

# NEXT STEP

Lives Transformed for Good

## Moving From Hardships To A Living Hope

Let's say there's at least one thing which most, if not all, of us can agree upon: life can be hard. We all experience some major, as well as, not so major challenges throughout life. It may be the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, the collapse of our financial security. It could be the onset of a debilitating illness, or a child walking a path other than what we had dreamed. It could be a heartbreaking divorce or long-lasting conflict within the family. The experience of significant emotional trauma can be one of life's long lasting consequential hardships.

At Next Step Ministries, we have seen the impact of many of these experiences. Such events contribute to the issues we witness at Next Step. Most involve some form of substance abuse and many result in one time or repeated incarceration. In many, many cases, the men have attempted to overcome the circumstances that led to these problems, and in too many cases, these same men are simply unable to find the strength and subsequent victory over these deep-seated troubles.

They (we) need the life transforming power of God's amazing grace.

Jimmy had been captive to a decades long substance addiction after experiencing sexual abuse in a church setting. Since coming to Next Step Jimmy continues to work towards forgiveness of his abusers as God is faithful in transforming his heart and his life through extensive Bible study, discipleship, and Christian fellowship.

Having grown up in the culture of a violent gang, another one of the Next Step participants turned to the Lord after several years in prison. He continues to grow in his relationship with his heavenly Father after his release and eventual transition to the safe environment and structured discipleship at Next Step. He is currently enrolled in Bible college, has held a steady job since and faithfully serves his church.



*Fellowship Night*

A major and common factor adding to life's hardships: absent and abusive fathers. If you research this topic you will find that fathers, as well as mothers, are incredibly important in the well-being and upbringing of their children. At Next Step, after ministering to 80 men in 10 years we have observed that the vast majority of those men grew up in the absence of a father or with an abusive father. Wayne, for example, had an extremely abusive father who led him into a life of aberrant behavior.

After years of criminal activity and substance abuse, Wayne was sent to jail where a faithful servant led him to Christ. Following his release, and a rehabilitation program, Wayne came to Next Step where he came to fellowship with his Christian brothers and become associated with a loving family of believers at a local church.

So, what is Next Step doing to help these men? Through group Bible studies and one-on-one mentoring, the men are encouraged to explore and discover the truth of who God is and what He has done, while also understanding who we are, as sinners made in God's image, and loved with His unfailing love. Grasping this great love gives all of us a living hope in Jesus, in spite of the hardships of our past. Finding our identity in Christ, and claiming His strength and wisdom helps men like Jimmy and Wayne put their faith in their Creator, instead of the creation, where they find true joy and rest in Him.



*Golf Night*

### **Why Group Activities?**

The leaders at Next Step make an effort to gather the Next Step participants together for an occasional "group activity". What and why is this part of the ministry?

A group activity is simply an opportunity to experience fellowship, food (in most instances!), fun, and normalcy for a bunch of guys that typically have not had such opportunities in the past. The gathering builds stronger and deeper relationships with fellow Next Step participants or with others from various ministries or churches around our community. Fun is frequently a missing element in the lives of many of these men, so the group activities expose these guys to means to have a good time in a way that they have not experienced in the past. Over the last several years, we have been to baseball games, gone fishing, spent the day at the BioPark, taken the train to Santa Fe, gone to the movies, had a group barbeque, and visited a local car show, just to name a few. We have, from time to time, been accompanied by groups from local church groups or other ministries, always resulting in a good time, and the building of healthy relationships.

Next Step recently joined with some of our volunteers as well as another ministry group to enjoy food, fun, and fellowship at a local establishment to hit golf balls. It was a great time to critique the golf swing of one another!

Would you be interested in participating in or hosting and planning a group activity? This can be done as an individual, a small group, or a church group. If you're interested, please call Todd at 575-414-8795.

We thank you for your prayers and support. We couldn't do what we do without you! Thank you to Smith's for their continued support!

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