

Ministry Update - 1st Quarter, 2006

Twelve Step Recovery Meetings:

We recently started Step 4, and will be teaching on the armor of God and on how to do spiritual warfare for the next few weeks. The reason we do that is because a lot of people seem to get "attacked" by the devil while trying to dig up the past for their 4th Step inventory. Some are paralyzed by fear, others feel guilt and condemnation, or they just don't want to face painful issues from the past. Everyone in our groups who has actually done the 4th and 5th Steps say it's worth it, but sometimes people have a hard time getting started, as the devil puts fear into them. We teach on spiritual warfare during this time, because you can't be working on your 4th Step inventory in the group anyway, it's a personal, private thing.

Here is a short excerpt from one of our lesson papers, which is also available on our website, "Knowing Who You Are In Christ, Using Your Spiritual Authority - Part 1": **Ephesians 6:10-18** "Finally, my brethren, be STRONG in the LORD, and in the power of His MIGHT. **Put on the whole ARMOR of God**, that you may be able to **STAND AGAINST** the **wiles (tricks) of the DEVIL**. For we do NOT wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (demonic forces in the atmosphere). Therefore **take up the whole armor of God**, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and **having DONE ALL**, to stand. Stand, therefore, having girded your waist with TRUTH, having put on the BREASTPLATE of RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the SHIELD of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the SWORD of the Spirit, which is the WORD of God."

Basically, **the ARMOR is the KNOWLEDGE of WHO you are IN CHRIST**. You must **ARM YOURSELF with that knowledge** (see I Peter 3:22-4:2) - knowledge of your POSITION IN CHRIST and the KNOWLEDGE that you are a NEW CREATION in Christ Jesus. In Col. 3:10 & Eph.4:23-24 is it called PUTTING ON the new man (the "new creation" that you are in Christ). The individual pieces of the armor are specific areas where you NEED TO KNOW who you are and what resources you have available to you in Jesus Christ. If you do not know WHO YOU ARE as a believer in Jesus Christ, or maybe you're just shaky on some points, you MUST get into the word of God and renew your mind! There is no substitute, there is no short cut to renewing our minds with the word of God.

- **Colossians 3:10** "And have **put on the NEW MAN** who is **RENEWED in KNOWLEDGE** according to the image of Him who created him."
- **Ephesians 4:23-24** "And **be RENEWED in the spirit of your MIND**; and that **YOU put on the NEW MAN**, which was CREATED according to God, in righteousness and true HOLINESS."

Evangelistic Outreach:

Saturday, January 7, 2006 -

It was a beautiful day, sunny and in the 80s, in January! This was the day they wished they'd had for the Rose Parade the week before. Ha! We gave out 48 lunches to the homeless, and probably could've given away a few more, so we may make up more lunches next month. Our team consisted of Tom, Dottie, Lorén, Angela, Awilda, Amelia, Vince, Youbert, Sheldon, Gary, Gordon, Adam and Petra. Wow! That's that biggest team we've had so far, too! There was a lot of openness of people receiving the tracts, and as usual, we gave out two or three hundred (it's hard to keep track). Vince gave some to a young woman who may or may not have been homeless, but she surely was in a bad place. When he told her God loves her, and gave her

several tracts, tears began to run down her face. He stayed and talked to her for a while. We saw a man who was yelling and hitting himself, dressed in raggedy clothing, and we assumed he was homeless. He looked and acted like a living picture of the Gadarene demoniac from whom Jesus cast out the "legion" of demons. I asked Adam to come with me, and we prayed as we approached the man. At first, it looked like he was going to lash out at us, but when we offered him a lunch bag, his face softened and he thanked us. I gave him an extra tract (there's always one inside the lunch bags), and he took it, also, and thanked us. As we walked away, we noticed a man on a bicycle watching us intently. I offered a tract to the man, and he took it, as I said, "Even crazy people need to eat." He made some remark that was in agreement, but seemed impressed that we had even approached the man at all. We pray that our example may help soften his heart to the gospel message in the tract, and we give Jesus all the glory. There are always people who refuse to take a tract, and Petra, who had never done tract-passing before, was a little dismayed at first when someone refused one. She said she enjoyed it, though, and we reminded her and everyone that we are just sowing the seed of God's word, and it's up to the Lord to bring forth a harvest of souls for His kingdom. After we had given out all the lunches, and were on our way back, we had one heckler. He hollered out something about why weren't we washing peoples' feet and feeding the poor. Well, that's just what we were doing (except not washing feet, at least not literally), but he hadn't observed it, so to him we weren't real Christians, I guess.

Saturday, February 4, 2006 -

Friday evening, we had Adam and his ten-year-old son Johnnie come over to help with the bagging up of the lunches for Saturday's outreach. That made it Tom, me, Lorén, Adam and Johnnie. We had a good system going, and had them all finished in about an hour. Adam said he couldn't come out on Saturday, because he was going to a discipleship class at his church, so we just prayed that enough people would show up on Saturday. Saturday morning was cold and overcast, and we only had six in our team to go out (with Tom at home as prayer cover). Some of our regulars were sick, or had to work, and Tom's back usually prevents him from being able to do that much walking. We could be discouraged by the lack of people, or we could believe that, like Gideon's army, God could use us no matter how small a band (Judges chapter 7). The ones who went out to the Boardwalk were Dottie, Lorén, Petra, Johnnie, Amelia and Awilda. We had 54 lunches, and the six of us couldn't carry them all, so we went halfway up the Boardwalk with as many as we could carry, handing them out, and then Amelia and Awilda went back to the car for the rest of the bags. The cold weather didn't keep the tourists away, and I would say we passed out the usual 200 or so tracts, plus the 54 tracts in the lunches. Amelia said she saw a lot of people reading the tracts we'd already given them. I also found that I would catch some people who had been missed by those going ahead of me. My first thought was, "Oh, they've probably already been offered one, so I shouldn't bother," but most of the time, that was not the case, and they would take one. There were a lot of guys outside the Phoenix House (residential recovery program), and almost every one of them took a tract, and some took more than one title. We gave away all the lunches to the homeless, and even ran out by the time we reached the end of the Boardwalk. Several times, we would see a man looking in the trash cans, and offer him one, and his face would just brighten up, and he was very thankful. Others were in groups, and some still huddled in their blankets against the cold and damp. The tract-passing was great, as usual, and ten-year-old Johnnie was a real trooper. When Petra, his grandmother, and I had to rest on a bench for a while, when Amelia and Awilda went back for more lunches, Johnnie was going out and handing tracts to everyone walking by us. Praise the Lord! As we were on our way back, a girl with hearts painted on her face offered us a red, heart-shaped balloon, and said she was just down there at the boardwalk to hug and "give out love" to everybody. We said we were there out of love, too, to give the message of God's love through His Son Jesus Christ. I'm sure she was sincere in her desire to help people, but a red balloon is not going to help anyone escape from the flames of hell! Our tracts that we were giving out will, if a person will read it with an open heart, and put their trust in Jesus. We always pray for the Holy Spirit to be working on peoples' hearts, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ" (Acts 26:18). We need to remember not to

be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ as we reach out to people. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first, and also for the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).

Saturday, March 4, 2006 -

It rained most of Friday, but in faith, we bagged up the lunches on Friday night anyway, praying for good weather on Saturday. Then, sure enough, it was a little cold and crisp, but sunny on Saturday. We had Tom, Dottie, Lorén, Chris, Gary, Nathan, Jessica, Petra and Amelia go out as our team, and 55 lunches to give out. They were still working on the parking lot at the beach, so we had to park a little farther away than usual, but it was okay. We gave out all the lunches, and several hundred gospel booklets (tracts). Of the tracts, most were English, some Spanish, and two Japanese, two French, and one Korean. We gave them to the vendors setting up their wares to sell, to employees in many of the shops and food concessions, and of course to the walkers and gawkers and tourists that roam up and down the Venice Boardwalk. My favorite moment was in giving two different tracts to a couple of teenage girls, and seeing them go over to a place to sit down and start reading them right away. We saw others reading them as they walked, as some of the group went ahead of us and we could see they were passing out the tracts up ahead. On the way back, one homeless man was sitting on a bench, and I asked how he had liked his lunch. He said it was great, thanked us, and then asked for more of the Chick tracts. We gave him about four more different titles. Quite a few people asked about what church we go to and we gave them information about how to get to Sunrise Church. Chris prayed for several homeless people that he gave lunches to, as well as just passing out the tracts and lunches. When passing the Phoenix House, lots of the guys were outside, and most of them took a tract. I was able to share with some of them about our prison ministry, and told them to call the number on the back of the tract, and give us the address of anyone they knew in prison, and we would write to them. For the foreign language tracts, I saw Petra give a booklet in English to two Japanese young men, so I followed up with asking them if they would like one in Japanese. They said "yes" and were so surprised I had some right in my hand. Later, Amelia gave English tracts to a group of young men, and as I came by, I saw one of them didn't have a tract. I offered him one, and then noticed they were all speaking with an accent, so I asked what language they spoke other than English. They said French, so I reached in my bag for one in French. I have so much fun with the foreign language tracts, and I love the look on peoples' faces when they see I have them in their language.

Prison Ministry:

We continue to get new guys from Avenal State Prison, Solano State Prison, Corcoran State Prison, and surprisingly, a new bunch from Mule Creek Prison in Ione, Calif. Our last guy to leave Mule Creek was in July, 2005, and he put our name and address up on the bulletin board there. We didn't hear anything for a long time, but all of a sudden it got noticed, and we've got quite a few new guys doing the 12-Steps faithfully, and all of them are on the Minimum Security Yard. The following are some excerpts from a few of their letters:

Stanley Davis, Soledad Prison, letter dated 1/23/06 -

"Well, it's almost time for me to be a free man! A lot has changed, I'm a better person, with the help of the two of you, Dottie and Tom. Thanks a million! I never had a support before, whenever I would come to prison, I would just think the same old way, and do the same old stuff. Never changing, living a sinful life, but today, I have purpose, unity. I will take a realistic look at my problems and see that most of them are minor. I will leave them that way, and enjoy my recovery, serving my lost brother and sister. I have found a gift in recovery, one I will keep for a long time to come, letting go of my past. I will pack my bags and move out of my past into a present filled with hope. I will be a student of recovery, I will welcome challenges, confident in what I've learned and eager to share it with others." "You know one thing? I've really found myself in recovery. when I was lost, I was a wreck waiting to happen,

and at this very moment I'm starting life all over again. It feels like I'm in a repair shop being repaired, but this repair is on going. I just want to thank you, Tom and Dottie, again for all the help you have gave to me. Without you two it would of not been possible. Now I'm ready for the world."

Lyrone Harris, Mule Creek Prison, letter dated 2/13/06 -

"Well, I want you and Tom to know I am praying for you and the family and your ministry. I am sorry I have not wrote you a letter of appreciation, but I have been busy with my job..... a work program outside the prison. Also, I am the leader in the chapel, and also I have 4 Bible study correspondence courses, but my biggest priority is the 12 Step program that you and Tom have. I have studied a lot of 12 Step programs, but this is the best one I have taken. Also, thank you for my Serenity Bible. I pray that God will make a way that I can help you and Tom when I get out soon, in feeding the people. Please pray for me that God guides me and leads me in His steps, as I pray for you and Tom. God bless, your Brother Harris"

Donald O'Brien, Pleasant Valley State Prison, letter dated 3/17/06 -

"Thank you so much for the information about the Jehovah's Witnesses. Yes, they are truly a cult, and I'm staying away from them. I even gave them back their Watchtowers and the New World Translation. Just last night, one of the Witnesses had asked me to attend their services tomorrow, because they will be showing a movie. I told him politely, "No thanks!" and gave him the information you gave me about the Jehovah's Witnesses, to open his eyes to the truth. Maybe I might be able to save one of them..... Yes, I do feel I am learning a whole lot from these Ephesians Bible studies, and I'm very interested to start on the Romans study, even if they're only chapters 5,6,7 and 8. I just want to learn more about our Savior (smile)."

Almo Jackson, Mule Creek Prison, letter dated 3/20/06 -

"Hope this letter finds you and the family in the best of health and blessed by the Father. As for me, God is really working on me. I'm going through a big change in my life, and at first I couldn't understand why I was having all these mixed feelings about myself and my past. They didn't start until I started doing your 12-Step program. I now realize that that's not a bad thing. In the past, whenever I started to have these type of feelings, I would stuff them. I know now that if I keep running from them I'll never really be free. Even if by some chance I stay out of prison I'll never really be free from the pain and hurt of my past life. I know now that I have to confront whatever it is that's been keeping me in bondage, so that things will get better."

RESURRECTION is the REASON for the SEASON!! "The divinity of Christ finds its surest proof in His resurrection (Rom 1:4). Christ's sovereignty also depends on His resurrection (Rom 14:9). Again, our justification hangs on Christ's resurrection (Rom 4:25). Our very regeneration depends on His resurrection (1 Peter 1:3). And most certainly our ultimate resurrection rests here (Rom 8:11). The silver thread of resurrection runs through all the blessings, from regeneration onward to our eternal glory, and binds them together." C. H. Spurgeon