



Hand of **HELP**

The Truth for Today



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The Heart of God



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It's easy to generalize when you visit close to a dozen families on any given day, when you hear of a dozen different needs, and a dozen different prayers. There is only so much one can stand from an emotional standpoint before they are spent, before there are no more tears, before the heart becomes numb, and although you feel with the individual in question and empathize with their situation, they are just one face among many, one need among a sea of needs.



This is why in this issue of the newsletter I strived to describe, to the best of my ability, the individual struggles of individual families, and it may surprise you to hear that all the articles I chose to include in this issue, at least authored by myself, came from just one day of travel through the villages and homesteads of the Romanian countryside.

I mention this only because I believe it will help you better understand the emotional toll doing what we do day in and day out can have, and why when we speak of needs, most often we do so in broad terms rather than focusing on the individual.

The need is so vast and the stories so abundant that we have a difficult time choosing who to feature in the newsletter, whose story to tell, and who to delay for another issue. It's not that a certain family is less worthy of help than another, or their need is less immediate, it's just that there's only so much room, and sometimes hard choices have to be made. Thankfully, sometimes, the gifts for a certain family exceed the need itself and we are able to help two, or three, or five other families with similar needs.

The heart of God is love, and all I can really do is thank you for having the heart of God when it comes to the needs we feature in our newsletters, and the families and individuals we ask you to pray for. I know it is God

who stirs your heart to help, and I thank you for being sensitive to His urging.

In the past this ministry has been criticized for making needs known, and simultaneously criticized for not making the needs specific enough. Some have asked why we put out a newsletter at all, while others question why we don't publish more issues per year. If we would be swayed by the opinions of men, this would be a very different ministry today, but thankfully, like you, we desire to be led by the Spirit of God, and follow after His guidance in all we do.

Although sometimes we do generalize as far as needs are concerned, please know that you are helping real people, real families, saving real lives, and bringing smiles to real faces. I see them every time I return to Romania, and rejoice together with them each time I hear a praise report of how the Lord met a need, of how the Lord answered a prayer, and of how He made a way even in times such as these.

As yet another year comes to a close, and the future seems more uncertain than ever before, it is comforting to know we, the family of God, still pray for one another, feel with one another and encourage one another. It is the heart of God in each of us that unites us in purpose, and stirs us to do good even when doing good is becoming a more difficult task with each passing day.

We press on until the race is won, knowing He who sees all will rightly recompense all who in His name give a glass of water to a thirsty soul, or a loaf of bread to a hungry one. Know that my prayers, the prayers of the Hand of Help staff, and those of the countless individuals you've helped are with you. May you be blessed, and may you know the joy and peace of our Lord and King Christ Jesus in perpetuity.

*With love in Christ,
Michael Boldea Jr.*



Isn't

God Good?



We serve an amazing God. Widows and families in Romania can be praying, 'God, we are looking to You for the provision of our needs. From our perspective, we see no way out of our circumstances, but to You all things are possible. Thank you for hearing our prayers. We trust You completely. In Jesus' precious Name we pray, amen.'



God had, months before, laid it on the hearts of brethren in the United States to give toward the needs of their brothers and sisters in Romania. What a beautiful sight it is when we show up on their doorstep with the answer to their prayers in hand. Oh, the praises and thanksgiving to God, who has orchestrated the whole thing. Isn't God good?



Hand of Help not only ministers to the needs of approximately 80 children, but they touch the lives of hundreds of families in the surrounding areas. This is the very heart of our Father who said He would be a Father to the fatherless. His heart is to care for the orphans, the widows, the widowers and the poor.



What a privilege it is to be ambassadors of His kingdom, to serve One so loving and kind. A heartfelt thank you goes out to those of you who pray for and support this ministry. May God reward you for your generosity and love for the orphan, the widow, and the poor.

*Blessings,
Dave, Cheryl & Hosanna Edman
Kalispell, Montana*



Defining *Thankfulness*

I've always considered myself a thankful person, but then again I've had a lot to be thankful for in my life. I've been blessed with relatively decent health, a loving wife, a supportive family, and a calling which suits my temperament and nature.

As a child I was taught to be thankful for the little things, but as I grew older the little things seemed insufficient, and I began to feel entitled to the intangible, simple, priceless things I was once thankful for. Thankfully, in His love and mercy, the Lord opened my eyes early on, and I returned to the mindset of possessing a childlike wonder of God's goodness, and of being thankful for everything all the time.

As such, it is always a joy and an honor for me to meet thankful people, and in certain cases it is even a humbling experience, because their thankfulness extends beyond what I feel I would be thankful for in my day to day life. During one of our outings distributing food, clothing, and finances, we stopped by the home of Lelcu Mariana. Oddly enough, Mariana and her husband live in the same village I grew up in for the first nine years of my life, but up until that day I had never met them before.

Though I personally did not know sister Mariana, my father knew her well enough, having visited on different occasions, and even before we walked into her home my father warned me that I would get emotional. No, I am not one of those guys who cries every time he sees a butterfly, but I do have a tender heart when it comes to other people's pain and hardship, something I am certain I inherited from my mother.

Sister Mariana has been on insulin for the past thirty years, and due to complications stemming from her diabetes she's had both her legs amputated. Although my father was aware of this, he was not aware of the fact that in the interim, since he'd last visited, she had also lost her eyesight.

As she started to speak to us in a warm and friendly tone, I began looking around the small room which was now packed with myself, my father, my brother Sergiu, and the team from the United States, and I realized I was not the only one who was trying to hold back tears.

Sister Mariana spoke freely of her struggles, of how she often has phantom pain, or how she often dreams of walking, but there was no sadness or bitterness in her voice and in spite of all she had gone through one could detect the joy in her words and mannerism.

"I lost my eyesight completely a few months back," sister Mariana said, "but thankfully I still remember what my children look like, and I recognize their voices and I can still put a face to the voice. I know it's hard on my husband taking care of me, but I know I'm still here for a purpose, and the good Lord will make it evident with time. Now I spend my days in prayer, and reciting the verses I began to memorize when I realized my eyesight was going."

We tell ourselves certain truths so often that they begin to border on the cliché. The notion that faith does not mean living problem free, but rather living with God amidst your problems is one of those truths. Sister Mariana was thankful and joyful not because of her circumstances, but in spite of them, because she knew that God was with her. "Every day He comforts me. Every day I feel His presence, and I know He has not forgotten me."

It's been close to a month since we visited the Lelcu home, and I am still reminded of this beautiful soul and the thankful heart she possesses every single day.

We are all, to the last, living testimonies of Christ and what He does in our lives and hearts when we receive Him. My hope and prayer is that we continue to be thankful for all things, realizing that many throughout the world are far more thankful for far less than what most believers today take for granted.

I would ask that you keep sister Mariana in your prayers, as well as her husband who is also her primary caregiver. I know it cannot be easy, but like his wife, the joy of the Lord was evident on his face the moment we shook hands and greeted each other.

Thank you for making it possible for us to reach out to such families and individuals, and be an answer to their prayers.

*With love in Christ,
Michael Boldea Jr.*



*“Every day He comforts me.
Every day I feel His presence, and
I know He has not forgotten me.”*

It is the policy of Hand of Help that if giving for a specific project exceeds the need thereof, the excess is used toward similar projects or families in similar situations. Sometimes gifts for families we feature in our newsletter do exceed the stated need, and in these situations the remaining funds are used to help families going through similar hardships or trials.



Come and See

After much prayer and contemplation we have decided to officially extend an invitation to all who would like to come and visit the work in Romania firsthand. Although teams do come regularly, and we host individuals with regularity, this is the first time we are officially extending an invite to all who've felt stirred to visit Romania, and see the work Hand of Help does firsthand.

We will begin scheduling dates and putting together teams as soon as we hear from you. These teams will be coordinated and led by Dr. Daniel Boldea, and we know that whenever you do decide to go, you will have a blessed time in the Lord.

If you are interested in becoming part of one of our upcoming teams, please contact us at daniel@handofhelp.com.



Joyful,



Joyful!



Long

Lives & Peaceful Hearts

When I was a teenager I thought forty was old. Now that I'm staring forty in the face, it doesn't seem so old to me anymore. Although perspectives shift with time and certain perceptions are relative, I think we can all agree that if you've walked this earth for almost one hundred whole years, you are rapidly approaching old age.

Not many of us are blessed with such long life, yet during our trips through the Romanian countryside we kept running into individuals who, although in the twilight of their existence on this earth seemed to have the energy and stamina of one much younger. Instead of finding them in bed, or resting comfortably somewhere just watching the world go by, most often we would find the older folks working around the house, husking corn, caring for their livestock, chopping firewood, or a dozen other things which require much physical exertion.

Yes, the movements have slowed with time, the spine is bowed and the joints ache, but each time I run across someone who was alive when the First World War began, you can see a settled peacefulness that can only be achieved with the passage of time.

Each wrinkle tells a story, each ache tells of a hardship, and if you're looking to spend an afternoon listening to firsthand accounts of the past hundred years, there are few places better suited than the home of an elderly person.

Among the many individuals we came across in our travels, Pricopie Eugenia and her daughter Aurica stood out to me. Sister Eugenia is turning one hundred years old this year, and her caretaker is her seventy six year old daughter Aurica. Although Eugenia is bedridden due to her bowed spine, Aurica is still a whirlwind of energy, always moving, always doing something.

I think we can all agree that if you've walked the earth for almost one hundred years you've accumulated a nice array of stories. Sister Eugenia was alive during the First World War, the Second World War, and every other war and skirmish in between. She had seen the rise, domination, and fall of communism, she had seen dictators and presidents come and go, yet what she chose to share with us was the day she was baptized, and the fact that she and two other sisters her age were the first believers in her area.





The Pricopie family home is small, made of mud brick, and has been there for many a decade. There isn't much of anything hanging on the walls by way of adornment, but there was one photo to which Eugenia kept pointing repeatedly, a photo taken on the day of her baptism, dressed in white, standing by the side of a pond, wholly unrecognizable as it must have been taken at least fifty years prior.

Crowded as it was in the small room, we stood and listened to how difficult it was to be one of a handful of Christians in a community during those days, how they were looked down upon, and how they were marginalized, but also how throughout every trial and hardship the Lord was there, and brought peace, joy and comfort.



‘If I know one thing after all these years, is that the Lord is always with us, and when we cry out to Him, He answers.’

It is this knowledge and certainty that cocoons peace in our hearts. Neither sister Eugenia nor Aurica have any source of income, when we asked they had no money for firewood for the coming winter, food was and is a scarce commodity for them, yet they have peace, and it is a peace so powerful that it is evident in their countenance. We left money for firewood, we left some food packages, and asked them if they needed anything else, and with a smile Aurica said, ‘we have the Lord, what more do we need?’

In these days of uncertainty and global chaos, may we have this selfsame attitude and mindset, that if we have the Lord, we have all that we need, and whatever the circumstance, whatever the trial, He will be there making a way when there seems to be no way.

*With love in Christ,
Michael Boldea Jr.*



The Widow's

Apples

Recently, men of science have confirmed what we believers have known all along. Namely, that it is better to give than to receive. Yes, they have scientifically proven this adage as truth, concluding that the psychological reward of giving, or helping others is deeply engrained in human nature.

Although she is by no means a scientist or a person of letters, Maria Bidalac likewise knew, and intuitively so, that it is better to give than receive, and it might explain why she was so adamant about her apples.

It was well past noon when we entered the village of Grigoresti on a beautiful October day. We had stopped at a few homes along the way, had distributed some food and finances, and having spent more time than we had intended with some individuals, it was getting late, and we were getting hungry. Most of our outings are in what some might politely call rural areas, while others might refer to them as the sticks. No gas station, no sandwich shop, no drive-thru, just farmland, old homes, and gravel roads. As such, if you didn't pack a lunch, you aren't going to be eating lunch.

Our next scheduled stop was the home of Bidalac Maria, a seventy-seven year old who has been a widow for the better part of a decade. After calling out a few times, Maria, who had been doing some work in her barn finally heard us and came to greet us. We greeted her, told her why we were there, and as my father and the rest of the group continued to talk to Maria, my brother Sergiu spotted the apple tree in her yard and began scanning to see if any of the apples were low enough to the ground for him to take one.

Although she was involved with a conversation already, Maria must have noticed my brother's intent, because after a few more minutes she excused herself and returned with a bag of apples which she insisted we take and distribute amongst ourselves.

Keep in mind, Maria did not have an orchard. There were only two apple trees as far as we could tell, so it wasn't like she offered us the apples she did out of excess.



We tried to beg off her gift, tried to explain that we would be back in the city within a couple of hours and we could go buy our own apples, but no matter how much we tried to explain, or what we tried to say, Maria kept insisting we take the apples.

Even when we left her yard, she followed us to the car, and until we took the bag of apples she would not relent. Having been in ministry for the better part of twenty six years, I can tell you that what someone gives is as telling as the fact that they give in the first place. When we give as unto the Lord, we do our utmost to give the best we can give, rather than something we wouldn't miss.

You can tell when someone sends a package as unto the Lord, whether the package contains food, shoes, or clothing, and when someone was just cleaning out their garage. Thankfully, those of you who support this work do so as unto the Lord, but that's another story for another time.

When we looked in the bag Maria had insisted we take, we realized she had given it as unto the Lord. Every single apple in the bag was bigger than anything she still had left hanging in the trees, and not one was bruised, spoiled, or less than worthy of being eaten on the spot. Maria's heart was revealed in the gift that she gave in that she gave the best she had even though we were just a group of believers passing through.

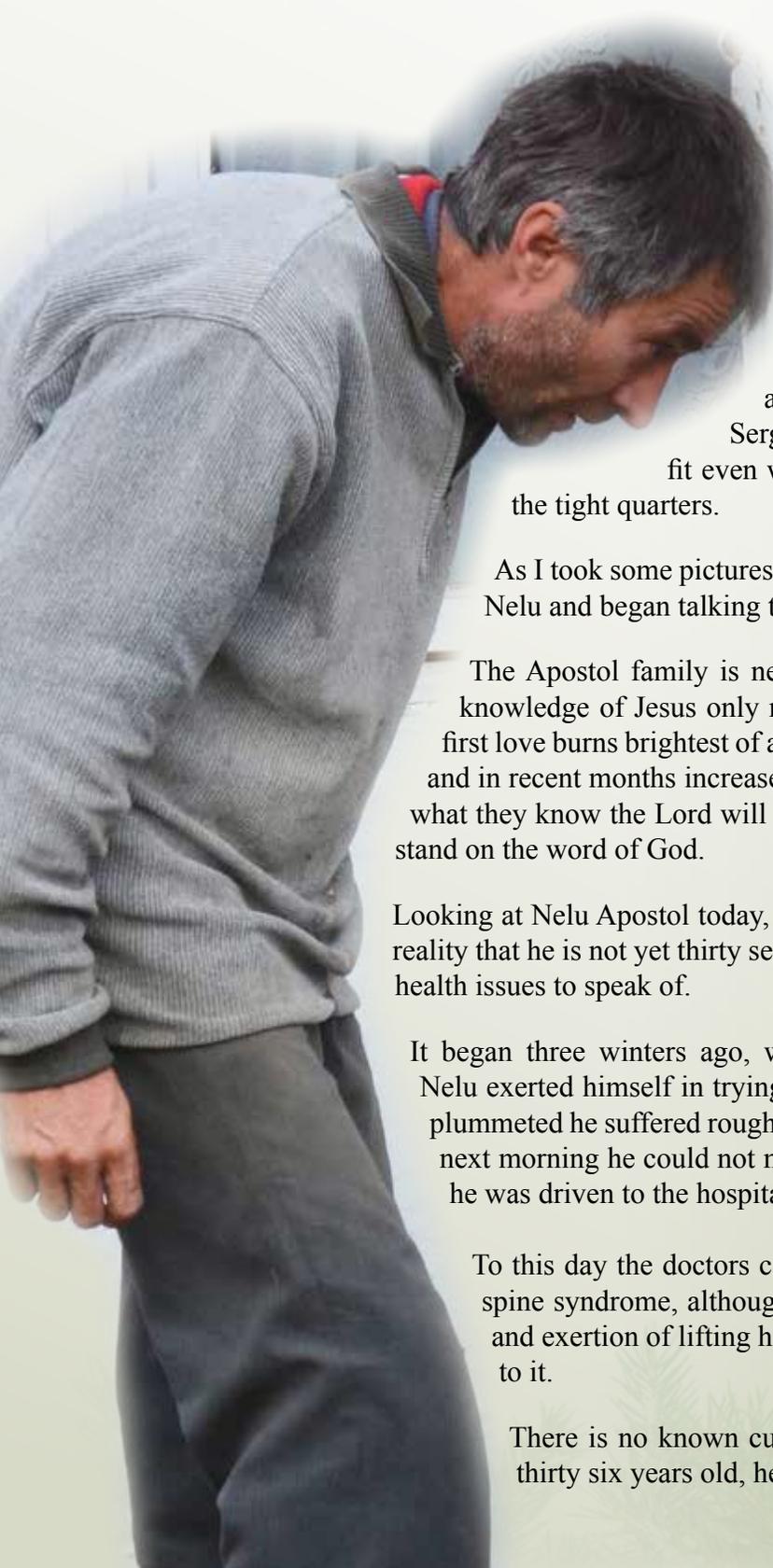
We ate apples as we drove to our next destination, and I don't know about the other car, but all the passengers in the car I was driving enjoyed them immensely. Perhaps it was the fact that we were hungry, or that we realized these apples had been given to us sacrificially, but they seemed sweeter, and crisper, and juicier than any apples we'd had in recent memory, and we were as thankful for them as we were about selfless hearts such as Maria's still being among us, whether in Romania or in America.

*With love in Christ,
Michael Boldea Jr.*



A Vivid

Reminder



How old do you think he is?’ my brother Sergiu whispered in my ear as I stood and watched Nelu Apostol enter his home.

‘What if I told you he is younger than you are?’

We had arrived at the Apostol home a few minutes earlier only to find Nelu trying to unload a cartful of firewood all on his own. Two of the brothers on the team made haste and helped him finish his chore, and as everyone entered the small home, my brother Sergiu and I remained outside knowing it would be a tight fit even without the two of us trying to squeeze ourselves into the tight quarters.

As I took some pictures of the home and surroundings, my brother approached Nelu and began talking to him.

The Apostol family is new to the body of Christ, having come to the saving knowledge of Jesus only recently. They are in their first love, and we all know first love burns brightest of all. Though hardships have shadowed them throughout, and in recent months increased in size and scope, there is joy and enthusiasm about what they know the Lord will do in their lives and family, because they believe, and stand on the word of God.

Looking at Nelu Apostol today, one would have a hard time coming to terms with the reality that he is not yet thirty seven years old, and as little as three years ago he had no health issues to speak of.

It began three winters ago, when after getting his cart stuck in a muddy creek, Nelu exerted himself in trying to lift it out, and as dusk came and the temperatures plummeted he suffered roughly three hours of intense cold before getting home. The next morning he could not move, and after promising to pay for a neighbor’s fuel, he was driven to the hospital in the city.

To this day the doctors cannot definitively tell Nelu why he suddenly got bent spine syndrome, although they have reasoned that a combination of the strain and exertion of lifting his cart, with the prolonged cold could have contributed to it.

There is no known cure for bent spine syndrome, and though Nelu is only thirty six years old, he looks closer to sixty.

After leaving some food, finances, and clothing, and praying with the Apostol family for strength and peace, we left their home, but the thought of how suddenly life can change for us as individuals stayed with me for some time.

Some individuals serve as testimonies for us, others serve as warnings for us, and others still serve as reminders that we are fragile, fleeting creations, wholly dependent upon our Creator for every breath and every step.

Life can change in an instant, in the blink of an eye, and it is those moments of testing that reveal whether or not our spiritual house was built upon the rock that is Christ, or on the shifting sands of our own self-aggrandizements.

I ask that you keep the Apostol family in your prayers, that though they are tried, their faith endures, and by their faithfulness they show those around them how good it is to know the Christ, and worship Him in spirit and truth.

*With love in Christ,
Michael Boldea Jr.*





Dear Brethren,

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Nothing in the universe so thoroughly and completely exemplifies the love God has for mankind than the birth of Christ Jesus, His Son. The instant the first cry rang out in that manger so long ago, the love of God was made manifest, and nothing was ever the same again.

We live in an age where men attempt to draw people to the household of faith with promises of what God will do for them rather than what He has already done. If they would just sign the visitor’s card, raise a hand during the altar call, and become a member, then they would really see what God can do for them. They promise individuals that they will nevermore lack, nevermore need, nevermore see something they can’t afford to buy, and by doing so I believe they minimize what God has already done and what God has already given us.

What God has already given us by way of Christ Jesus is worth more than any physical or material possession can ever be. If we are not satisfied with Christ, if Christ is not sufficient, then we either don’t understand the true meaning of God’s only begotten Son being born in Bethlehem some two thousand years ago, or our hearts are still tethered to this earth and our eyes still blinded to the glory of salvation that only Christ can give.

The birth of Christ not only gives us reason to hope, He is hope personified. Rather than wonder at what more God can give us, or what blessing is around the corner, may we rejoice in the hope that He’s given us and know how truly vast the love of God is for us as individuals. God gave His Son! No one took Him, no one kidnapped Him, God gave His Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

We often wonder why some simply won’t see this beautiful truth, and the sad reality is because they refuse to see it. Men choose to feign ignorance and blindness rather than allow themselves to be overcome by true love, pure love, sacrificial love exemplified in Jesus, because to see the enormity of God’s love for us is to fall at His feet and humble ourselves before Him.

Though the world might be spinning out of control and uncertainty has become a constant for many, may we rejoice in the truth of our Savior’s birth, may we rejoice in the knowledge that we are truly, unequivocally loved, because God has already shown us His perfect love in His Son Jesus.

Though times may get hard and days may get dark, I know His love will carry me through. I know God’s love will keep me, protect me, comfort me and shelter me, because He has already proven just how much He loves already. May the knowledge that you are loved be with you and overflow your heart.

God loves you, and so do we, for in Him we are the family of God, united in His Son and anxiously awaiting the wedding feast that is even now being prepared. May we not grow weary, may we not grow troubled, and may we continue to walk humbly with our Lord, emboldened in all good things by His love and grace.

It has been an honor serving you all these years, and I, along with the staff here at Hand of Help will continue to do so for as long as the Lord sees fit.

Psalm 32:11, “Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”

*With love in Christ,
Michael Boldea Jr.*

