

May 2022

→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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

UPDATE

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised! He is always victorious, even when we can't see or understand what is happening. We can always count on God to work all things for our good. Yes, I know we don't want to face "the things." We really would rather not have negative things happen in our life at all, but if God did that, we would not be tempted. We would serve God for protection, not out of love. Most of the world would do the same. God is seeking a bride, not a servant. Let us love God for who He is, not for what He can do for us.

The loan is progressing. I hate all of the paperwork, but it has to be done. Thank the Lord for it being done. Hand Up has been raped by greed for too long. The next big challenge will be finding used or low cost building materials. Most wood products have tripled in cost. Let us pray things will change so we can provide more housing for the homeless. Every client in our program was homeless when we took them, and most would be homeless if they had to leave today. Greedy, arrogant politicians have traded the lives of the poor and mentally handicapped for votes until they have created a crisis that will be hard, if not impossible, to overcome. On top of that, the cost to society has exploded and is irresponsible. The answer is not rotating them in and out of prison until they get old and can draw regular Social Security.

If we look at history, when the poor

outnumber the middle class, a coup or revolt of some kind happens, and there is a reset of the rules. The result is usually a loss of freedoms and, sometimes, loss of life. Whatever the result, you can be certain it was a result of people demanding irresponsible laws from lawmakers who do their bidding because they want to win the next election. Throw common sense out of the window and don't pursue any facts or reason. Let's win at all costs. It doesn't matter what party you belong to. Wake up now or make us all pay for your incompetence. This irrational behavior is growing old to me, and there is no party I could feel comfortable in.



God is seeking a bride, not a servant. Let us love God for who He is, not for what He can do for us.

— David Nichols,
President & CEO

BE BLESSED

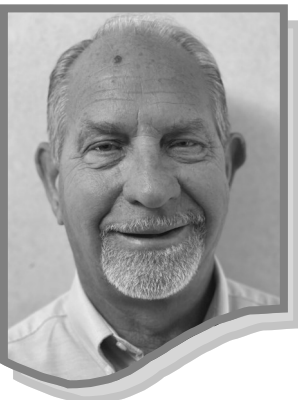
Some people, especially those who are believers, will close an email, a text, or a conversation, with the words "be blessed." Personally, I think that is a very warm and good salutation. It gives the connotation of becoming aware and of receiving. It speaks to me of opening oneself up to blessings that others bring, or even the blessings of God Himself. I believe God wants us to be

TESTIMONIES

“blessed,” and there are many ways that happens. We are blessed, in a small way, by the things we have. Too many, I think, take ALL their comfort in “THINGS.” We are also blessed by the relationships in our lives: a spouse, a boss, family, and friends. These are truly blessings that add comfort and consolation in our lives and daily journey.

However, the Bible adds another element to being blessed. In the Beatitudes, scripture indicates something more. These verses say blessed are those who are poor in spirit, mournful, meek, merciful, and peacemakers. This passage says blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. The implication is that we find ourselves blessed as we do certain things or embrace certain characteristics. In other words, we find ourselves in the midst of blessings as we live out the character of God as true Christians in this dark world. For me, the greatest sense of blessing comes when I find ways to be a blessing to others. Matthew, chapter 25, talks of how we will be judged, and it puts emphasis on those who find ways to bless “the least of these,” meaning the outcasts, the downtrodden, and those who are lonely and confused in life.

My new salutation is this: **BE BLESSED AS YOU FIND WAYS TO BLESS OTHERS.** I use this as a reminder that to be a true believer in Jesus and His ways, my value is found in how I can help and bless other people. That is why I am so happy here at Hand Up Ministries, because it is a great vehicle that allows me to do that every day.



**Be Blessed as
you find ways to
Bless others.**

My personal walk with God began when I was 11 years old. I was in a near fatal boating accident. After this experience, I began a closer walk with God, and I had a yearning to understand who He was and what I could learn from Him. I accepted Christ when I was 12. This happened during an Easter service in 1973. All was going well for many years, but I was like a lot of other Christians, riding a roller coaster of emotions and situations. I noticed that I was really backsliding when I was in my mid 20's. I was having wrong relationships with girls, living and sleeping with them. I was into social drinking, and I was basically “playing Christian.”

I really understood how God continued to be in my life when I went through some very painful events. Three family members died in September and October of 1996. The first death was that of my closest cousin. My grandmother died the following week, and my mother died the week after that. I became very angry with God, and I decided to live my life my way. God revealed to me what the problem was. It was simply me. I had accepted Christ into my life for salvation and guidance, but I had never made Him Lord of my life. Once I allowed Christ to be my total Lord and Savior, things began to happen. Through Christ, I had a place to stay, a job, and what I needed to survive, but, as it turned out, where I was going to live and work was not an acceptable location.

Through Christ's hand, I was accepted at Hand Up Ministries without any notification or application process. Rev. Nichols' love and compassion for helping men was manifested by him accepting me without delay. Being here at Hand Up has been a total blessing for me. The people at Hand Up have a great passion for helping men reach higher goals in life.

Hand Up has allowed me to grow into a much better person and be more confident in sharing the Gospel with others. Not only has Christ given me a stronger yearning, but Rev. Nichols' compassion has given me my own compassion for others. I made a decision to help others because there was a great need. I

believe that because of this, God opened a floodgate of doors for me.

I obtained a master's degree in Psychology-Christian Counseling and will be working on my doctorate in the same field. I have been put in charge of the worship music at the church services here at Hand Up, and I became a Genesis-One group leader. As a Genesis-One leader, I help other men in a relaxed atmosphere in a small group setting.

If one can learn to truly trust God and be obedient, He has PROMISED more blessings than our storehouse can hold. I believe that is what is happening to me. By Christ's grace and mercy, I have been given another opportunity to serve Him here at Hand Up Ministries. Christ tells us that if we are faithful in a little, He will give us a chance to be faithful in a lot. God has a certain plan for all of us, which He will reveal in small bits over time.

I am thankful that I finally took the steps, one at a time, to be faithful and obedient. God works in ways we cannot understand, but if we will trust Him and listen, He will reveal what His will is for our lives. I am so thankful that Christ has used Rev. Nichols, Hand Up Ministries, and those who are involved with this ministry, to bless my life. God has put me in this position so that I can share His love with others and, hopefully, be a blessing to them. My prayer for those reading



is simply this: may you bless others a little so that God may bless you a lot.

God works in ways we cannot understand, but if we will trust Him and listen, He will reveal what His will

is for our lives.

— Mike Lower

Mike Lower has served Hand Up Ministries in many capacities. He has borne much responsibility here, and his many contributions have helped this ministry thrive. I have had the pleasure of knowing Mike for

many years. He is a good man, and Hand Up owes him a lot of gratitude.

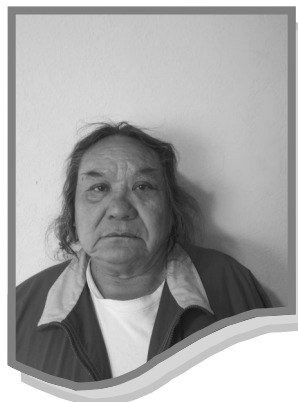
— Chris Benson
Newsletter Co-Editor

I was born in Pawnee, Oklahoma in August, 1955. There were six kids in my family, but only four of us are left. I went to school at Little Axe. We went to church at a Baptist church. My dad did construction work, and my mom worked for a dry cleaner. I was arrested for breaking and entering when I was eleven. I went to high school in Norman, but I was kicked out of school for selling marijuana. I worked for my uncle for a while. I went back to school in Noble, but I was kicked out of there for fighting. I went to Chilocco Indian School, and I graduated from high school in 1974.

I worked construction after high school, but I was arrested for accessory to armed robbery in 1974. I was incarcerated for six years, and then I worked for a plumbing company in Oklahoma City for fourteen years. The company closed down, so I did concrete work for a while. I went back to plumbing for another company, where I worked for twelve years. I went to Texas after that company closed, and I worked for a construction company. I also worked in California and New Mexico.

I have two sons and two daughters, but I was never married to their mothers. We lived together, but we didn't marry. I came back to Oklahoma in 1994 after working in other states for many years, and I lived with a woman who was retired from the Air Force. We stayed together for fourteen years. She died of a heart attack. I lived alone in a trailer house after that, but it was destroyed in a tornado. I got married in 2003. I worked off and on.

I was arrested on a federal charge in February of 2015, and I discharged from prison in March, 2022. I came to Hand Up when I discharged from prison. I am trying to get back on disability. I was in a car wreck in 1988, and I had two back surgeries. Hand Up



put a roof over my head, and they helped me get food stamps.

Hand Up put a roof over my head.
— Robert Williams

I was a pretty good kid when I was growing up. I always did what my mother told me to do, and I did quite well in school. I played video games in my spare time, and I also went to the local recreation center. I had very few close friends, so I mostly hung out with my brother and sisters. We did things normal kids do, such as watch a lot of TV and listen to music. We also snuck into the local pool at night.

I had my first taste of alcohol when I was 12, but I wasn't into it. I began smoking weed and cigarettes when I was 14. I only did these things sporadically, because I didn't have the money to afford such habits. We moved to a different city during the summer before my sophomore year of high school. I made more friends very quickly. By the time I graduated from high school, I had tried over seven different types of drugs, but marijuana was the only one I continued to use. I had seen firsthand what withdrawals and overdoses could do to a person, so I didn't do anything harder than marijuana. My mother was a devoted Christian, and she took us to church at least three times a week. She also took us to Celebrate Recovery.

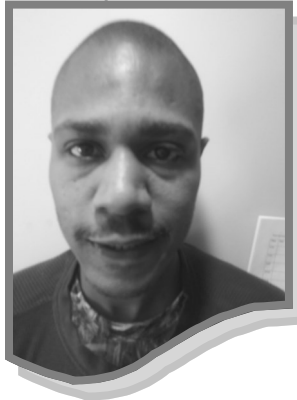
When I was 17, my mom gave me the choice of whether or not to go to church, and I chose not to go. I still retained my Christian upbringing and morals, but, living in such a liberal city, I began to research other religions. I did this not to practice other religions, but because the other religions were interesting. I considered myself to be an agnostic with Christian values. I always had a job, and I was promoted at some jobs. My family and I moved to California when I was 26.

Things were good until I moved into an apartment with my sisters. I began smoking meth, and I got into demonic conspiracy theories. My father and my brother were both diagnosed with schizophrenia. I never had schizophrenia until I started smoking meth. I had already stopped smoking weed, but I was hanging out with the wrong people. This

only fueled my manic episodes, and it caused me to eventually quit my job and move back to Oklahoma. My episodes continued. After three months in Oklahoma, I was still suffering from a residual disconnection from reality, and I hurt the person who trusted me the most. This landed me in prison.

I am not the kind of person who can thrive in an environment made for killers and career criminals, so, for my own safety, I kept my head down and spoke to very few people. My mother said I could stay with her in California after I left prison so I could get the spiritual and mental healing I so desperately needed. However, the law prevented me from going to stay with my mom in California. I had no place to go, but my case manager told me about Hand Up Ministries and how it was created for people like me.

I sent an application to Hand Up, and, by the grace of God, they had a bed open. Hand Up not only accepted me, but they welcomed me into their community while also helping me with every sort of legal issue I had. They informed me of plenty of programs to get me on my feet. They provided me with food and job leads. If it wasn't for Hand Up, I would be out on the cold streets with no idea where or how to start. In the end, I am in a better position to start acting like an adult and



taking care of my responsibilities than I was before I was in prison. The Hand Up organization is a godsend, and I greatly appreciate everything they have done for me. I see so many success stories here, and I want to add my name to that

list.

The Hand Up organization is a

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.

