

Monthly Support Report

February 28, 2017

Dear elders,

What a beautiful month this February has been. Our weather has been very unseasonably warm for this time of year. I keep thinking it's going to change and turn bitterly cold, but February is almost over and it's 72-degrees outside. Our biggest fear with the weather today are the gusty winds and the dry conditions outside make for conditions right for fires. Around here they call it a "Red Flag Warning" day.

I trust that this month's report finds all of you doing well. We've just come through a difficult cold season. A large percentage of the students at High School have missed at least 1-day of school in February due to a cold and or sore throat. Our family has just passed around a cold and sore throat. Aaron missed school just yesterday due to a cold. Fortunately for him his sore throat wasn't as bad as mine of my wife's. But, we're all doing better. I hope you and your family have been able to skip through cold season without being sick with a cold or the flu. Both can be miserable and even dangerous according to your age and health.

My study today most of the day consisted of a study of the Parable of the Wicked Husbandman that's found in three of the four Gospels. Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-18. I must say once again as I prepared for this week's Bible Class lesson that I really enjoyed my study and preparation time. This Parable is a very intense one. Like most of you who will read this report, I've studied the Parables of Jesus before more than once, but as I go through each one - I continue to look for at least one thing that maybe I missed in previous studies. Even if it's just a detail having to do with the way of life in the 1st Century. As has usually been the case, in my studies today I came away having learned something new. Here's what got my attention as I began my study this morning by doing some general reading about this Parable. One writer said it like this: "No Parable interprets itself more clearly than this one." I like that statement. While I likely never would have thought that about this Parable, as I finished my study and Bible Class preparation toward the end of the day I went back to this statement and found it to be an accurate assessment of what I had studied. This Parable does interpret itself very clearly. Maybe the man who wrote that statement was on to something. While this next statement is not about anything new, the second thing that I kept coming back to in this Parable was the many stories about God's care for Israel of old and their rejection of Him, His prophets and His Son. Things would have been so different and so much better for Israel had they listened to God's prophets. Of course, that's always the case even with us. God's ways are true and right and it should be our aim to listen carefully to those teachings and apply them to our lives. Another lesson that seemed to stand out and make a profound impression on me that I'll attempt to convey clearly to the class is how longsuffering God was with Israel. After sending Israel prophet after prophet only to see them rejected, even then, God was willing to send His Son. Sadly, Jesus was rejected as well and put to death upon the cross. What was the question Stephen asked just prior to being stoned to death? "Was there ever a prophet that your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the

Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered Him.” (NIV) - (Acts 7:52). That statement in Stephen’s dying discourse has a lot to do with what this Parable is about.

I’m still in the process of reading a book one of the members asked me to read and to use as a study guide whenever we get together for a Home Bible Study. The book isn’t a book that I would have chosen if I had been suggesting a book to use in a Bible Study. Plus, I’ll admit that it was rather challenging to use it as a study guide at the beginning of our study together. But now that I’m into the fourth chapter I must say that the lessons and the applications are some remarkable lessons. I also like this book because it reminds me of some of the basics we need in order to get back to the work in the kingdom that needs to be done along with the great value of a soul. I’ll leave it at that except to say, there are still people in this world of ours who are willing to have a Home Bible Study, and there are still people with good and honest hearts who will give serious consideration to what the Scriptures say and teach. We may have just gotten a little lax in our efforts to have Bible discussions with other people and in our attempt to set-up Bible studies with people we know. One of the more rewarding things we can do is to have a Bible Study with someone we know in their home or in our home. I find myself constantly giving myself reminders to remember to do everything to try and create opportunities to ask people I don’t know about the Bible. If I find they already go to church somewhere, I’ll try to tell them something positive about my most recent Bible Study and or worship service that I was a part of. This book is very down-to-earth and simple when it comes to making everyday applications like that.

I’m blessed to be able to continue studying and preaching from 1 John. This is a rich letter with lots of great lessons. This coming Sunday I’ll have the opportunity to talk about “the antichrist” from chapter 2. But it’s much more than a lesson about “the antichrist.” A lesson solely about the antichrist might only take about 10-15-minutes at the most. I’ll use some of my allotted time emphasizing as John does the different levels of spiritual growth and strength.

We continue to be blessed with a good group of young people who participate in our Bible Classes. They are one of the reasons I’m happy to be studying the Parables. While the lessons are fairly simple, we’ve had some very rich discussions in class that our young people who are in high school and college have taken part in. We have one young man who is a senior in high school who will be a freshman in college next year. His plans are to attend locally so we’ll be blessed to still have him attend with us. We have another young lady who is already attending college locally and doing great. We’re so proud of the young people we have worshiping with us. They are all growing spiritually in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are setting good examples for the younger children that we have. Our younger children look up to them. Our college students also help teach the Bible Classes of our younger children whenever they have the opportunity. All of our Bible Class teachers are very dedicated and are doing a fantastic job. You can tell how excited and happy the younger children are just to come to Bible Class.

We continue to be blessed with visitors who are either passing through or are visiting with us looking for a church home. We always do our very best to let them know how welcome they are at our services hoping they will come back and allow us to get to know them better.

It’s such a blessing to be able to serve the Lord in this place with those of like precious faith. We continue to work together and worship together in peace. We’re so thankful for that. We have a group of likeminded Christians who are striving to do the right thing with their lives. We continue to pray for Open Doors of opportunity to teach and preach the Gospel.

Thank you so much for your continued fellowship in the gospel. You are such a great encouragement to me and my family as we strive to do the Lord's will and teach His truths. It's my sincere prayer that you and the congregation there is doing well and growing. We continue to remember you in our prayers and we would ask that you continue to pray for us and for the work that we're attempting to do.

God bless.

Randy