

Ministry Update - 3rd Quarter, 2008

Twelve Step Program

Two of the steps we've been studying in this past quarter are Steps 8 & 9 - "Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others." The following is an excerpt from a letter from Antonio Briseño, one of our guys in Avenal State Prison, on how this Step affected him: "Steps 8 & 9 have been the most powerful Steps to me because of what I went through with my parents. I ended up taking out my problems on others throughout my life, rather than taking responsibility for my behavior. I started a family when I was out on the streets, but I failed to take responsibility and chose to hang out with gang members, which led me to a life sentence in prison. I thought about my life very hard, and I knew I was missing something in my life. God is the One who was missing in my life. I learned that through His Son Jesus Christ we can be saved. After accepting Christ into my life and reading His word daily, I learned that I had to forgive people and ask for forgiveness in order to move forward in my relationship with God. I finally wrote a letter to my dad explaining my change of life, telling him that I had accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. I told him how I felt about him all my life, and how I had hated him, and wished him dead, and cursed him whenever I spoke of him. I asked him to please forgive me for the feelings and thoughts that I had towards him. I also told him that I have forgiven him for his abusive behavior towards me when I was a child. His abuse really affected me throughout my life. After my dad had read my letter, he broke down in tears, and told my sister that he had given us a messed up life. I feel that I have made amends with my dad, because a year after this letter was written, I finally talked to my dad on the phone. I haven't talked to him in 15 years, and we talked really good. I also found out that he was going to church, and that was a blessing to hear. I have made amends with other people I have harmed, but I thought I would share the amends I made with my dad, because this is the one that had affected me the most."

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, July 5, 2008 - We had 90 lunches made up for giving out to the homeless. Our team consisted of Tom, me, Alycia, Youbert, John, Yvonne, Tom Taylor, and Catharine and her husband Rick. This was Rick's first time going out, and it seemed like he enjoyed it. Everyone else has been before, but we never know who will show up each time, as people have work, family obligations, are sick, or out of town, or just plain don't get up in time. This was actually a good turnout this time. We didn't have much in the way of clothing this time, just a few socks, but we had lots of little soaps. Shampoos, toothbrushes and toothpastes, and razors. Most of the homeless people want the food, of course, but when they find out we have the toiletry items, they go fast, too. Youbert and John went down the alleys, Catharine and Rick went along the beach, and the rest of us went straight down the Boardwalk. Sometimes, we would find a large group of homeless people camping together, and other times just find an individual here and there. Everyone was very grateful and appreciative, and almost everyone says, "God bless you!" We found some people sitting on some steps, and the others in our group had missed them. We were all out of lunches by then, but ran up ahead to get some from the others and bring them back for these people. At another big grouping of people, one young woman said, "I've already eaten today," and wouldn't take a lunch. We thought maybe she meant we should give them to the others who had nothing to eat yet. After the lunches are gone, we just hand out the gospel tracts. We all thought the general atmosphere was quite open and receptive, but there are always people who refuse them. We would go for a space where everyone was turning down the tracts, and then all of a sudden, we would hit a pocket of people where every single person wanted one! One man even ran up to Alycia from behind and asked for one! We gave out several hundred tracts in English and Spanish, but no

other languages this time. There were lots of kids and young adults, and they all seemed to be receptive and took a tract. We had Chick Publications titles such as "Party Girl", "The Wall", "Creator or Liar?", "The Great Escape", "No Fear?" and many others, and they were all attractive to the kids, because they are like little comic books. Adults are a little more leery of taking something, maybe, but even the response with adults was great this time! The Holy Spirit was really moving and going before us to prepare peoples' hearts. Praise the Lord!

Saturday, August 2, 2008 - It was a hot day in August, and our group consisted of me, Tom, Angela, Shami, Youbert, Daniel, Alycia and Yvonne. Daniel, Angela and Yvonne went along the beach, and Youbert took the alleys, and the rest of us headed straight up the Boardwalk. When we got down to the Boardwalk, we discovered that it was the day that the Hari Krishnas have their annual festival, with their brightly colored tents and advertisements for free food. The devil sure knows how to attract people! They don't really get rolling until around noon, so we still had a good time handing out tracts there at the Boardwalk and Venice Beach in the morning. Angela went up to the tents and left some tracts, and also offered them to some of the people working there setting things up. She said one young man took a tract. We saw people from two other Christian groups that were down there also, trying to give people an alternative to the devil's program that would be going on later that day. We had our usual 90 lunches, and handed out several hundred gospel tracts. We don't usually stop and get into discussions or arguments with people, but Daniel and Angela had a good discussion with someone who was a Buddhist. I was asked by one young man if I had any Bible verses memorized, and he wanted to hear them. I recited a few, but then he started talking about things that made no sense, and we offered him a lunch and kept on going. There are so many homeless people that have either mental illness, or they've fried their brains on drugs or alcohol, so we just don't waste time in fruitless arguments. We handed out a lot of tracts to children and teenagers, which always blesses my heart. We gave out a lot in Spanish, and also a few in Japanese. Two young men were walking, and I asked if they would like a little book to read. The one man took one, but the other one shook his head and said, "No." I asked him, "Would you like one in Japanese?" just because I thought he might be Japanese, and I was right. He turned right around and said, "Yes!" and I gave him two different Chick tracts in Japanese. I saw Sid from one of the tattoo shops, who always asks us for tracts. He said, "Do you have any new ones?" I had a little bundle of tracts I had put in my bag, with a rubber band around them, just for him. Out of that bundle, he only found one that he had already read.

We had one jacket, some socks, and some toiletries along with us this time, and Daniel found a man named Keith who fit the jacket and was grateful to receive it, along with a lunch. Daniel and Angela also prayed with him that he might come to know Jesus as his Savior. They also came across a young man who had slept out on the beach the night before and been robbed. He was just out here from the mid-west or someplace, and didn't realize what he was doing, I guess. He got beaten up pretty bad, and they stole what little money he had, but he was overjoyed to receive a lunch and bottle of water. Alycia brought an extra cart and two cases of bottled water from Costco, and she enjoyed handing out bottles of water along with the lunches. Alycia went over to one woman who looked homeless and was sitting on the beach. She was very sunburned from being outdoors all the time, and she was very grateful to get a lunch and bottle of water. As always, the toiletries were well received, and it always makes us feel good when someone asks for soap or a razor, or shampoo, or a toothbrush and toothpaste, and we're able to say, "Yes, we have some!"

One girl, all tattooed and pierced, had her head down, looking kind of dejected, and I asked her if she would like a tract. She refused, but I kept after her, and asked her if she was hungry and would like something to eat. She turned right around and said, "Yes!" and I gave her the last of the lunches I had. She got a tract inside the lunch bag, whether she wanted it or not, but the thing is, the lunch opened the way to get it to her, as just offering the tract did not.

Saturday, September 6, 2008 - Wow! We had a great outreach down at the Venice Boardwalk

today, and a wonderful time was had by all! Those who came to help get the gospel message out this time were Tom, Dottie, Daniel, Catharine, Shami, Amelia, Alycia and John. We gave out over 90 lunches, and two cases of bottled water. Daniel, Catharine and Shami went along the beach with the lunches, and they said people even came running up to them. One man danced a little jig, he was so happy to get a lunch. The police had been there earlier, and had rousted many of the homeless from off the beach and Boardwalk areas, but John went down the alleys and found a lot of them and gave them lunches there. We came across one bunch of younger homeless people, and they gladly took lunches, but also were happy to get razors, soap, toothpaste and tooth brushes that we had made up in little zip lock bags. After the lunches were gone, we just passed out gospel tracts to the many tourists and Saturday morning walkers and gawkers that stroll along the Boardwalk, looking at the shops and vendors. I gave one tract in Japanese to a young man, two in Chinese to a couple who were setting up a table to sell their wares, and another in Russian to a man selling items at a table. We gave out several hundred tracts in English, and quite a few in Spanish. Some people would be walking in groups of four or five, and we would offer a tract to one or two of them, and they would refuse them, but then one of their group would turn back and say, "Hey! I'll take one!" I love to see that, because it shows us that the Holy Spirit is working on different individuals, and even if their friends don't want to know the truth, if God has been working on their heart, they still have free will to choose to take a tract and read it. The same thing happened with one group of homeless people. Alycia and I were together, and we had run out of lunches, so we could only offer these people the tracts. Four or five of them all said, "No, thanks," but as we were leaving, one man came forward and asked, "What have you got there?" We told him they were little books about Jesus, and he accepted several of them.

Prison Ministry

Dennis R. Shadle, Calif. Men's Colony, San Luis Obispo - "I am so grateful to you for all you've done for me! I'm doing much better, but still have tough times and days. I really enjoy the studies and lessons. Remember, I was so sure I had committed the unpardonable sin, and felt I was totally lost that even life didn't matter anymore? Well, I'm doing another Bible study, and they confirmed from Scripture what you told me, and also that if I'm worried about having committed such a sin, I haven't done it, because the very fact that one is concerned about it indicates they have not blasphemed the Holy Spirit. Praise God! My thinking was so screwed up! You'll never know what a burden has been lifted! Satan no longer can fool me! Well, I just thought I'd share that with you. Please keep me in your prayers, and again, thank you for everything!"

Alice Conner, Walden House, Los Angeles - "I'm still working on my Eighth and Ninth Steps, making amends. It was hard getting started, but now that I have I've already completed two three-page letters, and some I can do verbally. I'm so thankful to you both for getting me through the roughest times. I'm needing to get through this, and it does get trying at times, but I hold my peace. They watch me a lot, because it's just hard for them to believe that a person can be joyful all the time. It's because I go to bed with my God and get up with Him. I'm sending this for my tithe. I had got a little money from a friend, and before I spent a dime, I put this in an envelope. I know how important it is to do this, and it means a lot for me to do this. I truly know the importance of this and you two were the ones God put it on my heart to give it to. I believe it's in the best hands in the world. Love, Alice"

E-Mail from Carmen H., Released Last Year - "Thank you once again for sharing Gods love! Your ministry has been such a blessing in my life, so for that I thank you and forever will be grateful! Well, guess what? Today I've been home 13 months exactly and today I've fulfilled my commitment to parole and instead of being on it for 3 yrs, they released me early. It's been a long haul and there is still so much to deal with and face. Every time I turn around there's something in my way, or financially struggling, but praise God I'm out here free! I love you both! Have a blessed week."

Norma Jean Jackson, California Institute for Women, Corona - "I have an open mind and I know this Higher Power is greater than me, and loving and caring. I talked and listened to others who went through your program, see it working on them, and to me that confirms that the evidence of some Higher Power. Because of this, I trust that and open myself up and let the Lord work on me and through me, and I shall become a whole person."

David Von Haden, Kern Valley State Prison, Delano, CA - "I want to thank you for your words of encouragement, and it helped me out a lot. Getting your letter from you helps me a lot. I learn a lot from all the information you send me, and it makes me think a lot. I seem to be going through a problem or a low time in my life, and then I receive what you send me, and it helps me get through my problem. God must be looking out for me and sent you to help me. God bless you and your family. You are always in my prayers. I'm waiting for the next lesson from you, and can't wait to see what it is about. Like I said, I always learn something new from it. Love, Your brother in Christ, David"

Eric K. Brown - From our "Love Lifted Me Recovery" group that Eric leads at Solano State Prison - "Well, we are certainly ready to advance to the next Steps. All of us have thoroughly completed Steps 8 & 9 to the best of our abilities. Steps 8 & 9 proved to be as challenging as Step 4. But, as God would have it, these Steps provided liberation and rewards. We are all very grateful to have had this experience of cleansing and healing and, in most cases, reconciliation. It was great!"

**"Lost in My Head"
by Daniel Holland (now released)**

*The time that is wasted is my biggest regret, spent in this place, I will never forget
Just sitting and thinking about the things I've done, the crying and laughing, the hurt and the
fun*

Now it's just me and my hard-driven anger, behind a wall of emptiness I allowed to be built

I'm trapped in my body just wanting to run back to my youth with laughter and fun

*But the chase is over and there's no place to hide - everything is gone, including my pride
With reality staring me right in my face, I'm scared and alone, stuck in this messed up place
Now memories of my past flash through my head, and the pain is deep, and the tears I have
shed*

I ask myself "Why?" and "Where did I go wrong?"

I guess I was weak when I should have been strong

Living a life for drugs, and my feelings were lost and afraid to be shown

Then as I look at my past again, boy! it was easy to see

The fear that I had was being afraid just to be me.