

Ministry Update - 3rd Quarter, 2012

Twelve Step Program

Here is some of what we've been studying this past quarter: **Steps 6 & 7 "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." Dictionary definition of defect:** an imperfection that impairs worth or utility; a shortcoming; a lack of something necessary for completeness; a blemish. **"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings." Dictionary definition of shortcoming:** a deficiency (lacking something), a defect.

The first thing to do in **being "entirely ready"** to have God remove your character defects is to RECOGNIZE that they ARE INDEED character defects, and that they NEED to be removed from your life. "Shortcomings" means those areas where we COME SHORT of God's perfect standard. Romans 3:23 says, "For ALL have sinned and **fall short** of the glory of God," so there's no person on the face of this earth who is entirely without SOME defects and shortcomings, no matter HOW GOOD a person they may seem to be. Also, please realize that when we say "character" we are speaking of **moral and ethical traits or qualities that you have LEARNED**. We are NOT referring to YOU as a person, your personality. God has given each one of us talents and qualities that make us special individuals, and each one of us is precious in His sight. What God wants us to do is to get rid of behavior patterns and "hang-ups" we have learned that are not godly, and all things which are hindering our being the creation He meant us to be - to work on those areas where we have been bent and warped out of shape.

Also, we had someone ask us, **"I would like you to break down the word "hang-ups" in regard to our 12-Steps." Our answer was:** The dictionary defines **"hang-up" as "a difficulty of a personal or emotional nature that a person seems unable to deal with."** So, that would start us off in Step One, **being powerless** to handle our hang-ups and difficulties. **It would also apply to Steps 6 and 7, because it could be character defects or shortcomings.** These "difficulties of a personal or emotional nature" that we call "hang-ups" would be things that impede our progress in recovery and in the Christian life. They would be personality quirks that get in the way of our spiritual growth and maturity. Just as a loose thread on your shirt or pants could get HUNG UP on a nail, and impede your progress (until you stop and untangle the thread, so that you could move on) in the literal sense, these personality traits or shortcomings would need to be dealt with before we can move on into maturity, peace, and true recovery. Hang-ups can be big or small, but they all need to be untangled and dealt with before we can be successful in life. Any addictions we've had are not really the same as the "hang-ups", because **the addictions probably began in the first place to cover up the "hang-ups" and emotional deficiencies** we had, possibly since childhood.

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, July 7, 2012 - We had a large group of people to help us in going out to the Boardwalk and Venice Beach today. We prayed for "the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers in the harvest" and He did! We had Tom, me, Catharine, Shami, Dhiren, John, Billy, Bob, Angela, Keith, Mitch, Ararat, Frank, Brian, Greg, and Sylvia. We had 118 lunches to give out to the homeless, and lots of little bags of toiletries, and some clothing and socks. There is a gospel tract in every lunch, and we also gave out hundreds of gospel tracts to the passers-by and vendors there at the Boardwalk. We mostly gave out tracts in English, although quite a few in Spanish (Sylvia spoke Spanish, and gave out a lot), and I found one vendor who spoke Turkish, and gave him a Chick booklet ("This Was Your Life") in Turkish. Angela was very glad to be back, and said the Lord woke her up early, and she just knew she was supposed to be going on the outreach. She said she especially liked giving out the tracts, and the Lord led her to a lot of young people who were open to receive the tracts. It was Keith's first time, and he said the Lord really did a work in his heart, freeing him up from old fears and excuses of why

he shouldn't go. He enjoyed it very much, and said he felt "full of joy" at being able to do the Lord's work in this way. He said the people were so thankful, and one homeless woman named Brandy gave him a big hug. Shami's brother Dhiren was visiting from Vancouver, Canada, and said he enjoyed going out with his brothers in Christ from across the border. Shami and Catharine saw some of their "regulars" and prayed with them. A homeless man named Arthur had a praise report, and said that his eyes were much better since they had prayed for his healing last month. Brian, Mitch, John and Bob also prayed for a lot of people, and had one interesting and "challenging" experience. Most of the people asked for prayer and were thankful, but one man named Angel was rather belligerent and kept interrupting them. John said they just kept praying, and the Lord shut his mouth, and they were able to pray for him, too. Ararat said he learned not to judge who might take a gospel tract and who might not, but just to offer them to everyone, as "God is no respecter of persons." We've all found out that the most "unlikely-looking" people many times are the ones who gladly receive the tracts.

Saturday, August 4, 2012 - What a great outreach we had today! Several people in our group said it was one of the best ever, and John said it was "all about spiritually connecting with people and praying with them." Of course, we did have 116 lunches to give to the homeless or anyone in need, as well as socks, T-shirts, and toiletry/hygiene items. We also gave out gospel tracts to everyone who was down there at the Venice Boardwalk, not just the homeless, and we all came back praising God for His goodness. Tom was at home praying mightily for all of us, and those who went out on the Boardwalk were: Dottie, Catharine, Billy, Mitch, Bob, Ararat, Frank, Brian, John, and Keith. We know the Lord heard all of our prayers, because people were so open to the gospel, and many came up to us asking for food and help. Tom always prays that people will come out of their "comfort zone" and come to us. As for the prayers for protection, Frank said it felt like we were walking with a shield around us. We had some clothing to give away, and a pair of shoes, which Catharine gave to Arthur. She and John prayed for Duran, who was just out of jail, and only six days sober. They gave him our phone number, and he later called, and we gave him information about how to go to the Bible Tabernacle, if he wanted to get off the streets. Catharine and John also prayed for Cliff and Rose, who were homeless, and they prayed for their dog who had a broken leg. They told Valerie about her need to accept Jesus as her Savior, and a homeless man named Dino was listening to them. Dino later told them he has a ministry of his own down there, and prayed for Catharine and John. Mitch and Ararat also had an experience of praying for a man named Jerome, and then as they walked away, he came after them and asked if he could pray for them. Keith was handing out tracts, when one man said he worked for "Jews for Jesus", and he took some tracts to give out himself. It's always encouraging to find other Christians down there at the Boardwalk doing God's work, too, as it's a very dark place otherwise. I think Keith speaks for us all when he said, "I felt full of joy for the rest of the day, because of going on the outreach."

Saturday, September 1, 2012 - Today's outreach to Venice Beach was a success, as usual, but we give God all the glory. Our team that went out to the beach and Boardwalk (and to pray) was Tom, Dottie, Catharine, Shami, Daniel, Suchart, Keith, Billy, Bob, Olivia, Frank, Ararat, Mitch, Moises, Brian and Greg. Shami recently got back from a wonderful ministry trip to the Fiji Islands, and she gave us an update on how the Lord is moving there. The Lord was moving on Venice Beach, also, and we gave out food, clothing and the word of God in the name of Jesus. We had 118 lunches to give to the homeless, plus socks, hats, sweatshirts, and hygiene kits. For the others who were just out to have a good time at the beach, we handed out several hundred gospel tracts in English and Spanish, and two in Japanese. Shami, Catharine and Daniel's group prayed for a lot of the homeless people they met, as well as giving them food and comfort items for their physical bodies. Mitch, Ararat and Frank's group also prayed for a number of people, and many of them recognize the guys from previous months. It was a first time on the outreach for Olivia, Moises and Suchart, and they all enjoyed it. Olivia, who is twelve years old, said it was "Awesome!" She was very outgoing and confident in approaching the homeless people to give them lunches, and also in giving out the tracts. As always, we pray that the word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is contained in the little tracts and booklets we give out, will produce much fruit for God's kingdom.

Prison Ministry

During this quarter, we were able to visit one inmate at **San Quentin State Prison**. The Lord really blessed us with a great trip up to Northern California to see the family (Tom's two daughters, five granddaughters, and one great-grandson), and to see David in San Quentin (David is the first guy we ever wrote to in prison and who did our 12-Step program by correspondence, so basically, he started our prison ministry). We had a great visit and time of fellowship with David, and wish we could do that kind of thing more often. Normally, we can't visit our prisoners, because there are just too many, over 350 by now, and we can't possibly visit all these prisoners. Our correspondence ministry in the prisons continues to grow, and we receive many, many letters of thanks and appreciation from the men and women who are doing **our 12-Step program and Bible studies** in prison. Thank you, as your prayers and financial support enable us to minister to all these men and woman in Jesus' name. Here are a few short excerpts from their letters:

Thomas Schuster, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "I want to thank you for allowing me to participate in your 12-Step study, which I find very stimulating. I want you to know that the format for the Fourth Step moral inventory was a great help to me. I have been in A.A. since 1994, and this was the best inventory I have done to date. In fact, I have wanted to keep a running inventory for a long time, but did not know how to get started. Your list of questions was perfect for that. I took a composition book and answered them all over again. Now I can add to that as I go. Respectfully, Tom S."

Raymond Martinez, Mule Creek State Prison, Ione, Calif. - "It is with the love of Christ that I write you to thank you for your love and ministry to those of us behind bars. The time, effort and finances with which you pour into this particular calling has given many of us encouragement. I have participated in many 12-Step courses, as it is a Board requirement, yet, the view of God in these programs is whatever you make God out to be for you. So it has been a prayer answered to see you put the emphasis back on the true Healer, Jesus Christ. To God be the glory and praise! Continue to do your good work and know that you are making a huge difference in the lives of all of us here, that in our recovery, if perhaps we should be set free one day, we will be blessings to society and the lost, rather than curses. Thank you, and God bless you! Yours in Christ Jesus, Raymond Martinez"

Donald Paul Glass, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "My heart smiles knowing there are those in our world who still share their hearts with those who are suffering in troubled times. God has a very special place for people as the two of you are. Thank you for being just you. The world would be a much happier place with more people like you. Thinking of the wisdom I've gained while studying with "Love Lifted Me Recovery", it always makes my heart smile, especially when I finally find an answer I've been searching for. Sometimes it's very difficult to bring up a part of my childhood that was traumatic in my past, but I realize it's absolutely necessary to let go and forgive those of my past, and release all the bitterness from within. With all my anger, guilt, shame, pain, hurt, and resentments given away, I can now concentrate on the actual healing of my spirit, mind and soul. The wisdom gained with a new understanding gives me a new knowledge to apply in my newfound way of living life, as I have recently been born again by accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I have just recently been baptized, too, and remade a new man. Much love and respect, Donny"

Steve Soares, Soledad State Prison, Soledad, Calif. - "You guys are amazing! I thank the Lord for you. Thank you so much for being there for me, for bearing my burdens with me. Your help is great; your care touches my soul. I don't have family to help, so it means a lot. I'm working on my Fourth Step again. It just keeps getting more and more interesting, doesn't it? I used to think the Steps were a one and done thing, but now I'm getting that there are levels of them. Pretty interesting. All part of living a balanced life and getting ready for parole. I may not get a date, but I will be ready for parole. Thank you again, not just for what you all do for me, but also for what you do for all of us in here. Jesus is being praised and called on because of your ministry. Sincerely, your brother in Christ, Steve"

Deborah Koosed, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla, Calif. - "Hello, my friends, how are you? I must tell you I just love your letters, and the picture of you guys made me smile from ear to ear. I was proud to show it to some of my friends here. I'm excited to get a certificate for completing your program. It makes me feel so successful and proud of myself. I often think about the Fourth Step inventory, and how intense it was, and the soul searching it took. Thank you for that. Thank you for caring and being part of my healing process. Love, sincere respect, and appreciation, Deborah Koosed"

Dennis Peterson, Mule Creek State Prison, Ione, Calif. - "Thank you for the great responses to my lesson. I feel so much better changing my life for Christ's. You know, all I knew was the criminal lifestyle until I met Christ. I am 57, will be 58 next month, and I've just received a letter from my mother after 12 years in prison. She told me if I came back to prison, she wouldn't be there. Well, she kept her word. Only because I showed a great deal of improvement did she decide to come see me one more time before she dies. I don't have a serious third strike, so if the Three Strikes Law gets overturned in November, I should get my case overturned and get out of prison before my mother dies, Lord willing. Pray for me. God bless you both. I have you in my prayer book. Praise the Lord for you and your ministry. God bless, Dennis"

Rose Avellareda, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla, Calif. - "I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for everything. As you know, I've been through a lot, and being in prison isn't always easy. Although I'm almost done with the 12-Steps, may I still write you and Tom from time to time just to keep in touch and keep my life going in the right path? There are so many women here that speak very highly of your ministry. I just wanted to take a moment just to say thank you. Your friend, Rose"

Hoa Tran, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "Before anything, I would like to let you know that English is my second language, and I want to apologize for any misspellings or incorrect grammar. I've been incarcerated for the past 17 years for two attempted murders. At that time, I was very intolerant and inflexible, a criminal and a gang member. My only solution to fix problems was violence. I was very cruel and full of anger. I finally became sick and tired of being the devil's loyal soldier. I am a better person now, because I found God, and many self-help programs. I know your 12-Step program will give me the extra push, strength, and courage to continue in my recovery progress. I am so glad that I have turned my back on the devil, and I will continue to make the devil angry at me when I know I am on the righteous path, of course with God on my side. Thank you for giving me this wonderful opportunity and believing in me while many others are not. God bless you both, Hoa Tran"

Brian Felix, Avenal State Prison, Avenal, Calif. - "Praise, honor and glory be to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! First and foremost, I want to thank you for the biblical walk through and application of the 12-Steps. In here we need so much more of the joy and love you and Tom share with one another, and with us - the ministry appointed to you by God. God bless you! Brother Brian"