

“Love Lifted Me Recovery” - April, 2013
Newsletter for January, February, March, 2013
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Web Site: www.Loveliftedmerecovery.com

Twelve Step Program

In the months of January, February and March, our meetings are studying the first three Steps of the Twelve Steps. Here is part of our introduction to Step Two:

STEP 2 “Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

A Power greater than ourselves -

Now that we have admitted that WE are powerless, is there any HOPE that someone, somewhere DOES have the POWER to save us and restore our chaotic lives to order? Secular 12-Step groups would have you believe that ANYTHING can be your Higher Power, even the 12-Step group itself. We believe that only God Himself, as He reveals Himself in the Bible, has the power to change and restore our lives.

Restore us to sanity -

What is the AA definition of INSANITY? “Doing the same thing over and over, and expecting different results.” If we have tried to quit drinking or using drugs, or worse yet, tried to keep drinking or using while thinking we could keep it under control, we are guilty of this kind of INSANITY. If we have tried over and over to change a loved one’s behavior, believing their promises to change while continuing to suffer abuse, we are guilty of this kind of INSANITY. If we have tried over and over again to change our own compulsive behavior patterns in our own strength, we are guilty of this kind of INSANITY. Step 2 offers us HOPE that Someone - a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to normalcy and sanity, and lift us up out of the horrible pit we are in (see Psalm 40:2-3).

“He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth, even PRAISE UNTO OUR GOD; many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.” **Psalm 40:2-3**

This is a description of a person in a situation so bad that they CANNOT get out of it by themselves - the pit is DEEP, and the miry clay is SLIPPERY, and they keep FALLING BACK INTO the pit. Whatever you feel is YOUR “horrible pit”, you can only be lifted out of it with God’s help and power. It could be a horrible pit of sin, sickness, pain, addiction, depression, feelings of worthlessness, confusion, or worry and despair over a loved one’s addiction or behavior.

Here is a short testimony of someone who has just begun doing our 12-Step program at the beginning of 2013 - “I wanted to share with you how much God’s love has overcome me. In just this short time, I am learning who I really am in Christ and how the word of God is transforming the way I live, think and breathe. Before, my life was filled with torment, hatred, anger, bitterness and plenty of unforgiveness. Now, I am at such peace with myself, I’m happy and I am alive. My thinking is changing positively every day that passes. Worries and stresses are subsiding at an unbelievable rate. Thank You, Jesus! And thank you, Pastors Tom and Dottie for your service in Him. Always, V.P.”

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, January 5, 2013 - Today, we had Tom, me, Bob, Leigh-Anna, Jack, Frank, Ararat, Brian, Mitch, Brendan and Daniel to go out on the Boardwalk for our outreach. It was the first time for Jack and Brendan, and Leigh-Anna hadn't been able to come for several years, due to health problems, so it was her first time back. She said she was so glad to be back, and just thrilled to be able to go on the outreach again. We had made 119 lunches, each with a gospel tract inside, and gave them all out to the homeless at Venice Beach. We also gave out lots of pairs of socks, and little bags of shampoo, soap, a razor, and other toiletries. Bob and Daniel prayed for almost everyone to whom they gave a lunch and the other items, and so did Frank, Ararat and Brian's group. Leigh-Anna, Jack and I started at the other end of the Boardwalk, and found large groups of the homeless camping out up there. Everyone was very grateful to receive the things we were giving out in the name of Jesus. As always, after we've given out all our lunches and stuff, we continue to hand out the gospel tracts to people just down there for an outing. There are usually more tourists in the summer, but I was surprised at how many were there today, and I gave out a tract in German, one in Chinese, and one in Italian. The one in Italian was to a boy of about 12 years old, and he was riding one of the bikes you can rent there. When I gave him a tract in English, he just had the "look" and I asked if he could read English. He said no, and that his language was Italian. Praise the Lord! I was able to find one in Italian for him. Other than that, it was much like our usual outreaches, and many, many people took the gospel tracts. We continue to pray for them, and hope we will meet them in heaven one day.

Saturday, February 2, 2013 - For today's outreach, we had Tom, me, Catharine, Shami, Bob, Keith, Mitch, Ararat, Brendan, Joe, Angela and Brian. Angela brought her camera and took photos of all of us for our website, which she is in the process of updating, redesigning and refurbishing (thank you, Angela!). We had 118 lunches, lots of socks and toiletries, and a few T-shirts and sweatshirts, all of which were gratefully received by the homeless population of Venice Beach. Shami, Catharine and Brendan's group prayed for a lot of the homeless people, many of whom are opening up to them more in giving prayer requests. They prayed for Arthur and Robert, and Arthur said his eye was much better but now he needed healing for his leg. Joseph and Mike asked for prayer for protection, and several people asked for their needs to be met or for jobs. Ararat and Brian's group also prayed for a lot of people, including a man named Tennessee, who was in a wheelchair. Bob gave his testimony to many of the homeless, telling them how the Lord brought him out of that situation and turned his life around. Bob spent a lot of time talking to a man named Isaac, encouraging him to give his life to the Lord. We handed out several hundred gospel tracts in English and Spanish, and Ararat gave one to a man who asked for Arabic. After giving out all the lunches and tracts, on our way back to the cars, we saw many people reading their tracts, and many others waved and thanked us again for the food and clothing. Our primary purpose is to reach people with the gospel message, and the food and other items for the physical comfort of the homeless is just to show them the love of Jesus. I love all aspects of what we do down there at the Boardwalk, but giving out the gospel tracts is my favorite. I think I had the most fun this time by holding out tracts for guys on their skateboards, and they would reach out and grab them without even stopping. How great is that? Praise the Lord!

Saturday, March 2, 2013 - This outreach, we had Tom, me, members of the youth group from Church of the Canyons (Josh, the youth group leader, and I didn't get everyone's names, but there were six in their group altogether), and our regulars: Shami, Catharine, Bob, Frank, Ararat, Brian, Brendan, Joe, Keith, Leigh-Anna and John. Our friend Angela R. took photos again, and we had two new people, Angela A. and Alex. The youth group members had a great time, and they spent more time in actual "street witnessing" and talking face to face with people. We all gave out lunches to the homeless, and had made up extra ones because of the larger group, so we had a total of 129 lunches. We had tons of

socks, toiletries, quite a few jackets, a blanket, and some other clothing and hats. Angela A. brought five Bibles, and gave them out to people who said they would read them. We saw one young man reading his new Bible as we passed by later. Shami, Catharine, and John's group prayed for everyone, and John had a special experience praying for a blind man named Arthur. John ministered to him, but Arthur also asked if he could pray for John, and he was very touched by that. Shami had an experience with a young homeless man who had no shirt, and was dressed only in shorts. She gave him a lunch, and then asked him if she could pray for him. He asked if she would pray that his family would take him back. She laid hands on him and prayed, but before she left, she felt the Lord telling her to ask him if he would pray to receive Jesus as his Savior. He said yes to her and yes to Jesus, and prayed the sinner's prayer to receive Christ. The rest of us handed out many, many gospel tracts, and since God has promised that His word would not return void, and it would accomplish that for which it was sent, we trust that much good seed was planted in peoples' hearts. Altogether, several hundred gospel tracts, or "seeds", were planted. Now it's up to the Lord to cause people to come to faith as they read the good news of Jesus Christ.

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; and every man shall receive his own reward according to his labor. For we are laborers together with God...." I Corinthians 3:6-9

Prison Ministry

Hector Salgado, Soledad State Prison - "I would like to thank you for allowing me to take part in your Christ-centered 12-Step recovery program. My name is Hector, and I'm a lifer serving a life sentence for a gang-related murder, but now serving a life sentence for Christ (II Cor. 5:17, Rom. 10:9-10). My first parole hearing is next December, and one of their requirements is that we know the 12-Steps. The secular version does not appeal to me as it is taught in the prison system, so I thank God for your ministry. Also, your ministry gives me hope that the wreckage of my past life can be used to help and give hope to others while bringing glory to God. In our Savior's love, Hector"

David Nusbaum, Avenal State Prison - "I have completed Steps Eight & Nine, and am ready to move on to Step Ten. I had some resentment issues I needed to work on while doing Step Nine, but I did it, and it was no cake walk. I have been doing your program now for over a year, and have never taken the time to write. Forgive me, please! People such as myself are very blessed that there are such people as yourselves who are willing to help us grow both mentally and spiritually. My search for God has been a long one, but I have found Him and I continue to strive to become closer to Him every day. Hallelujah! I really want to get out of prison and live a normal Christian life, but whatever happens, I know it will be alright because God loves me, and has forgiven me for my shameful past. He continues to strengthen me and give me guidance when I need it. I am saved! Thank you very much for your help. Sincerely, David Nusbaum"

Linda Brown, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "I have been given the opportunity these past three years to unite with the Lord, and spend time getting acquainted with Him. I have opened my heart in securing a life committed to service. I believe that God has a mission for me. Just as long as I remain diligent and open in surrendering my life over to Him, and sharing what he has done for me and continues to do, nothing can stand in the way. I am coming close to my release date, and will walk into the world with God. I know recovery and God go together, because if it weren't for God and this program, I would have continued to be a lost sheep. Thank you for becoming my family, and I look forward to one day meeting you both. Love you both, Linda"

Ernie Quillin, Substance Abuse Treatment Facility/Corcoran State Prison, Corcoran, CA - "I wanted to write and let you know how much I've enjoyed doing the 12-Steps and Bible studies. I also want to tell you that they have helped me to make a big change in my life. Step Four really opened my eyes to a lot of things I've done to others, and things that were done to me. I'm 64 years old and up to then, I'd never looked at what my actions had caused, the hurt I've inflicted on others, or even the hurt they've caused me. But thanks to your program of working the 12-Steps, and the love of God, I've been able to see what harm I've caused, and more importantly to change my ways so that these things don't ever happen again. You are helping a lot of guys here in Corcoran. When we are at our AA and NA meetings, we always talk about what we've gotten out of your 12-Step program. On behalf of all the guys here that are doing your program, I send you thanks. Love, Ernie"

Abraham Baugh, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "Thanks for the lessons, the letter, and the loving support. I have been working the 12-Steps for about four years now, through a variety of programs: AA, NA and ACA, and yours is the best for me because it's Christ-centered. Your literature is the best for my journey because it's all about Jesus, and about how giving myself to Him is how I recover. Your Fourth Step was the most in-depth and difficult one yet. I know that I must continue to inventory myself, but I hope to move away from all the harmful ways of my past with this go-around. Thanks again, I appreciate everything you guys are doing. Abraham"

Fonda Gayden, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "I am grateful for your lessons and your letters. You have been the "love that lifted me" to recovery. Thank you for your ministry. I am learning to take my thoughts and emotions captive to the obedience of Christ. The Bible and your lessons have enabled me to understand the purpose of life. It tells me where to find wholesome associates who truly love one another, and how to be happy in spite of difficult conditions that surround me. I am ready for my next Step, Step Ten. Thank you. Sincerely, Fonda"

Irving Whately, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison - "Your teachings are very humbling. My faith soars when I read the word of God from your Bible studies. Tom, seeing you in that kayak, it seems so peaceful to truly believe in Jesus Christ. However, without hardships in our lives, we would never see our true character and evolve into Christlikeness. You two are truly "God's angels" - thank you for caring. Sincerely, Irving Whately"

Songkra Kroung, Avenal State Prison - "I want to thank you for the wonderful news that you sent me in regards to my application for your Bible-based 12-Step program. To be accepted by your program was delightful for me, and I thank you for that. Your recovery program will help me with the issues of low self-esteem, fear, pride, anger, resentment, unforgiveness, and my negative self-image which led me to my addictions and antisocial behaviors. I first came to know the Lord Jesus when I was in the refugee camp in 1980, when I was eight years old. I was a baby Christian, and I didn't really commit my life to Jesus completely. Later, I got involved with being a gang member and criminal behavior. I rebelled and went against God's law, but our God is kind, loving, forgiving, and has a purpose for all of us when we commit our lives to Him. Sincerely, Songkra Kroung"

Reuben Ingraham, Deuel Vocational Institution/State Prison, Tracy, CA - "I would like to thank you for your efforts and time that it takes to produce such a vital program to those of us who are incarcerated. Your program is exactly what I have been searching for to help familiarize myself with the 12-Steps, and so I can work an honest recovery program. As for your letter correspondence, I would be honored if you would respond to my letters, for my loved ones don't seem to have the time anymore. You give me hope that after a life of drug and alcohol abuse, God still has a plan for me. Respectfully,. Reuben"