

Monthly Support Report

December 31, 2016

Dear elders,

Happy New Year! (Almost). I can only pray that 2016 has been a good year for you and that 2017 will be a good and even better year. I know every year has its ups and downs (some more downs than others). But either way, it's my humble prayer that regardless that we've allowed the events of this year gone by to bring us closer to the Lord. And if we haven't, I pray that our number one goal for the coming New Year will be to commit ourselves to drawing nearer to the Lord and allowing Him to increase our faith so that we can better endure the hardships and be better workers in the kingdom. There's a lot of good to be done for His name's honor and glory. And I'm confident that all who are willing can accomplish great things.

May God richly bless you for all that you do in the kingdom, and for all of the good that you attempt to do in the lives of others. You probably don't realize what an impact you have in the life of other people. With this in mind, let me take a few minutes to share with you a little story about a recent encounter and a conversation I had with a man that I had a Bible study with. He's the one who shared the story with me and I found it to be both discouraging and heartwarming at the same time. He was passing through town and that's how our paths crossed. As we would use the terminology – he had been away from the Lord and out of duty for more than 20-years. He hadn't attended worship services for well over 20-years as well. I didn't know that when I first met him. I thought he was just passing through town. But for some reason I thought he seemed like he wanted to talk so I pursued him and asked if he had the time to get together. He readily took me up on my offer. We got together and talked for a long time and that's when he shared his story. He had fallen away a number of years ago. Where he worshiped, and lived is not important to the story. But I imagine circumstances similar to his have taken place many times throughout the years. He had fallen on hard times spiritually and had stopped attending due to a faltering faith. At first, he missed an occasional service, and then it was just an occasional service that he attended. Finally, over the course of about a year, he stopped attending. After he had been absent for about 6-8-weeks he started receiving a few cards and letters telling him that he was missed. But after a few months (3-4-months) those cards and letters ended and finally he received a letter telling him that his name was being removed from the directory of the church that he was no longer considered to be a member in good standing and that was the end of his contact with that local congregation. At that point in his life in his own words he really didn't care one way or the other, but he did feel something was missing in his life but he wasn't sure what it was.

Since I wasn't there, and his side of the story is the only side of the story I know, I'm not going to make any judgment one way or the other except to say that the man seemed to be sincere and since that time he and his family are now worshiping faithfully with a faithful congregation in another city. A city they had moved to about 12-years ago, for a reason having nothing to do with the church situation. But thinking aloud I'm wondering how many times similar stories like this have been repeated in other places. How many times have folks have simply stopped attending and we've simply sent them a card or a letter without taking the time and making the effort to go and sit with them to try and find out what's troubling them and how we can help? I agree, there are times when they don't want our help and they

don't want to sit and talk. But then there are other times that we may let them slip through the cracks until they've been gone long enough that their heart has had time to grow cold. Maybe this man's story can be useful to you in the coming year. Maybe this is a good application of Luke 6:31, ³¹"Do to others as you would have them do to you." If you were to grow weak in the faith and drift away, what is it that you would want your brethren to do for you?

Looking back over 2016 I'd have to say it's been a difficult year for many of our members in a very personal way. Many have suffered greatly due to the loss of loved ones. As a matter of fact, sadly, sicknesses and loss has consumed most of the year for many in our congregation. Only now can they begin to breathe a sigh of relief and begin that slow road of emotional recovery. But the good news is the rest of the congregation has been great to rally around them to try and help them through these difficult times. Closeness and togetherness has continued to be one of the strengths of this congregation.

Now in this New Year it's time for all of us to press forward and busy ourselves in the Lord's work of saving souls. We have a lot of work to do and a bright future ahead for 2017. Good attitudes remain what they should be as children of God. The will to work is there. Opportunities are beginning to present themselves more and more. We'll simply have to step up and prayerfully as the doors continue to open we will see the fruit of our labors.

Our Bible class study about Jesus' Parables continues to be a very enjoyable Bible class. Class participation has been great and it appears as though everyone is really learning. I'm really thankful for both. I think this is one of the more enjoyable classes I've ever been a part of having to do with Jesus' Parables. I look forward to the continuation of each study. I hear nothing but good comments. And the good comments aren't necessarily about the teaching as much as they are about the things we're learning in each class. As a matter of fact, while I've taught most of the lessons thus far, a couple of the other men of the congregation have taught a lesson each and have done an excellent job in presenting the lessons.

My wife and I continue to have contact with a couple of families who visited with us a few times awhile back. We actually have studies with them from time-to-time and have had some degree of success is persuading them. But getting them to the point of making the commitment has been the difficult part. My wife had contact with one lady a couple of times just this past week and had excellent conversations with her and they continue a good friendship and they have great discussions, but the progress is slow. But she doesn't give up and won't give up. And know my wife, if this lady has a good and honest heart and is open to the gospel she will be persuaded. I find the same obstacles. I have good studies with the person I'm studying with and just about the time I think I've made good progress – I almost have to start all over again. But I keep trying.

I'm studying with another man who actually believes he can or has performed miracles. He has told me of at least 10-12 of the miracles that he believes he has performed. At least twice now we have gone through the New Testament passages that tell the reason for miracles in the first century and how it required an apostle to lay their hands on someone before they could perform a miracle. And he always asks the same question after going through and reading these passages. "Then you don't believe anyone can perform miracles today do you?" I answer his question with a question. "What would be your conclusion from the passages we just read?" His answer is always, "I guess not." But then he says, "Randy, I know I've done these things." That's about as far as we've gotten, although we've had other

discussion about this. I'm not giving up, and he continues to allow me to study with him. It's actually been a good study that I'm enjoying. But I'll enjoy it more when I convert him.

Thank you for your fellowship in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. I enjoy our fellowship together and I enjoy my labor in the Lord's kingdom that your support allows me to do. Your help is greatly appreciated and I give thanks always for you and for your help and for your friendship. Thank you.

God bless.

Randy