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→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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UPDATE

Someone must have stepped on the gas. It is already February, and it seems like we just got through Christmas. With a New Year comes new changes, new challenges, and, hopefully, a new you. Change is a must, so let's make it a better year and a better you and me. Being over 70 makes me realize it could always be my last year to make a difference. I intend to try.

By the time you get this newsletter, we will have met with the officials in the Arkansas Department of Corrections. How fast things will move after that is up to the Lord, but we plan to do our own part. Hand Up has proven to be a place where many men find God, but where all men grow and come to know Him better. We know Arkansas will be the same. Now I have meetings set with a group from Louisiana on February 3rd and 4th. I do not yet know where this will lead, but God knows. Life is hard, but it can certainly be exciting when working with God.

Remember our country in prayer, and, as the Bible teaches us, pray for our leaders. Failing to rebel against Rome's leadership is much of what got Jesus crucified. If He had led a physical rebellion against Rome, they would have been willing to make Him a king. Rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft. Jesus came to deliver us from such. Spiritual bondage is worse than physical bondage. Do not let Satan

deceive us into becoming part of his rebellion.

Our warfare is spiritual. Our fighting is with spirits. Our weapons are spiritual. In these last days, the majority of people believe this is fictional and don't take it seriously. The kingdom of God is not of this world. To the carnal mind, this is fictional. To the spiritual mind, this is life or death. Be a weirdo and take it seriously. They hated Christ, and they will hate you. Walk in the Spirit, and love and pray for those who do not understand God's kingdom. Your future depends on it.

— David Nichols



From the time I first came to Hand Up Ministries early in 2018, I sensed God speaking the word "community" to me concerning the Hand Up campus on 59th street. I didn't think too much of it at the time, but over the last several months, God has been renewing that word in my spirit concerning this ministry. I get the sense that this is how God perceives this ministry and has designed it to be. I believe with all my heart that God's desire for us here at Hand Up

Ministry is greater than just us going through a program as individuals, but that we learn to live and function as a community.

I found several definitions for the word “community,” but the one I like is this: a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals. I fear most of us spend more time trying to function “On our own,” as individuals. We strive to be independent sometimes at our own peril.

Recently, the ministry has had to evict too large a number of individuals due to drugs and alcohol. The overriding theme in each of their stories has been that their relapse was brought on by loneliness or depression surrounding the holidays. Could those stories be different if we thought of ourselves as a community, where we shared interests and goals with one another? Our G-1 groups are designed and purposed to do that, but much of the time we treat G-1 as an imposition on our time and energies. Are we being selfish? Do we understand that we go to G-1 and participate as much for the others who are there as we do for ourselves? That is, if we care about others around us at all.

People who live in a community care about each other. They share entertainment, rides, time, conversation, and many other things. There is plenty of time in our lives for us nurture our own independence, but can we make some time in our lives for others and their needs? Can we check on those who we know are sick, or having trouble with their vehicle, or maybe even make sure they have enough food to eat? Are we too inwardly focused to understand that what happens to our neighbors (or even others in our community) affects us?

We have some common goals; such as staying clean and sober, becoming strong enough to avoid re-offending, and becoming successful in life and business. I

ask you to join me and try to set aside some time to become a part of the life of your neighbors. Consider trying to make some new friends here at Hand Up Ministries this year. Go out of your way to do something special for another resident on this campus. The concept of community doesn't happen just because we live in close proximity to one another. I believe real community has to be intentional. We can become a powerful community of successful men, but it will have to be on purpose and not by accident. To be honest, I have seen some glimpses of this happening in isolated cases here at Hand Up, but not as widespread and as often I would like to see.

Pray about it, I ask you, and see if you agree with me. Does God see us as part of a “community,” or just a neighborhood (that is, just a few blocks of trailers)? I would like to live in, and be part of, something special like a genuine community of men who share things in common and support one another to the point of seeing everyone succeed. How about you?

— Ray Riddle



TESTIMONIES

God was always in my life in some way or another. As a child, I watched my relatives receive letters from Jimmy Swaggert or Oral

Roberts promising that for a small donation all their prayers would be answered. Church was a place the adults sent us so they could have the day to themselves. After my parents divorced, I was moved from house to house and state to state, because no one wanted the responsibility. This led to me being sexually and physically abused.

Finally, after much running away, I was sent to Christian home for children. This was where I learned about God from some very good people. Our minister took me under his wing, and he taught me about sermon outline structure, how to pick a topic, and how to use a concordance. This led me to win a contest which paid for my tuition at a Christian college in Oklahoma City.

I can't explain it all in a short testimony, but I walked away from the church and into a life of sin. As much energy as I put into worshipping God, I put more energy into sin. Alcohol was the bane of my existence, and I was in and out of relationships every few months. Eventually, this life led me to hurting a lot of people in my life, and I went to prison.

A lot of people's testimonies end where they met God in prison, but not this one. I hated God even more. I was totally convinced God was at the root of all my pain. It was only when I met Cindy that I came to my senses. She was a Christian who hired me to finish her house. We talked a lot about my past, and, instead of judging me, she just listened. After months, she asked this one question. "Who made all of the decisions in your life?" I said it was me. That was when I realized God had nothing to do with my pain. I did.

I read God's word more. I studied more. I prayed more. The more I did these things, the more God gave me understanding and wisdom as to what I needed to do. I had been on the run from the law for a long time. I turned myself in to the authorities, and I expected to receive a life sentence. I was content to serve God wherever He put me. I received a suspended sentence.

I became ill after I was released from jail. I was on the street, and, through God's grace, I found Hand Up Ministries. They took me in without question. They gave me a bed, and they helped me get food and SSI. I have remained faithful to God and my promise to serve Him wherever He put me. Through his goodness, I have a relationship with my

children, which shouldn't have happened. I serve Him through my ministry at Hand Up.



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— *Chaplain Chris Spears*

I was born in Elko, Nevada in 1969. I was born with cerebral palsy. When I was three, I had to have surgery because one leg was shorter than the other. We moved to Texas in 1976, and we started going to church in Texas. After we moved to Texas, we lived in a tent until we moved into a trailer. My grandmother knocked out my teeth when I was seven. I started dipping snuff when I was 13, and I quit going to church when I was a teenager. My sister and I were hauling hay in a wheel barrel once, and the wheel barrel fell over. I got mad at my sister, and I kicked her in the knee with a steel toed boot. I got into trouble for that. I was put into a living center when I was 15, and I had sex with a lady who worked there. She got fired, and I left the center when I was 18. I moved back into my mom's house, and I lived there till I was 20. I started drawing SSI when I was 19, and I moved into a house owned by a family friend.

I worked at a restaurant for about a month, and I quit. I moved into another living center, but I left after two months. I moved back to Granbury, and I lived in a trailer my mom owned. I met a woman I knew in school, and she moved in with me. She got pregnant, and we got married. That was a big mistake. I ended up taking care of my son by myself, but I was talked into putting my son up for adoption. My son has several disabilities. I moved to Ryan, Oklahoma in 1995.

I remarried in May, 1997. I committed a crime in 1999, and I went to prison for four and one half years. I came to Hand Up Ministries in March, 2004. I was a driver for

Hand Up till 2005. I worked for Pizza Hut till 2007. I was arrested for not paying fines in 2007. I became a driver for Lou Davis (Hand Up director and assistant director) in 2008. I did this until Lou retired in 2011. I have been trying to get SSI for many years.



Hand Up has given me a home since 2004. I am very grateful to David Nichols for all that he has done for me.

— Corrie Wade

I was raised as a Jehovah's Witness, and early in life I learned about our heavenly Father Jehovah and His beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord. I did Bible readings in front of the congregation, and I attended our meeting twice a week. As a young child, I did what my parents wanted me to do in our daily life, but I didn't take the teaching of God to heart. I started doing what I wanted to do in my early teen years, and I stopped going to meetings. I didn't care about it anymore.

My parents began having problems in their marriage, and they stopped going to meetings. They divorced, and our family split apart. We all went our separate ways. This was when I went astray from God and started living a life of sin. After this, it seemed whatever I did was wrong, and I sinned again and again. I got far from God. Things just didn't go right for me, and it seemed to be endless.

I became an alcoholic because of the stress of trying to work and stay ahead on the bills. It was all too much for me, and then one night I did the wrong thing. I committed a crime, and I went to prison. Prison was a wakeup call for me. I was scared someone was going to kill me for what I had done. It was four years before I could relax a little. I wanted to keep busy doing something I liked, so I started reading books. I liked to read novels and stories of adventure.

This went well for a while, but I realized I should be reading the Bible instead of other books. I got two Bibles, but

something wasn't right. I wanted to read the Bible I read when I was young. I knew one of the guys in my unit was a Jehovah's Witness, and I asked him to get a Jehovah's Witness Bible for me. He invited me to attend Jehovah's Witness meetings in the chapel. When I went to the meeting, I knew in my heart that was where I needed to be. This happened in January, 2017.

It came time for me to discharge from prison, and I needed to find a place to live. I had no family or friends who could help me. My counselor told me about Hand Up Ministries. I applied to Hand Up, and I was accepted. I had a place to go. Hand Up has helped me get back on my feet, and they gave me encouragement to get a job and become a member of society again. I thank David Nichols for building Hand Up Ministries to give people like me a second chance. I also thank our heavenly Father Jehovah for all things. I have a life with God again. My faith is in Jehovah and our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you.



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— Alan Wickham

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.

