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→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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# UPDATE

Praise be to the God and Savior of all mankind. What a wonderful God we serve. While He is there for all people, not all people choose to accept His gifts. Let's take a look at the United States.

In the U.S. 70% of people say they believe in God, but only 30% of those go to church. That's 21% who hear the word on a regular basis. Of that 21%, many go to church out of tradition, not because of a zeal for God. We don't know what that percentage is. What we do know is that a high percentage of people do not practice both of the commandments that all of the New Testament Christianity hinges upon. In other words, what today's Christians practice does not match what they say they believe.

Therefore; loving God and loving others as ourselves has become a theory, not a matter of fact for being a Christian. So it's something we do if we have time, or fits in our schedule, or if others approve of it,

or we help pay for someone else to do it for us. It's not our first love, but the sign we put up saying we believe in. Acceptance of men has become more important to us than obedience. I can never forget the day one official said to me, "David, some Christians don't believe sex offenders can be saved." Is that not getting dangerously close to blasphemy of the Holy Ghost by saying God's power can't save them and His blood was not shed for them? I believe God's grace is sufficient for every person, even the religious elite. It's only His grace, not our own works, that makes us any different than the worst sinner. Whatever sin abounds, God's grace abounds more and is sufficient!

—*David Nichols*

# FINANCING

We are ready for financing, except we are waiting for some information from the CPA. Tax season slowed that down, but we are back on track. God is good! It is much more exciting when things are going well. However, we grow the most when things aren't great.—*David Nichols*

# TESTIMONY

## ***PERSONAL***

I can't always talk about everything going on at or with Hand Up because of the haters that are everywhere today. The spiritual forces we fight against are real, so we try not to feed them. Satan uses people just as God uses people. After Satan uses people to destroy others, then he leaves the people he used and they destroy themselves (Judas is a prime example). Jesus uses people to do good in doing so, their cup runs over (widow who fed Elijah with the last of the meal she had). The earth is the stage in the story, and God moves the players as He wills to accomplish the end He designs. To be a part of that plan is beyond great. It is heavenly and exciting.

Here's what I'm asking. Since mom passed away, I have felt more alone. I depended on her prayers to help guide me. (I really miss my mom). I'll be 69 this year, and though I feel much healthier now, I still can tell I'm aging. Tough decisions seem to be happening more often. And opportunities don't wait around. Pray that I will make the best decisions for Hand Up and all the men and women who depend on us. Also pray God will send laborers into the harvest. Now is a great time to be useful and alive.

I grew up in Greenville, OK, just south of Ardmore. Mom took the four of us kids to a Church of Christ six or seven times. When the elders passed around the crackers and juice, I felt left out because kids weren't supposed to partake of it. So one Sunday when the elders were passing the trays with the special forbidden juice, I stood up tall and proud at 8 years old and snatched that shot glass right out of the tray. I downed that special juice like a wild west cowboy. Gasps of horror and sadness echoed through the little church. When I got home, mom took a belt and whipped me with the buckle end. I had marks everywhere. So I thought that was God's love.

After my stint in the Army, I married my 1st wife and became a policeman in Alaska for 3 years. After 6 years of marriage, I began drinking heavily. My wife didn't love me anymore and I didn't know why, even to this day. I lost everything in the divorce; my home, my job, my career, and the most precious thing to me--my three kids. When the divorce papers said I could only VISIT my kids, I couldn't understand it and sort of lost my mind. The next ten years, I was a drunk and coke head, drifting from job to job. The bar scene, the fluff parties, my sinning had no limits. I forsook my mom and dad, brothers and sisters, even my own children. I thought I was the kind of man my children didn't need to be around.

I had gotten remarried in 1993. In 1995, I committed a crime and was put in prison. That came with another divorce but no children. My boat had sunk and I had hit bottom.

I didn't have much to do with God

until I hit prison. During my 10 1/2 years there, I picked up a Gideon bible there and would read and pray for God to use them, (other inmates), to kill me. As I read, I kept running across the words, "Don't be afraid". I started counting and found that phrase in the New Testament 365 times. That helped me through it.

Life after prison was even harder than I could have imagined. No life, no hope, no job, no future. I was so alone. I stayed with my brother through the winter, then had to leave.

I went to OKC, hoping to find a way to live. I camped by the river so that I had water. After 2 weeks, I became very depressed. I dug myself a grave by the river, laid down in it and pulled as much dirt as possible in on top of myself. Then it began to rain and I was hoping to die. As I lay there, I remembered while in prison, hearing about Hand Up Ministries. That seemed to spark some hope in me. So I got myself out of the grave and searched for a phone. I make the call and was accepted in July of 2006.

I got a job at a laundry company sorting sheets, etc. You wouldn't believe all that was in those sheets. After the first day, I said I wasn't going back to work there. David Nichols straight up said that I could go back to work there or move out. It didn't take me long to decide to go back. After a short time I got to change positions and began to move up. I became supervisor and stayed there until I retired in 2016.

In July of 2008, a couple years after coming to Hand Up, I committed

my life to Christ and began to grow. In August of 2016, I was asked and agreed to work for Hand Up as an assistant to James Womack, the director of HUM I. In 2017, I was promoted to Director of both back shifts, but under James when he is here.

I know God had a reason for sparing my life so many times. I want to just be the vessel God can use. I'm still piling dirt on the grave of the old me and looking forward to tomorrow.

—*David Lavender*

## CAMPUS 2

We are staying full and are very slow on turnover. This means few people are leaving which is good, but the waiting list to get here is ever growing. The need is so great for females and married couples that the current waiting list is over 12 applicants long. We are busting at the seams and really need to get a few more trailers up and running to help these homeless Christian brothers and sisters. Please give prayerful consideration on how you can help.

On a personal note, I am currently having some medical issues and am having to do weekly chemo treatments. I am fighting depression and other symptoms that affect both my body and my mind. I am horrible at asking for help as I deal with a pride issue as well. I am putting the pride aside and asking for prayers. If it is not meant to be that God heals me, I ask that through this, I learn to be a better Christian and a better witness to His glory! I thank you in advance for your prayers and for your concern. —*Jeff Wendel*

## **Question: "What is the Christian view of retirement?"**

**Answer:** As Christians approach retirement age, they often wonder what a Christian should do during the retirement years. Do Christians retire from Christian service when they retire from the workplace? How should a Christian view retirement?

**1)** Although there is no biblical principle that a person should retire from his work when he reaches a certain age, there is the example of the Levites and their work in the tabernacle. In Numbers 4, the Levite males are numbered for service in the tabernacle from ages 25-50 years old, and after age 50, they were to retire from regular service. They could continue to "assist their brothers" but could not continue to work (Numbers 8:24-26).

**2)** Even though we may retire from our vocations (even "full-time" Christian ministry), we should never retire from serving the Lord, although the way we serve Him may change. There is the example of two very old people in Luke 2:25-38 (Simeon and Anna) who continued to serve the Lord faithfully. Anna was an elderly widow who ministered in the temple daily with fasting and prayer. Titus 2 states that the older men and women are to teach, by example, younger men and women how to live.

**3)** One's older years are not to be spent solely in the pursuit of pleasure. Paul says that the widow who lives for pleasure is dead while she yet lives (1 Timothy 5:6). Contrary to biblical instruction, many people equate retire-

ment with "pursuit of pleasure" if at all possible. This is not to say that retirees cannot enjoy golf, social functions, or pleasurable pursuits. But these should not be the primary focus of one's life at any age.

**4)** Second Corinthians 12:14 states that the parent ought to save up for the children. But by far the greatest thing to "save up" is one's spiritual heritage, which can be passed on to children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Generations of descendants have been impacted by the faithful prayers of an elderly family "patriarch" or "matriarch." Prayer is perhaps the most fruitful ministry outlet for those who have retired.

The Christian never retires from Christ's service; he only changes the address of his workplace. In summary, as one reaches "retirement age" (whatever that is) the vocation may change but one's life work of serving the Lord does not change. Often it is these "senior saints" who, after a lifetime of walking with God, are able to convey the truths of God's Word by relating how God has worked in their lives. The psalmist's prayer should be our prayer as we age: "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come" (Psalm 71:18).

**We appreciate all our partners and donors. It is your support that enables us to assist individuals back into society as new brothers and sisters in Christ.**

