

Ministry Update - 2nd Quarter, 2012

Twelve Step Program

STEPS 6 & 7 - Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

During this quarter, we study Steps Four, Five and Six. When we get to Steps 6 and 7, we are dealing with getting rid of our character defects and shortcomings. Every Christian in the world should be in this kind of study, even if they've never had an addiction or problem of that sort. Too many people go through life without ever examining themselves to see what character defects they have, or realize that God wants us all to work on getting rid of those things, as they are hindrances to His working in our lives. To quote from one of our lessons: **The Bible does not use the words "character defects" or "shortcomings" - the Bible calls it our SINFUL NATURE, "the FLESH", a CARNAL MIND, or the "OLD MAN". God's word says that before we came to Christ and were born again, we were in DARKNESS, and what we call character defects are evidences of that darkness. Romans 13:12-14 is written to Believers, and it tells us to cast off (throw away) the "works of darkness" and "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, April 7, 2012 - Our outreach was a big success. John brought someone new, a lady named Bridgitte, and her ten-year-old daughter, Leah. Tom stayed home to pray for us, and the others who went out on the beach were: me, Billy, Bob, Mitch, Frank, Brian, Laird, Catharine, and Daniel. Bridgitte and Leah really enjoyed it, and Leah said she especially liked seeing a homeless man named Patrick, who had a puppy. John said they saw a lot of broken souls, many of them there because of obvious drug and alcohol problems, but many were open for prayer. One young man named Jaime really appreciated the prayer, but also the human contact of a hug. Catharine saw a man with long hair, and asked him if he were hungry. He said he was, and they gave him a lunch. He also took some socks for himself and his girlfriend, and said, "Now we can go dancing in our new socks!" We had 118 lunches, lots of socks, toiletries, underwear, and some other clothing items and shoes. We saw one man walking along with a little bag of the toiletries we had to hand out, and I asked him if he'd gotten a lunch, too. He said, "No, they were all out of the lunches," so we gave him one. We found out later that it was Frank's group that had run out of lunches, but still had the toiletries. The very last lunch we had in our group went to a man in a wheelchair. He was so happy to get it, and we said, "It's our last one, we saved it for you." After we gave out all the food, clothing and other items, we continued to hand out the usual gospel tracts in English and Spanish. I had a Chick tract entitled "No Fear", which was well received by the younger people. One young man, shirtless, tattooed, and body-pierced, started to refuse the tract, but when he saw the name and picture on it, he took it after all. I love the tracts from Chick Publications for that very reason - people will take them that might not take an ordinary gospel tract. I gave tracts to a couple of young women, at different times, but both looked very sad. One homeless girl was all hunched over by a pile of her stuff, and looked like she might be coming down off some drugs, but she took a lunch and a tract. Another girl was sitting on a bench, and did not look homeless, but just sad. I gave her a Chick tract called "You Have a Date" and she looked skeptical at first, but then took it. We always pray that the seed of God's word will be planted in the hearts of the people who receive the tracts, and that the Holy Spirit will continue to do His work, and the Father will draw them to Jesus.

Saturday, May 5, 2012 - We had a great outreach today to Venice Beach. We heard from some of our regulars that they wouldn't be able to come, so we didn't know how big of a group we would have. It turned out to be me, Tom, Billy, Bob, Frank, Mitch, Shami and Greg, so we had enough people. We had 115 lunches, lots of toiletries, socks, T-shirts, a few jackets, and some other clothing items. We gave everything away to the homeless, as well as giving out the gospel of Jesus Christ (in the form of little gospel booklets from Chick Publications) to anyone and everyone who was down there at the beach. Mitch said it was

such a blessing to be doing the Lord's work, and he and Frank had a lot of people asking for prayer. The homeless people who remember them from other times are opening up and talking more, they said, and asking for prayer. Frank also said he gave a lunch to a man sitting on a bench, and the man asked if they had any socks. When Frank said, "Yes" and gave him a pair of socks, the man said, "God is good!" Billy found three guys who were new to Venice Beach, and had just arrived the night before. He told them about our ministry as he gave them lunches and other items they needed. Shami and Greg prayed for a lot of homeless people while meeting their physical needs with lunches, socks, and toiletries. They also had a women's jacket, and found a woman who was the right size to fit in it. They prayed for a man named Bubba, for his health. They also prayed for Arthur, and he had tears running down his face. He kept saying, "Men don't cry," but Shami told him it was okay, it was just the Holy Spirit working in his heart. We gave out a lot of tracts in English and Spanish, and my favorite one was to a young man who was skateboarding, and he grabbed the tract as he was skating by me, and he didn't even stop. I also gave a tract in English to a young girl on a bicycle, and asked her if she would like one in Spanish for her parents who were setting up a table to sell some things. She smiled and took both of the tracts. We passed by the Phoenix House, and I went inside to see if I could talk to one of our prison guys, Walter, who was released and is living there, but it was against their rules, so I couldn't see him. All in all, we had a great time down at the beach, and were able to give out several hundred gospel tracts as "seed" being planted for the Lord.

"So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor." 1 Corinthians 3:7-8

Saturday, June 2, 2012 - Our outreach team to Venice Beach consisted of Tom, me, Catharine, Shami, Greg, Billy, Bob, Mitch, Frank, Ararat, and Brian - all "regulars", nobody new. To give out to the homeless, we had 115 lunches, lots of toiletries, socks, some sweatshirts and T-shirts, and a few other items of clothing (mostly stuff donated by people from our church - thank you, Sonrise Church!). Frank said people seemed more open, and wanted to talk and have prayer. Brian met a blind man named Gary, and prayed for him. Catharine and Shami's group prayed for a lot of the homeless people, including Richard, Larry, David (he was looking for a church, also), Sean (he wanted prayer for his family in Oregon), and Melissa. Three ladies took the nice, new, soft blanket we had, and said it was for their friend who was pregnant. A young man named David took the pair of "flip-flop" shoes, and a very thin young woman gladly took the nice sweatshirt I had (in a small size), as I thought it would fit her. Shami saw a man wearing the nice coat she had given out last month, so obviously, it was a hit. After we gave out all the clothing, food and hygiene items to the homeless, we continued to hand out several hundred gospel tracts to people who were just down at the Venice Boardwalk "hanging out", and we had tracts in English and Spanish. I saw a group of young people standing outside a tattoo shop, and offered them tracts. The guys all took them, and when I tried to get the girl's attention, they said, "Oh, she doesn't speak English." I asked what language she did speak, and they said, "Japanese." I reached into my many-pocketed satchel bag, and found one in Japanese. The look on her face was priceless, and her mouth was wide open with a big "Ooooooh!" as she took it. Two young men, at different times, asked for more than one gospel tract. We had lots of Chick tracts, and gave Nehemiah five or six, and Jacob Daniel three or four. I told them both, "You have good Bible names!"

Prison Ministry

Here are some of the different 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, Salinas Valley 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, two prisons in Corcoran, Calif., Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA, Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, and Sierra Conservation Center in Jamestown, CA. We also have a few inmates scattered across the country in Federal prisons.

Lisa Mustard, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "I am so happy to hear from you and wanted to tell you thank you for the certificate, and I received it on Friday, along with the notes on being mindful of our thoughts. I have to express my appreciation to you both for allowing me to participate in your wonderful program of the 12-Steps. I was able through the questions and answers to dig deeper than I ever had before, and get to the core issues of a lot of my past., including my childhood, and my drug addiction, not to mention what brought me to prison. It was through your "Love Lifted Me Recovery" that I was able to work my Steps and really get a deeper meaning to my recovery and sobriety, so again, I am grateful to you both. God bless you both always. Lisa Mustard"

Juan Garcia, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "I want to thank you for all the help I'm getting from you, and for helping us convicts on our quest of transformation so we can get rid of our old ways and adopt the principles of God. Sorry for taking so long to do homework of Step 5, but I've finally got it done. I really like answering the questions, especially those from Step 4, because it was the first time I was actually honest about my past. Thank you for helping me get rid of the burden of guilt I carried for a long time. I feel much better now that I let go of all the resentment, shame, anger and guilt I held onto for a long time. Once again, thank you and God bless you both. Sincerely, J. Garcia"

Mary Jo Montoya, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "You are both awesome! First, because of your wonderful ministry and love for the Lord, and I don't know how you find the time to do all the things you do. Also, thank you soooo much for the letter to the Board. I want hopefully to finish the Steps by September. I want you to know that I have gone to AA and NA for years, but at the meetings, you don't ever have to talk or actually work the 12-Steps. With your program, I worked each Step and was proud I did the 4th and 5th Steps! Yeah! I am learning and growing, and I am so glad I have you two and your ministry. Thank you again for all your help. I've been incarcerated since 1981 - over 30 years now, and your studies are one of the best I've worked! Sincerely, Mary Jo"

Edmund Escobar, Solano State Prison - "My whole life has turned around for the better, because you were my helping hand to meet Christ and to accept Him as my Lord and Savior. Keep up the good Christian work! I will bear the faith you instilled in me. God bless you. Edmund"

Rodney Jones, Calif. Correctional Institution, Tehachapi, CA - "Hello, my Brother and Sister! Just a small note with a big message. I want you both to know that I genuinely appreciate all the love, support, and guidance. Your time invested in us is a true blessing. May God continue to bless you both in abundance. Thanks a mill, your Brother, Rodney"

Benjamin Kaharik, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "I really appreciate your letters, as I don't receive much mail myself from the outside. I just wanted to say thank you again for all you do for us prisoners. Tom, just thought you and Dottie would like to know I quit smoking on June 1st (and am still clean from smoking over a month later), even though I knew I shouldn't be smoking in the first place. The literature you sent (Tom's paper called "What About Smoking?") really hit home. I've tried to quit on many occasions, but had failed, but I know it's going to stick this time because I know it's what God wants. So, thank you for helping me realize that. Because of you helping me to find my way back to God, I had the courage to stop. Keep up the good work with your ministry - it really makes a difference in our lives. Love, your friend in Christ, Benjamin. P.S. - I really didn't know how bad I smelled after smoking until now. Wow! Anyway, thank you again!"

Jose Norat, Avenal State Prison - "I just want to let you know that I have completed the Steps 8 & 9. Today, I spent the entire day writing apology letters and thereby taking another step in what for me will be a life-long Step 9. With God's grace, I will continue living my life as a living amends to my victim and everyone I've harmed by doing good and showing kindness. It took me some time before I was able to forgive those people who harmed me, before I could ask forgiveness for my past wrongs. And I wanted to make sure that my forgiveness was sincere. Today, I pray for everyone to have the real peace that comes from God through our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray for you, and give thanks to Him for all the hard work and devotion you both put into the ministry God in all His grace and wisdom gave to you, so that you would be an impactful example of the love of God. Respectfully, Jose"

Pocholo Pascua, Chino State Prison - "Thank you again for the time you take out of your day to continue to spread God's word. What a blessing you guys are at Love Lifted Me Recovery to communicate with all of us here in the prison system, and also to the less fortunate people on the streets. That beach outreach sounds life fun, going and helping out the homeless. Well, may God continue to bless you. Always lookin' up, Pocholo"

Calvin Jackson, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "I can't tell you the effects that this 12-Step course has had on my life. I see and go about my life in a God-like manner. I have learned to never give up on hope and faith, because if we live our lives as God tells us, then we will be blessed no matter what is our situation. So I thank you two from the bottom of my heart. And yes, I would love to be an active member of your Bible studies. Love, Cal"

Tyrone Hardison, R.J. Donovan Prison, San Diego, CA - "Oh my heavens! I want to thank God for placing you and Love Lifted Me Recovery in my path. As I work the Steps and receive the positive feedback from the both of you, truly, God is working in me. Even though the reflections are rather tough, I feel closer to God, and I feel the burdens being cleansed away and my whole attitude has changed. Your Christian brother, Tyrone"

Thor Vang, Avenal State Prison - "I want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to learn more about the Gospel of John. All these Bible study lessons that I've done have helped me to humble myself. Now, I can start by loving myself more and other people around me. God is in my life and as I continue to do Bible studies, I learn more and more each day to become a better person to all people around me. I pray that you both are in great health and spirit. Sincerely, Thor"