

May 2019

→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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UPDATE

Psalm 143:8 states, "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning." What do we hear when we start the day? In our fast paced world of today, it may not be lovingkindness. Loving and kind would not describe many people when they first awake in the morning. It may not even describe the way they are for the entire day. God is loving and kind all of the time.

We claim it is because we need our morning coffee, but it is really a spiritual problem. His peace will cause us to be both loving and kind. It will remove the stress and worry which take their toll on our health and relationships.

Hearing His lovingkindness first thing in the morning can set the tone for the rest of the day. If we are truly His vessel, others will hear that lovingkindness through us. Let us make a choice to be his vessel every day.

The CPA is finally caught up with our paperwork, and we now can focus on filing for a loan with reasonable interest. What the devil meant for evil is going to turn for good. God always causes all things to work together for good if we love Him.

Our chapel fund is growing at a decent pace. We have about 30% of the cost. After 11 years in a tent, a metal building will be like a castle. We do accept vehicles if you have any to donate. All proceeds go to the chapel fund. If something is wrong with the vehicle, we

usually fix it before we do anything with it.

We are adding RV spaces at Chandler to provide more space. It will also improve the value of the property when we decide to sell it and move. God has better things in store, and we must be ready.

We are working more closely with other ministries to benefit all of us. Since almost all of those in elected office who tried to shut us down are now out of office, we believe we can get some positive things done for the homeless and those destroyed by addiction. We are having great success in this pursuit. Pray for us.

Our locations for men on 59th Street and in Chandler have solid training programs for mental, spiritual, and physical success. We are now expanding our programs to the park on Shields. While everything is solid there, it is time to finish the intent of the program, so meetings are a must. Small changes are hard for these people or for any of us. We need your prayers as we move forward.

I am looking forward to being at Amazing Grace Church on May 5th. I will be there in the morning and evening. You are welcome to come and invite anyone in the area. The address is 2020 Rena Road, Van Buren, Arkansas, 72956. I think the morning service starts at 9:30 AM. The evening service starts at 5:00 PM.

Here is my best pastoral advice to everyone. Since we live in a very negative world right now, it is even more important than ever to be around positive, good news. This may mean changing some friends, changing what you listen to, where you go, etc. Your life is more important than trying to please someone or make them happy. Only God can do that. You need to fellowship with people. Make sure it is the right people. Shalom.

— David Nichols

TESTIMONIES

I was born in eastern Oklahoma. My mother was a strong woman who raised my five sisters, my brother, and me. She taught us morals and values, and she made sure we attended church so we could learn about God and our savior Jesus Christ.

When I was 13-years-old I was baptized in the cold waters of a creek just outside of town. I attended church throughout my teen years, and I volunteered to help the missionaries who came to our church each summer. We built classrooms, an ambulance garage, a basketball court, and a medical clinic.

My mother got her first driver's license and her GED when she was 42-years-old. She earned her bachelor's degree in behavioral science when she was 52. My mother was my hero and my role model. I had some tough times as a teenager, and it was because of my mother that I graduated from high school. I was the middle child in my family. My three older sisters dropped out of school, and I was the first of two siblings who graduated from high school.

I joined the Air Force a few months after I graduated from high school, and I proudly served our country. I was stationed on the east coast during most of my time in the service. After I was discharged from the Air Force, I went back to the place where I had learned small town values.

The following year I began studying radiologic technology at the University of Central Arkansas, and I received a bachelor's degree four years later. I began my career as a radiographer in North Little Rock, and I started a family. I had a wife and three children.

Five years after receiving my bachelor's degree, I enrolled at Southern Technical College, and I earned an associate's degree in electronic technology.

I got a job with DuPont (a Fortune 500 company) and moved to Oklahoma City.

While I was in the military, I got into drinking and partying with my friends. I thought they were my friends. This behavior continued in college and after college. Thus began my downward spiral. I stopped going to church, and, because of my drinking, I failed as a husband and a father. I also lost my job. Because of my education and my background, it wasn't hard to find another good job. I continued drinking, and it wasn't long before I committed a crime against a minor girl. I touched her inappropriately while I was drunk. I was prosecuted for this crime and went to prison.

While I was incarcerated, I thought about all of the things I had lost. I pondered how I had done everything society said I should have done to be successful, but I was thinking about me and what I had lost. I started praying and reading the Bible, and it wasn't long before God showed me the error of my ways. I had been thinking about myself and all of the things I could have and did have, and, in so doing I lost my family, my job, and my freedom.

In prison I met a man who told me about Hand Up Ministries. I sent an application to Hand Up, but I didn't get the response because I transferred. At the new facility, I met a minister who was on the board of directors at Hand Up. He checked on my application, and he learned I had been accepted. I discharged and went to Hand Up Ministries on Broadway. I soon found a labor job, and I started to earn my keep.

I was soon asked to work for Hand Up. I said no at least seven times. I finally said I would pray about it. After a visit to eastern Oklahoma, I agreed to work for Hand Up. Two days later the place I had been working closed, and everyone lost their job. God had a plan for me, and He put me where He wanted me to be.

I started out helping in the office, but soon I became the office manager. This was around the time Hand Up moved to SE 59th Street in Oklahoma City. I continued to work as office manager until Louis Davis retired, and then I became the director of Hand Up. I believe my mother's lessons and my military experience have served me well in this position. God has me where He wants me to be, and I am certain this ministry is here to help those who feel lost and alone.

I have learned it is not how much you make or how much you have that makes you happy and successful. The things that bring true

happiness are doing the work God puts before you and allowing Him to lead you. I thank God for allowing me to be a help to this ministry, and I am thankful for the good values my mother taught me. These values help me serve this ministry.



“Hand Up has been a blessing in my life and in my family's life. I now have the respect and love of my family.”

— James Womack,
Campus 1 Director

I was born 37 years ago in Norman Municipal Hospital (now called Norman Regional Hospital). I was born to a couple who fell in love in high school, but who fell out of love as the years passed. I grew up with no idea of what a real family was like. I thought dysfunction was how a family functioned. I thought I was the black sheep of my family. I never truly fit in with the white side of my family, nor did I fit in with the Mexican side of my family. This was preparation for what was to come.

I lived with different members of my family during when I was young. I lived with my mom, my grandparents, my dad, and an uncle in Texas. I also lived in a children's home. It was that bouncing around like a ball that taught me not to worry about it all. I didn't worry about staying in one place for too long. It was preparation for what was to come.

I dropped out of high school, but later I went back to school. I graduated from Norman High School in 2001. I went from a 3.96 GPA to a 2.6 GPA, but I finished school. I attended Oklahoma City Community College, but I followed the same pattern as before. I had to drop out, but this time it was because our niece, of whom we had custody, was burned in a house fire. She was five years old, and she had burns on 26% of her body. I had to take care of our daughter full time, work full time, and go to school full time. I had to quit school, but eventually I went back to college, and I earned an associates

degree. I continued my education at the University of Oklahoma, but I didn't graduate because I was arrested.

I spent almost six years in prison. I served two sentences concurrently. I was also sentenced to 18 years of probation, but only two of those years are supervised probation. I began to wholeheartedly seek the Lord when I was in the county jail. I weighed 296 pounds when I turned myself in to the police. I now weigh about 210 pounds. My life has been a journey of epic proportions. I have gone through changes both spiritual and physical.

While I was incarcerated I attended a preaching school for one year, and I also attended a vocational school for a year. I discharged from prison about one and a half months ago. In slept outside on my first night out of prison. My hands and feet were so cold I couldn't feel them, but I still praised God. On the following day I went to see my probation officer, and I met people who have been homeless for years. I only spent one night outside, and I can't imagine being homeless for years. I now take supplies to homeless men and women.

I spent a night at Drover's Inn, and the next day I went to Hand Up Ministries. God always provides. I have had a great job for a month, and I am a supervisor on the weekend. I also have an opportunity for an even better job. I have been blessed every day. Life in Christ has radically changed me, but my journey isn't over. Like David, I want to be a man after the Lord's heart. May God bless you on your journey.



“God has given me the desires of my heart, but, more importantly, I have Jesus. He is my rock and my fortress.”

— Chris Flores

I was born in Waukegan, Illinois in August of 1969. My father was Russian, and my mother was an Okie. I had a normal life growing up. We lived just outside of Chicago.

I was into hot wheels and Star Trek when I was a kid. Evel Knieval was my role model. I made a ramp out of a board and a five gallon bucket. I would attempt to jump almost anything. My dad died in 1979. My mom wanted a change, so we moved to Oklahoma.

I was raised Catholic, but after we moved to Oklahoma I became a Southern Baptist. My mom worked in the fabric department of a TG&Y store, and she did the best she could to raise two boys alone. My mother was proud when I graduated in 1987. I got saved, and I started to walk with God.

Things were normal until mom's health started to fail and she needed dialysis. I felt so alone. I blamed God for my situation. It was hard taking care of my mother's medical needs. I turned to drugs, and I soon began my downward spiral. I was arrested for a crime to which I pleaded guilty. I attended church in prison, and David Nichols came to the prison and spoke at our church service. He said something which touched me deep in my soul. I honestly believe God sent David to me that day. David said you might not always like the road God has you walk down, but He will always provide a way.

Soon I sent an application to Hand Up Ministries. I was accepted, and I came to Hand Up on May 1st, 2014. It took a while to find a job. I filled out 90 applications in three weeks. I finally got a job, and I paid restitution to the state. I know it is hard for guys who are getting out of prison, but like



“God will always provide a way. Sometimes you won't like the road, but that makes the reward much sweeter when you achieve your goals.”

— Anthony Vugrin

I was born a second-generation freed man in a small farming community in Tennessee. My grandparents were formerly slaves and then sharecroppers in Memphis, Tennessee. My father was a minister at the

local church, and my mother was in the church choir. They raised us with Christian values and made us live by the. My understanding of God and Christianity was going to church, hearing the preacher, and reading your Bible. With that, you have completed your duty.

Later in life, I left those teachings and moved to a world that didn't follow the Christian standards. I started testing life and what the world offered me. I indulged in sin and left my childhood lessons. One day, at my lowest point, I looked up and asked God “How can I do what you told me if I'm not where you placed me?” He told me that my sin would not stop Him from doing what He said. One thing many people don't understand is that God never leaves you or breaks a promise. It is sin that separates us from Him and His blessings and plans.

Since then, my life is being restored. And I am fulfilling what God said He would do. I am blessed in every area of my life. In the past, God has positioned me to help Hand Up Ministries as a chaplain and Genesis One Sponsor. This has blessed my life to help the men and see them grow. I am privileged to have served the ministry and the Lord in so many ways.



“There's no better feeling than knowing you helped strengthen someone's faith and encouraged their Christian walk.”

— Matthew Boyland

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