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→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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# UPDATE

I told you God is good. We finally have a good loan offer. Now we have to work on getting everything processed for closing. There are a lot of men who will be glad to know we will have more beds.

There are also many other things going on I can't talk about, but you can rest assured God is still God, and He has compassion on the poor and needy. Too many people cry out to God when in despair, but when God saves them, they tend to think they are better than the next person who is needing God's love. That pride and arrogance makes them like a Pharisee who forgets what he looked like in the mirror. Judgement will not be pretty for them. It is not the unrighteous who have given me problems for helping the people I help, but it is the self-righteous, those who say they are believers. They have forgotten who Jesus was and still is. Repentance must be now while you have time.

Another thing for which God will hold people accountable is their treatment of the mentally ill and the abused. It is more than stupid to put these people in prison for non-violent offenses. It is abuse of power and cowardly, and the authorities do it just to show they are tough on crime. These people need family who cares, and it costs less than 20% of what you can make the taxpayer pay.

Hand Up is in no way a prison or a hospital ward, but we help many of these people. They are made worse by bad practices and spiritual corruption. If politicians are going to spend taxpayer dollars, then they should do what is right and best. They should stand up and take the heat. If your opponent can smear your goodness and cause you to lose the next

election, then He probably doesn't want you to be a career politician. Make your time count. The same is true for pastors who are afraid to take a stand for what Jesus teaches. If the church votes you out, get a job or start a better church. Take a stand, and God will help you.

Just sayin'.



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— David Nichols,  
President & CEO

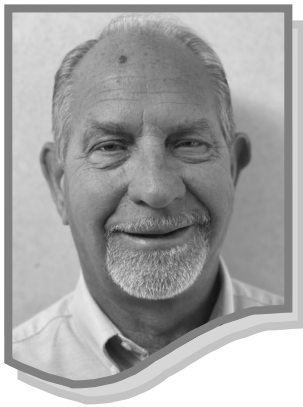
## EXCITING TIMES!

I have never lived in a time when there were more opportunities to do good things. Everywhere you look, there are those who are in despair and who are afraid of what the future is going to bring. At times, it scares me a little bit, but, for me, there is ALWAYS a Hope! I am talking about the Jesus Factor! My Bible tells me that God has a plan for me, and it is a plan for a hope and a future. He has already arranged an "expected end" for me, and it is a good one.

Lately, David Nichols and I have been going into prisons for a program called "Resource Fairs," where the inmates who are getting out of prison in the next year get to meet with vendors like Hand Up and discover what kind of help is available for them as they

prepare for reentry into society. I have been seeing a lot of guys who are scared and fearful about where to go and how they are going to make it. Hand Up is uniquely qualified to offer these guys the most help and, with God's help, present to them a message of hope and help. I have never been more excited for the opportunities I have to share God's message with those who need it most. It is a message of hope through Jesus Christ our Lord. God really does make a difference!

No other program does all of the things Hand Up does to help men coming out of prison get on their feet and start a new path to success. Different organizations offer certain things for which they are qualified, but absolutely no one else does as many things as Hand Up Ministries. What a blessing it is to work within this program to help men who need a positive message. Hand Up is able to demonstrate that message in a powerful and practical way.



I pray God gives us the strength and the resources to not only continue doing what we do, but also to do it better, and for more people, than ever before.

— Ray Riddle,  
Oklahoma Director

## JOHN 2:3

“When all the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, ‘They have no more wine.’”

What Mary was facing here was not a reason to call 911 or the wine police. It

was a snafu, a social problem, a foul-up. It was not on the same scale as a world conflict or a dilemma on a national scale, but it was still an embarrassment. Someone had to deal with this matter.

When you think about it, a lot of issues we deal with are everyday embarrassments, frustrations, and other small issues throughout the day and week. They aren’t something to write home to momma about, but they can turn into something worse if we don’t deal with them. We’re late for work, or a coworker doesn’t show up and you have to cover his shift, traffic gets snarled, etc. The small problems in our lives are not yet threatening, but a poor response to a simple problem can light a fuse.

We need to follow Mary’s example. She could have exploded on those around her, asking why they hadn’t planned better. She could have asked whose fault it was that there wasn’t enough wine. She could have told them they can never do anything right. She could have thought that if there is anything that needs to be done, she would have to do it herself. Does this sound familiar? She could have imploded. It’s my fault. I’m a failure in life. Go ahead and make fun of me. I deserve it.

She simply turned to Jesus with the problem. Sometimes, we forget that the answer to some of our life’s issues is just that simple. KISS (keep it simple, stupid). Yes, she was his mother, and she had witnessed him perform miracles. This is all the more reason to follow her example. She knew that at the point of a small issue in her life, she could turn to her son before the problem grew worse.

In our lives, we need to learn that when small problems arise, we need to turn to Jesus sooner rather than later. We need to turn to Him before the issues get worse and we take it out on the people we love. First, we need to identify the problem. By doing this, we admit that there is an issue that has to be resolved. When you do this, you are halfway there. Second, Jesus is always happy to help, so tell Him about it through prayer. Third, read His word. I have always found the answer in the Bible. Jesus delights when we come to Him with our problems. Psalm 18:19 states, “Because He delights in me, he saved me.”

— Chris Spears,  
Genesis One Coordinator & Chaplain

# TESTIMONIES

My family took me to church when I was a kid. I didn't mind going to church, because I got to dress up. I always enjoyed dressing up. I also got to hang out with my friends, but that was all church was to me. It was never about God. As I got older, I thought to myself my family doesn't go to church, so why should I? I stopped going to church.

Shortly after this, I started smoking pot and drinking alcohol. It got so bad that I couldn't function if I didn't have something in my system. My life was starting to spiral out of control. This was when I went to prison. I spent ten years, two months, and ten days in prison. During that time, I explored alternate religions. I was even a pagan high priest. Nothing seemed to work, but then a friend invited me to go to a Bible study. I wasn't convinced, so researched the archaeology and apologetics behind it to prove it was false, but, to my surprise, it was true. I decided to turn my life over to God.

Some friends told me about Hand Up Ministries, and I applied to Hand Up and was accepted. I was amazed at the love and support everyone gave me.



God has provided me with a good job and people who care about me and help me stay out of prison. Hand Up is a huge blessing in my life, and I don't know what I would do without them.

— *Matt Evans*

I was born in Las Vegas in December of 1992, and I am the youngest of four children. We moved to Oklahoma eight months after I was born. My parents didn't go to church. I went to a Baptist church with my grandmother, and this is how I was introduced to Christianity. As a child, I didn't take my faith too seriously, but a friend invited me to church when I was in high school. I really got into this church, and I was truly seeking the Lord.

However, this church's legalism affected my relationship with God. I had bitterness toward my family, and this affected my relationship with members of the church. I began to withdraw and isolate myself, but I was still participating in church activities.

I wanted to surrender myself completely to the Lord, but I was still holding onto hurts and pains. I wasn't studying the Bible daily, nor was I praying like I should. I was just going through the motions, and I began making bad decisions. I felt condemnation and shame all of the time. All of this emotional turmoil and my struggle with lust led to me committing my crime.

I turned myself into the police, which is what my pastor recommended. I spent five days in the county jail, and then I bonded out of jail. I fought my case for a year and a half. I took a blind plea, and I received a sentence of five years in prison and fifteen years of probation. I started attending a Bible study in prison, and my whole view on Christianity transformed. I began to see my identity in Christ and know I am forgiven. My relationship with God found depth.

My case manager told me about Hand Up Ministries, and I came to Hand Up immediately after I left prison. I am grateful for a place to live, and I am grateful for the strong, lifelong friendships I have made here. I appreciate the church services and the fellowship with the men here. I have grown in God at Hand Up. The church services and the godly leadership have helped me in my relationship with God. I have had the same job for two years, and I was able to save money for a car. I participate in the worship team at Hand Up, and I have twice gone to Arkansas to perform praise music and testify at the church pastored by David Nichols' brother.



There are many challenges ahead, but I know with accountability and faith I will be alright.

— *Joseph Dodge*

I was born in Anderson, Indiana, but we moved to Oklahoma City when I was three years old. My grandparents, my mom, my aunt, and I came to Oklahoma because of the oil boom in the eighties. I was an only child who grew up under the supervision of my single mom and my grandparents. My mother worked very hard to provide for me to give me the best life possible. I came to know the Lord when I was a young child, and I accepted Him as my savior.

When I was a teenager, I lived with my mother in low income housing projects. My mom was doing her best to provide, but I was home alone in an environment surrounded by drugs and gangs. I succumbed to peer-pressure, and I started running with gangs and using drugs. I dropped out of high school and left home to run the streets, thus straying from God and my family. I met my wife during that time. We were married for 27 years, and we had four children together. Even though I was working to provide for them, I was still running with gangs and using drugs. This led my incarcerations.

I tried to put my family back together after I was released from prison for the first time. This only lasted a short time, because I learned my wife had found someone else. This caused me to leave and return to gang life and drugs, which resulted in my second incarceration. After my release this time, I stayed with my daughter. My grandmother died two weeks after my release. I had been very close to my grandmother, and I relapsed into drugs and running with the old crowd. I went to prison for the third time.

I decided I needed God. I needed Him so I could change my life and reunite with my kids. I started to attend church, pray, and read the Bible daily. Doors started opening. Soon after I reestablished my relationship with the Lord, I was put into the S.A.T. program, and I eventually made administrative parole. I had no place to go, but I learned about Hand Up Ministry. Hand Up provided me with a roof over my head and a sober living environment. Hand Up also helped me get a \$13 an hour job, with transportation to and from work. Hand Up has in-house AA/NA meetings and Celebrate Recovery meetings, which help with my recovery needs. We also have church once a week, as well as weekly Genesis One

meetings. I feel like all of this is ordained by God. If I had had this opportunity the first or second time I went to prison, I probably wouldn't have gone back to prison. I am very thankful to God and to Hand Up for providing a place where I can continue to better myself.

— Joshua Craig

# HAPPY EASTER!



**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.**

