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→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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# UPDATE



All glory to the King of all kings, the Lord of all lords, and the Lord of my heart. I believe in listening to what He says and avoiding the world's understanding of what they think

He is. The world cannot understand spiritual things, so they follow religious guidelines so religion will become part of the political process. Now truth has become what is popular, not the life and teachings of Christ. The words of Christ have become less important than what the majority accepts. The church today persecutes Jesus like the church did in Jesus' day. It has become too dangerous for me to become a part of any church, or even be recognized for who I help. Not for any wrong I have done, but for bringing Christ to the despised and unwanted. We are the unwanted baby of the church, born and then left on the steps of the courthouse. If someone helps us, we live. If they don't, we die, and nobody notices. There is a spirit of hatred and pride that has invaded our churches and society. That spirit did not come from God. God is love, and He

finds a safe way to help people, good and bad. I was arrested and threatened for legally helping unwanted people. Jesus and many of the disciples were also arrested and threatened. They were illegally beaten or crucified. Is that the next step of our ungodly religious society? It wasn't Rome and the Gentiles that hated Jesus. It was the church. His own people hated Him. He wasn't sanctioned or approved by their authority. His teachings of the heart and spiritual things contradicted their practices and made them look bad. It is the same today. People follow religious rules, but they ignore the weightier matters of the law, such as judgment, mercy, and faith. We have blind guides, who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel (Matthew 23:23). Here at Hand Up, we are lawfully helping 23 men for whom we do not have beds. Pray they don't freeze this winter. We need space now! The politicians created this problem, but the majority of them refuse to change a hate law that is in itself illegal. That is the religious stand that is here to stay. The good news is that we are slowly adding more beds. The sad side is that we are receiving 18 to 25 new men each month. With the city and the county in talks about making tents and homeless camps illegal, it will get worse. There are over 2000 of them right now, with about 300 of them being sex offenders. Many of these we could help right now if the churches had a real revival and a change of heart. This is not going to happen by accident. We are often faced with opportunities, but until the money is available, nothing can happen. We want to

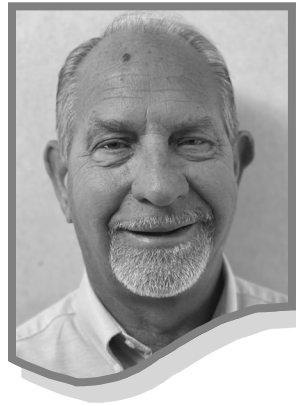
thank those individuals who know the truth and are led to support us. One family, whose son was here until he had to go to a nursing home, has given so abundantly that we don't know how to thank them enough. We appreciate every person who gives. With Gods' help, we manage to multiply every gift into something permanent. While you enjoy this Christmas and New Year, pray for the homeless, the mentally ill, addicts, and the very poor. God Bless!

— *David Nichols,*  
*President & CEO*

## **WHAT IS CHRISTMAS?**

At the time I am writing this article, it is one week before Christmas Day 2022. I have named this article "What Is Christmas?" in order to get your attention. I am well aware that we could start a spirited debate over this question, because it means many things to many different people. In its Christian form, it is a time set aside to commemorate the birth of Jesus. This is the same Jesus who came into this world to fulfill the process of providing a sacrifice for the redemption for all who believe in Him. As a believer, I celebrate Christmas by trying to remember what I believe to be the "reason for the season." There are other things that people might say about Christmas. Some may say Christmas is, in the spirit of God giving His Son to the world, about giving. I am all for celebrating Christmas through giving, because it helps me to focus on one of the attributes of God. He is certainly a giver. Others might say Christmas is about family. I don't want to debate that truth, because family is important and holidays are, in part, what they are because of family. However, my thoughts

turn to the residents of Hand Up, because the majority of them have no access to family. Because of this, the holidays are difficult for them, and they feel left out and lonely. I don't say this to make you feel sorry for them, because this brings me to the point of this article. At Hand Up there is a culture of community that causes men to reach out and help one another. Usually, a resident will reach out to another resident at holiday times, as well as at times of hurt or loss, and bring that person into their circle. They might have them over for coffee or a meal, or invite them to a game night they are hosting. Whether it is Christmas Day, or a birthday, or any day, there is community at Hand Up, and no one gets left out. I am grateful for this aspect of our community every day.



— *Ray Riddle,*  
*Oklahoma Director*

## **TESTIMONES**

I grew up in a Catholic home with my parents, who recently celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, four sisters, and one brother. My family was very involved in the church. I was an altar server, and I was in a youth group, the youth choir, and the adult choir. I was a reader in Mass, reading the Bible aloud during the service, and I taught second grade catechism. When I turned 18, I began asking the priest about things I read in the Bible, but he couldn't answer my questions. I left the Catholic Church when I was 19, and I began a spiritual journey of my own. I was not living for God. I studied Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Satanism. I read a lot, and I learned a lot. I got into new age mysticism, and I began reading tarot cards. I served in the Army for five years, and I fought in the Gulf War. After leaving the Army, I was addicted to pornography and drugs, and I suffered from PTSD and alcoholism. I attempted suicide, and I was in and out of treatment centers. I

got out of a treatment center the last time with a renewed outlook. After a year of sobriety, I went to work for a treatment center as a manager. I got transferred to a job in Lake Charles, Louisiana. While I was at this job, one of my employees invited me to church. At the church service, I felt like the pastor was speaking directly to me, and I was born again that day. I still had a lot of issues, and I was living with one foot in the church and one foot in the world. 20 years later I went to school to study for the ministry. After finishing school, I moved to Elk City, Oklahoma to work as a manager at a fast food restaurant. Six months later I was in the county jail. I began seeking God and studying scripture. I spent ten years in prison, and I did ministry while I was in



prison. Shortly before my discharge from prison, I was accepted at Hand Up Ministries. I am very thankful for this ministry. Since my release from prison, God has made me a productive member of society. I thank God, and I thank Hand Up Ministries.

-Billy Landry

My story starts in Enid, Oklahoma, where I lived with a single mom. We moved from place to place, but we eventually moved to south Texas to live with my grandpa. We stayed there for six years. My grandpa died of cancer, so we moved back to Enid. I started getting into trouble, and, due to my own actions, I slowly burned bridges with my older brother. He was forced to move me to Oklahoma City to live with my mom when I was 17. I was in a bad spot. DHS took my brother, and I ended up in juvenile detention. My rocky road started there, and I was in and out of prison for the next ten years. I got out of prison this last time, and I decided I didn't want that life anymore. I knew I had to change where I went and who my friends were. This made me come to

Hand Up. I wanted to change, and I began looking to the Lord. I prayed and read the Bible. If I can do it, anyone can do it. Never give up.

-Eric Wynn

I was born in Durant, Oklahoma on February, 20<sup>th</sup>, 1984. I was raised in the country in a little town called Bennington. I was a good old country boy. I was poor, so I started selling weed and meth. I became a big time drug dealer. My brother wanted me to bury someone, and I did it because I didn't want my brother to get into trouble. We got caught, and I was sentenced to 45 years in prison. They wanted to give me the death penalty, but I prayed to God and he saved me. I became a Christian. I served 16 years and eight months in prison. I had many years to straighten out my life. I thought I could do it by myself, but I learned I needed help. Now I just lean on the Lord.

-Wayne Olsen

I spent too much time on the road. I spent ten years paying off my child support. I also spent five years paying off student loans. I remarried, and my second wife and I adopted a boy and two girls. I went to jail for an offence with a teenage girl, and we divorced after 17 years of marriage. I lost my wife, my children, respect, and everything else. I spent ten weeks in jail, and I received a ten year suspended sentence. No mission would take me, but my probation officer told me about Hand Up Ministries. Five people were ahead of me on the waiting list. When I checked back with Hand Up, the five men were gone. I came to Hand Up in December, 2009. I have worked the same job for several years, and I help my family when I can. Father God has helped me all of this time.

-Jim Musgrove

My parents divorced when I was 2 years old, and I was raised by my grandmother. I have two brothers and one sister. I had a good childhood. I didn't have any problems,

even in high school. I played sports in high school, and I also worked a job. My adult life has been up and down. I lost my grandmother four years ago. I was in prison when she died. This was very heart wrenching, because I wasn't there for her. My dad was the best. He was always there for me in the good times and the bad times. My dad and my grandmother were Christian people. Both of them were hard working people, and they often talked to me about staying in school, staying out of trouble, and working hard. I was caught doing something stupid. I can't change the past, but I know God has forgiven me for what I did. I pray every day, and I read my Bible every day. I thank the Lord for giving me a fresh start in life. I have learned a lot at Hand Up Ministries. I have met Christian



men who have helped me live a new life, and my life is getting better. Hand Up gave me a new start. God blesses me every day. I have a roof over my head, and I am able to help others. God is helping me to be a better person.

-Erick Samuel

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. I was arrested for doing something stupid, and David accepted me back to Hand Up. I am now a gate guard for Hand Up. 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

Luke 1:27-29 (NLT)

He was born to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

**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.**

