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→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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# UPDATE

I didn't send a newsletter in August. My cup ran over and I had some depression. We had a lot of turnover, lower income, and Satan's attack was relentless. Nevertheless, we are more than conquerors and are still tearing down gates and everything that exalts itself against Christ. We give a lot of people the tools they need to get started in life, but the material things are neither the biggest gift, nor the best.

The tearing down of strongholds in their spirit and soul is much more than what the mind can imagine. The carnal wisdom of the world is to put down a person, control them with fear and threats, and think torture and punishment is the only answer to man's evil heart. But we have proved God's grace and power are the only cure for the sinful heart, even beyond imagination. One of my goals is to get more testimonies sent out. This takes time and work, so pray for us.

The thing I notice that is most important with helping people change is that "Love covers a multitude of sin." Once a person sees God's love toward them, hope is born. The devil cannot stop hope from transforming into faith unless he can stop the love that breeds it. If his "self-condemnation" tactic

starts losing ground, then he quickly brings in some religious person who can quickly judge and reinforce the condemnation. After a while, they've taught the convert how to be a good religious person who doesn't rock the boat. Since they are now no threat, Satan puts his efforts somewhere else. He lets the carnal mind work for him. Satan won the heart of man when Adam gave it to him through disobedience to God. Christ paid the penalty so man could give it back to God by choice. We still have the choice to walk in the Spirit or in the flesh. Our efforts at Hand Up are to persuade men to choose to renew the mind to follow God. All of our choices have results. Let's choose life. If our mind dwells on the things above, we will choose spiritual things. If our mind dwells on earthly things, we will choose carnal things. May God help us live to please God.

We don't have funds yet for a chapel, and winter is coming up. Since the law here requires most of our men to be escorted into and out of a church building, outside church is not a good experience. We would ask that everyone pray that the churches pitch in to build a metal building for these men to worship in, so the lepers of this day can have a place to worship. Please help the least of these. —*David Nichols*

## MY TESTIMONY

My name is Randy Crawford and I used to be a real loser. I manipulated the system every-which-way I could, which un-

fortunately included everyone who tried to help me along the way. A real eye opener for me was turning 50 in prison due to that way of thinking. I used to believe, "It's okay. I can get drunk or stoned tonight and all I'll have to do is

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repent tomorrow; all will be fine!"

It took me over 40 years to utterly and completely destroy my life beyond my repair. Through pride, self-centeredness, and thinking I was intelligent enough to direct my own life, I became a slave to my sin nature. I allowed worldly vices to govern my life; if I didn't like how I was feeling, I would just use some external stimuli to change it. I used drugs, booze, even women... whatever it took. Now as I look back, I see that I let my emotions rule my life. My emotions were my "idols."

In September of 2012, I got down on my knees and asked God to take my life. Either by death or by Him using me as He pleased, even if it meant staying in prison to witness to others. I was ready. When I reached that point of total submission, Father God began to really work in my life! He has brought me from a 6th grade level education to obtaining my General Education Diploma in less than one year! I'm in Career Tech now and I've completed level I

carpentry along with levels I & II for plumbing.

From now on, I just want to do the right things and continue to stay in Father God's perfect will for my life. That makes me feel better than any drug or bottle ever could, and with a plus; no hangover! I'm so glad I finally realized my situation and turned my life over to Father God through Jesus Christ. Now I live in obedience, and this is my testimony. God Bless. — *Randy Crawford*

(Randy is back at Hand Up—second time. The testimony came while back in. The second half of the testimony will be included in the next newsletter.)

## How to Get UP When You're Down

We all have storms and difficulties. But what many of us experience goes beyond just feeling "down." It becomes depression — a despair so deep it has put many in the hospital and quite a few in the grave. Depression is a killer, and God's people are not immune.

Feeling "down" is like a thunderstorm that comes and goes, but depression is a lingering fog that takes the sunshine out of life. Hopelessness overshadows life. We think we may never recover. We wonder, "Will I ever know joy? Will I ever smile again?"

If this sounds familiar, you're in good company. Some of God's greatest servants found themselves there.

Moses got so depressed, he asked God to kill him. Jonah did the same. Elijah sat under a juniper tree and wished he might die. The apostle Paul talked of despairing even of life. John the Baptist's despair had him doubting for a moment that Jesus was the Messiah.

Winston Churchill called depression "a black dog" chasing after him. Charles Spurgeon, perhaps the greatest preacher who ever lived, had times of depression. So did Abraham Lincoln.

And so did King David, a man after

God's own heart. Betrayed by Absalom, a beloved son, David lost his wealth, home, power, and fled for his life. Absalom is killed and David weeps, "...would to God I had died for thee, Absalom."

On top of that, David had sinned against God and lost an infant child he loved. Things could not have looked worse when he penned Psalm 42, almost a clinical description of depression. But God has made provision. You don't have to be depressed. Psalm 42 gives you three things to do.

**Look within** - analyze your heart. David began talking to himself - to his soul. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me?" (Psalm 42:5). The soul is the "you" that lives inside, your emotions, mind, and will.

**Someone inside** - that old nature, unredeemed, unsanctified - is constantly talking to you, saying, "You have reason to feel sorry for yourself. You'll never make it. Life isn't worth living." This is where you must take control. Take your soul by the nape of the neck, look your soul straight in the eye and say, "Soul, why are you feeling this way?" That's what David did (v. 5).

**Look upward** - recognize your help. You may have good reasons to be depressed. You may feel God has let you down - David felt that way. You may have a broken heart. Perhaps you're haunted by the ghost of guilt. But God has not forgotten. Pour your grief out to God. He knows, understands, and cares. He is your help even when you cannot understand. Life is not over for you.

Yet the LORD will command His lovingkindness in the day time, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. (v. 8)

David looks upward. "God, You are my help, my hope; You will command Your lovingkindness to me."

**Look onward** - realize your hope. ...*Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise*

*Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* (v. 11)

You are here by God's appointment, in His keeping, under His training, for His time. No matter what is happening, it's not God's final plan. However bleak your circumstances, God is with you. "*For I know the thoughts I think toward you, sayeth the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*" (Jeremiah 29:11)

And hope does not mean a vain wish. It is a definite assurance based in anticipation. Don't lose hope! God has a future filled with hope for you. God loves you and He's going to meet the deepest needs of your heart. He's going to turn your Calvary into an Easter and your heartache to a hallelujah.

So don't let Satan blow out the candle of hope in your life. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice. Though Christians are not immune to trials, tribulation, pain and suffering, take comfort in knowing God will see you through. —*Jeff Wendel*

## ***It's God's Money***

### **I. He is the owner, I am the manager**

Everything I have today comes from God. It is His; I own nothing. David said that "the world and everything in it" belongs to God (Psalm 89:11). I am not the owner of the things in my life; as a steward, I am merely the manager. If I believe that I am the owner, then I am constantly going to be in conflict with God over what I do with the things that I have. But when I understand that the Lord is the owner, and I am only the manager, the conflict disappears, and freedom overtakes my life. It all belongs to God.

### **II. As a manager I have a divine responsibility**

If God is the owner, then I am the manager whom He has trusted with His property. I must learn to think, therefore, like His manager. A manager oversees the owner's assets for the owner's benefit. A manager car-

ries no sense of entitlement to the assets he or she manages. The job of a manager is to find out what the owner wants done with His assets and then to carry out His will. This understanding affects how we give.

#### **A. Give abundantly**

King David, then the most powerful man on earth, understood this owner-manager relationship. After receiving a tremendous offering, David responded to God...

"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? For everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your own hand." 1 Chron. 29:14 (HCSB)

#### **B. Give sacrificially**

In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul tells of Macedonian Christians and their sacrificial giving. Paul testifies here of the Macedonian believers...

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God granted to the churches of Macedonia: during a severe testing by affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their generosity. I testify that, on their own, according to their ability and beyond their ability, they begged us insistently for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints, and not just as we had hoped. Instead, they gave themselves especially to the Lord, then to us by God's will. 2 Cor 8:1-5 (HCSB)

#### **C. Give joyfully**

Have you ever wondered why the Bible says that "God loves a cheerful giver?" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Joyful giving is a sign that the givers understand the owner-manager relationship. Cheerful giving can only come from a heart set on things above, not on earthly things (see Colossians 3:1). God loves a cheerful giver because such givers are investing in heaven, which reaps eternal dividends.

We give because everything is God's to begin with. The Scriptures teach us, both by mandate and model, that we are to give abundantly, joyfully, and sacrificially.

### **III. The manager will give an accounting**

I am held accountable to God because He, as the Owner, has expectations of the manager. The Owner has complete right to a full disclosure of what's been done with His property. Our managing His property will undergo a job performance evaluation. (Read Romans 14:10-12.)

Each will give a personal account to God. God will want to know what we have done with the possessions He has entrusted into our care. Here are a few areas of inspection.

#### **A. Ourselves**

The Owner will check how devoted we have been to Him. That's why Paul wrote in Romans 12:1, "Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship." (HCSB) Paul says a proper and spiritual act of worship is to give yourself fully to your Owner to be used as His servant.

#### **B. Our possessions**

He will also hold me accountable for what I've done with the things He has entrusted to me. One of the final parables Jesus gave concerned a master who entrusted his possessions to three servants while he was away. The master, after returning, held each servant responsible for how he had used or invested what had been entrusted to him

#### **C. Our time**

Look at Ephesians 5:15-17: "Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk - not as unwise people but as wise - making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." (HCSB)

#### **D. Our abilities**

The owner will examine what we have done with the gifts and abilities He has granted us, (Read 1 Pet. 4:10). God, my Owner, expects me to take the spiritual gifts and abilities He has handed me and use them for His glory.

God has entrusted to my management time, possessions, abilities, and even my very being. I will be accountable for all these things and how I used them. Serve Him and grow to think and care and love like He does. —Jeff Wendel