

# NEWS

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## → MINISTRY UPDATE ←

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All praise and honor to God. His greatness is beyond our imagination. His love reaches far beyond what our carnal mind can comprehend. When mankind is written off as unable to be

redeemed, His power and presence is there to redeem and restore as clean and righteous. Even when fellow man can't forgive, the blood of Christ can purify all sin and change the heart of any person who asks and accepts His payment for ALL sin.

Hand Up accepts people who have been written off by the world. I see clients of all sorts. Many are in the system because they have mental illness or too low of an IQ to avoid the traps of this society. No one cares enough to help them avoid the pitfalls of life. Our society has decided it is better for them to be out of sight and out of mind.

A second group is those who thought they could live like the world and still succeed. They commit crimes like the rest of the world, crimes most people don't get caught doing. They are not serious enough crimes to make the news or cause major attention. Most of our clients have a bad youth history and no loving guidance in life. Most have had physical, sexual, and verbal abuse. These have trouble understanding God's love because they have not been shown it before.

The third group is those that have family and should have been successful, but the cares of this world and the trap of drugs,



*Offering a hand up, not a hand out*

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sex, alcohol, and the enticements of this world drew them away. The road they travelled leads to a price they never expected they would have to pay. If given the right environment and opportunity, these clients can change quickly.

The fourth group is a much smaller percentage, but their sins are more notorious and worse to society. They are less likely to find anyone who cares enough help them succeed. Their road can be hard, and due to peoples experiences, it may take more time for them to develop trust. With the right help, most do not reoffend. While man may not forgive, God will forgive, and they can and do become successful.

The fifth group is a small percentage. These are the ones convicted because prosecutors need wins and they were convicted for lack of money. They are usually found guilty on false testimony, being at the wrong place at the wrong time, mistaken identity, falsely accused, etc. A good example of this is in the "Dallas Forty." This was done by the Innocence Project. Forty lifers or death row inmates were tested for DNA. There was enough DNA evidence to exonerate 18 of them. I still believe law is important and is ordained by God. Sometimes unrighteous humans use the law for their own purposes. Because of these humans, Jesus became a felon and a sex offender and was crucified. All the apostles and Paul were other examples.

We, as Christians, should not write off people because they have a record, but we should show the true love of God, even to our enemies. We succeed in getting a lot of people out of the prison cycle, and many become believers. If you believe that this is



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part of God's word, join the "Family Club" by donating any amount to show you stand with us in changing people's lives.

-David Nichols

## Testimonies

I grew up in Copperas Cove, Texas with my mom and younger brother. I don't remember much of my childhood, except for what I have been told. When I was two or three years old, I was physically abused by my mother's boyfriend. I was hospitalized with injuries to my back from my shoulders to my butt. I suffered nerve damage that I still live with today. My life got better when my mother met my step-father when I was around eight years old. It took me three years to gain his trust and call him dad.

My step-dad was a sergeant in the Army at Fort Hood. He was my main influence in joining the military. I was bullied when I was in high school. I was never book smart, but I graduated with a 2.5 GPA. I met my wife at a Sonic when I was 19. We were married for 12 years. She had a two year old daughter, and later we gave her two sisters to make our family complete. I was drinking heavily and smoking weed when I got out of the military.

When I committed my crime, I destroyed the safety of my family. I went to prison for ten years at 85%. I have to live with the guilt of what I have done for the rest of my life. I learned about Hand Up Ministries in prison from Ray Riddle, the Hand Up Director. I work hard and come home, and I try to do everything right this time. Hand Up gave me second chance at life and a place to live. They also gave me information on jobs. I am not yet a believer in God.

-Michael Doyle

I grew up in Warr Acres, Oklahoma. Due to my parents' inflicted trauma, my childhood was saturated with anxiety, anger, and sexual immorality. Most of my childhood memories are disturbing. At a very young age I began inflicting pain on myself and my brothers. I am the oldest of three brothers, and I was not a good brother.

As my teen years approached, I began experimenting with smoking cigarettes, smoking marijuana, and drinking alcohol. I also started cutting myself. I was an alcoholic by the time I was 15. I skipped school. Even when I was there, I had a really hard time fitting in and learning. I hated it. I never had love or support from my family. I only had anger and disappointment.

I went to meet my biological father in Washington when I was 16. My mom said he was an abusive alcoholic, and she was right. I was in school there, but I ran away because my father was abusing me. I bounced around on the streets. I tried to continue school, but I inevitably abandoned that. I came back to Oklahoma, and I moved in with my mom. By that time she was a bad alcoholic, and we clashed hard. I moved in with my manager at Taco Mayo. She helped me a lot, and she called me her son. However, she drank and smoked marijuana, so naturally I did too. I was attending AA regularly by the time I was twenty. I would get black out drunk, cut on myself, cry, and repeat.

I met the mother of my first child when I was 21. I was no good. All I wanted to do was escape sobriety. That was all I cared about. I went to the crisis center in Oklahoma City two times before I was 20, and I went to Griffin Memorial Hospital in Norman once. She stayed with me. I turned to God more than a couple of times, but I fell away every time. I was broken. We split up in 2009.

I went to the city rescue mission, and I enrolled in Bridge to Life. I was doing well, reading my Bible, going to church, and being sober. I committed my crime right before this. The guilt and shame destroyed me and prevented me from any chance of rehabilitation. I lived a life of working and not having anything to show for it. I was self-medicating with alcohol, drugs, and sex. God saved me when I was arrested in 2016 for what I did six years earlier. I felt a strange sense of relief and peace. I served eight and a half years in prison.

I heard about Hand Up Ministries when I

was in prison. I follow God now, and I talk to God. God put Hand Up in my path to bless me so I can bless others. Hand Up has shown I am not alone, and Hand Up has also shown me the love of God. Prison and Hand Up have shown me how to finally live instead of exist. God has restored my physical and mental health, as well as my relationship with my dad. I am blessed and thankful.

-Jason Meisner

We were poor when I was a child. I stayed with my mom until I was nine then I was placed in a DHS foster home. My mom was an alcoholic. I didn't know my dad, but I loved my mom very much. My mom got us out of foster care. I watched my step-dad stab himself over and over. I watched my mom try to kill herself over and over. I was very cruel when I was a child. I drowned my brother's chickens, and I killed cats and dogs.

I moved in with my dad, and I hated it. We were a middle class family moving from south Oklahoma City to Moore, where there were rich kids. I was in LD classes. I didn't start school until fourth grade. I was often kicked out of school when I was 15. I shot another kid for no reason. All of this was before I was 17. I got another gun case. I was hanging around with gangs when I was 15. I didn't believe in God. I was expelled from school for gang activity and fighting.

The thing that brought me to God was when my mom went to rehab so she could get sober and be a better mom. I visited her, and she kept saying she could hear the song Amazing Grace. I thought she was full of it. She collapsed right there and quit breathing. She was in a coma for four months, and she died four times. The doctors said she was brain dead and there was nothing they could do. One day a preacher and another person came and prayed with me. I swallowed my pride and went to the chapel. The next day my mom came out of it. She woke up and had a full recovery. She became the best mom ever. I knew God was real, but I battled with Him back and forth. He always showed up.

I stabbed someone, and I went to prison. After I got out, I started a business, and I broke my neck. I began trafficking drugs and guns, and I got caught. The prosecutor

wanted to give me a life sentence. I told God if He got me out of this I would stop dealing drugs, cover my gang tattoos, and change my life. I got a ten year sentence plus ten years of probation. I did fours in prison, but I still had a gang mentality and I went back to gang banging. I was back in prison on a sex charge within eight months. I didn't do it, but it forced me to be the man God wanted me to be. I was forced to stop that old life style with the kind of people I couldn't stay away from before.

I am now at Hand Up Ministries, and I am glad to be here. I am glad to be away from the killers I was around my whole life. God is working in me. I lost my whole life and everyone, but I found my life. I have never been happier. I love myself and everybody. God is good. I can't wait to get a cat. LOL!

-Ronnie Chancellor

I am the son of a Navy man, so we moved around a lot, especially when I was young. In our house we were encouraged to find our own way in all things: work, school, spirituality, etc. The only memory I have of going to church was when we visited my grandparents in West Virginia. I was a carefree child with a loving mother and father, even though he was gone a lot because he was in the Navy. He always spent time with my sisters and me when he was home. My parents didn't speak of church. We had our own routine. We were not religious.

My mom was as close to spiritual as you got in my family. She practiced Wicca, and she considered herself to be a white witch (a good witch). She was very spiritual, and our house always seemed to be peaceful. As a kid, I was too busy playing with my friends, riding my motorcycle, and playing drums to think about God. I was hardly ever in trouble. School and my activities took all of my time, and I didn't have time to be a bad kid.

My first real introduction to church was my cousin. He played in a gospel band, and he was the reason I got into playing the drums. I found Jesus then, and I was saved when I was 14. I read the Bible and attended church. This was probably the best time of



my life when I was growing up. I started to hang out with one of my sister's friends when I was 17. He played guitar in a band, and they needed a drummer. I got the gig. I was in the musicians' union. I had my parents' permission to play in bars. My bandmates watched me and made sure I didn't drink. I was making money and having a blast, but I still knew the Lord. Then it happened.

We were playing a gig in Ohio, and a guy walked up and introduced himself. We sat down and talked, mostly about my long hair and how I had the look. He was the founder and lead guitar player for a very popular Ohio Valley band named Tongue & Cheek. I joined his band. We played 80's hairband music. At 19 I was playing huge venues with huge crowds, and we had a very big fan base (mostly girls). We played hard and partied like rock stars. This was what led me astray. I drank a lot, and with all the women that showed up, you can imagine what happened.

I became an over the road truck driver when I was 21, but I still played in the band for five years until it became a conflict with my job. So after the many girlfriends and a wife and kids I lost, because of the stuff I did in the band, I met Teresa. I took her and her four kids in, and we were together until I got arrested and went to prison.

While in prison, I read a book that brought me back to the Lord in a strange way. The book was The Da Vinci Code. I did research to find what was and wasn't true in that book, and this led me back to the Lord. I still have questions like everyone else, but my heart is true. Most days my faith is true. I am still on the journey to God, and I believe Hand Up Ministries is going to help me stay on my path. It is a blessing to not be homeless and have people to hold me accountable for my actions.

-Glendon Withrow



#### Proverbs 4:1-4

**Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; Do not forsake my teaching. When I was a son with my Father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, He taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live."**

**Happy Fathers Day to all the Fathers and remember the ones we have lost.**

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