

December 2017

→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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

# UPDATE

We hope everyone enjoyed the holidays. We managed to have a big meal for the men at HUM 1. Most people have a lot to be thankful for. But others have nothing but life itself. I was driving down the street this morning and saw a row of tents no longer being hidden by the leaves of the trees. This particular community happened to be all sex offenders. Online records today show 440 living homeless but obeying the law by registering each week. Soon someone will complain and the city will make them move to another spot until someone complains there. These men cannot get a job without a vehicle and cannot get a vehicle without a job. If you are one of the 440 who did their time and now sentenced to live like this, you probably would feel you had nothing to be thankful for. Quoting an employee from the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, "Around 80% of all inmates have mental illness." Most of these 440, if not all, are mentally ill. Many of them are so much so, they couldn't work a job. And it was so-called

Christians who voted to make them live this way, so they don't trust us or any Christian. Many of them turn to drugs to self-medicate or have any feeling at all. Laws are good if they are good laws, and prison is good for those who deserve it. But when they have paid their dues, treating them worse than we do any of our animals is pure stupidity; and that is just from the human or earthy side of things. And for Christians who haven't read the Bible or understood it, it's not just stupid, it is sin and serious at that. Read Matthew Chapter 25:21 thru 48. Hate laws are not Christian laws, but God's laws are, and we will be either on the right or the left. We can make excuses for not obeying God's law, but it won't stand in judgement. So when you are enjoying this holiday season, think about the homeless. Around December 7th, it is supposed to get below freezing and these tents don't have central heat. And prayer only works if it is followed by action. Yes, I am mad about the hurting and senseless and inhumane treatment of human beings, even of the ones who may not be Christians. They never will be if they never see Christ in us. If this upsets you, good. It makes you make a decision to get on board or turn away. God wants you hot or cold, not indifferent. If you could see what I see, you might lose faith in mankind. But again, you might find the real God

who loves sinners so much He gave His only son for them. I went to jail for them in 2010 for just helping them, but I didn't do it quietly and I'm not stopping now. I may be 68, but God put fire in these old bones and it hasn't stopped burning. And as long as I have men coming to me wanting to be saved after hearing the Word, I know the fire of the Spirit is still at work. May God bless us and help us to bless others.

Thank you for your prayer and support, and may everyone have a great Christmas and beyond.—*David Nichols*

## MY TESTIMONY

My name is Ivan Barger, and I am 48 years old. I have been to prison four times, and I finished a five year sentence on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017. I had no place to live. An overwhelming feeling of doom and depression was ruling my life.

I had never been to close to God. Not only had I never had a relationship with Him, but I had never read the Bible, nor had I ever really prayed. I was about to give up. Prison was who and what I was. I decided to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I began to pray, and things started to happen for me. I started learning, and I began trying to

love the people around me. I even tried to love people I hadn't previously cared for. I was accepted into Hand Up Ministry, which was a major moment for me. My prayers had been answered! I had a place to live. I continued, and still continue, to get on my knees and talk to our Father above.

I began trying to find work when I arrived at Hand Up. Thoughts of doubt started filtering back into my mind. One night while praying I put my faith in God and I put everything into His hands. Two days later I had a job! The more I talk to God, read the Word and pray, the better my quality of life gets in every way. Jesus is my Savior. Because of John 3:16, I have a new life at 48!

## Overcoming Regrets

Do you ever feel like your regrets are haunting you like ghosts from your past?

I used to allow regrets over things I've said or wished I had said and things I've done or wish I had done, to steal my joy, peace and hope. I became so aggravated with these condemning "ghosts" of regret that I finally decided to figure out how to defeat them. The following "battleplan" (for conquering regrets) has helped me and I hope it might help others dealing with this problem too.

**Defining this enemy**

Even though I knew what the word *regret* meant, I began by looking up the definition, which, according to Webster's Dictionary, is: "*sorrow aroused by*

*circumstances beyond one's control or power to repair: an expression of distressing emotion (as sorrow)"*

I also noticed that *repent* is one of the synonyms for the word *regret*. I suppose this makes sense in one way; it's the same thing to feel *regretful* and *repentant* (over something we've said or done). But, from the Christian point of view, there's a contradiction between the definition of regret and the synonym of repent. The definition says that regret is "*beyond one's control or power to repair,*" but the Bible repeatedly tells us that repentance *is* the "power to repair" (regrets, guilt and shame). I just had this thought: *If regretting and repenting were synonymous, repenting of something we regretted would be redundant.*

The Apostle Paul wrote; "*...the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world (by Webster's definition) produces death.*" (*spiritual, emotional and even physical death*) (2 Corinthians 7:10)

Here's an example of what Paul meant: Judas regretted betraying Jesus (Matthew 27:3), but he didn't repent of his betrayal and his failure to repent "produced death." Whereas Peter regretted denying Jesus (Matthew 26:75), but he repented and moved on.

### **Defeating the enemy**

I know that Peter, Paul and all Christians regret mistakes and past wrongdoing, but if we truly believe that "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9), we'll get to the place where our regrets no

longer have the power to control our emotions; we'll begin to put them into perspective by understanding how God is making good result from our failures.

As I'm sure you've figured out by now, I've come to the conclusion that these feelings of oppressive regret and condemnation are not from God. I think that many of us won't release these feelings of regret because we wrongly believe that to feel regret is to be repentant. But the Bible tells us that the Christian life is a spiritually and emotionally "abundant life;" a life of joy, peace and hope. These uplifting things that sustain us through even the most difficult trials cannot possibly coexist with feelings of guilt, regret and despair.

I believe the first step to putting your regrets behind you, where they belong, is to quit allowing them to attack your mind as a force – divide and conquer them. When regrets come to your mind, begin to categorize them. For instance, if the regret is over something that's in your power to resolve; like apologizing to someone or paying back money you've borrowed etc., take the actions needed to resolve that regret. This category might be what the Bible calls "the conviction of the Holy Spirit," which prompts us to act according to God's will – it works with our conscience. It's vital to resolve this category in order to have a good (guilt-free) relationship with God – "*...if our conscience is clear, we can come to God with bold confidence.*" (1 John 3:21 NLT)

Another category, which was a big "ghost" for me since losing family while I was in prison, was regrets I harbored regarding things I said or wished I had said to loved-ones that have passed away. I am no longer haunted by this ghost; he faded away when I realized that I don't want my memory to evoke feelings of

guilt and regret (for my family and friends) when I'm gone, and I know those that I've lost didn't want me carrying around that burden either.

There are many other categories of regret; times we've sinned against God and hurt others, relationship mistakes, bad investment mistakes and so on, but none of these categories control my emotions any longer, and I believe it's God's will for every Christian to overcome oppressive feelings of guilt and regret.

You may wonder, as I did, what the source of these feelings of regret and false-guilt is if it's not from God, as the Bible says – *"...there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1)

That means the source must be our carnal nature ("self-condemnation") and/or an outside dark spiritual force. I believe it's probably some of both. The Bible tells believers that our *old nature* is at war with our *new nature*: *"...the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh..."* (Galatians 5:17). The Bible also says that Satan is our "accuser" (Revelation 12:10) and that he attempts to negatively influence our mind, will and emotions through people and in other ways.

But regardless of what the source is, it's clear that the last thing any negative source wants is for regretful thoughts to provoke thanks-giving to God, so this is the most powerful weapon against these things. Form a habit of thanking God for forgiving you (of the things you regret) every time a regret comes to mind. I promise you that the power these regrets have to cause sadness and feelings of shame and condemnation will begin to diminish and you will start to see your past in

its proper context – God's context.

The Apostle Paul is an excellent example of putting regrets in the proper context. He repeatedly referred back to his regrets of persecuting, imprisoning and even participating in the killing of Christians; he even said that he wasn't even *"fit to be called an apostle..."* (1 Corinthians 15:9). But then he added the following words that I've adopted and hope every follower of Christ will apply to themselves – *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain..."* (1 Corinthians 15:10)

If we're allowing our regrets to affect our joy, peace and hope, His grace is proving to be vain to us; we're essentially telling Jesus that His suffering and death wasn't enough to take away our former sins and mistakes. It's a new year; it's time to let your regrets go!

*"...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

*"... one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 3:13-14)

You can never go back and change your past, but you can start where you are and change your future.

—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.**

