

Ministry Update - 1st Quarter, 2007

Twelve Step Recovery Meetings

We studied Steps 1, 2 and 3 during this quarter. In one of our recovery meetings we used the questions on the Second Week's Lesson for Step 3 as our questions to cover in the meeting. Step 3 is "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God." It got some really good discussion going on giving our will over to God, deciding and choosing ahead of time to do God's will instead of our own will or following our feelings and emotions, and what it means to fully surrender to God. We used the example of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, where His emotions were so strong that He sweated blood, but He still decided with His will to obey God and do the Father's will. John 13:3-4 says that "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments....." In other words, Jesus knew what God's plan was in His going to the cross, and He knew who He was. However, when He got to the Garden of Gethsemane, the immensity and horror of what He was about to go through hit Him, and His emotions (emotions are a part of the soul - "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful" - Matthew 26:37-38) caused Him to pray and ask, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," but then with His will, He made a choice and prayed, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Jesus is our Supreme Example of how to choose with our will to obey God rather than go with our feelings and emotions, but I realize we all too often identify more with the disciples who fell asleep (they were following "the flesh"), rather than with Jesus.

Evangelistic Outreach

Saturday, January 6, 2007 -

Friday evening, we bagged the food for the lunches for the outreach, and I somehow had the wrong list with me on Thursday when we bought the food, so there was only enough for 54 lunches, instead of the 72 we usually do. A "Senior Moment" for me, but the Lord worked it out for good. Saturday morning, we had Tom, me, Loren, Shannon, Dwayne, Amelia and Leigh-Anna for our outreach team, which is fewer people than usual, but it worked out fine having just the 54 lunches. We had two of the little carts that hold about 18 lunches each, and the rest of them we carried, and it worked out perfectly. When we got near Rose Ave., we did turn around and come back down the Boardwalk a little sooner than we usually do, because we had only one lunch left, and we saw a group of five or six homeless people up ahead, so we figured we didn't have enough for them, and it was best to turn on back. Last month, there was another Christian ministry up at that end of the Boardwalk feeding the homeless, too, so maybe they were back, and could catch those we missed. We did find one guy on our way back to give the last lunch to. On our way up, part of our team went down near the beach and on the grassy area, and the rest of us went straight up the Boardwalk. We found some people who remembered us, or at least recognized our lunches. One guy asked "What kind of sandwiches do you have?" and I said, "It's not sandwiches; it's two cans of Vienna sausages, crackers, cookies, a fruit cup....." and he interrupted, saying, "That'll work!" Everyone said the people getting the lunches were very thankful, and one guy who had a Bible sitting next to him said, "Praise the Lord!" It had been extremely cold and windy on Friday, but Saturday was sunny and beautiful. There were more people out and about on the Boardwalk that one would expect for January, and we passed out a lot of gospel tracts, and people were quite open and receptive. I saw one man sitting on a bench, and I went over and offered him a tract. He showed me the same one in his hand, and he said he had just found this one and was reading it. Praise the Lord! Even the ones that get dropped or thrown away by some, get picked up and read by others! I went into two tattoo parlors, and gave tracts to the people working there. Business was slow, and they all took the tracts, except for one guy who said, "Oh no, those are too scary!" I guess he'd read them before and didn't like the idea of hell? There were a lot of people running, in big groups, and we thought maybe they are practicing for the L.A. Marathon. None of those would stop and take a tract, but one man who was running by himself took one, and said, "Thank you very much!" We gave gospel tracts to guys playing basketball, people watching the basketball games and tennis players, and to the usual people

just walking along the Boardwalk. We gave out tracts in Spanish and English, but no other languages this time. I did run into an Indian man, setting up some stuff to sell, and asked him what other language he spoke, and he said, "Tamil". I thought he looked familiar, so I asked, "Aren't you the one they call 'Swami'?" and he said he was. I got out the only tract I had in Tamil, and when he looked at it, he said he'd already read it. I knew he had read it, because I gave him one almost two years ago, but he didn't seem interested in reading it again (he is Hindu) . Please pray for "Swami" - he needs much prayer for the Holy Spirit to break through the "blinding of his mind that has been put there by the god of this world, Satan", so that the "light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto him," and "shine in his heart to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Corinthians 4:3-4 & 6).

Saturday, February 3, 2007 -

We had another great outreach as the Lord continues to bless us as we go out in His name. Jesus said in Luke 14:21 & 23, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.... and the lord said unto his servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled'." We had 72 lunches this time, and some of our group even went down the side streets and alleys to find the "poor and the maimed" and those living in the "highways and hedges" down by Venice Beach. Our ministry team this time was Tom, me, Loren, Shannon, Dwayne, Amelia, Gordon, Leigh-Anna and John. Yvonne was at the house when we got back (Tom always stays home to pray for us while we're out there), as she mistakenly thought we started at 9:45 instead of 8:45, but she was able to pray with Tom. Dwayne joined us a little late down at the Boardwalk, because he was needed at the Bible Tabernacle for a deacons' breakfast that morning, and couldn't join us until afterwards. We handed out gospel tracts to the passers-by, and they were well-received for the most part. One homeless man gave us back the lunch after I said, "Jesus loves you" to him as I gave him the lunch. He said, "Here, take it back, then - I hate Jesus!" We said, "Okay, someone else will want it," and kept on going. The rest of the lunches were all well-received, with a few people even saying they didn't need one, because they had a little money, and maybe somebody else was worse-off than they were.

One man was sitting on a bench, and I offered him a tract. He didn't take it, but there was another tract right next to him on the bench. He asked what it was about, and I said it was about Jesus, and that we were down there spreading the gospel. He gave me a funny look, and I told him he could read the one there on the bench if he liked. Right then, a young woman came up to me and asked for a booklet in Spanish. She and another lady were working in one of the shops, and they each gladly took four different gospel booklets in Spanish. The man on the bench was watching intently, so I pray he decided to read the one next to him on the bench. Some of the people we meet are Christians, and we pray that what we are doing is an encouragement to them, too. One young guy saw what we were handing out, and said, "Oh! Yeah! Great!" so I said, "Praise the Lord!" Another guy working in one of the shops took a tract, and we talked for a few minutes. He also had asked me what the booklets were about, and where we get them (they're the little comic booklets from Chick Publications), and I told him they were about Jesus and God. I figure, why not just be honest and tell people, and if they are really so hardened to the gospel that they won't read one, then someone else will. A few people will give them back when you say that, but most will keep them. This guy kept his, and we had a nice conversation. Up and down the Boardwalk, I would see many people reading their tracts that someone else from our team had already given them, so we know they aren't being wasted. Praise the Lord!

Saturday, March 7, 2007 -

Well, on Friday I got the morning off to a good start by ordering more Chick tracts from off their website on the Internet They sent me a sample of a new one, and that always gets me wanting to order some, and I also ordered some other English and some Spanish tracts. These will be mostly for our outreaches. We are also getting really low on our custom-made Chick tracts with our ministry information printed on the back. We had 10,000 of them made up about four years ago, and they are almost gone. You have to order 10,000 of one tract in order to get the custom print job, but they are also half price when ordered that way. Friday

evening, we had Tom, me, Loren, Sheila, Yvonne, and Amy come over to help bag up the lunches for the outreach, and we made up 72 lunches. Saturday, we had a lot of calls from people saying they couldn't be there, either because of work, sickness, or other commitments, so we had a small group to go out. Even Loren couldn't go out with us, because she sprained her ankle. It ended up being Tom, me, John, and Dwayne. We had three of the little fold-able carts, so we could carry all the lunches, but we still had a few left over after the outreach. Tom put them in his truck, and handed them out to homeless people he would see while he's out and about during the day. As for the outreach itself, it went very well, pretty much as usual, with the exception of maybe not handing out quite as many tracts. With only three of us (Tom stays home to pray, as he can't walk that much with his bad back and sciatica), we probably did not hand out as many tracts as when we have ten or twelve in the group. That's just plain old math! There was a lot of prayer that went into this outreach, and it was a beautiful sunny day, so we gave out the gospel to quite a few people (it would be worth it if even only one person was saved from an eternity in hell, right?). It's funny, we would go along with a lot of people turning us down and saying "No" they didn't want a tract, and that would get a little discouraging. Then, all of a sudden, we would be giving them out right and left, with people taking them as fast as we could offer them! As always, the homeless people we found down at the Boardwalk were very grateful to get the lunches, and we pray, as always, that the Lord had the people He wanted to be there for receiving the gospel message of eternal life in His Son Jesus Christ.

Prison Ministry

It changes almost daily, but here are some of the different men's and women's prisons where we are writing to people now. The women's prisons are: Valley State Prison and the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla, Leo Chesney Correctional Facility in Live Oak, California Institution for Women in Corona, and Norco Women's Prison in Riverside County, and one women's conservation (fire) camp. The men's prisons are: San Quentin, two prisons in Soledad, CA, Wasco, Avenal, Solano, Tehachapi, Washington Ridge and Alder Conservation Camps, Calif. Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo, North Kern State Prison, Chuckawalla Valley and Ironwood State Prisons in Blythe, CA, Susanville, Lancaster, Mule Creek, a prison in Imperial, CA, and Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga!

Francisco Cortez, Wasco State Prison -

"I start this letter by praising our beloved Father and Savior, for I got your Bible studies just in time, for Satan was at work, throwing poison at my mind. But by the grace of our Lord, I will overcome all that he comes at me with. I am a 25-year-old ex-gang member, and my Lord had to bring me here to make my path known. I am to feed His sheep and I am to be a testimony to the lost, for He loves us! Thank you both for helping me help find my way and gettin' to know God! Sincerely, Francisco"

Teresa Criado, at Valley State Prison for Women, Chowchilla -

"Hello, I just wanted to write a fast letter to tell you both I am very thankful that God brought you and "Love Lifted Me Recovery" into my life! You and my Bible study mean a lot to me. I look forward to getting mail from you whether it is my Bible studies, a letter, or a card from you, it puts a big smile on my face!"

John Young, at Chuckawalla Valley State Prison -

"I received your letter and enclosed was the second week's lesson of Step Ten. I really enjoyed the second week's lesson of Step Ten, because as I continue to take a personal inventory of myself, flashes of my past behavior became vivid as I completed each verse. I was that person who allowed his heart to be hardened in my pursuit of money and power, forgetting the teaching that was taught to me as a child, that God would provide all that is needed. However, this experience has drawn me back to God and His teaching, and since then I have softened my heart and cleansed my hands. God has filled my life with so many blessings and fulfilled my request, and when my request does not come to pass, then I know now that my request was not to be, for God surely knows best."

David Walker, at Chuckawalla Valley State Prison -

"I thank you so much for helping me in my recovery and 12-Step program, and the Serenity Bible is so awesome! I opened a lot of stuff that's been locked away for a long time. I cried and asked Jesus to help me, that I need Him and trust Him as Lord of my life. I feel like a little kid working so hard to get a new toy, but I must remember that the Lord will work His ways all I have to do is trust in Him. I thank Him for you both helping me. Thank you for your kindness and time in sharing with me and helping me open my eyes wider. With respect and God's love. David"

Matthew Chappell, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, Calif. -

"Dear Tom and Dottie, Praise God! I have been found suitable for release at my parole board hearing. This is my first chance at parole, and this just never happens. Our God is an awesome God! Nothing is impossible with Him. I'm sure to tell everyone who asks the reason I have been found suitable for parole is because of what God has done in my life and how He has changed me into the man I am now. Most don't want to hear it. I am so sad for them. My Christian friends all just smile and say "Praise God!" or "God is great!" or "What an awesome God we serve!" I love them so much, I want to do so much for them. I'm still a little spacey right now and haven't thought everything through yet, but I wanted to be sure and write to you guys right away. Tom and Dottie, thank you both so much for being such good friends to me. Through working your program I met Jesus my Lord and Savior and was given life. God has made me sober and given me every blessing imaginable. Thank you for showing me how Christians operate in the world on a day to day basis."

Daniel Holland, Corcoran SATF -

"Well, they moved me because of a fight that I got into. But the crazy thing that happened is he hit me, but I did not hit him back. I walked away. I'm not used to that. I have always been a fighter, but since God has come into my life, I do not want to fight like I used to. But it is hard to be humble, but I'm doing it. The C.O. moved me so there would not be any more problems. All I got out of that guy hitting me was a black eye and the side of my face swollen up and my pride hurt, but I'm learning to deal with things in a different way. I know that it is not going to be easy to change my life, and I need a lot of work before I turn into the man God wants me to be, so please keep me in your prayers."

Jamie McDonald, at Warner Springs Women's Fire Camp -

"Hi, how are you? I hope you're doing well. I'm sorry it took me so long to do this 4th Step, and I did half of it. I will send the next part in a couple of weeks. It was hard for what I wrote, to dig all that up! Things I had stuffed. I don't know if I "did it right" but I did what came to my mind. I'm un-stuffing things and letting them go. Thank you so much. I'll write more in my next letter, letting you know what I'm doing. I'm doing good, and I've already been on my first fire. I am "first saw" (chain saw) on crew! God bless! Love, Jamie"

Eileen Orange, at Central Calif. Women's Facility, Chowchilla -

"I'd like to thank the Lord for opening my ears, heart and mind to help me search and do my 12-Step study. I want to thank you for all you do for me and my studies. This is so important to me. I have been doing a lot while incarcerated to work on being a better person. I have an education class I attend, I attend 3 days of church and Bible study, and Tues. & Thurs. I attend NA meetings. I feel very good about everything I do, besides my 12-Step studies I do with you. I have a Bible study sent to me, and I have received 3 certificates of completion of those studies. All the studies help me focus on Jesus! I'm real excited from this week, because I introduced my 12-Step study I do with you to some more ladies, and they took your address and will be writing to you to do your study. Amen! Love, Eileen"