He is right from his perspective because he doesn't know that it was Olga who chopped woods for Lushkoff. Anyway, the end result is Lushkoff's life is back on the right track. And there is a saying, "all is well that ends well."

5. Lushkoff is earning thirty five roubles a month. How is he obliged to Sergei for this?

Answer: Had there been no encounter with Sergei Lushkoff would have continued begging. It was because of Sergei that he could get an opportunity to be helped by Olga. The whole incident changes the way Lushkoff thinks about his future. Earlier he had no confidence of getting a job. His stint with Sergei and Olga gives him a new confidence which helps him land a decent job.

6. During their conversation Lushkoff reveals that Sergei's cook, Olga, is responsible for the positive change in him. How has Olga saved Lushkoff?

Answer: Olga takes pity on Lushkoff. She knows that such a weak man can't chop wood. She helped him by chopping wood in his place. No matter how much abusive Olga was in her words, deep inside she had a helping attitude. The very act of Olga changes Lushkoff's heart. Had Olga not helped Lushkoff in chopping wood he would not have got the money he needed. He would not have got the chance to listen to Olga's moral lessons.