

October 2018

→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

*David Nichols — President (405) 613-3120*  
*Dondino Melchorie — V.P. (702) 688-3165*  
*Ron Minnick — Sec. Treasurer (405) 473-2378*

# UPDATE

Giving birth to something can be very painful. I remember the birth of our oldest son. My wife was in labor nineteen hours. She had the pain and I had stress. I wished I could save her the pain but I couldn't. At the same time, we anticipated what was ahead— a new person from our own flesh. Once he arrived, there was joy and the memory of pain began to fade. You never forget the memories, but the joy far outweighs the pain.

Giving birth to anything can be very similar. It's been said, "Anything worth anything costs you something. And the greater the cost, the greater the reward." Hand Up has been no exception. Since it's inception, it's been a struggle to keep it alive until birth or "established". The cost has been more than anticipated. It almost cost my own life in the process. We're almost to the birth stage. It will soon become a life of it's own. We'll still have to nurture and protect it, but if something happens to me, someone else can fill that place in it's life. But I'm going to enjoy bringing it up as long as I am

able. And all of it through the grace of God.

It will take another month for the CPA to establish our books to the bank's satisfaction. Then we will let you know what happens. It still may not be easy, and I doubt peoples attitudes will change right away, but it will be harder to kill legally and people will begin to see the results.

— *David Nichols*

# Projects!

While we don't have enough material to finish all the skirting, we at least got most of the mobile home skirted at campus one. It will take another \$10,000 to skirt campus 2. We try to use R-Panel sheet metal. We buy as much used as we can. We will paint everything later.

We've also been roofing a lot. I brought a load of seconds from Dallas area that I bought for \$20 a square. That is almost gone. We pray for more.

Paint is also an issue. Especially white, both indoor and outdoor. We can tint it ourselves. We do not like purple or pink but would consider it if we have to.

We are also about finished with two or more trailer apartments. That

will give us a total of 13. When we get more money, it will go a lot faster. We will eventually build about 50 more. At some point we hope to start building permanent structures. We would like to keep as many of the mentally ill off the streets as possible, Prison is not where they belong and it is also way too costly on our society. We already save our state millions with each year, and we hope to multiply that many times over.

Another goal we want to achieve soon is a apples to apples recidivism study. We want to find a trustable source to do the study that will not be biased. — *David Nichols*

## TESTIMONY

When we are kids we expect life to be easy, and we expect to be protected by our parents and taught social skills. This wasn't the case with me. My mother left my father when I was four, and she got with a man who was mentally and physically abusive. I was abused on a regular basis, even over the smallest things. I started using drugs when I was fifteen so I could forget what was going on in my life. Drugs were a way to rebel. I was out of control when I was sixteen, and my mother sent me to a group home. Life was no better when

I got older.

I thought no one cared, not even God. I didn't understand how a loving God could allow these things to happen, so I stopped believing in God. I served a prison sentence, and I still didn't want to believe in God. This changed when I went to prison a second time. I saw what God could do, and I started going to service and taking it seriously.

I didn't know about Hand Up until someone handed me the paperwork for it. I thought it over, and I decided it was a good choice. If it wasn't for Hand Up I would be homeless, and I would most likely be in jail. Everyone here has been in prison or on probation, even the staff. They understand what it is like, and they go out of their way to make sure things go as smooth as possible. They help you as much as possible.

Without a doubt I believe God put me here to get stronger in Him and reassure me that there are people out there who care. I feel blessed by this. I give thanks to God, and I am honored to be part of the Hand Up family.

—*Marc Shirley*

## PERSEVERANCE

If God knows all things and if God desires to give His children good things and if God hears us the first time that we pray, then why does God ask us to persist in prayer? Is there a time we should give up and stop asking?

Two parables of Jesus make the point.

The first is from Luke 18, the story of a widow who has been mistreated.

Day after day she brings her case before a judge who “neither feared God nor cared what people thought.” The judge is at first indifferent to the widow’s request, but then he is compelled to reconsider because she refuses to take “no” for an answer. He finally relents, saying to himself, “Though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.”

Jesus’ point is not that God is like an insensitive judge who must be badgered to respond to our request, but that how much more will God, our good judge and father, “bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night?” That is certainly how Luke understands the parable, for he prefaces it with the words, “And [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.”

Luke’s choice of wording, “lose heart,” suggests what is precisely our experience in waiting. God delays in answering our requests and we are disappointed, tempted to give up, to lose heart. Which is why Jesus concludes the parable with a rhetorical question, “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?” suggesting that unanswered prayers test our faith. We meet that test when we keep praying and don’t lose heart, in spite of our frustration, our disappointment.

Another parable from Luke 11 makes the same point. Jesus says, “I tell you, even though he (the neighbor in Jesus’ parable) will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your impudence or shameless persistence he will surely get up and give you as much as you

need.” Jesus concludes, “Ask and it will be given to you.” God wants us to persevere in prayer.

Once you start to think about it, it might raise other, even more troubling questions: Why should we have to keep asking God for what He knows we need? Does God need to be nagged? If we don’t need what we pray for, it won’t matter how long we persist in prayer, nothing will persuade God. If we do need it, it is odd that we have to ask more than once or even ask in the first place.

### **Persistence is for Our Sake, not God’s**

If we always got exactly what we wanted the first time we asked, we would inevitably begin to treat God as our genie, only summoned forth to give us our hearts’ desires. But that is precisely what prayer calls into question: What do you really want?

Persistence compels us to the true center of prayer, which is not something but someone. Persistence deepens our relationship with God and compels the heart to examine what it really wants most. Do you want God’s will? Do you want God even more than you want what you are asking for? If not, then for God to grant what you are asking for, even if it is a good thing, might be the most unloving thing God could ever do.

Persistence demands patience, waiting. This is the ground of spiritual growth, spiritual vitality, and health! Because our natural inclination is to use God and not to love God, only frustrations in prayer can purge and purify our desires. Henri Nouwen captures the idea beautifully, “you must be patient...until your hands are completely open.” Perhaps God desires to give you exact-

ly what you have asked for, but only in a time and way that the gift can truly benefit you instead of harming you.

“I prayed for many things,” writes John Chrysostom, “and was not heard. For even this occurs to your advantage. Since God realizes that you lost heart and are indolent, and that when you attain what you need, you depart and no longer pray, God protects you with the pretext of need so that you may concern yourself with Him more closely and devote yourself to prayer.”

God uses persistence in prayer to purge our desires. God also uses persistence in prayer to mold, even transform, our desires, to change how we pray and even what we are praying for so that we gradually come to pray closer to the heart of God’s will. For example, you might have prayed for years for your child or your parents to have a good marriage. And it doesn’t happen. You watch them divorce, but over time your prayer changes. You begin to pray that God will use that failure to move them closer to Him. (I’ll reserve for another time a question you might have right about now: “What if that was my initial prayer – for God to save their souls? Why doesn’t God answer a prayer that seems so in line with His will?” Good question.)

The Apostle Paul prayed three times for a “thorn in the flesh” to be removed. He never tells us what it is, simply that it is painful, a source of torment, “a messenger of Satan.” When God didn’t answer his prayer as asked, Paul changed how he was praying. He prayed that God would help him to rely on God’s grace, God’s strength, God’s power, which was made perfect in Paul’s weakness.

No doubt you have your story of frustrations in prayer. Take heart. Persis-

tence does not guarantee that you will get what you asked for, but it does promise you will get something better and actually closer to your heart’s deepest desire. God will answer your prayers. Perhaps not when we wanted or even HOW we wanted, but in a way that we truly longed for in the depths of our soul.

Most importantly, persist with God in confidence that He persists and has persisted with you. In Genesis 3, God asked Adam, “Where are you?” and the whole Bible is the story of God’s relentless pursuit of a relationship with us. God won’t take NO for our answer. The Bible daringly depicts God as the spurned lover who will never give up, the abandoned Father who relentlessly draws back his wayward children, sometimes with discipline but always with the cords of kindness. God never gives up on you, so don’t give up. Persist in prayer. As it was with Jacob, the LORD actually wants us to wrestle with Him, to wrestle in prayer, as if our life depended on it. Which it does.

—Jeff Wendel

**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.**

