

Ministry Update - 1st Quarter, 2012

Twelve Step Program

In our weekly recovery meetings, we studied Steps 1, 2 and 3 during this quarter. Step 3 is **"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God."** We learned about 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 sometimes use 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 ("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.

Counseling & 24-Hour Prayer Ministry

The past few months have been busy with people calling for prayer or counseling with Tom's telephone ministry. We also do counseling with both of us in our home. We have had people call or come over for marriage counseling, family counseling in other areas, depression, and other issues. Some are related to alcohol and drug addiction, but most are just related to life, relationships, and living in this messed up world. Whether it is Tom on the phone, or both of us in person, we counsel straight from the word of God, and Tom has special spiritual gifts from God in this area.

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, January 7, 2012 - This morning, we had Tom, me, Shami, Catharine, Mark, Billy, Shawn, Greg, Frank, Joey, Steve, Mitch and Brian as our outreach team. We broke up into three groups, starting from three different areas on the Venice Boardwalk, and we handed out 116 lunches, lots and lots of little toiletry bags, socks, underwear, and some sweatshirts to the homeless people there. After the lunches and the rest of the stuff was gone, we continued to hand out gospel tracts, especially Chick tracts in English, Spanish, and one in Thai. A lot of the homeless people, and even some of the vendors recognize us, and either ask for a lunch, or ask for tracts. One vendor family was speaking Spanish, and had their kids with them. We offered them some tracts in Spanish, and they took a lot, and were very happy, and started reading them to their children. On our way back, Shawn, Billy and I saw one vendor very intently reading a "Creator or Liar?" tract, and I offered him some other titles, which he took. One of the homeless men who had taken a lunch from us thanked us on our way back, and said he enjoyed the little book, so we gave him several more, too. Several people came up to us just asking for more tracts. As usual, Shami and Catharine's group prayed for a lot of people, including Doug, Gregory, Sharon, Robert and Arthur. Doug actually came up to them and asked for prayer. Shawn prayed with a man who asked prayer for his mother, Bertha. Joey said he used to hang out at Venice Beach in the old days, and that it was good to walk through the area sober this time! Praise the Lord!

Saturday, February 4, 2012 - The weather was beautiful, and not typical for February. Maybe that's why there seemed to be more homeless people down at the Boardwalk than usual, and all of our groups ran out of lunches within a short time. We had Daniel, Shami, Catharine, Greg and Sylvia starting down at Venice Blvd. and going along the beach. Another

group made up of men from Canyon Country, the Bible Tabernacle's "Witnessing Team", also started at Venice Blvd., but went up the Boardwalk. That group included Mitch, Frank, Brian and Ararat. Billy and Dottie drove up to Rose Ave. and started down the Boardwalk from there. Tom stayed at home to provide prayer cover for us, as he prays the entire time we're down there. We had 115 lunches for the homeless between all of us, and lots of toiletries, socks, and underwear. The socks and underwear are always a big hit. Some people told us of new rules and regulations regarding feeding the homeless at the beach, but we aren't sure what that consists of yet, so we'll just keep praying and going down there to do our outreach. As it stands now, there are a lot of homeless people at Venice Beach, and many of them recognize us and come up to us asking for a lunch. One man saw us giving out the last of our lunches and toiletries, and he asked for information about our ministry. We gave it to him, and he said he would go on-line and give us a donation. Mitch and Ararat met a man named Mark who asked for a Bible. We only had some little New Testaments with us, but they promised to bring him a complete Bible next time. Daniel, Shami, and Catharine's group prayed for a lot of people, and Daniel said people seemed to be especially tender-hearted and really wanted prayer. They prayed for Arthur, for healing for his eyes, and for Sebastian, whose mother had recently died. They prayed for Brett's daughter, and he was very moved by their prayers. Daniel also said they met a lot of people who were living down at the beach who had just lost their way in life, or made a wrong turn, and just found themselves homeless all of a sudden. As usual, after ministering to the physical and spiritual needs of the homeless people we met, we continued to give out the gospel of Jesus Christ in the way of tracts in English and Spanish. Several people asked for more than one tract, and it always makes us happy to see the tracts being read as we head back to the car.

Saturday, March 3, 2012 - Today's beach outreach went very well, praise God! We had a good group of people going out: Dottie, Tom, Joe, Beth, Billy, Daniel, Shami, Catharine, Sylvia, and five guys from the BT in Canyon Country - Frank, Brian, Mitch, Ararat, and Laird. We had 115 lunches, lots of socks, toiletries, and some clothing. Beth was surprised to see how many young people were homeless down at Venice Beach. She said one girl didn't look older than sixteen or so. Billy thought there were fewer homeless people than we usually find, but we didn't have any trouble giving away all 115 lunches. There was a TV show being filmed down at the Boardwalk, the same one as about this time last year, "Ninja Warrior", and we think maybe the police rousted the homeless off the Boardwalk early in the morning because of that. We still found plenty of people, as I said, and after handing out all the stuff to the homeless, we continued to give out gospel tracts in English, Spanish, and one in Turkish. Joe, especially, said he handed out a lot of tracts in Spanish. Daniel, Shami and Catharine's group prayed for a lot of people, but said there was a different "dynamic" because of the Ninja Warrior set-up (some of their regulars" were not in their normal places). They prayed for Kenny, for healing for his foot, and for healing for Arthur's eyes. They said a lot of people were receptive to prayer, and even asked for prayer. Billy, Joe, Beth and I gave food, socks and hygiene items to a group of very young men. They were so thankful, one of them said, "I could give you a hug!" We ended up hugging them all, and telling them this was all given in the name of Jesus. Mitch gave out a complete Bible to one person who asked for it, and we all handed out many gospel tracts. It was good to see people reading the tracts as we walked back up to our car.

Prison Ministry

Here are some of the different men's and women's prisons where we are writing to people now, and the total number of inmates doing our 12-Step program and Bible studies is well over three hundred. The women's prisons are: Valley State Prison and the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla, and California Institution for Women in Corona. The men's prisons are: San Quentin, Soledad State Prison, Avenal State Prison, Solano State Prison, California Medical Facility State Prison in Vacaville, CA, Tehachapi, Calif. Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo, Kern Valley State Prison, Chuckawalla Valley and Ironwood State Prisons in Blythe, High Desert State Prison in Susanville, Lancaster, Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, Centinela State Prison in Imperial, Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, Oak Glen Conservation Camp in Yucaipa, Chino State Prison, Calipatria State Prison, RJ Donovan State

Prison in San Diego, DVI in Tracy, CA, three prisons in Corcoran, Calif., Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA, and Sierra Conservation Center in Jamestown, CA. We also have a few inmates scattered across the country in Federal prisons.

Kurt Abron, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "I want to say that your ministry program helps us to set our new foundation which is Christ-centered, and you two also set a positive example of the service that is out there for us all to give and serve in Jesus' name. God willing, when I'm released, I want to make that promise to you that I would like to be out there, passing out tracts passing out lunches, just sharing His name. I also want to thank you for the support letter for my parole hearing. Your letters are well respected in Sacramento. I am prepared this hearing to be granted parole, God willing. This will be my fourth hearing, and I now understand that it doesn't matter how prepared I am, or not prepared, but it's God's will for me to either be out there, or stay here and continue to help these men change their lives. I am a new child in Christ now. I feel brand new, and now starting to look like the guy that my mother and father envisioned. Thank you! Your friend, Kurt"

Bernard Plummer, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "I would like to say at this time, Thank you for treating me like a human being.' This means more to me than you can imagine. My prayers include you both and your family. Yes, I would like to do the Bible study now that I'm finished with the 12-Steps. Please keep communicating with me - it really has kept me humble and gives me something to look forward to. Sincerely, Bernard Plummer"

Peter Maldonado, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "I hope this letter finds the both of you in the loving, caring arms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. My name is Peter Maldonado, and I'm in the Saturday morning group here at CSP Solano with brothers Eric, Rod, Duane, Jose and Juan. It is a true blessing being part of this LLMR support group with these brothers. I have enclosed my first week's lesson for Step 10 - "Taking a Daily Inventory." I look forward to receiving the next lesson. I am looking forward to completing the LLMR 12-Step program with my brothers in Christ here in prison. May God's peace, mercy and grace be with you. In His name, Peter"

Les Silva, California Medical Facility State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "I was very glad yesterday when I received my Bible studies, lessons #10 and #11 of Ephesians. Thank you! I also want to share with you something that happened to me recently. A friend of mine with cancer (melanoma) was in hospice here in the prison, sent there to die. By the time I finally got approved to visit him, he was in bad shape. He was in a coma. My friend's name was Glen Holliday. I arrived and pulled up a chair. The workers kept telling me to talk, because Glen could hear me, even in a coma. I asked all the workers to leave me alone with my friend for a while. Tom and Dottie, I sat there and thought, Everyone deserves to have someone cry and pray for them,' so I prayed, and I had been crying for about fifteen minutes when Glen touched my face with his hand! He was awake and looking at me. He was lucid. I climbed onto the bed and held him for the rest of our two-hour visit. The next day when I went to visit, I was told that Glen died earlier. Yet, Glen is going to heaven, because we prayed and Glen accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior before I left him. I believe God touched me through Glen, and I am so glad I could help my old friend in those final hours. Your Bible studies and love prepared me for ministering to Glen. Thank you, and God bless! Les"

James Lowden, Soledad State Prison - "Thank you for being there for me - for your love and support over the years through Jesus. Your ministry has really touched my heart, and I hope and pray that I will some day be able to be out there to meet you both in person - to shake your hands (or give you hugs) and to help in some way to give something back to your wonderful and amazing ministry that is evidence of Jesus' love for us all. Thank you, thank you! I will continue with my Bible studies and keep you posted on my progress. Sincerely, James Lowden"

Paulo Galicia, Pleasant Valley State Prison, Coalinga, CA - "Thank you very much for the Bible study Step 2. I rejoice very much studying and pondering about every question, and

somehow they all seem to be written for me, because they all apply to me. Praise Jesus! I also was blessed when I received the Serenity Bible, which has very profound insights. Thank you again for sharing with me all the things that you both are doing. You are quite busy constantly! I love what you do in your outreach evangelism. Even though when the weather is not good, or adversity comes your way, you keep honoring the call of God in your lives. Also, I am reading the paper you sent "Dealing with Anger." I think I have some issues there. I need to start working on the root of this problem. I will keep you in my prayers while I am waiting and looking forward to the next step study, and to hear what else the Lord God is doing through you both. Sincerely, your brother in Christ, Paulo"

Dina Rae Gritz, Valley State Prison for Women, Chowchilla, CA - "Here is just a short note to encourage the readers of Tom and Dottie's newsletter, from a beloved friend (Dina Rae) who has learned to follow Jesus, encourage myself, and trust God at all times through these 22 years of the "Holy Spirit's School of Ministry" a.k.a. prison.

"Being God-Focused" (Lamentations 3:21-25)

"This I recall to mind therefore I have hope" (Vs. 21). The prophet Jeremiah's remembrance of God's faithfulness brought a change in his attitude. As long as we meditate on our troubles, the more convinced we become of our hopelessness, isolation, inability to cope or help ourselves! But, when we focus on the Lord, we are able to rise above, rather than suffer under our troubles! Stop being devil-focused, and be God-focused!

"Therefore I have hope" - Hope is expecting and waiting with confidence. A "waiting attitude". God remains full of grace and truth in every situation (Exodus 34:6-7).

Dina Rae - "God's Girl"

Alice Johnson, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "Hello, servants of the Most High God! Thank you for your support and Christ-centered recovery program. It is a lovely ministry. I want to pray a blessing for you this new year: May God's love and mercy fill you with an overflowing that never dries up. May He bless you with an abundance of health, wisdom and prosperity. May His hand that provides protection and shelter keep you in your times of testing and trials, and destroy any plans the enemy has devised for your demise. May this year of 2012 be brighter and lighter than any year prior. God bless you, sincerely, Alice Johnson"