

Ministry Update - 2nd Quarter, 2010

Twelve Step Meetings

Step 6 - "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

Step 7 - "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

In the months of June and July, we are working on Steps 6 and 7 in our recovery meetings. The dictionary definition of defect is "an imperfection that impairs worth or utility; a shortcoming; a lack of something necessary for completeness; a blemish." The definition of shortcoming is "a deficiency (lacking something), a defect." **Our shortcomings means those areas where we COME SHORT of God's perfect standard.** Romans 3:23 says, "For ALL have sinned and **fall short** of the glory of God," so there's no person on the face of this earth who is entirely without SOME defects and shortcomings, no matter HOW GOOD a person they may seem to be. Also, when we say "character" we are speaking of moral and ethical traits or **behavior patterns and qualities that you have LEARNED.** We are NOT referring to YOU as a person, or your personality. God has given each one of us talents and qualities that make us special individuals, and each one of us is precious in His sight. What God wants us to do is to **get rid of behavior patterns we have learned that are not godly,** and all things which are hindering us from being the creation He meant us to be. **We must work on those areas where we have been bent and warped out of shape,** so that God can conform us to the image of Jesus Christ. Also, God can't use us to the fullest extent that He would like to use us when we are full of our character defects and shortcomings. That's what the dictionary definition of defect means when it says "an imperfection that impairs worth or utility." In God's eyes, our WORTH and VALUE is never impaired (made less), because He will always love us. However, our UTILITY (usefulness) is definitely impaired and lessened, and **God is not able to use us** the way He wants to. **II Timothy 2:21** "Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, **USEFUL to the Master,** prepared for every good work."

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, April 3, 2010 - We had a great outreach down at Venice Beach. The weather was nice, but not too hot. Our group of faithful volunteers consisted of Tom, Dottie, Catharine, Shami, Daniel, and Yvonne. We had about ninety-four lunches, lots of socks, some clothing that had been donated from our church, and toiletry items. We had lots of stuff! The homeless people we encountered were all very happy and grateful to get the food, clothing (including some really nice jackets), knit caps, socks, and everything. Mary met one young man who had just arrived from Huntington Beach. She offered him a lunch, socks, and toiletries, and he was so overwhelmed that he burst into grateful tears. I also gave lunches and other items to two young men who were walking by, and one was wearing a strange, large top hat. They also had tears in their eyes as we gave them food, and whatever else they needed, and told them it was in the name of Jesus. Daniel talked to a couple whose names were Trevor and Isises, and Isises told him she was very depressed and had considered suicide. He tried to help her as much as he could, and we need to continue to pray for her. Mary also talked with a man named Joseph, who had a dog named James. He said James was his only friend, but Mary told him Jesus was his friend, too. Yvonne gave a lunch to someone sleeping on the grass with their blanket pulled up over their head. Later, when we were on our way back, the man waved and thanked us. It was Jerry, whose name I'd gotten last month, so I said, "Hi, Jerry!" I think he was surprised I remembered his name. We saw a homeless woman sitting over by the bathrooms, and Mary went up to her and offered her a lunch and toiletries. Mary also had a jacket that fit the woman, and she was so happy to have a warm jacket. Some of the people we met said they didn't need the toiletry items this time, because some U.S. Census workers had been by and given them little bags of soap, toothpaste, and things, as they were taking the Census information among the homeless population. Later, on the way back to the car, we were all out of lunches, but we gave out lots of the gospel tracts in English and Spanish. One young man named Frank said he knew Jesus as his Savior, but took a tract anyway, saying it was one he hadn't read yet. As we parted, he said, "Thank you! I'll see you in heaven!"

Saturday, May 1, 2010 - We had great weather and a joyful team of volunteers today. The laborers who went forth into the Lord's harvest were Tom, me, Alycia, Catharine, Daniel, Yvonne, Angela and Mary. We had the usual ninety or so lunches, and tons of used clothing that had been donated. Toni D. from church said she had a birthday party, but instead of people bringing presents for herself, she told everyone to bring things for the outreach to the homeless. She brought over bags and bags of clothing, much of which was warm jackets, sweatshirts, sweat pants, and lots of socks. She and a few others from church also donated toiletry items, such as toothpaste and tooth brushes, shampoo, soap, razors, packets of "wipes" and things like that. The homeless people we encountered this time were very grateful to receive the food, and also the clothing and toiletries. The socks are always a big hit! We even had some shoes, and one woman said she had small feet and needed both socks and shoes (she was barefoot). An almost brand new pair of tennis shoes fit her, and we found men to fit the larger sizes. Alycia said she was handing out lunches, and a little boy came up and shyly asked for one for himself. Jeff and Karl were so thankful to receive the food and other items, they refused to just shake hands, and hugged everybody. Alycia, Yvonne and I went up to Rose Ave., and worked down from there, and Daniel, Catharine, Angela and Mary started from down at Venice Blvd. My group ran out of lunches first, and then we met up with the other group and grabbed a few more lunches from them. Yvonne had saved out one lunch for a "special person" and she saw a woman digging through a trash can to find something to eat. When she gave the lunch to the lady, she had such a look of relief on her face, and a huge smile. Later, when we went back with the lunches we got from the other group, Yvonne gave the last lunch she had that time to a man who had told us he was "very hungry", and we told him we would come back if we could get more lunches. I felt bad that we didn't have enough for everyone in that group, so I took one man, Johnny, and bought him enough food at a nearby restaurant to share with his friends. Daniel, Catharine, Mary and Angela found a lot of people who wanted to talk and have someone pray for them. A homeless man named Phillip was sick, and they gathered around him and prayed for his healing. A young man named Eric, who was not homeless, but just down there at the Boardwalk, watched them pray, and came up and asked for prayer for himself. As they passed one vendor selling skulls and other rather demonic-looking souvenirs, Mary felt the Lord wanting them to pray for people to not buy his stuff. They prayed that the people walking by would see how disgusting all his stuff was, and would not want to buy it. After the lunches were gone, we continued to pass out the gospel tracts in both English and Spanish. Angela saw the new skateboard park, and asked Alycia to go with her to hand out tracts to the young people there. She said almost everyone took a tract, and very few refused. Catharine saw an older man who looked despondent. She handed him a tract entitled "Heart Trouble" and he thanked her, and said it "made his day." We all enjoyed ourselves down at the Boardwalk, and thanked the Lord for such openness on behalf of the people to receive the gospel tracts.

Saturday, June 5, 2010 - We had a great outreach, with Catharine, Daniel, Alycia, me, and Tom on the team. That's kind of a small group, but some were sick or had other things happening, so Tom decided to actually go out on the Boardwalk with us. Usually, he stays at home and prays for us while we go out on the Boardwalk, because he can't walk that far, due to his bad back. This time, he brought his walking stick, and just went very slowly, but was able to help by pulling one of the carts full of lunches. We had a blessed time down at the beach, and gave out almost all of the lunches we made. I think the police had come by earlier and roused some of the homeless from their usual haunts, because there were not nearly as many as last month. We still gave out a lot of lunches, toiletries, socks, clothing, and of course, gospel tracts. I saw one man wearing only overalls, and asked if he would like a T-shirt and sweatshirt, and he was so happy to get them. Later, we saw him walking along wearing his new items of clothing. Catharine, Daniel and Alycia met a man who had his own hammock between two palm trees, and he was very appreciative of the lunch, a knit cap, and other items. They also gave food, soaps, and lotion to a lady named "Rusty." Daniel told her it was being given in the name of Jesus, and she asked, "Why in the name of Jesus, and not someone else?" He told her, "Jesus is the One who provided all this stuff, that's why." They also met a young man named "Boom-Boom" and his girlfriend, Cindy. They need prayer, and were very thankful to get food and toiletries. One woman asked for water and Spanish tracts, and Alycia gave her some bottled water she had, and several tracts in Spanish. Tom and I met

a man named Ernie, and he needed deodorant, socks and a lunch. He said, "Thank You, Jesus!" when we gave him all the stuff, and we said, "Yes, it is from Jesus." When Tom and I met up with Daniel, Catharine and Alycia (we had started at different ends of the Boardwalk), we all prayed for a man named Matt. Matt had come up to us and asked for a lunch, but then he said he needed prayer, because he had had a heart attack the other night. We all laid hands on him and prayed for him right there on the Venice Boardwalk. On the way back to our car, Tom and I saw Jerry, Maurice and Michael, who had been sleeping on the grass when we first gave them lunches. Two of them were up and sitting in their sleeping bags, brushing their teeth (we'd given them toothpaste and tooth brushes, too). They had another guy with them, and asked if he could get a lunch. I said, "We're all out, but we have a few more in the car, if you want to follow me to the car."

Testimonies & Letters from Prison Ministry

Robert L. Miranda, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "I was raised in a family of five children, three girls and two boys. My mother has always been a loving and caring mother, but she raised all of us on welfare by herself. My father and mother were divorced when I was a year old. My mother had to struggle to make ends meet, but she always kept food on the table and clothes on our backs. We were raised in the Jehovah's Witness Organization, and although it was a difficult way to grow up, we were raised with some sort of religion in our lives. I remember always taking money from the contribution box at the back of the kingdom Hall, and going to this place called "The Cable Car" on Mission St. in San Francisco. I never enjoyed going to the Kingdom Hall or going door to door, because I never felt the Holy Spirit in my life, nor did I have a true understanding of who Jesus Christ was. All I ever heard about was "Jehovah". I always felt I was going to hell because I could never live up to the standards the Jehovah's Witnesses placed upon their congregation. Although I chose to live my life in the world, my mother has always been there for me, and has never given up on me. After thirty years as a Jehovah's Witness, she felt there was something missing, and the Holy Spirit revealed to her that the Jehovah's Witnesses was not the right religion, so she left. After a couple of years of no church, and through much prayer, she received the Lord Jesus as her Savior.

As for me, I was drinking and using drugs, and my life became unmanageable. I was on a road to self destruction that not only altered my life, but everyone's lives who loved me and those who didn't even know me. One night in November of 1981, we were watching football, and a friend and I were drinking. After the game I asked to be dropped off at a bar, and a friend came up to me and asked me if I'd like to smoke a PCP joint. I did, and I also continued to drink. The whole evening went downhill from there, and ended up with my stabbing a man during a drug deal, and he died. I was all freaked out at this point, and had all but lost my mind. When I came down from the alcohol and drugs, I became aware of the finality of what I had done - it was like being caught in a nightmare that wouldn't go away. When I was finally caught, I was given 15 years to life for second degree murder, and it was the best thing that ever happened to me! At the rate I was headed, I would have been dead by now, so prison was a second chance being given to me. Even so, it took me many years to realize that I needed Jesus Christ in my life. I became so depressed in prison, even thinking of suicide, but never would do it, because I worried about how my mother would take it. My sister had become a born again Christian, and she was praying for me. Finally, on October 14, 1998, I asked Jesus to come into my life. I told Him I believed in Him and needed His help. All of a sudden, I felt this tremendous weight lifted off my shoulders and felt as though i was being washed from the inside out. I knew I was born again and my life would never be the same. I have never looked back since then, and I worship and serve the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart. Now my life has meaning and purpose, and I have found peace within myself through Jesus Christ. I thank Jesus every day for His love, grace and mercy upon me, and for the patience He has for all of us. I also pray that everyone who reads my testimony will, if they haven't already, repent of their sins and believe with true saving faith in Jesus Christ and His birth, death, burial and resurrection, and that the only peace you can find is in Him."

Nate Elliott, Sierra Conservation Center State Prison, Jamestown, CA - "Just thought I'd drop a line or two to say thanks for the Bible study. It's helping me deal with my issues. I'm also thankful for your outreach ministry. To hear that someone out there really cares and is trying to make a difference gives me hope. God bless you and your ministry. Sincerely, Nathaniel Elliott"

Mark Romero, Calif. Men's Colony, San Luis Obispo, CA - "Greetings in the name of the Lord! Just a note to say "Hi" and to let you know that I am praying for you and the ministry. Things are going well in here. Thank you for the material on depression, as well as everything else. It is very helpful. I find that working the Steps with you is helping me go deeper than I have in the past. I think it's the content of the questions asked and the fact that I am going through the process of writing my responses and mailing them. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. I know that God set this whole thing up and He is using your ministry to continue the healing He began in my life. Praise God! Well, so long for now. God bless. In Christ, Brother Mark Romero"

Ambre Van Horn, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "I want to thank you for all you are doing in my life, and the lives of others. I have been an addict for over 25 years. I am sharing these Steps (my homework) with my mother, who has struggled right along with me in my addiction. I just wanted you to know I appreciate all you both do. Love in Christ, Ambre"

Yolanda Roberts, Valley State Prison for Women, Chowchilla - "Hello, Friends! I am so happy to get mail. I have you and your family in my prayers. I am so happy and thankful for you correcting my Bible study and sending me more study lessons. I have been growing in my relationship with God, and it keeps me very humble and at peace. Thank you so much for keeping all inmates in your prayers."

Martin Mendoza, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "I really appreciate the 12-Step Christian based recovery program that you provide. Let me tell you that it is a true blessing for us Christian believers that the name of God is not hidden. Other secular 12-Step programs always try to hide the name of our one true God, Jesus Christ, who is a part of the divine godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So for us lifers that must stay involved in a 12-Step program, you give us the perfect avenue to worship our Lord and comply with the requirement that will enable us to one day be granted parole. I also wanted to tell you that your questions really help me reflect in other areas of my life that need healing. Respectfully, Bro. Martin Mendoza"