

April 2018

→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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UPDATE

Sorry we missed last month's newsletter. I was overwhelmed, mostly due to a sinus problem. Just a bump in the road. I was able to fulfill my schedule to the prisons though. I was able to visit the two largest prisons in Oklahoma and a third that is half maximum and half medium security.

Here's the thing that may surprise you. I now have enough beds to handle those coming in April as far as sex offenders are concerned. I have beds for non-sex offenders, so what are we going to do? Probably get more bed space. How? I don't know yet. We will do what we can and then let God do what we can't. He only does the impossible. He expects us to do what is possible.

Here's the reason for the doing. The homeless number keeps rising and will continue. It's over 460 and rising. That's just the one's who are registering. The number not registering is between 1200 and 1400. All of these people will eventually go back to prison for 5 years and then have 5 years probation. The tragedy

is most of these people would be registering if they could find a place they could live that's not just a tent. The same with working.

Things are going good concerning a loan. Please pray that it continues. While we have lost a couple of churches, we also picked up some individuals' support that has made up the difference. Not everyone is full of hate or fear.

God's grace is far above our understanding. We want people to pay for their actions. We demand it. But if we do anything wrong, we justify it and pray for mercy and grace. We don't want people to know our worst self, just our best. We never judge ourselves as harshly as we judge others when they do or say the same thing. What we portray in public is never the same as who we are in private. I sure am glad God is the judge, aren't you? Thank you Lord for your forgiveness.

—David Nichols

TESTIMONY

I would like to give God all the praise and glory for the blessings in my life. I have lived at Hand Up Ministry since 2013, and I am very grateful God brought me here. I feel very blessed to be part of Hand Up's music ministry.

God revealed to me that love doesn't set you free. Truth sets you free, but truth has to be spoken in love. I can praise God today that the truth has set me free. I was in so much bondage. My thought process was always negative, and I had a defeated attitude.

The more I draw near to God's word, the more God draws near to me. God has blessed me with a great Genesis One group, and the members of this group are my brothers in Christ. The Lord and Hand Up have gotten me back on the road to healing. I was baptized on June 21, 2015. I am so grateful that I'm no longer in the lost state I was in for most of my life.

—Bobby Reeves

SILENCE

There is something wonderfully strange about silence. For we who live in a noisy world, the sound of silence is a welcomed sound. When we are tired and worn down, we welcome silence. It is during the quietest and sometimes the darkest periods of the night that we often find our greatest rest and peace.

But there are also times in most of our lives when silence is not welcomed or wanted. Especially if that silence comes from God!

John 11 presents the seventh and the greatest sign-miracle of Jesus, the raising of a man named Lazarus from the dead. And it is through this

miracle and our Lord's relationships with the persons involved, that we can come to better understand the silence of God.

When God is silent, there is always a reason and always a right response.

John 11 points out that **WHEN GOD IS SILENT, THERE IS ALWAYS A REASON.**

Times of sickness and/or death often amplify the silence of God. Four times in the first four verses it is said, "Lazarus was sick." "Sick" is a word that refers to a sickness that leads to death. Lazarus had a terminal illness.

Both during Lazarus' sickness and his eventual death, the Bible makes it very clear that Jesus was fully aware of Lazarus' condition, yet He chose to do nothing. In other words, He remained silent.

Why did Jesus remain silent when Mary and Martha and especially Lazarus needed Him so much?

First, notice the importance of the truth that it was not because Jesus did not care for or love Lazarus, Mary or Martha that He was silent.

John goes out of his way to tell us that Jesus loved Lazarus.

God never allows anything to come into our lives except by His permission. And if He grants it His permission, then He will give us the grace to deal with it.

For me personally, I've have struggled and learned that when I stumble and feel I can't trust His hand, I know I can always trust His heart.

We need to face the fact that unconfessed sin will always disrupt our relationship with God. Psalm 66:18 says, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*" Isaiah 59:1-2 says, "*The Lord is not too weak to save you, and he is not becoming deaf. He can hear you when you call. 2 But there is a problem—your sins have cut you off from God. Because of your sin, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.*"

When God is silent, you should first of all examine your relationship with Him. If there is known sin in your life, confess it immediately, repent, and seek His forgiveness. Then recommit your life to His sovereign control.

If you've done this, and like Job of the Old Testament you still feel slighted by God, then listen to this. This could be the greatest truth of all.

The third reason God is often silent is simply the fact that sometimes He wants to reveal a wonderful new truth about Himself to us.

Often the silence of God only means He is preparing to bring into your life a greater revelation of Himself than you have ever known before!

If there is silence in your life from God, first, be certain all sin is confessed and to the best of your knowledge and sincerity, that you are walking with God. Then, anticipate a new experience with God in which He is seeking to draw you into a closer and more intimate relationship with the Master than anything you have ever known.

There's one last truth regarding the reason for God's silence. Divine delays never mean divine indifference.

When God is silent, there is always a reason. But last of all, when God is silent, there is always a response.

You can respond to God's silence in one of two ways. Wrong and Right

Here are some of the **wrong** ways to respond to God's silence.

You can respond in Confusion.

You can respond in Anger.

You can respond in Guilt.

*You can respond in Self-
Condemnation.*

You can respond in Depression.

You can respond in Doubt.

Here are the **right** ways we

should respond.

You can respond in Faith, Hope, Love, and Humility.

That's what God wants you to do. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Jesus is the truth that sets you free to hear from God again.

Remember, when God is silent, you can still rest assured, that He knows what you're going through, and He also knows how your situation will end, for our good and for His glory.

—Jeff Wendel

SICKNESS

If you or your loved one is in the midst of a severe illness there are probably many questions that are going through your mind. These questions need to be answered thoughtfully and biblically. Questions such as: Why would God allow this sickness? How can I make any sense out of this suffering? As a Christian, how should I react to sickness? Answering some of these hard questions can be very difficult.

Why would God allow you or your loved one to get sick?

Frankly, this is a very difficult question to answer because Scripture gives many reasons for the sicknesses that occur in our lives. Therefore, it can be very challenging to determine exactly which cause fits the case. Here are some of the major reasons given in the Scripture.

1. Sickness and death naturally come to all because we are fallen people living in a fallen world. We get sick and die because we are imperfect human beings living in a world filled with bacteria and viruses that attack our bodies. To stop all sickness and death would require God to stop the world as we know

it today.

2. God sometimes allows sickness so that His purposes might be fulfilled. Jesus said that one man was born blind so that, "the works of God should be revealed in him" (John 9:3). Other times Jesus said that it was to bring glory to God when He healed the person (John 11:4). Therefore, you can be assured of one thing, that God is working out His purpose in your life through this sickness.

3. God has also used sickness as a judgment against people who were in rebellion against Him. Scripture teaches that God never afflicts someone willingly, but allows it, hoping that they will turn from their sin. If you are a Christian in right standing with God this potential cause of your sickness is not one that God would use, simply because you already have a right relationship with the Father. Many sicknesses have nothing to do with a person's sin or turning them from rebellion. Jesus made this clear when the disciples questioned Him concerning a man who had been born blind. The disciples asked Him, " 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him' " (John 9:2-3). Notice that Jesus was emphatic that neither this man nor his parents had anything to do with this birth defect. God had a single purpose of revealing His own glory in the man's healing.

4. Sometimes God doesn't provide a clear reason for illness. God has allowed some individuals who have had great faith and whom He has used greatly to get sick. In some cases, they didn't recover and God gave no explanation for His reasons. Elisha the

prophet is a good example. He got sick and died after he had healed many others in his own ministry (2 Kings 13:14). God didn't explain why He allowed this man to be taken from his service in this manner. Whenever God does anything without explaining it, you must trust in His sovereign wisdom and love. There are purposes beyond your understanding that He is working out for all concerned. Therefore, ask God to reveal His grace and strength to you in this time of weakness.

5. Sometimes God allows sickness for a testimony of His power and glory. One of the best examples of this truth is when a deadly snake bit Paul after He had been shipwrecked on an island.

6. One of the most comforting principles that God declares is that when a person gets sick He promises to sustain this person on their sickbed. David taught, "The LORD will strengthen him on his bed of illness; You will sustain him on his sickbed" (Ps. 41:3). Therefore, allow the Lord to strengthen you spiritually by drawing close to Him during this time of sickness. Therefore, whether you are healed or end up receiving the ultimate healing (death and your new body), the Lord will be with you and sustain you by His grace. David declared concerning the Lord that: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). The Lord also promises: "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him" (Ps. 91:15). If you or a loved one are currently experiencing sickness, I encourage you at this time in your life that you seek the Lord to be your strength and refuge. He wants to be with you and help you if you will only call upon Him.—*Jeff Wendel*