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→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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UPDATE

My apologies for being late again getting this out. Thirty days go by faster than I can keep up with.

Bobby's wedding was great and they got settled into their rebuilt mobile home at our HUM II park. We have five more homes to remodel there. That means room for five more couples when we can get them done. That may not be a big deal unless you are one of the five.

In three months, I will have done this for 20 years. What I have learned has changed me dramatically. Before I had a lot of interaction with people I thought were my friends. Many may still be, but I've watched what happens when people are put in the grinder of political correctness and what they can lose if they try to fight it. I'm not sorry I've stood on what I believed. I am not sorry what it cost me. But now I hesitate putting people in a position of having to choose. I have trouble trusting anyone but God. I have no fear of talking to anyone on earth. But I find myself avoiding people as much as possible. And though I don't intentionally sin, I find myself bombarded by people with messed up lives, bad choices, lost family and friends, lost dreams, bad mental and/

or physical problems, no hope in the world, and no proper friends to turn to. Most have a life-long history of abusive and ungodly environment, bad influence and examples, wrong or no teaching, and the list goes on. These are sheep who have never known a shepherd; condemned by society, rejected by family (if they ever had family), not worthy of redemption in mans' eyes; sentenced to a life of hurt, pain, anger, and destruction. In another time, their friends would have been Mary Magdalene, who Jesus cast out seven devils; the one who washed Jesus' feet with her hair and expensive ointment, and whose brother Jesus raised from the dead, and the whole family became Jesus' close friends.

I'll share one of these friends with you. His name is Josh. The State was about to put Josh onto the streets. Josh has severe mental issues and his case manager asked us to help. I agreed to try. Josh came to Hand Up a year or so ago. Severely abused all his life, Josh had suppressed hurt and anger, wore dark and evil clothing, liked to draw dark and evil things, etc. I will not even attempt to describe what he has been through. He wanted to help out though, so he bugged everyone to the point they wanted him gone. I refused to put him on the streets, so we tried everything to find him a place to go; all to no avail. We got him wearing decent

clothing. He is getting better at cleaning his trailer. I asked him what 2X2 equaled and he didn't know. Since we had prayed for him, I believe God can do anything. I asked him what they had tried to teach him in school. He told me they just passed him on through. So I gave him a multiplication chart and asked him to study it until he had it memorized. In one week he was tested on a 1 thru 12 chart. He passed over 80%. The second week he passed over 90%. I verbally tested him and he got 100% of everything I asked him up to 12X12. Now we have someone tutoring him in math and spelling. My goal is to get him to where he can pass a GED test and be able to function at something he can do. The anger and bitterness is gone. God loves the impossible. Pray for Josh.

Please help me raise the money for the chapel building. This small tent is really getting old. The wood pallets and plywood on the floor are rotting also.— *David Nichols*

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

If you or your family have ever been affected by a natural disaster and if you live in Oklahoma, chances are that you have, you may feel as if you've been abandoned by God. However, if trouble has hit your life in some other

disaster or form of tragedy—the death of a loved one, a dreaded medical diagnosis, the loss of home and property, or the loss of your job, you are experiencing your own whirlwind. You may feel as if your whole world has been turned upside down and wonder how you can possibly survive the loss. In times like these, you can feel very much alone.

But you are not alone. In the midst of unspeakable sorrow, God is with you. Even if you do not feel Him near, God is there. He promises to never leave you alone. Therefore, wherever you are, God is. He is with you before, during, and after the storm, never losing sight of you, or your suffering. Even as you ponder how you will begin picking up the pieces of your life, God is there; loving you beyond understanding, holding you up, and making a way where it seems there is no way. He is a very present help in times of trouble.

God knows in great detail the devastation caused by tragedy. He understands the pain and sorrow acquainted with grief and loss. He understands because He is all knowing. Jesus endured suffering and experienced pain—even the pain of feeling abandoned. And because God is with you always, He knows that you are hurting. He sees your pain, and hears the cries of your heart. You are not alone in your suffering; He is there for you.

God cares very deeply about you, and is attentive to every detail of your life—even those things that burden your heart. First Peter 5:7 says that you should cast "all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you." Isn't it comforting to know that God Almighty cares about you! It may seem like your life has been shaken to the core, but His love for you is never shaken. *"For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken," says the Lord who has compassion on you*" (Isaiah 54:10).

No matter how bad things may seem, God is in control. Nothing happens without His knowledge. Matthew 10:29-31 says,

"Not one sparrow (What do they cost? Two for a penny?) can fall without your Father knowing it. ... So don't worry! You are more valuable to Him than many sparrows." If God's eye is on the sparrow, He's most certainly watching you. In the midst of sadness and uncertainty, His hand is there to guide you; His strength is there to support you. You are never out of His reach. *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.* (Psalm 73:26)

Take from a man his wealth, and you hinder him; take from him his purpose, and you slow him down. But take from man his hope, and you stop him. He can go on without wealth, and even without purpose, for a while. But he will not go on without hope. —C. Neil Strait As you think about your own circumstances, you may feel completely discouraged. The reality of what you are facing can seem so overwhelming that you might feel like giving up. But don't give up. The circumstances may be too difficult in human terms, but in Christ there is always hope. *"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. 'They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope'"* (Jeremiah 29:11).

When you consider all that you are facing, ask yourself, "Is there anything too hard for God?" Absolutely nothing! No matter what is going on in your life, you can trust that He is in control, and is working everything out for your good. When you wake up in the morning and wonder how you will face the day, God is working it out. When you wonder how you can get through and overcome this difficult time, God is working it out. And when you lay down at night, wondering how you will face the challenges of tomorrow, whatever they may be, God is already working it out. God knows intimately the concerns of your heart, and can provide all the peace, strength, and courage you need. So don't give up! Hope ... and persevere!

Throughout the Bible, God makes it clear that our prayers are very important to

Him. He loves for us to talk with Him, just as we would our closest friend, and promises to be there for us whenever we call. He says, *"Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart"* (Jeremiah 29:13).

He wants you to tell Him about your burdens, and to give Him all your cares, so that He can bring hope to your heart, peace to your soul, and strength to your life. But even when you're at a loss for words, and don't know what to pray, the Holy Spirit Himself speaks on your behalf. Yet God is not only interested in your struggles. He wants you to talk with Him about everything, from your smallest victories to your greatest fears and all things in between.

Isn't it good to know that you have a direct line to God? That He is available to talk to you anytime, day or night? In fact, you can talk to Him right now. Tell Him how you're feeling; that you're hurting. Tell Him about your disappointment. Talk to Him about your anger and your pain. Tell Him how you love Him and need Him so. He hears your weeping, your requests, your praise, and thanksgiving. Prayer moves God. And when He moves in your life, you will feel His presence, experience His peace, and draw from His strength in ways you never thought possible!

— 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.



A LETTER FROM ODOC

David,

This week is National Volunteer Week and we just wanted to say thank you for serving as a volunteer with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections.

We realize that we could not fulfill our mission without you, especially when it comes to inmate rehabilitation. During last week's Board of Corrections meeting, the attached resolution was passed recognizing National Volunteer Week and all those that serve as volunteers with our agency.

A lot of people see the problems and needs in the world, but you are among those that do more than just take notice - you dedicate your time and energy to make a difference. Whether it is providing religious services that foster spiritual renewal and growth or offering one of the multitude of programs that help those incarcerated deal with the issues in their life, or helping fill the gaps in the agency by providing staff support - you are making a difference!

Thank you again for all you do,

Leo E. Brown

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TESTIMONY

Long ago, before I knew Christ, my life was a complete mess. The only way I could hear from my Father was when I did wrong. My teenage years and up became nothing but trouble. I heard from my Father a lot then. My mistake was, I was not listening to my heavenly Father at all.

Then I ended up in prison. I lost my Father just before that. Now I started to find my heavenly Father. Then I started studying. First it was something to bide my time. It was not a year later when He opened my eyes to see Him. Now my studying and Christian life intensified. I found God!

God led me to Hand Up ministries. Here I found a way I can be a free man and still walk with God. Hand Up Ministries gives me freedom and accountability. Hand Up Ministries, David Nichols, and staff have shown me how to walk as a man in Christ, instead of a convict.
L. R. Wilkes