

“Love Lifted Me Recovery” - July, 2014
Newsletter for April, May, June, 2014
Pastors/Chaplains Tom & Dottie Hooper
LoveLiftedMeRecovery.com

Twelve Step Program & Ministry News

We continue to have weekly Bible study/recovery meetings, counseling and the 24-hour prayer line for anyone who needs help during the week. The prison ministry dwarfs the local ministry here in Venice, as we are ministering to over 400 men and women in prisons all over California, and some in other states.

Sometimes the local ministry overlaps with the prison ministry, and here is an example: one of our guys recently got released and called and said he was at the Bible Tabernacle here in Venice. This was Gary Walker, who was in Ironwood Prison, and he completed our 12-Step program in prison. He had called originally on Thursday late afternoon, and said he was in downtown L.A., and didn't have anywhere to go. We gave him directions to the Venice BT and told him to get on a bus straight down Venice Blvd. and he might get there in time to be able to spend the night (they have certain hours for "intake" of new people). Here's how wonderfully God works - he got there too late to get in, and was walking around just trying to find the place, when someone asked him if he was looking for the Bible Tabernacle. Well, that person was Brad, who was supposed to be at our house helping to put together the lunches for the outreach, but he couldn't come because of a plumbing emergency at the BT (Brad is the maintenance guy for the Venice BT, and he also comes to our Monday meetings). He was able to help Gary get in, get some dinner, and they allowed him to stay for the weekend until he could see his parole officer and then be transferred to Texas. Long story short, if Brad had been at our house instead of tending to the plumbing problems, he wouldn't have been there to help Gary. Praise the Lord! Also, the Venice BT is the women's and children's ministry, so usually they don't just take in men for a few nights. God worked it all out, and Gary was very happy. He was supposed to be going back to Texas to family as soon as he could check in with his parole officer in downtown L.A. Anyway, we went over to the Venice BT to meet him, and we visited for about an hour. Praise the Lord!

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, April 5, 2014 - The weather was beautiful, so we expected to see a lot of people down at the Boardwalk. Our gospel team consisted of Tom, Dottie, Brad, Bob, Shami, Catharine, Keith, Frank, Mitch, Ararat, and Brian. We gave out 123 lunches to the homeless, but all three of our groups ran out, and we thought we might have to start making more lunches each month. It was getting to be warmer weather, and there were just a lot of homeless people down at Venice Beach, especially a lot of young people. Brad, Bob, Keith and I went in one group, and we encountered a whole lot of homeless people early on, even while still in the parking lot. We were handing out lunches, socks and toiletries to one group, and a young woman asked, "Are you Jehovahs?" We said, "No, we're just Christians - born again Christians," and she said, "Thank You, Jesus, thank You, Jesus!" This was Brad's first time going on our outreach, and he said he enjoyed it, but was a little shy in giving out the gospel tracts. That's okay, because we all get better as we practice. All together, we gave out several hundred gospel tracts in English, and quite a few in Spanish. I also gave out one in Italian, and one in Turkish (this was to one of the vendors). We were all out of lunches when we met up with Mitch, and he was talking to a lady named Claudette. He promised her he would find one of the others and bring back a lunch for her, but you could tell by her expression she wasn't very hopeful. Right then, Frank came up, and Mitch got a lunch from him and gave it to Claudette, and she was so happy. That opened up the conversation, and Mitch invited her to come to the Bible Tabernacle, and gave her the information. He also gave the BT's info. to a man

named Robert, and he seemed really interested, and we hope he will check himself in at the BT. Near the skateboard park, Mitch, Brian and Frank saw a group of men who recognized them, and they not only asked for lunches, but said, "Are you going to pray for us, too?" Frank said a man came by on a bicycle and asked him if he had any lunches left. Frank showed him the few lunches he had left, and the man said, "Oh, thank God!" After they ran out of lunches, they gave a man named John some socks and toiletries, and he was very thankful to get those things. We passed out gospel tracts to the people walking up and down the Boardwalk, and to the vendors, and the homeless people each get a tract in their lunches. One group of people just walking on the Boardwalk took the tracts I gave them, but one of the women grabbed the tract I gave the man, and said, "Let me see that one!" I ended up giving them all several different tracts each. Shami, Catharine and Ararat spent a lot of time talking and praying with the homeless people they met, some of whom they see each month. One young man named Jeff prayed to receive Jesus as his savior. They prayed for Tiffany and Andy, and Tiffany is pregnant, and they are homeless. Finally, I always forget to mention this, but Mitch and the guys who come out from Canyon Country always save a lunch for a guy they see by the freeway entrance every month. He's always very thankful to get the lunch they save for him. Oh, yes! One more thing..... even though going on the outreach may mean getting out of their "comfort zone" for some people, the rewards are worth it. We had several of the homeless people this time say, "Oh! We are so hungry! Thank you!" and lots of "God bless you"s and everyone is always so grateful. That's the reward we get right here and now, and when we get to heaven, we'll find out how many people who received gospel tracts from us are there because of it.

Saturday, May 3, 2014 - For our outreach to Venice Beach, we had a good bunch of volunteers to help us. We had Tom, me, Shami, Bob, Frank, Mitch, Keith, Brendan, Ararat, Dave, and Charles Turner, one of our guys from the prison ministry who is now paroled and living at the Bible Tabernacle in Canyon Country. Charles said he was blessed to be able to actually go out with us on the outreach, as he'd read about it in our letters for many years. We wrote to him since 2008 in prison, and he was paroled in January, 2014. We had made 133 lunches, and we had lots of socks, toiletries, and some other clothing items. We gave away all of the food and other items to the homeless, all of whom were very grateful. One young woman said, "Thank You, Jesus!" Shami, Ararat and Brendan prayed for many of the homeless people they met, including Arthur, who is a regular. Arthur was very happy to get an orange T-shirt, too. Bob asked me if I had any tracts in Russian, and we gave a Russian "Creator or Liar?" tract to a Russian Jewish lady. She was very happy to get it, but said she didn't need a lunch. As usual, after we handed out all the food, socks and toiletries to the homeless, we continued along the Boardwalk giving out gospel tracts. We gave out several hundred tracts in English, some in Spanish, and gave away one New Testament. One man who said he needed the tract in Spanish also looked like he might be homeless, and Bob had one lunch left. We offered it to him, and he was so happy to get some food. We handed out lots of tracts to passers-by, and a lot of young people accepted them. One group of young men took tracts, and when one of the guys asked what it was about, I said, "It's about God and Jesus," thinking he would probably turn it down. I was surprised when he said he wanted it, and all but one of the guys took tracts. We all were blessed and enjoyed sowing the seeds of God's word, and we pray that the Lord will bring a great harvest of souls from our time out at the beach.

Saturday, June 7, 2014 - Those volunteers we had to go on the outreach along with Tom and myself were: Shami, Catharine, Keith, Brad, Frank, Mitch, Brendan, David, Charles, and Jaime. We had made 135 lunches, and we had toiletries, socks, T-shirts, and some shoes and other clothing items to give to the homeless. I brought a camera and tried to take some pictures, but it's hard when I'm so busy handing out the lunches and tracts. I did take a few, and two guys named Josiah and Quincy posed for pictures with their lunches, socks and toiletries in hand. Frank and Mitch's group, as well as Shami, Catharine and Brendan's group did a lot of praying for people. Joseph was really grateful for the food and for the prayers. Rico, an ex-Marine who did four tours in Afghanistan, was homeless because of an alcohol

problem, but really appreciated the prayers and food. He was also given hope to get his life back together if he will turn to the Lord. They also prayed for Tito and Monica, and also for their dog, Shady. They were so thankful for the prayers they gave Shami, Catharine and Brendan big hugs. Others who were prayed for were Ricky and Christine, "Lone Wolf", and Kami and Greg, who all asked for protection and guidance from the Lord. A man named Cain (Kane?) was lying on the ground, but sat up when Brendan asked if he would like a lunch. He was stunned, but grateful, and after they prayed for him, he even came over and joined in the prayers for others nearby. He had a big lump on his head from where someone had hit him with a pipe, for no reason, he said. We're so happy we are able to show the love of Jesus to these people down at Venice Beach. After we gave everything away to the homeless, we continued up and down the Boardwalk giving out gospel tracts. We gave out several hundred in English, quite a few in Spanish, and one in French. When they were in the parking lot, Mitch said there was a whole family who took tracts, and they were reading them in the car saying things like, "Look at this!" We gave out a lot of tracts to families with kids, and when four young guys went by us on skateboards, I held out tracts, and three of them took them without even stopping - just flew on by and grabbed the tracts. We ran into other Christian groups down there, including "Jews for Jesus" guys Joe and Cyril setting up an awning and table with literature. Tom had run into Joe from "Jews for Jesus" the day before down at the marina, as Joe saw our ministry sign on the truck. He told Tom that they were going to be down there on Saturday, so we looked for them. We were so happy to have Charles Turner coming on the outreach with us again. He said, when he read about himself in our letter, when he came with us on last month's outreach, he got tears in his eyes. He could hardly believe he was reading about himself going on the outreach in the free world, instead of reading it in one of our letters while in prison. Praise the Lord!

Prison Ministry

Not only do we minister to prison inmates on a one-to-one basis, but we have at least three groups of men inside the prisons who are conducting support groups for the men doing our Love Lifted Me Recovery 12-Step program. The men meet together for encouragement, Bible study, and going over the lessons, although they still send them in to us for correction, so that they can get a certificate of completion when they finish the program. There are groups meeting at Solano State Prison, Calipatria State Prison, and Ironwood State Prison, and again, the weekly meetings are for encouragement, support, and discussion to facilitate healing, relapse prevention and recovery as the men work our program by correspondence. We also have men who are evangelizing inside the prisons, and we've been sending them gospel tracts in English and Spanish for a long time. Recently, we had two opportunities to reach men who speak Japanese, Russian and Cambodian, and our guys asked if we had tracts in those languages. We did, thanks to Chick Publications, and we sent them gospel tracts to help reach these men who did not speak much English. Joseph Rodriguez in CSATF Corcoran needed the tracts in Japanese and Cambodian, and Duane Lewis in Folsom State Prison knew of several men who spoke Russian, and needed the tracts for them.

Joseph Rodriguez, Substance Abuse Treatment Facility/Corcoran State Prison, Corcoran, CA -
"Thank you for the many tracts in English, Spanish, Japanese and Cambodian. Now it's for sure I cannot hold onto to any at all, and you made it possible for me to reach some people who I thought didn't care about who Jesus Christ is. Silly me, they just didn't understand English! Also, do you have a picture of everyone together who helps you with the outreach? If so, can you send me one please. Deacon Joseph Rodriguez"

Helen Sweet, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "Regarding Steps 8 & 9 and making amends, I used these steps about two years ago to make amends with my youngest daughter. I started telling her about the 12-Steps I was doing, and just asked her to read all the things I remembered about us

and where I thought our relationship had started to go bad. We had little correspondence until that letter, and then I received back a three-page letter that I inserted into my Board of Prison Terms portfolio. My daughter now visits me along with her older sister, and I thank the Lord for His blessings! This last month, I used the steps again, this time with an inmate with whom there had been years of animosity. Finally, after almost ten years, we are now speaking and sharing a self-help class together. The most wonderful part is her smiling when she meets me, and I know she means it. Again, thank You, Lord! And thank you for all you do. Helen”

Patrick Wallace, Folsom State Prison, Represa, CA - “I just wanted to thank you so much for coming into my life and sending me my lessons, which is so valuable to my growth as a person and as a Christian. Lately I have really been struggling with myself over my actions that brought me to prison. Basically my guilt. I thought I had dealt with that a while ago, but the closer I get to my parole hearing, the more shameful I feel. I talked briefly with my pastor, and he told me that I have to forgive myself. Jesus Christ has forgiven me through the atonement, and I have to do so as well. It is still something that I struggle with, and I ask myself if it is the adversary trying to keep me in bondage and not be totally free of the old man, or is it just my lack of faith in not believing I am redeemed through the blood of Jesus? Please pray for me so that I can get a better handle and perspective of this confusion in my life at this time. Brother Patrick”

Angel Medina, Corcoran State Prison - “I got the Serenity Bible and I really enjoy it. I try to read it every morning before I go to chow. So far the coolest read I found was on page 217, and it is regarding Step One. It says, “Gradual loss of identity and the progressive violation of ones own values in the practice of the addiction.” That was a really big read for me, because I pushed hard on my values and I felt like I did not know myself when I was in my addiction. In your paper “Dealing with Anger”, I really liked where it said that our anger can be “not so much against a person, but rather against circumstances.” In me, looking back on things, that is so true. Thank you again for everything. Your friend, Angel”

Sarina Ruiz, Calif. Institution for Women, Corona, CA - “I wanted to write you a few words today to let you know how much I appreciate your help. Your Bible studies keep me humbled, because sometimes I don’t ask myself these things, and it brings me closer to Jesus and how He thinks of me, and how I should live. It gives me joy to stay committed to something honorable and of God. Please pray for me and my family. Most everyone has been or still is addicted to drugs, alcohol, bitterness and anger, and they don’t know God like I do today. I desperately need them to be saved and protected from evil or harm. Thank you so much, and God bless you two. Sarina”

Raul Castillo, Centinela State Prison, Imperial, CA - “Dear brethren and friends Tom & Dottie, I am writing you this simple note just to tell you that I love you both very dearly. As I was finishing the lesson I am sending you, I felt a deep sense of appreciation for you within my heart. For a reason unknown to me, there is something strong that attracts me to you, and I thank you very much for being there for me the way you are. You have been an answer to one of my deepest prayers, so thank you for being there in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus. Love you, Raul Castillo”

Lorenzo Smith, Soledad State Prison, Soledad, Calif. - “How can I properly express the joy I derived from reading your last letter? I must tell you that it lifted my spirits to heights in my heart with God - a very welcome change from where they had been for so long. The fact is your letters have always worked miracles and I pray that you will not stop writing them. I want to thank you for everything you’ve been doing for all of us. Lorenzo”