

Ministry Update - 2nd Quarter, 2009

April, May and June has our recovery groups working on Steps Four, Five and Six. Here are some thoughts on these Steps written by Antonio Briseño, who has finished the 12-Step program by correspondence in prison:

Step Four - Step Four has been great to me!! This pertaining to telling our stories and going back to the root of where it all started. Talk about a big relief! God is good!!! I have been able to share my testimony with others without being sad or breaking down because God has healed my pain and took away the sorrow, the hatred, the bitterness, and the anger I was once filled with. A child requires time, attention, love and affection, and I never experienced this, because my mother left me at the age of five, and my father was a heroin addict, as well as a very abusive father. As I studied Step Four, learning what was damaged or missing in my childhood, it was "not an attempt to blame the previous generation. Rather, it was a genuine effort to understand the deepest root causes that underlie our compulsive adult behaviors." I also learned that "we must face and acknowledge our fears in order to move beyond them. Otherwise, we will be so wrought up emotionally, that we cannot deal with the most important issue in our lives - our relationship with God."

Step Five - I have acknowledged what Satan has done to my parents and I have compassion and understanding toward that situation. I believe Satan does destroy lives if you continue to live in the darkness, and I believe Satan had destroyed my life due to my living in the darkness. Being honest about my past with others has given me a new energy and capacity to change my life.

Step Six - I became willing to ask God to remove all these defects of character, such as bitterness, anger, hatred, cursing, lustfulness and resentments. I was once a gang member, and hanging around gang members has really gotten me into trouble, so since becoming a Christian, I had to set my boundaries in order to focus on my relationship with God. I have learned to allow God to straighten my twisted life into a beautiful strong one. I recognize that the Lord loves me and wants me to experience perfect joy, peace, and fulfillment in my life by trusting completely in Him."

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, April 4, 2009 - It was a beautiful spring day, and our group consisted of Tom, me, Angela, Catharine, Shami, Alycia, Michael and Youbert. Tom stayed home to cover us in prayer, and the rest of us split up into two groups: Catharine, Shami, Youbert and Alycia going along the beach from Venice Blvd., and Angela, Michael and I starting up at Rose Ave. and going down the Boardwalk. We had ninety lunches and lots of toiletries and socks, which were all received with gratefulness and thanks. Some people saw that we had tracts, and they asked for one. I told them there was one in their lunch bag, but gave them another one with a different title. After going along the beach and Boardwalk, Youbert and Alycia went down the alleys, because they still had some lunches. They found a Hispanic man who didn't speak English, with his four-year-old daughter, but Alycia talked to him a little bit in Spanish. She asked if he needed food and water, and he said, "Yes." She also gave him some of the toiletries, and he grabbed her hand and thanked her over and over again. Of course, she gave him some tracts in Spanish, too. Michael also gave out a lot of Spanish tracts and spoke a little Spanish as he offered them to people. Later, Michael did some chin-ups on the high bar at the New Muscle Beach. Some guys were watching him and applauding, and afterwards Michael was able to give them all tracts. Alycia said one foreign-sounding man came up to them and expressed that we were doing a wonderful thing, and he wanted to help us, and he reached in his pocket and gave her \$20.00 for the ministry. Youbert saw a blanket on the ground, but wasn't sure if there was a person inside. He put a lunch next to it, said "Here's a lunch for you," and a voice came out of the blanket, saying, "Thanks a lot, man!" Angela and I saw an older man, and asked him if he need some food. He said he did, and we also asked

him if he needed any socks. When we gave him some socks, he said, "How did you know what I needed?" I said, "God knew what you needed." I saw a homeless guy we'd seen many times before, Steve, and he was talking loudly and acting very, very drunk. I asked him if he needed a lunch, and he said, "I need a hug!" I gave him a quick hug, and then the lunch, and he seemed grateful. It's so sad to see many of these people getting drunk or smoking pot (they must get the money for it somewhere?) so early in the morning. This is one reason why so many people are homeless in the first place, and will not go to a shelter like the Bible Tabernacle, because they wouldn't be able to continue in their addiction in a shelter!

Angela met a Chinese man in one of the shops, and when he saw that we were giving out gospel tracts, he went into his shop and showed her many different tracts that he had in several languages. He spoke very little English, but by broken English and sign language, Angela gathered that he is a Christian and a missionary (he knew that word in English), and he gives out these tracts to people on the Boardwalk. There are many tourists and foreigners at the Boardwalk, and I personally gave out several tracts in French to two different groups of French people, and one in Korean to a man who said he spoke Korean. Of course, as always, we gave out many tracts in Spanish. I saw Sid, who works in one of the tattoo parlors, and he asked for any new tracts that he hadn't read yet. I gave him a few, and his friend with him took one. Angela said, "You were really brave to go up to those guys at the tattoo parlor!" I said, "Oh, no! Sid is a Christian, and he always asks me for tracts when I see him! He gives them out to the people who come to his tattoo parlor." Finally, Youbert told us of a homeless man who took a lunch, and when Youbert asked him what else he needed, the man said, "I need life." Youbert said, "Turn to Jesus, and He will give you eternal life!" The man took a gospel tract and said, "Thank you!"

Saturday, May 2, 2009 - Another beautiful spring day! We had so much fun, and were truly blessed as we went out on the Venice Boardwalk and beach to hand out gospel tracts and give lunches to the homeless. We had a great team of people to go out with us, and that was Rick and Catharine, Angela, Alycia, Yvonne, Gordon, and Daniel, as well as Tom and myself, and we gave out 91 lunches (each with a tract inside) and several hundred gospel tracts. The lunches for the homeless were all received with gratefulness. We found one large group of people camping out on the grass, and they each took a lunch, and almost everyone needed tooth brushes and toothpaste, soap, shampoo, and the other toiletry items we had with us. Yvonne and I saw several men sitting on a bench, and we offered them tracts, but we were all out of lunches by then. Just then, Gordon and some others came up and still had lunches left, so we offered them lunches, too, and they all said they were hungry and needed one. We had a new tract from Chick Publications called "It's All About You." It went over very well, especially with teenagers and young adults. As we've found many times, the people who look the least likely to accept the tracts seem to be the ones who take them the most readily. I gave them to people working in tattoo parlors, and to young people who were tattooed and pierced, and they would accept one, usually saying, "Thanks a lot!" One family with four young children took tracts, and each child asked for more than one tract. I gave "Back From the Dead" to the older boy, but when he saw what the girls were getting, he asked for "A Love Story" instead. I couldn't find any more of that one, but I found "Poor Little Lamb", and he took that one and traded it for the other one. Aside from English, we gave out lots of tracts in Spanish, quite a few in Chinese, one in Korean, and one in Dutch. Catharine and Rick took a few tracts in Turkish and German home for their new exchange student from Turkey. Last of all, one rather strange man took a tract, and asked what it was about. I told him it was about God and Jesus. He said, "If I read this, what's going to happen to me?" He then held up the tract in front of my face and took my picture with his cellphone! That's a new one on me!

Saturday, June 6, 2009 - God's word says that He "loves a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7), and we sure had a cheerful bunch this Saturday, as we gave of our time, energy, and food and articles for peoples' physical needs. Those of you who give financially to this ministry, so that we can buy the food and tracts, are also part of that group of cheerful givers, and we thank you and thank God for your faithfulness. We had so much fun and were so blessed as we went out to the Venice Boardwalk, and our group consisted of Tom, me, Angela, Alycia, Youbert, Gordon, Shami, and Catharine. We gave out hundreds of gospel tracts, ninety

lunches for the homeless, and lots of socks, T-shirts, shoes and toiletry items (toothpaste and tooth brushes, shampoo, razors, soap, etc.). Youbert had received a donation of about 100 T-shirts, and we gave out about fifty, and will give out the rest next month. Catharine, Shami, Youbert and Gordon met a very young homeless man named Christopher Paul, and he told them he was a new Christian. They prayed for him, and he especially asked for prayer for his unsaved girlfriend, Vickie. They also found Anthony and his wife, who had come out to the beach from Skid Row in L.A. They were very grateful to receive all the food and items we had to give. Catharine also said they found an older homeless man over in an out-of-the-way corner, and he was reading the book of Isaiah in his Bible. He was very thankful to receive a lunch and some toiletries. A young man and young woman, dressed like what we old timers would call "Hippies" were walking along, holding posters. I asked if they needed some food. They said they both needed something to eat, and they were just holding the posters for someone who asked them to walk up and down the Boardwalk with them. The young man said his nickname was Radio, and the girl's name was Kennedy. "Radio" said we were doing what Christians were supposed to do by giving out food and clothing to those in need. They received tracts also, of course.

As always, our main concern is getting the gospel message into peoples' hands, and from there on, it's the job of the Holy Spirit to bring people under conviction of their sin and their need for Jesus as their Savior. God has promised that His word will not return void or without accomplishing the purpose for which He sent it, so we know we will meet many people when we get to heaven whose lives were changed by the tracts they received this day. First of all, we believe many people will come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior and receive the gift of eternal life as they read these tracts. Secondly, we believe that some of the homeless people we minister to will be encouraged to trust in the Lord and find help to get off the streets, and get their lives back in order. And thirdly, we met many people this time who said they were already saved, and we encouraged them to get busy for Jesus and hand out tracts where they live. One couple here on vacation from Australia said they were Christians, and therefore didn't need a tract, but then the woman came running after us and said she would like one after all. I told her she could order the Chick tracts over the Internet even from Australia. One young man who was setting up a table to sell things said that he "used to hand out these tracts," so I gave him one of the newest ones, and said, "Maybe this will get you excited to start handing them out again." I gave one of our "Creator or Liar?" tracts to a young man who had a Bible under his arm. I assumed he was a Christian from that, and he said he had never seen any tracts like these. I told him he could order them on the Internet, and he seemed really excited. We gave out lots of tracts to children, and Angela had some special tracts just for kids. We gave out lots of tracts in Spanish, and I gave out two in Russian, one in French, and one in Japanese. I tried to give one to a guy outside one of the tattoo parlors, and he said, "Oh! Just leave it for Sid inside." Sid is the guy who is a Christian and gives out tracts to his customers, so I left him one of the newest ones I figured he didn't already have. After the lunches were gone, Angela and Alycia stood outside a store where the "Zoltar" fortune telling machine is, and handed out tracts as waves and waves of people walked by. Then, as they were walking back to the car, two fire engines came slowly down the Boardwalk, and they gave tracts to all the firemen on the trucks. One woman, who was standing by and watching, came running up to Angela and Alycia and asked for a tract, too.

Prison Ministry

Elsa Martinez, Central Calif. Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "Well, I just finished my 8th and 9th Steps and wrote to those who I have harmed asking for forgiveness. I feel so much better within myself, that I have a glow of cleanness and honesty. Wow! It's so beautiful, thanks to you both, I'm very grateful and understand more about recovery and the more important thing is I feel good about myself and feeling clean. Also, learning about God as well. I want to really change my life, and it's a blessing and I love both of you so much for showing me things I never thought that I would do. I'm reading God's word and at the same time been in recovery. Thanks and God bless you both."

Norma Jean Jackson, California Institute for Women, Corona, CA - "By studying and going through this 12-Step program, I found a joy of living. Also, I found a kind of love that has no price tag. By living and learning each day to practice all the Steps, I have found a spiritual awakening. This spiritual awakening granted me a gift of a new state of consciousness and being. I have been able to find I have a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind, and love that I thought I was incapable of. By finding these I believe I made myself somewhat ready to receive this gift. By realizing I could not do it on my own and that some Higher Power was necessary to do it I opened myself up to turn my will and my life over to God. It was really hard to do a moral inventory of what had caused me to reach physical, moral and spiritual bankruptcy. I knew I had to do this inventory in all honesty and confide in God and someone else. It was not easy. Even after this, I realized I had some flaws, and I asked God to remove my shortcomings. I was then able to make my peace, after making a list of all I'd harmed. By this time, I knew that I needed to continue taking personal inventory on a daily basis, and when I was wrong, I admitted it right away. Then, prayer has opened up a path that led to a sure power and safe guidance from God. All of these Steps gave me a wonderful energy and the ability to carry the message to others in need. Thank you for this 12-Step program"

Thomas Talamantes, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "Hello and God Bless! Thank you so much for everything. I am truly glad that there are those who love God so much to sacrifice their time to live for the Lord and help others. I pray that God continues to bless you and all those who are a part of your ministry. I truly admire your dedication and devotion to the Lord. I pray one day I can do the same to show others God's love and mercy. Sincerely in Christ, Thomas"

Je'Anna Redwood, California Institute for Women, Corona, CA - "Thank you for the recent update on life with you! When I first started your 12-Steps, I felt lost in the day to day saga of what's going on in your life, almost as if I'd gotten into the "story" midway. Now, I look forward to it. I especially am interested in the outreach at the beach. Before I was arrested in 1984, I was homeless and living at Venice Beach. I am drawn to these people mainly because I was one, and secondary to that, I believe if someone would have given me a chance at life I might not be here. The paradox is that I'm grateful for being here, because this is where God revealed Himself to me and where I found no greater love! I, too, have a compelling desire to help and be of service to the hurting. Once I am released, I would very much like to join with you in your efforts to reach out to the lost and dying."