

Ministry Update - 3rd Quarter, 2005

Twelve Step Recovery Meetings:

Our Monday and Wednesday meetings are going well, and we've been working on Steps 6, 7, 8, 9 and now starting on Step 10. Steps 6 and 7 are getting rid of our character defects, so if we're honest, we never really finish with that Step until we get to heaven. Steps 8 and 9 are making amends to those we have harmed, and in our group, we also work on forgiving those who have harmed us. Here is a short quote from a paper Tom wrote that explains a little of what we teach in our meetings. It is called "Three Magic Words":

"My dear friends, brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, these three words I believe to be the keys to a successful recovery from the past and for a glorious new beginning. It has been my experience that when we get completely **Honest** with everything, no matter how painful or shameful it may be, we then allow our Heavenly Father to administer His loving Grace to us with complete **Forgiveness**. We must be ready also to forgive any and all who have wronged us in any way, as hard as that seems. It is absolutely necessary for complete healing, and even though you may want that "pound of flesh," the Bible says in Rom 12:19, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine; I will repay', saith the Lord."

We must completely forgive the whole thing and turn it over to God. By doing this, it frees us up from carrying the bitterness any longer - it will be a relief and lighten our load. Remember, the Word of God tells us to cast our burdens upon Him - our Lord does not want us weighted down with excess baggage from the past. We need to understand that we are in a race and cannot carry the weight, but must be stripped down so that we will run it unencumbered and we will be the winners. I truly wish I could put my finger on the part of working the steps that was the magic part, but I can't. All I know is that I made a **Commitment** to do all there was to do. I did not believe any of it was going to work for me, but I promised God that I would do it anyway, and that I needed His help."

Evangelistic Outreach:

Saturday, July 16th

This time, the "Venice Beach Dream Team" consisted of Dottie, Amelia, Vince, Youbert, Sheldon, Angela, Lorén and Kaylah, with Tom remaining at home to give us prayer cover. We thought there was more openness and receptiveness with the people being offered the tracts, many even saying, "Thank you" as they took one. Amelia said afterwards that she was surprised that almost everyone took a tract. There were a few people who turned them down, but the interesting thing was that a lot of people that maybe you wouldn't think would take them, did, and others that you might think would take them, refused. I guess Jesus was right when He said not to judge by outward appearance (John 7:24). We didn't let anyone's "looks" intimidate us, but offered the tracts to everyone, and again, we were surprised by how many people did receive them this time. We had some prayer, fasting and spiritual warfare beforehand on Friday, just for this purpose, and we could see the difference from last month, when we did not do the same amount of prayer. Jesus said, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house" (Matthew 12:28-29). We were definitely going into the strong man's house, Satan's territory, as the Venice Boardwalk is full of demonic influences, as we've said before. Sheldon had not been down to the Boardwalk in many years, and he noticed the difference in atmosphere. Most of the shops and vendors out on the sidewalk are selling New Age charms, statues of Buddha and other idolatrous statues, pictures and necklaces. There are vendors selling pictures or T-shirts with sexually explicit and other ungodly themes, signs posted with blasphemous messages, and many, many psychics offering to tell your fortune by just about

any method you can imagine: tarot cards, palm reading, various forms of Chinese fortune-telling, and probably goat entrails, if they could find a goat! A lot of the vendors are hardened to the gospel, but many of the shops down there have Spanish-speaking workers, and Amelia talked to quite a few of them, and gave them tracts in Spanish. We found one concession stand that didn't have something demonic about it, and one of the men took a tract in English, but I asked if they spoke another language. They said "Chinese," so I dragged three different Chinese tracts out of my voluminous bag, and they all began to read them. Again, the tract "For My Muslim Friend" came in handy, as one man refused the regular tracts, saying, "I'm a Muslim," but when we said, "Oh, we have one for Muslims!" he took it gladly.

As for the homeless part of the ministry, we had a few interesting experiences. When we first got there, I saw a man, and couldn't tell if were homeless or not, because his clothes weren't bad, although his hair was mussed up. I asked Sheldon, "What does the well-dressed hobo wear these days?" I noticed he was sort of looking around, and when I saw him looking in a trash can, I figured he was one of ours. We went up to him and said, "We're giving out lunches; are you hungry?" and he took it gratefully. When we got down to our last five lunch bags, we came across a group that had seven people, so we apologized that we only had five lunches, but one guy said, "That's okay, we share everything." I was glad then that we had packed some extra food in each bag this time. We came across several other groups, but we were out of lunches by then. We still handed them tracts, but one young man asked, "Do you have any food?" I told him we were out, but some others from our group were up ahead, and when we caught up with them, we would try to find him on our way back. When we met Angela, Vince, Youbert, and Amelia, we came back and found him, and gave lunches to some others in the same area. We were one lunch short, and had to apologize again, and the one guy who didn't get a lunch started cursing and swearing at us, even though one of the others said they would share with him. A few minutes later, Lorén gave him a lunch that she had been carrying, and he said to her, "Please apologize to them for me; I'm just kind of drunk."

Saturday, August 6th

Today's outreach was one of the most successful we've had so far. More tracts were handed out, people seemed more receptive, we were there for a longer time, and more prayer was made on behalf of this outreach, so maybe the amount of prayer is the key. We prayed and did spiritual warfare on Friday, and prayed when we got up early on Saturday morning. Tom stayed at home and gave us "prayer cover" the whole time we were down there, and said he was actually in prayer the whole time. I'm sure others were praying, too, and we thank you for your prayers. We got down to the beach only to discover that this was going to be the weekend when the Hare Krishnas have their big festival, "The Festival of the Chariots," which is a euphemism for a very demonic display of all their Hindu gods and goddesses. They had all the tents set up, but the actual festival had not started yet. Our group stopped and prayed and bound the demons that were attached to their stuff, and later we found out that Vince and Angela also stopped to pray against the demons. Vince and Angela also went through their whole set-up and placed gospel tracts here and there. Praise Jesus! Other Christians were down there, too. Angela and Kaylah tried to give tracts to some women, but they said they were with a Christian group from Haiti. They were a worship team, and were planning to sing later, but they were also witnessing down t the Boardwalk.

Vince said he talked to a lot more people one-on-one this time, and they were quite open to the gospel. Sheldon and Kaylah had been a little shy in handing out tracts last time, but they got "on fire" this time. Ten-year-old Kaylah gave out so many tracts, that she had to keep asking us for more. Almost all of the people she offered them to accepted them. When we asked Sheldon how he liked it this time, he said, "When do we go again?" It's difficult to get the old flesh up early on a Saturday morning to do this, and hard to get out of our comfort zone sometimes, but it's definitely worth it! We are reaching lost souls for Jesus Christ, and it feels good doing it! We gave out the usual tracts from Chick Publications, all different ones, but we also had some Gospel Tract Society tracts donated to us by Edyphia Robinson, who sent them all the way from Missouri! Thanks, Edyphia! Those went over very well. We gave out all of the "Do Good People Go to Heaven?", "A Bridge Over Troubled Waters" and "Touched

by the Master's Hand." The foreign language tracts that we gave out were Hebrew, Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese and Korean. That's not even counting the many, many in Spanish, and Amelia was there to talk to people in Spanish, too.

We had made up extra lunches this time, and had 39 all together. Everyone we gave them to was very appreciative and thankful. We saw three people sitting on a bench, and we weren't sure if they were homeless or not, so we said, "We're giving out lunches. Do you know anyone who is hungry and needs one?" They all said, "We do!" We got lots of "God bless you"s from the ones who received the lunches, and no "incidents" of any kind. Later, when we had passed them all out, Sheldon had a man ask him for money, saying he was homeless. Sheldon said he couldn't give him money, and he was sorry, but we'd already given out all of our lunches. Instead of being angry, the man said something to the effect of, "Wow! Is this what you guys do? That's really cool!"

**Isaiah 55:10-11 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout,
and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
so shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire,
and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."**

Saturday, September 3rd

This outreach was again one of the most successful outreaches we've had down at the Venice boardwalk and beach. We were down there for a longer time, handed out 48 lunches to the homeless (the largest amount we've ever done), and people were very receptive. Again, we have to say the success rate is based on how much prayer goes into the event. Some of the Scripture promises we prayed were Matthew 12:29, Colossians 4:3, I Thessalonians 1:5, Acts 26:18, II Cor. 4:4-6 and Isaiah 55:11. We believe God will cause the seeds to grow into a harvest of souls for His kingdom. We gave out all the lunch bags, and Sheldon even went across the sand and grass area to where a group of homeless people were camped out. We gave some to individuals, and some to groups of homeless people, and the number came out just right. Sheldon saw a man who was not dressed too badly, so he wasn't sure if he were homeless or not, until he saw him looking into trash cans. He asked him if he was hungry and would like a lunch, and he said, "Yes, I am!" Angela said she noticed people being more open, even to the point of looking at us and making eye contact, so it made it easier to ask them if they would like a tract. Gordon said he liked going out with us as a group much better than when he tried to give out tracts on his own. Amelia just said she was blessed to be able to go out with us again. Several hundred tracts in English and Spanish were given out, and the foreign language tracts that were given out this time were two in Russian, one in Ukrainian, one in German, and two in Chinese.

We came to a bench where two obviously homeless men were sitting, and one was very young, probably only in his early twenties. We gave lunches to both of them, and then offered a Chick tract (there was also a tract in each lunch bag). The younger man was not right in his head (demons? drugs? mental illness?), and he was making weird arm movements kind of like a Hindu ritual or a Balinese dancer, but when he saw the "Somebody Loves Me" tract he looked right at me and said, "Oh! Just like my Grandma!" I asked him, "Does your grandma have these kind of tracts?" and he said, "Yes," but then he started babbling some kind of gibberish. Later, when we got home, I remembered him and realized that if he had a grandmother who used Chick tracts, she most likely was praying for him, or had prayed for him, for many years. I started praying for him also, asking God to restore him to his right mind and bring him to Jesus. Even if his grandma is now with the Lord, he wouldn't be the first person to get their life right with God long after a praying parent or grandparent had gone to be with the Lord. And if his grandma is still alive, I pray that he will get in touch with her, and let her know when he gets his life right with Christ. One of the tracts that we put in each lunch bag was entitled "Are You Living for Jesus?", so if God grants him clarity of mind long

enough to read these tracts, maybe we'll find out when we get to heaven that it turned his life around.

Prison Ministry:

We continue to have more prisoners writing to us and asking for our 12-Step program and Bible studies, especially a big influx from Avenal State Prison in California, but also some others. Inmates continue to share our materials with other Christians and with the unsaved, including some very innovative ways. We have more prisoners actually working the 12-Steps than ever before, and some that have finished the 12-Steps are doing our other Bible studies (available on the Internet also). Here are excerpts from some letters:

Mike Carrillo, Soledad Prison: "Well, you asked how I communicate with these other guys in administrative segregation. I'm on a tier of about 25 cells - each cell has a barred cage front, so it's easy to holler down the tier to other cells. There is no mingling or contact with other inmates, and they are all single cells (one man per cell). We walk past the cells when the cops take us (handcuffed) to the shower at the end of the tier. We talk as we walk by, but mostly if I want to talk to a guy 10 cells down I use my fishing line. It's a long string (torn sheet) with a bar of soap tied on the end of the line. I put my line outside the tray slot, wind up motion, and let 'er fly down the tier. Then, the other guy fishes my line into his cell (under the door) and pulls my line in his cell. I tie on my note, or in my case I tie on tracts or an extra Bible or the studies and I share them in my little Love Lifted Me Franchise ministry. A somewhat of a Pastor Mike - just doing my duty to God and my country! You know my heart's desire! As of now, I share your studies with 3 other guys who love them. I'm gonna have a 4th guy here soon, maybe today after I talk to him. These guys are hungry for the word of God, so I feed them what I have. They send it back and they ask for more! My pleasure! Please send me more tracts. You know very well that I am on fire for the Lord, so nothing you send to me is wasted or bogarded. I share it and they ask me for it - all day long every day..... I also answer a lot of questions these guys come up with. I don't know it all, but no one has asked a question yet that I could not answer (biblical stuff, you know). When new guys come in The Hole I wait and watch how they're gonna act before I approach with my Lord. I don't want to get trampled underfoot! Sometimes people are hard to read, and there are some very violent satanic demons that roam these tiers. Lately I've been practicing what you've taught me, to claim the blood of Jesus and to take those thoughts captive in obedience to Christ. Love, Michael"

David Basile, Soledad Prison: "Enclosed is the last lesson on Romans. You know, several years ago, someone sent me a Bible study on Romans which was set up by Kay Arthur. It was way cool, but in comparison, I found your study more heartfelt, especially with your definitions of certain Scriptures. I am looking forward to doing the book of John."

Randolph Haro, Corcoran State Prison: "Thank you for the tracts and the Bible studies you've sent. I've handed them out and the brothers have read the studies. I've been giving the tracts to non-Christian guys, and some are very receptive. So, "Love Lifted Me Recovery" is reaching all the way to Corcoran, too! Thank you. May our awesome Father continue to bless you in every way, and give you the desires of your heart. May He bless you with good health always, and long life, to accomplish planting and watering the souls here on earth. In Jesus' love, Randy"

Gary Kagel, Corcoran State Prison: "Well, hello and praise the Lord! So good to get your letters! The Spanish tracts are a BIG hit! I just hope they are as excited to receive Jesus as they are the tracts! I pray over and read each one and pray for God to send people to get them, and to send me to receptive people. He has been answering positively. Thanks again for ALL the tracts - you are terrific to be giving and supportive and willing to serve our Lord. You are good examples of Christian Brethren in service. God bless and keep you, and give you His peace and joy always. In His service, Love, Gary"