

“Love Lifted Me Recovery” - October, 2020
Newsletter for July, August, September, 2020
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LoveLiftedMeRecovery.com

Praise the Lord! Every day, we wake up and say that if we made it through another day, and if we didn't wake up dead, the Lord still has something for us to do here on this earth! This applies to all of us who know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Colossians 4:17 says, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." "Wait a minute!" you say, "I don't have a ministry! How can that apply to me?" Well, II Corinthians 5:18 says that God has given to each one of us "the ministry of reconciliation", which means just telling people about Jesus so that they can be reconciled to God. We all have that ministry, and this is something Tom especially likes to tell people over and over again. Another thing Tom likes to tell people is that "God is not interested in your ability, but your availability." In other words, God can work in us and make up for any lack of our own ability or talent, but He can't work in us if we're not surrendered to Him and AVAILABLE for Him to use us.

● **II Corinthians 5:18-20** "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the MINISTRY of RECONCILIATION, that is, that God was in Christ RECONCILING the WORLD to Himself, NOT imputing (holding against them) their trespasses (sins) to them, and has committed to US the MINISTRY of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors (representatives) for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore (beg) you on Christ's behalf, be RECONCILED to God."

The Bible tells us that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for the SINS of the WHOLE WORLD. However, it doesn't do you any good unless YOU ACCEPT what He did on the cross, and believe that Jesus PAID for YOUR SINS - **you have to BELIEVE and APPLY it to yourself by FAITH, and ask Jesus to come into your life and be LORD.** The gospel or "GOOD NEWS" that we give to others is to tell them that, although they are SINNERS, Jesus has already PAID for THEIR SINS on the cross. Hallelujah! **"God was in CHRIST reconciling the WORLD to Himself, NOT imputing their trespasses to them."** That means God is NOT holding our sins against us, or the sins of everyone in the world - the PRICE has been PAID by Jesus Christ!

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, July 11, 2020 - The beaches and Venice Boardwalk were open - praise the Lord! They had been closed since the middle of March because of the Covid-19 pandemic. We weren't sure how many of the homeless people had been able to migrate back to their old haunts, but we did know that there were some homeless people back down there. We didn't have a big crowd show up to help us, but we had enough people: Tom, me, Mitch, Sheldon, Kaela, Felipe and Felipe's friend Gino. We had 172 lunches, and only came back with a few left, so that means quite a few homeless people had re-located back down to the Boardwalk. Each lunch contains a gospel tract, so we were also ministering the gospel of Jesus Christ to each person. We gave out socks, hygiene/toiletry packets, and lots of clothing, including T-shirts, tank tops, shorts, and jeans. Everyone was very happy to get the food, clothing, and other items. One young woman asked, "What's in the lunches?" We told her there was a bottle of water, a small can of Vienna sausages, a fruit cup, some crackers, granola bars and cookies. She said, "Well, whatever it is, it's a blessing." We told her it was a blessing sent from Jesus. Sheldon, Felipe and Gino said that among the people they met with, they spoke to Ronnie, an older guy, who said he wanted to help pass out lunches, but he had no one to watch over his stuff (he had about two shopping carts full). Sheldon spoke to a younger guy who said he wasn't homeless, but worked during the day when he could find work. He looked in need so Sheldon gave him a lunch, and he was really appreciative. There was a group of Christian women, who set up a booth in order to talk to people about Jesus. Right next to them a man

pulled up on a bicycle and opened up this big box that had huge live snakes for people to come and pet or wrap around their shoulders. Sheldon remarked to one of the gals in the booth that it was odd and ironic that the snake guy chose to set up right next to their booth. Felipe and Gino handed out Spanish tracts and spoke in Spanish to some of the people, and it's such a blessing because their eyes light up when they find someone who can communicate with them. Gino said Venice Beach has changed a lot since the 1980's. There were a lot of people just walking along the Boardwalk, and we handed out tracts to them, also. As for giving out the lunches that were left over, Stephani found a homeless guy near the laundromat and gave him a lunch and two more for his friends. Later, she said she saw him giving a lunch to a homeless man who was asleep right in front of the laundromat, and it made her happy to see him sharing.

Saturday, August 1, 2020 - We didn't expect a large group coming to help us, as some were out of town, working, and other things. We ended up with a small turnout: Tom, me, Sheldon, Felipe, Gino, and Kaela.

Tom stayed home to keep us covered in prayer. We formed into two groups and divided the stuff that would usually go with a third group, so we all had extra lunches and clothes, but every last thing was given out! The homeless people were back down at the Boardwalk in numbers, and all of them were happy and grateful to get the clothing, food, and toiletries. Several people said things like, "You really made my day!" Also, there was a kind of funny exchange between two homeless men; the one didn't like the Vienna sausages, so he asked the other guy, saying, "I'll trade you one of your granola bars for my can of beanie-weenies" (they don't have any beans in them, so technically are not "beanie-weenies"). We had 169 lunches, lots of clothing and toiletry/hygiene packets, and socks. As always, each lunch contained a gospel tract, and we also gave out tracts to the passers-by on the Boardwalk. It was kind of funny - the people wearing masks didn't want to take anything (it might be contaminated, I guess?), but those not wearing masks were more open and friendly and took the tracts. Kaela and I were wearing masks at first, but it was so hot, and a homeless guy named Rob told us the police were not enforcing the mask rule at the beach, so we took ours off. Much better! Sheldon, Felipe and Gino went together, and everyone they met was very appreciative. Sheldon said he spoke to the women in the booth with the signs about Jesus, the booth he first noticed last month. They said they were from a small local church in Lake Forest. We're always glad to see other Christians down there giving out the gospel, as we can't reach everybody. All in all, we had a wonderful time "ministering the gospel" (Romans 15:16) to the people at the beach.

Saturday, September 12, 2020 - Praise God for another opportunity to give out the gospel at Venice Beach! Our team of volunteers, plus Tom and me, consisted of Sheldon, Kaela, Felipe, his brother Juan, and Stephani. We had 169 lunches, toiletry/hygiene packets, socks and other clothing, and some pillows for the homeless, plus dog food for anyone who has a dog. There are not too many who have dogs, but the ones who do seem to take care of them even before themselves. We have been giving out dog food for a while now, but many tell us they have food for their dogs, and just need it for themselves. I think they need the companionship as well as maybe a feeling of protection from having a dog. Kaela, Stephani and I went up to the north end of the Boardwalk and found lots of homeless people, many in tents, along the wall of the parking lot. We found a man who said his name is "Big O", and he took a lunch and lots of clothes, and he was very happy and thankful. We gave a lunch and dog food to a man named Juan, and he had a dog named Roxie. He was living out of his van, but he said he loves Jesus and was so thankful that some of Jesus' followers were handing out food and clothing to those in need. Felipe, Juan and Sheldon started at the south end of the Boardwalk, and also covered the handball courts, skateboard park, and basketball courts where many homeless people hang out. Sheldon spoke with a woman named Victorious, and she asked for extra gospel tracts to hand out to people. Felipe said he saw one homeless guy who had a sign that said "Homeless Lives Matter". Praise God! Yes, they do matter, and Jesus died for them, too, and we were also giving each person the gospel so that they could get their lives right with God, and maybe even eventually get off the streets. There were not as many tourists and passers-by on the Boardwalk as we would usually see at this time of year, but it may have been because the weather was a little cool, or maybe people were still afraid of Covid -19. Many of these

people took the gospel tracts we offered them, and we pray they will receive Jesus and eternal life through Him.

Prison Ministry

Because of the Covid-10 restrictions in the prisons, most inmates are not being allowed to go to any classes, church services or self-help groups, so we have received hundreds and hundreds of requests to do our 12-Step program. We cannot possibly take on so many new people, but we are telling them that the Bible studies are available if they have their own Bible. Many of the men and women are choosing to do the Bible studies now until we have openings in the 12-Step program, and we are taking new ones for the 12-Steps, but in order as they have written to us.

Sean Mulvey, Folsom State Prison, Represa, CA - "Thank you for your response to my request to participate in your 12-Step program. By your choice, I am willing to participate in any and all of your Bible studies while I wait for an opening in the 12-Step program. Having had some experience with the Steps, especially Step 11, "Praying for knowledge of God's will", I am taking this as a sign for me to do your Bible studies by correspondence. I have plenty of extra time and am actively looking to be productive during this time of incarceration - I want to make these days count rather than sit here and count the days. Thank you and God bless you. Sincerely, Sean Mulvey"

Anthony Bravo, Kern Valley State Prison, Delano, CA - "I am happy and blessed to have you cross my life. At first, I only contacted you to get self-help courses, so that I could get certificates for my parole board hearing next year. I'm 47 years old, and I have always been a drug-trafficker. I would go back and forth from Mexico to the U.S. and back again, all my life, and I had never picked up a Bible until now. This book is really a beautiful book, and you, Tom and Dottie are beautiful people. Now, I don't just care about getting certificates - I don't want anything in return for studying the Bible. Thank you. Anthony Bravo"

(We sent him some gospel tracts after this, and are praying he will truly give his life to Jesus)

David Barclay, California Correctional Institution, Tehachapi, CA - "Your monthly letters continue to be a great source of inspiration and encouragement to me. I enjoy hearing about what God is doing in your life. I look forward to the blessed day when I can meet you both in person and thank you for helping me in various ways, whether through the Twelve Steps, Bible studies, or your letters in general.. Also, I look forward to being part of your beach outreaches. Again, thank you for all that you do on behalf of the gospel and being an example of God's love. If not for God's love, I would surely be lost, but thanks be unto God for His amazing grace which has transformed my life. Love, you, David"

Loretta Rennert, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "Thank you for your letter - you brightened my day. And thank you for all you do with the prison ministry and the lunches for the homeless. You really made my heart smile when I read that you made lunches for the homeless and distributed them, because I know from personal experience that it is a lifeline for them. I have been on both sides of the fence. I have been on the receiving end, as I was once homeless, and I have been on the giving end. When I am released, my husband and I will be helping in soup kitchens and doing food distributions for the homeless. You two are being a light in the darkness. Thank you for all you do. Sincerely, Loretta"

Theoran Laws, California City Correctional Facility, California City, CA - "I wanted to extend my thanks to you again. When I originally requested to participate in your 12-Step program, I was honest with you and said I was trying to fulfill a request by the Parole Board. I was open to any help the program offered, but my priority was to impress the Parole Board. I didn't know that your program was a

spiritual-based program until I got my first lesson. I can't express how glad I am that it is, because I have been reintroduced to the Bible. I haven't touched a Bible in many years, and now I find myself tearing up as I read through it. My cell mate explained it by saying, 'God works in mysterious ways.' Whatever the case, I want to thank you so much because I realize that I need God in my life a lot more than I need to impress the Parole Board. My heartfelt thanks, Theo"

Jonathan David Watson, California Correctional Institution, Tehachapi, CA - "This is my testimony: I come from a long line of moonshiners, so at a young age I was doing my own and making lots of money, starting at the age of ten. I later found out that I could run more moonshine if I stayed up late, so I started doing pills and everything you can imagine, so that I was eventually selling moonshine, speed and coke. Drugs and alcohol controlled my life until I ended up in prison and overdosed on heroin. I was dead for more than three minutes, they shocked me with the cardiac paddles and still no response, until a woman came from another part of the hospital, and she asked if she could try something. She put her hands on my chest and said a prayer, and my heart started again. The next day she came into my room and explained what had happened and told me she was a Christian, and that God had told her what to do. She told me that God had a plan for my life and that I needed to change my ways and listen to Him. I am a living miracle, and I started going to church and my new life began. Fourteen years later, here I am getting stronger in my faith. Love you, Brother Dave"

Andrew Lopez, Centinela State Prison, Imperial, CA - "A quick note to send my thanks for what you do. Your letters continue to make me smile, laugh and cry. I want you to know that the Bible study lessons really help me in my growth. They also help me memorize verses and remember where all the books in the Bible are located. I love you guys. Brother in Christ, Andrew L."

Charles Steward, Wasco State Prison, Wasco, CA - "I would like to thank you for helping me with my walk with the Lord. I was thinking of how I could help and be of service to your program, so I am enclosing a book of stamps which you can use to help you mail your self-help program to others. May you both continue being the angels that you are. Sincerely, Charles Steward"

Ronald Prasad, Mule Creek State Prison, Lone, CA - "I want to thank you again for everything and for helping me to understand that I can also be forgiven for my sins. I have been staying busy with the lessons you have provided for me, which are a great help, because all self-help programs and church services have been halted due to Covid-19. I am reading my Bible every day and staying focused on doing the work that I am chosen to do, all for Jesus Christ. I look forward to getting my next lessons. With love, Ronald"

Kimberly Harrison, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "Thank you so much for your mission updates, testimonials and Bible studies. I would love the opportunity to study God's word with your program if you can handle one more on your list of things to do. I am looking forward to learning more of God's word and his direction and will for my life. I will commit to study hard and complete it in a timely manner. Thank you again for this blessing. Kimberly"

Jose Rivera, Centinela State Prison, Imperial, CA - "I want to thank you for sharing your time and your newsletter with me. It was an encouragement and a blessing, praise God! Sincerely, your brother in Christ, Jose R."

Rebecca Vela, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "Thank you for all you have done for me in my recovery since 2015. I have come a long way since then, becoming a drug and alcohol counselor, and proud to be sober since 2009. You guys opened the door for me to grow spiritually and mentally. Thank you for all your love. With much love, Rebecca"