

Ministry Update - 3rd Quarter, 2010

Twelve Step Meetings

In July, August, and September, we worked on Steps 7, 8 and 9, which are: Step 7 - "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings", Step 8 - "Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all", and Step 9 - "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others". In some respects, we may work on these steps all our lives, but we try to remove as much "baggage" from our lives as we can for the present. These "Steps" as they are called, are really just biblical principles, and they are necessary for every Christian, not just those with problems of addiction. Every Christian MUST remove the weights and baggage from the past that tend to drag them down and make them less effective in serving the Lord Jesus. None of us can afford to let anger, bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, or any "little sins" that we might call "shortcomings" crowd out the Holy Spirit and keep Him from working in our lives.

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every WEIGHT, and the SIN which so easily ENSNARES us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher (He's the Finish Line in the race!) of our faith....."

Here is something we wrote to one of our guys in prison when he was working Steps 8 and 9 - "Maybe you have a problem in making amends, because you feel that some people on your list "deserved" that treatment from you, because they hurt you. However, God says you must forgive them completely for any wrong done to you. Then, only apologize for your actions, bad attitude, or whatever, and leave out whatever they did. That's between them and God (see Romans 12:17-21). God will take care of any revenge that is needed. What you want to happen in Step 9 is to get the BURDEN of guilt, shame, bitterness, anger, and anything else OFF of you. It's really not about the other person at all - it's all about YOU being HEALED of all the old baggage that kept pulling you down, especially as it contributed to your drinking, drug abuse or other addictions. No, it does not make you a "weak person" to do this. You are doing the 12-Step program to try to get healing and recovery in your life, and it takes humility (being willing to be humble), but that does not mean you're weak. It just means you are determined to get your life back on track and right with God at ALL COSTS. Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). Meekness and humility are pretty much the same, but meekness has the idea of strength under control. Jesus is our example to follow of meekness and humility, and He was God in the flesh! He could have squashed His enemies like bugs any time He wanted to, but He CHOSE to be a humble servant and a sacrifice for our sins, and to allow sinful men to kill Him. Jesus knew who He was, and could still be meek, humble, compassionate, kind and gracious, and we should be that way, too. When you choose to forgive someone, even if you think they don't deserve it, you are being like Jesus, and you give up YOUR right to have revenge on those people."

Venice Beach Evangelistic Outreach

Saturday, August 7, 2010 - The weather was unusually cool and nice for this outreach, a little overcast, but that's okay. Usually, we roast in the heat on the August outreach. Also, the first Saturday of August is usually the Hare Krishnas' big festival down at the beach. I think they call it "Festival of the Chariots", but there are no chariots that I know of, just a lot of demons. I always pray before the outreach, and Tom stays home to pray while we are down there, but we did extra spiritual warfare this time against the Krishna demons. Satan comes packaged in many names, whatever appeals to certain people, and I guess this stuff appeals to some. As it turned out, the Hare Krishnas were not there, but "American Ninja Warrior" show of some kind was there, with people lined up to get in, and lots of security guards. The people standing in line didn't seem very open to receiving gospel tracts..... I guess their minds were tuned up for ninja warrior stuff, whatever that is (oh! I saw on the news later that it was tryouts for a TV show). We don't let that stop us, though, and we always get the gospel of Jesus Christ out to as many people as we can, and trust God for the results. Matthew 9:36-38 says "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the

harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." The laborers that God sent us this day who showed up to go down to the Boardwalk were: Daniel, Shami, Tom, me, Alycia, Anthony, Greg, Sheldon and Yvonne. That was a pretty good-sized group, actually, and we took some clothing, lots of toiletries, and 105 lunches. We all had good experiences with the people we met, and everyone who received a lunch or toiletries or clothing was very grateful and thankful. A man named Richard asked Daniel to pray for him, and a woman named Gwen prayed for us. Gwen said we were such a blessing, and she prayed a special blessing from the Holy Spirit onto us. Alycia gave a lunch to a little boy, and he was so happy to receive it. Another young boy, maybe ten or twelve years old, took several of the Chick tracts we had, and told us which ones he had already read. Our group ran out of lunches, and one young man looked so forlorn and disappointed when we told him we had no food left. Just then, we saw Sheldon, Shami, Greg and Daniel's group coming from the other direction, and we took him over to them. Sheldon gave him a lunch, and he was so thankful and relieved. I talked to Jason and Jerry about the Bible Tabernacle, and how they could go there to live if they were tired of living on the streets. After we gave out all the food, we continued up and down the Boardwalk giving out the gospel tracts. Anthony gave one to a Buddhist man, and he said he would read it. I gave tracts to a large group of teenage boys who looked like "gang-bangers", and each one took a tract. It's always so encouraging when kids and young people take the tracts, because you just never know if that's the only time they have heard the gospel.

Saturday, September 4, 2010 - We had a great outreach, with a group made up of Tom, me, Angela, Daniel, Shami, Catharine, Sheldon, Greg, and Yvonne. Angela and Yvonne went with me up to Rose Ave., and we handed out all of our lunches in about the first fifteen minutes. Daniel, Shami, Catharine, Sheldon, and Greg started down at Venice Blvd. and came up the beach, and when we finally met up with them, they had given out all but two lunches. There were a lot of homeless people down at Venice Beach this time, maybe more than usual. We had some cans of beef ravioli (with pull-tab lids) and we gave those out when we ran out of the lunches. When Sheldon told one guy that he was out of lunches, but asked him if he wanted the can of ravioli, the man said, "Oh, h____, yes!" So, I guess it was appreciated even though it was less than a full lunch. We gave out lots of pairs of socks, some sweatshirts and jackets (donated from people at church), and lots of small shampoos, soaps, razors, and other toiletries. Daniel's group came across a couple who looked well-dressed, but the woman was very depressed. They said they were homeless and needed the lunches, but they must have fairly recently become homeless. We also saw two men sitting on a bench, and they said they were homeless, although they didn't look it. Angela found one couple who needed some food, but she was all out of lunches. Then, she saw Shami coming, and they gave the last two lunches to this couple, who were extremely grateful. After we gave out all of our lunches, Angela, Yvonne and I took our little carts back to the car in order to give us more freedom for handing out the gospel tracts. We all gave out lots of gospel tracts in both English and Spanish. The tourists and people just out for a walk on the beach took tracts, vendors setting up their tables and booths took tracts, and even some runners and people riding bikes took tracts. Sheldon held a tract out for a women running, and she grabbed it from him. I held out tracts to several people on bikes, and they would grab it as they rode on by. One of the homeless men who received a lunch earlier asked if we had any more tracts for him to hand out to other people. I gave him a collection of several titles.

Prison Ministry

Morris Bragg, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "Thank you so very much for allowing me to be involved in your Love Lifted Me Recovery Program. Even though I am still in the early stages of it, just reading God's word and how it applies to me in the past, has made a dramatic change in my life. From other AA/NA programs I have been participating in, they have never gone this deep, nor do you have anyone to support and understand what a person like me has gone through in my life. And though some of the questions are difficult (it hurts to reflect on the past), I know this is all a part of God's healing process for me to be transformed into the image of his Son Jesus. God bless you! In the name of Jesus, Morris Bragg"

Ricky Hammontree, Kern Valley State Prison, Delano, CA - "Hello, how are you? I recently received the "Serenity" Bible you sent. Thank you very much! I love this book. I had this book before and I know it is a perfect tool for my recovery. I am very fortunate to have been blessed with this book in my life once again. So I want to thank you from all corners of my heart for this and for all you do. Until next time, sincerely, your friend, Ricky"

Heather Mercer, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "I just wanted to thank you for helping me get started on this journey. I am new to "recovery" and I am excited to be doing it with Jesus and with mentors like yourselves, who really understand. My goal is to try and complete the 12-Steps with you in the next seven months, if possible, so I can receive the certificate before I am released. I feel blessed by your ministry and am praying that it touches many people, and I pray that you both are wrapped in His light and are abundantly blessed. Thank you. Through eyes of faith, Heather Mercer"

Alice Johnson, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "Hi, thanks so much for the "Serenity" Bible you sent me and Bible-based 12-Step beginner's packet. I'm so happy to get these lessons. I also enjoyed your testimonies - great power of the Lord being expressed. I feel that I need to contribute to your ministry. The only way I can do this at this time is by enclosing some stamps. Please accept these from God above, as I know it was truly God moving upon my heart. Have a blessed day! God bless you, Alice Johnson"

Don Searcy, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "Thank you for the kindness you have shown me. And thank you for your helpful support letter. The Parole Board knew exactly who you were. You two are some great people! Yours, Donald Searcy"

Martin Mendoza, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "I want to thank you for the 12- Step program you offer us. It really has helped me apply the 12-Step concept in a Christian-based manner. I will continue to pray for your program, and even though I do not have much money to help, I can send some stamps. The Lord has touched my heart to give in this manner since I know postage is starting to get very expensive. So please receive these few stamps as my contribution to this blessed ministry. May the Lord continue to provide and bless you my beloved brother and sister in the faith. I'll be looking forward to my next lesson. Numbers 6:24-26. With much respect and love, your brother in Christ, Martin Mendoza"

Curt Rolison, Avenal State Prison, Avenal, CA - "I've always been the quiet type - more of a thinker, I guess you could say. I'm deeply moved when I read your letters. Especially when you speak about giving out all the lunches to the homeless. I, too, have a very strong and sincere desire to help the less fortunate, especially the homeless. I believe with all my heart that God has placed this desire in me. I want to help in any way I can. I just want to serve God in any way. I know the area that you deliver your lunches at. That's where I'd probably start, too. There's such a high concentration of homeless and addicts on the Strand around the Venice area. I've been doing your Bible studies for two years now, and as I read your wonderful letters, I'm always moved deep inside me. I don't know what it is, but it's stirring inside me. I'm very thankful to have this connection with you both. I wish I hadn't taken so long to write you and tell you. I look up to you both as responsible Christians that don't just talk the talk, but you walk the walk as well. There's a big difference between the two. What a blessing you are to so many lives. I love you both. Your friend in Christ, Curt Rolison"

Gerson Ortiz, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "Thank you very much for your letters and all that you share with me. I am praying for you and your whole family and this wonderful ministry you guys have. I'm glad that I'm doing these Steps with you. I am learning a lot. Thank you very much. God bless you, Gerson Ortiz"

Jose Aguero, R J. Donovan Correctional Facility, San Diego, CA - "I just received your latest correspondence and course materials. As I've mentioned before, the uniqueness of your material is really helping me grasp the reality of physical and spiritual recovery. I appreciate you sharing your life, and it sounds like Tom has a full schedule with his counseling, and you

with this course and everything else. I imagine things may get a little hectic. I'm sure you must read this a lot, but I'm sincerely grateful for what you guys are doing. Until next time, God bless, Jose"

Gerald Hurt, Calipatria State Prison - "It's always a blessing to receive your mail, because the Lord moves your soul and there is never a bored moment. There is a brother in here, he saw how involved I was with my studies, and I told him what it consisted of, and he asked me could he be a part of it, and how can he get involved. I told him I would ask and submit his name, so here is his information. Well, sister and brother, may God bless you. You're in my prayers, and you two go on about your day being blessed in God's eyes. Yours truly, brother Gerald"

Robert Weber, Avenal State Prison, Avenal, CA - "Thank you very much. I believe I have completed Steps 4 and 5. In these Steps, lots of stuff has been remembered - the shame and guilt has been both painful and wonderful. I understand we must endure the pain to release the pain. This is why it is wonderful. I am stronger in Christ and my recovery here in prison than I have ever been. I love you so much for bringing up the joy in my pain. God has a great sense of humor and I can't wait to see what He brings me next. With love, Bob"

Robert Faltisco, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "All the work I've done (I'm on Step 8 in your class) has really paid off, and I want to thank you guys directly. I am very grateful for your wonderful mission and your beautiful support letter. I can only hope for physical freedom, but clearly, you guys are helping me find spiritual freedom. Plus, I get to go to heaven! God bless all you do and are. Sincerely, Robert"