

“Love Lifted Me Recovery” - October, 2018
Newsletter for July, August, September, 2018
Pastors/Chaplains Tom & Dottie Hooper
LoveLiftedMeRecovery.com

Twelve Step Program

For those who are working our Twelve Step program in prison, Steps 8 and 9 are especially important. Many people tell us they feel “lighter” and as if a burden has been lifted off their shoulders when they do these Steps. **Step 8 is “Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all”, and Step 9 is “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.

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.

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, July 7, 2018 - We were having a hot spell, but still had a great outreach. We had three groups to go down to the Boardwalk, with Tom staying at home to provide prayer cover. Besides Tom and me, we had Keith, Sheldon, Tony, Johnny, Jacob, Apple, Suchart, Bob, Moses, and Sheldon’s two nephews, Eli and Aaron, ages 9 and 10. Moses and Bob had not been able to come on the outreach for a while, and they were both so happy to get back out there and minister to the people in the name of Jesus. We had 167 lunches, lots of socks, knit hats from Debbie in Phoenix, hygiene/toiletry packets, some shoes, and used clothing. Tony brought three big trash bags full of nice, used clothing, and Moses brought a big bag of extra food - some sandwiches with apples and carrots, sealed in plastic wrap, and we handed them out

along with the regular lunches. Everyone was very thankful to receive the food and clothing items, and since the weather was hot, the pairs of shorts we had were especially appreciated. Bob and Moses came with me, and we covered the north end of the Rose Ave. parking lot, and then started down the Boardwalk. A lady named Jean was living out of her car, and she received a lunch, some toiletries and a pretty new blouse. We told her it was being given in the name of Jesus, and she was so happy. A young man was walking along with two dogs, so we offered him some of the dog food. He said he had a 20lb. bag of dog food in his backpack, so I said, "Then I guess you just need the people food." We gave out everything except for a few shirts. Johnny, Jacob, Apple, Suchart and Tony went together, and they prayed for some of the people, including "Lone Wolf" who had a lot of pain in his back. They gave out most of the clothing, and the T-shirts were a big hit. Johnny told one man that they didn't have any shirts in his size, they were too small, but he took one anyway, saying, "A tight shirt will make me look sexier." Sheldon, Keith, Eli and Aaron went together, and they went along the handball courts and basketball courts. There was a young couple near the handball courts who seemed to lack everything, so they gave them clothes, toiletries and food. Near the skate park, they found a large group of homeless, and there was a young guy who had no shoes, and they gave him a pair of flip flops that were a little too small, but he took them anyways and was grateful. He was so skinny that they gave him two lunches. He was really hungry, and very appreciative. While walking back to the car, the boys asked Sheldon very good questions about the homeless, and how they felt compassion for them. He was touched that they really felt like they had experienced doing something in God's service. As always, each lunch contained a gospel tract, and we also handed out many tracts to those who were just passing by down at the beach.

Saturday, August 4, 2018 - It was a beautiful day, but kind of hot. The members of our outreach team today were: Tom, Dottie, Keith, Sheldon, Bob, Johnny, Shami, Jacob, Cody, Apple and Suchart. We had 170 lunches, lots of socks, toiletry/hygiene packets, some sunglasses, T-shirts, and some other used clothing to give to the homeless. Almost everyone was very appreciative and grateful for the food and clothing we gave them, but there were a couple of incidents with mentally ill or otherwise-challenged folks. One man threw his lunch away, and then later went to pick through it and wander off reading the tract out loud. Another man got very upset at Johnny, and was cursing him. It was August, and the Hare Krishnas were setting up their tents for their yearly "Festival of the Chariots", so that undoubtedly brought a big infusion of demons in the area (more than usual for the weirdness of the Venice Boardwalk), and some of the people were affected by it. In other words, the demons didn't like us giving out the gospel of Jesus Christ, and were working through a few of their people. But, as we said, most of the homeless people were grateful, and we received many "God bless you"s from them, and big smiles. One woman kept saying, "Thank you, I love you, I love you!" to us as we gave her and her friends clothing, food, and toiletries. Shami and her group prayed for Patrick and Lemar, and we all gave out gospel tracts to the people walking by. Each lunch we give to the homeless contains a gospel tract, but we gave out lots more tracts to people who were just down at the beach for a Saturday morning. We always pray that God will cause the seeds of His word to grow in peoples' hearts and that He will draw them to Jesus and salvation.

•**Isaiah 55:11** "So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
it shall not return to Me void, without accomplishing what I please,
and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."

Saturday, September 1, 2018 - Today, our group to go down to the Boardwalk consisted of Tom, Dottie, Tony, Sheldon, Apple, and Suchart. It was kind of a small group, but we managed to give out almost 170 lunches (we had a few leftover, and will give them out during the week), lots of socks, toiletry/hygiene packets, used clothing, some hats and shoes, and a lot of backpacks to the homeless. Sheldon, Apple and Suchart went together, and they gave food and other items to a young couple who kept saying, "Thank you, thank you, you're awesome!" They also gave things to a young man named Jimmy, and he said he had a job he would be starting on Monday. Three young guys with skateboards recognized them, and told

them how thankful they were that we come down there and give them food and all. Tony and I went up to the north end of the Boardwalk and covered the homeless population up there. One woman asked, "Are these the lunches with the little sausages?" Another man asked, "Is it peanut butter and jelly?" We said "Yes" to the sausages, and "No" to peanut butter and jelly. Our lunches contain a small can of Vienna sausages, a fruit cup, some cookies, peanut butter or cheese crackers, and another "goodie" or dessert item. Also, a bottle of water, a napkin and plastic spoon or fork, and a gospel tract. We prayed for a woman named Jillian, and another woman named Sheba, and several others. Tony found a woman in a tent on the beach, and she was partially paralyzed and could barely walk. He gave her a lunch and also prayed with her. Everyone loved the backpacks, and Sheldon said one man spotted a particularly nice red one, and his eyes just lit up when Sheldon gave it to him. Tony asked a man, "Do you know Jesus?", and the man said, "Yes, and He just gave me this lunch", as he held his lunch up in his hands. All in all, we had a great outreach, reaching out to people with the love of Jesus, and hopefully they felt it..

Prison Ministry

Our prison ministry reaches men and women in every state prison in California, some federal prisons around the country, and prisons and jails in Oregon, Arizona, Missouri, Texas, Colorado, and Oklahoma. We have over 400 people doing our Bible studies and 12-Step program by correspondence. They are growing in their faith, because God's word does not return void, but will accomplish His plan and purpose. Here are a few portions of letters we've received from inmates:

George Lowery, Avenal State Prison, Avenal, CA - "How is life with you? I hope all is well. I love my Serenity Bible - thank you so much for sending it to me. I also have to thank you for the other stuff you sent me. Now that I have Jesus in my life, things don't seem as bad as they used to be. I also find myself hanging out with a new group of people - people who I never thought I would hang out with. I can feel myself changing, and I feel more at peace with myself, and things seem to make so much more sense. Does that make any sense to you? Can you give me any feedback on that? Enclosed is Step 3 and my Bible study lesson. Hope to hear from you soon. Your brother in Christ, George"

Dave Murphy, Substance Abuse Treatment Facility, Corcoran, CA - "Thank you so much for your beautiful, uplifting "Love Lifted Me Recovery Ministries". Your ministry has taught me to keep my eyes focused always on our Lord Jesus Christ. No matter what life throws at us, if we believe in Jesus with all our heart, mind and soul, no one can stop us. Your ministry has kept me on the right track. Even when I got denied by the Parole Board for five more years. What I know is that God has a plan for me, and for all of us. Thanks to your ministry, my parents are going to church, and also helping out at the local food bank, which is something I thought they would never do. I told them you guys are a tough act to follow! As for me, I'm doing my best to follow Him in prison, and when I get out in the real world, I will be able to minister to people who need His help, also. Thank you for reaching out to so many people. God loves you, and so do I. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. Sincerely, Dave"

Les Silva, California Medical Facility, Vacaville, CA - "I wrote these words into a letter in hopes of sharing the importance of your work, how your dedication and love for God works in our lives. I needed to share this story of my past and how it relates to this lesson for Step 2 (Les is doing the 12-Step program for the second time). This lesson peeled some of the last and most resistant layers from the "onion" of my heart. As a young boy, I learned to fight, and I thought I had control of my life. Many years later, as family members and loved ones died, I realized I did not have control over everything in my life. Then, when my fifteen-year-old son died from drowning, I had no one to blame, so I blamed God. God was the only one who had the power to control who dies, so I blamed God as I stood looking at the drowned body of my son Michael, after the divers brought his body out of the river. I struggled and resisted God for many years,

until I could not carry the burden any longer. So, my struggle ended, and I gave my life to the Lord in 1995.

The “old man” in me knows the INSANITY of resisting God, and of returning to my old ways, yet expecting a different result. This lesson on Step 2 helped me to revisit and remember that hurt, struggling and lonely young man I had been, so I can use these lessons to regain my trust and courage that allowed me to surrender my control to God. The grown-up in me now hears Jesus calming me and saying, ‘Be still, and know that I am God.’ I thank God for His patience with me, and I thank you, Tom and Dottie, for remaining true and faithful for the over seven years (since 2012) that I have been doing your 12-Step lessons and Bible studies. Please, Father and Lord Jesus, bless us and carry us in Your loving arms. Amen. Les”

Ramon Kafoa, Avenal State Prison, Avenal, CA - “Praise God for your ministry. It has been truly a blessing to be participating in your 12-Step program and Bible studies. It helps me in many ways, and it strengthens my walk as a Christian. It keeps me aware of my addiction, and how to avoid the triggers that may be harmful to my recovery. Please keep my family in your prayers. Just a couple of days before the new year, we lost our son Roman. He was only 22 years old. He was struggling with some problems, and he couldn’t handle the pressure, and he took his own life. Thanks for everything. God is good! In His love, Ramon Kafoa”

Donald E. Brooks, California State Prison Solano, Vacaville, CA - “Today’s lesson really cleared up an old false belief of mine that I had followed all my life. Now, I know it was a false belief, and I feel so much better. I used to believe that God would test or tempt us with sin. Not only that, but I believed God wrote our lives and applied certain things in our path as a test. This lesson in the James Bible study has taught me otherwise. When God disciplines us, He refines us and tests us as part of our growth process - it is for our good. He does not lead us into harm’s way, but He will use any situation we are already in to teach us His values and moral principles. Today’s lesson really opened my eyes and corrected my belief system. God is good. Be well and God bless you. Yours, Donald”

Tristan Fernandez, Substance Abuse Treatment Facility, Corcoran, CA - “I am writing you regarding Steps 8 and 9. With Step 8, I made a list of all those I had harmed, not just with my crime that brought me to prison, but of all my crimes, even those I wasn’t convicted of. I filled up a whole page, front and back. As I did this, I began to feel a sense of relief from within me. Like with Step 5, being able to admit that I’ve impacted so many people, and it made me feel a sense of accountability. I no longer feel the resentment I once had toward some of these people, and because of that, I am willing and wanting to make amends. With Step 9, I began writing apology letters, and even though I’m not able to mail most of them, it makes a difference. There were a few family members I could mail them to, and a few people in here that I apologized to. I am ready to move forward with Step 10. Thank you for allowing me to be in your program. I’ve learned a lot about myself and seeing how much you both care to help is new to me. All my love and respect, Tristan

Hugo Sosa, California State Prison Solano, Vacaville, CA - “I have a praise report! In your last letter, you sent me some gospel tracts to give to my neighbor in the dorm who is a Satanist. I confess that it was hard at times to talk to him, or to share God’s blessings with him, but I told myself that Christ in me loves him, so that was good enough for me to share my food, time and the gospel with him, and I gave him the tracts you sent me. At first, he challenged me and argued over everything, but later, he needed help with something, and I helped him. He was thankful, but the real praise report came as he began to make statements like, “I got blessed”, or “Thank God!” One day, he just came out and asked me about my beliefs. He said that he could see how at peace I was, and how I shared my beliefs, and how I treated him with respect, which he had not received from others in prison. He said he was still confused, but that he was going to seek more information and decide. Pray for him that he will come to know Jesus soon. Sincerely yours in Jesus Christ, Hugo”