

Ministry Update - 3rd Quarter, 2009

Twelve Step Program

STEP 7 "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings"

"I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." **Psalm 34:4-6**

One of the Steps we've been studying this quarter is Step 7, which is being willing for God to remove all of our shortcomings. As you might imagine, this Step may take a lifetime to actually accomplish, but the first step to removing the shortcomings is to be aware of them, to acknowledge them and confess them to God, and then to start working on letting these things go. Here are some thoughts on Step Seven from Antonio Briseño, one of our graduates of the Love Lifted Me Recovery Twelve Step program in Avenal State Prison. Anthony writes: "Step Seven has helped me to understand the openness I needed for my walk in faith. I know my problems started at childhood, and I carried these problems ("shortcomings") with me all of my life. I remember the day I accepted Christ, I broke down in tears and felt all my pain being released within myself. I knew this was the beginning of my new life. God does not want to mortify us, but He does want us to submit to His leadership. We are to humble ourselves before God as His children in need, and He will lift us up by filling our innermost hungers. Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." I have turned from trusting myself to trusting and delighting in the power and strength of God alone."

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, July 11, 2009 - We had a good bunch of people show up to help take all the lunches, toiletries and clothing down to the Boardwalk for the homeless. We had Tom, me, Kaylah, Gordon, Daniel, Alycia, Youbert, Vince, Catharine, Shami, Yvonne and James. The lunches were a hit, of course, but everyone was very grateful for the socks and T-shirts, as well. Daniel said some people remember us from the past times we've been there. Daniel offered a lunch to a man named Gabriel, and he said he would pass it on to some who needed it more, and he said he would start reading and studying his Bible more. Catharine met one man who was just out of prison, and she gave him the address and information for the Bible Tabernacle, if he wanted to go there for a place to live. He was still practicing his addiction of alcoholism, and said he wasn't ready to go there yet. How sad! I gave lunches to a group of young guys, and one of them said, "I like these little books! Do you have any more?" So, I gave him several other titles. Vince and Youbert saw people up on a grassy area, and gave lunches to them. One old man took a lunch, but when Vince told him that Jesus loves him, he shook his head and said he didn't believe it. They gave him another tract, and we will pray for him. Gordon spoke to a man named Walter, who wanted to talk. Gordon ended up witnessing to him for about ten minutes. He needs prayer, also. After all the lunches, toiletries, T-shirts and socks were given out, and bottled water that Alycia bought, we just handed out gospel tracts. People were very open and receptive, and we passed out several hundred in English, many in Spanish, and two in Chinese. Just like the seventy other disciples Jesus sent out to preach the gospel, we "returned with joy" and gave God all the glory.

Luke 10:17 "Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!'" II Corinthians 4:6-7 "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."

Saturday, August 1, 2009 - Our group for the outreach today consisted of Tom, me, Kaylah, Angela, Youbert, Daniel, Shami, Catharine, and Alycia. A smaller group than last time, but we still managed to handle all the lunches, T-shirts we had to give away, and socks and toiletries we had. Among the homeless, we saw some we knew, and one was Freddie, who has even come to our church and our recovery groups in the past. Sadly, he didn't stick with it, and he's back out on the streets, and was smelling of booze. Daniel, Shami and Catharine gave a lunch to a homeless man named Paul, and he asked for them to pray for him. Daniel said they also prayed for several others. Angela, Youbert and Alycia started talking to a man named Howard, and he had a lot of questions. He is a Christian, and was very sincere, but was in need of a lot of encouragement and prayer. One of the Scriptures they gave him was Romans 8:1, as he was feeling under condemnation for some reason. He wasn't homeless, he was just one of the many people who come down to the Venice Boardwalk on a Saturday. One of the first groups of homeless people that Angela, Kaylah and I found up near Rose Ave. told us about a group of young people camping out over behind their van. We asked if they were truly in need, and they said, "Yes." We found the four young people, and gave them lunches and tracts, and they were very grateful. After we gave out all the food and clothing items to the homeless, we just stayed to pass out the gospel tracts, of course. Daniel said he thought people were more receptive than usual, and he gave out all the tracts he had. I saw my friend Sid in one of the tattoo parlors, and gave him some of the most recent Chick tracts that he hadn't seen. He is a Christian, and he hands out the tracts to customers in his shop. The police were out, trying to keep order among the crowds, and we gave some tracts to the policemen. Alycia gave a "Creator or Liar?" tract to a Jewish man wearing a yarmulke, and we later saw him reading it intently as he was walking. Other than English and Spanish tracts, we also gave out one in Italian, and one in Hindi. Someone gave two English tracts to a blonde woman and her two girls, but later, we noticed them speaking Spanish, so offered them some in Spanish, too. I offered a tract to a man, and he refused it at first. Then, he said he would take it, because his friend was talking to him about God a lot. This was the weekend that the Hare Krishnas had their "Festival of the Chariots", which is a euphemism for a demonic display of their Hindu gods. We had prayed against the demons, and for God to send His Holy Spirit to work in peoples' hearts, and our prayers were answered.

Saturday, September 5, 2009 - The people who actually went out on the Boardwalk for this outreach were Youbert, Ron, me, Shami, Catharine, Daniel, James, Terry, Peter and Kevin. Tom stayed home to pray for us the entire time we were down at the beach, Angela came on Friday evening to help pack the lunches, Alycia came on Thursday to help me do the shopping at Costco and unloading the car with tons of boxes of food, and every one of you who has contributed financially, or those at Sunrise Church who have contributed toiletries, socks and used clothing, are all part of this ministry, and we couldn't do it without you. We know others are praying, too, especially those in our prison ministry who read about each month's outreach and wish they could be there to help. Thank you, everybody! Daniel came back from the outreach saying it was "intense", but all in a good way, and that they just had a lot of conversations with people. While Daniel, Catharine and Shami were talking and praying with a guy named "Bear", another man named Jerry came and tried to steal Bear's belongings. They were able to alert Bear and catch it in time before his things were stolen. They then began talking to Jerry, noticing that he'd been in a fight and was all bruised, and Jerry started crying. Youbert, Ron and I started up at Rose Avenue, and we immediately ran into a large group of homeless people, gave them lunches, and they nearly cleared us out of socks, T-shirts and toiletries. They were all extremely grateful, and thanked us for what we were doing. Later, on our way back, we had two lunches left, and asked them if there was anyone who had not gotten a lunch before. There were two people who hadn't been there, and needed a lunch. Youbert and Ron brought several large bags of used clothing, and found many people who looked through it all to find what they needed. One man said he had to go to court, and we provided him with a nice white shirt and pair of slacks. It was Peter and Kevin's first time on the outreach, and they seemed to like helping people with the used clothing. Kevin was a little shy at first, and held back, but as he saw how excited and grateful the people were to receive the clothing, he warmed up to it and got involved. Youbert, Ron and I saw a woman sitting

down in the shade, with another woman sleeping next to her. The first woman was a vendor, who said she recognized us from other times we've been down there, but she said the other woman just came and decided to sleep next to her, maybe because it "seemed safe." We left a lunch and lots of toiletry items for the homeless woman who was sleeping, and the other woman said she would watch them for her. As for the gospel tracts, they were well received, as usual. Several hundred tracts in English, many in Spanish, and one in Italian, and one in Korean were handed out. I saw some men arguing near the basketball courts, and I walked up to them and handed each one a tract. I prayed that they would all read them, and maybe what they were arguing about wouldn't seem so important. We always run into other Christians down there, too, and two women, when they saw what we were doing, gave us some money "For your mission," they said. Another young man said he loved the Chick tracts, and remembered reading some of them years ago. I told him he could order some for himself on the Internet by going to www.chick.com.

Prison Ministry

More and more men and women are signing up for our correspondence Twelve-Step program, because, due to the State's financial problems, the State of California has cut back on many secular programs that used to be available. Inmates who have the possibility of parole are especially concerned, because the Parole Board requires them to be involved in 12-Step and self-help groups, but they are no longer available. Sort of like Pharaoh requiring the Hebrews to make bricks without straw! We are happy to facilitate these men and women, and God is blessing them and us as they grow in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the prisons, Solano State Prison in Vacaville, has even given one of the inmates, a minister of the gospel himself, permission to hold "Love Lifted Me Recovery" group meetings, as well as the inmates doing our lessons by correspondence. Below is what Rev. Eric K. Brown wrote to us, as he asked our permission to use our materials, before accepting the job as facilitator of these meetings.

Rev. Eric K. Brown, Solano State Prison, Vacaville - "Many of the Christians who are required to take self-help programs are struggling with the secular concepts and teachings in many of the cognitive groups that have been offered. So many people have heard of "Love Lifted Me Recovery" from those of us who have been blessed in the area of entering recovery from our addictions, compulsions, and dependencies, that I was approached and asked if I would lead a Christian-based weekly meeting. And of course, what pastor can say, 'No' to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ? My understanding is that there is already a list of inmates who have signed up and were awaiting my decision. I also understand, that because of the spiritual and mental growth and maturity in so many who are enrolled in your correspondence courses, even "the lost" are interested. So, if I have your further blessing, please let me know. I have agreed to conduct the LLMR-Solano Branch group meetings, and also one-on-one counseling. We have been given permission by the prison to have weekly meetings in a central location. Each inmate will write to you to receive their lessons, and send them back to you for correction, but our weekly meetings will be for encouragement, support, and discussion to facilitate healing and recovery as they work the program by correspondence. Your Brother, Eric K. Brown"

Je'Anna Redwood, California Institute for Women, Corona - "I really needed this study, right at this time in my life! Thank you for the Scripture reminders and the ability to receive what the Holy Spirit revealed to me today. Because of the past, how I had to adapt to it to survive, and now has become like an instant response, I sometimes still get caught up in that web of lies the devil throws my way. I just now prayed for specific confession, forgiveness, restoration, and I am renewed. I also forgave myself and plan on staying more awake, sober and vigilant to resist and stand firm against the enemy. My daily getting dressed with my armor is a must!" In Christ, Je'Anna

Robert "Rusto" Gould, CMF, Vacaville - "Praise God that joy and peace be upon those of us who diligently seek His wisdom. It is truly amazing how the good Lord blesses us with exactly what we need, right at the moment we need it. This Bible study that I am returning came to me right at a time that the devil was taunting me at my job. I am part of the construction crew and I work with nine other guys who sometimes just want to sit on their butts and expect others to earn money for them. That's really not so bad, because I can get more done if they will just stay out of my way. The other day, I requested that two of them leave the room I needed to do my work in, and their response was, 'We're working out - come back in an hour!' Well, I sort of let the bad, ugly Rusto surface and boy, how quick they were to point out my negative attitude, and that a good Christian shouldn't act like that! Well, I spent the rest of the day a little bent. Then that night, I received this Bible study! I was totally floored - ha, ha, ha! So, the next day, I apologized to everyone at work (even to those who were not involved) for my inappropriate behavior. I said many prayers and asked God for enough strength to remain focused on glorifying His kingdom. So, I repented, asked for forgiveness, and made amends to those I offended, and I am extremely happy to have received the blessing of this Bible Study!" From my heart, with love, Rusto

Natalie Guivan, Valley State Prison for Women - "Well, this is the first time I've written ya'll other than doing the 12-Steps. I want to thank you for this 12-Step program. It is helping me and I am really working it. In fact, I think I want to do it again upon completion. Is that possible?"

Robert Rosas, Soledad State Prison - "Just a short note to say "Thank you" for the support letter you provided me with for the Board of Parole Hearings. I truly do appreciate your support and everything else you have helped me with. Your 12-Step program has really been helpful to me. I am only at Step Three, but have really enjoyed working through them. You know, it's funny, because I've been in prison for thirty years and have participated in AA and NA for a few years, and have never learned the Steps as I'm learning them now. I'm now enjoying the Steps and thanks to you, Tom and Dottie, I'm learning. God bless you and keep up your good work and love for Christ." Robert

Norman Smith, Pleasant Valley State Prison, Coalinga - "I've never said this before, but I'm very grateful for the person who gave me your address for getting a "Serenity" Bible. Look how far I have come along! I always knew that one day I would get to know our Lord Jesus Christ, but I'm grateful for you two helping me get there, sooner rather than later. I do believe that with your continued support, I will get a lot farther. I'm a much different person since I have been writing you over the last two great years." Love, Norman

Shane Doyle, Calipatria State Prison - "I go for my Board hearing in 2012, and this prison does not offer a 12-Step program. You two are the only ones I've found who offer a 12-Step program. So, I thank God for blessing me to have known Violet Irvine in Medford Oregon, who brought you two to me in 2008.. God is great!"