

# Ministry Update - 4th Quarter, 2004

**Recovery Meetings:** October, November, and December mean we study Steps 10, 11 and 12 in the group, although individual members may be on different steps at different times. New people are coming all the time, and starting at Step One, even at the end of the year. We continue to do 4th and 5th Steps with those in our recovery groups, and with prisoners by correspondence.

**Step 10 - "Continued to Take Personal Inventory, and When We Were Wrong, Promptly Admitted It."** - One of our lessons for Step 10 was on "checking the condition of your heart", which is actually a study on "The Parable of the Sower" of Matthew 13, which ties in with doing the daily inventory of Step 10. Here's a quote from the lesson: "the Bible teaches that **WE are responsible for the CONDITION of our own hearts, or "ground"** in which the word of God is planted, as we grow and mature in our Christian walk. So, another way to look at the daily inventory is to compare it to a farmer checking on his crop and on the condition of the ground into which he would plant his seeds. Our HEARTS are the GROUND into which God will plant His seed - the word of God. Doing a daily inventory is checking on the condition of your ground! Several areas are mentioned in this parable that would be things for us to look for in our inventories. Check your heart to see if it is hardened (rocky soil), and check to see if the thorns of cares and worries, riches, or worldly pleasures are choking out the seed of God's word." Then follows a great Bible study with verses from all over the Old and New Testament about our hearts, and our responsibility to keep them right with God. "What if you find, in doing your inventory, that your heart is already showing signs of being hardened, or you find thorns growing up and choking God's word in your life? What can you do to CHANGE the condition of your ground? Step 10 tells us what to do: "When we were wrong promptly admitted it." God's word tells us what to do: Confess and turn away from sin, with a BROKEN and contrite HEART (break up the old ground). Jeremiah 4:3-4, "For thus says the Lord ....'Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns....." (Verse 14) "Wash your HEART from wickedness..." and Hosea 10:12 "Sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord until He comes to rain righteousness on you."

**Step 11 - "Sought Through Prayer and Meditation to Improve Our Conscious Contact with God, Praying Only for Knowledge of His Will for Us and the Power to Carry That Out."** - In Step 11, we study prayer and knowing God's will. We have several papers on prayer: "Twelve Points for Effective Prayer", a homework paper on prayer, and another Bible study on prayer. Then we have our study on "How to Know God's Will". Here are some quotes from that lesson: "God does **NOT** reveal His personal plan for any of us by **UNFOLDING to us a long-range view**. Psalm 37:23 says **the STEPS** of a righteous man are ORDERED by the Lord, so we must follow Him **one STEP at a time**. He does NOT reveal a long-range plan to any of us, because if He did, our NATURAL INCLINATION would be to examine and analyze it to SEE IF WE APPROVED of His will and plan or not! Also, He knows what TRIALS and TESTINGS we must go through, but if they were revealed to us ahead of time or ALL AT ONCE, we would not have the faith to go through them. He only gives us the FAITH and STRENGTH (POWER) to handle each day's problems as they happen."

- **Matthew 6:34** "Therefore do NOT worry about TOMORROW, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. **SUFFICIENT for the DAY** is its own trouble."
- **II Corinthians 12:9** "And He said to me, '**My GRACE is SUFFICIENT** (enough) for you, for **My STRENGTH** is made perfect in [your] weakness.' Therefore most gladly will I rather boast in my infirmities (weakness), that **the POWER of Christ** may rest upon me."
- **Luke 9:23** "Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross **DAILY**, and follow Me.'"

**Step 12 - "Having had a Spiritual Awakening as a Result of these Steps, We Tried to Carry this Message to Others, and to Practice these Principles in All Our Affairs." -**

How do you get a Bible study out of A.A.'s Step 12 you might ask? Well, when it says "we carry this message to others" we mean it to be the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, not the "message" of the 12-Steps. When it says, "we practice these principles in all our affairs", we mean it to be biblical principles, which is what the 12-Steps are anyway, they are God's principles "borrowed" from God's word and then secularized. Step 12 is on "sharing the message with others", so we have one lesson on witnessing. Then "practicing these principles in all our affairs" gives us a lesson on finding out your spiritual gifts, and using those gifts in the Body of Christ, a short paper on "How to Help People", and a new Bible study on renewing the mind with the word of God.

**From our Introduction to Step 12:** "In Step 12 we need to learn how to share our story - just how the Lord has given us, if you will, a new lease on life, and cleared up the confusion, pain, and even shame. We can now see clearly, maybe for the first time. We have learned by obedience and trust just how much our Heavenly Father loves us unconditionally. Many of us did not experience unconditional love from our earthly fathers, so we had a hard time relating to our Heavenly Father. My beloved, it is my prayer that the inability to relate does not exist anymore, that the love of our Heavenly Father far out shadows any of the feelings of worthlessness we may have carried for too long. He just wants us to trust in Him, believe Him, and commit to His will. You can have joy greater than you ever thought possible and part of that joy starts right here with your story, and continues with God's story. As you share with a friend, family member or a stranger in the street - those who have no hope in them - and you take the time to share the love of Christ with them, you can be used by the Father to turn them from the darkness to the Light (Acts 26:18). Yes, from the pit of hell, to eternity where the glory of God is."

**A Prayer Warrior Goes Home:** Our loving friend Ruby Thornbrugh, who prayed for our ministry and brought a number of people to our meetings, went home to Jesus on Wednesday, October 13th after a long battle with cancer. She suffered for several months, and could not get to church, so we visited her, prayed with her, and took communion to her on many occasions. We miss her dearly.

**Psalm 116:15** "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

**Counseling Ministry:** The past few months have been busy with counseling, both on the phone with Tom's telephone ministry, and with both of us in our home. We have had several couples for marriage counseling, family counseling in other areas, counseling for depression, and other issues. Some are related to alcohol and drug addiction, but most are just related to life and living in this messed up world. Whether it is Tom on the phone, or both of us in person, we counsel straight from the word of God. The past three months have seen several counseling calls for Tom from mothers of troubled teenagers, and Tom has counseled and prayed with the mothers, and with some, referred them to agencies that work with teenagers.

**Evangelistic Outreach:** We mailed several large packages of Chick tracts to Amanda in Seattle, before she left for India on December 6th. We sent over 300 gospel tracts, in English and the three Indian languages we could find, and we would've sent more, but she could only take so much in her luggage (the little Chick booklets are heavy, not like regular tracts). We sent packages of tracts and Chick comics, in English and Spanish, to several of our prison guys, and they are being passed around in the cells and gyms there. We sent Bible promise books and a few tracts to the mother of one of our prison guys, and his mother's neighbor, and two packages of tracts and comics were sent to Amelia when she was in Uganda. We've provided tracts and materials in several languages: two requests for Spanish tracts and materials from people here in L.A., and Hindi, Tamil and Kannada for Amanda in India. We help "supply seed for the sowers" (II Corinthians 9:10) who can in turn reach people in places where we can't go.

**Amelia Olmos writes from Uganda:** "First I need to thank our HEAVENLY FATHER JESUS for ALL the good and bad experiences in my life, the bad experiences are the ones I learned from, so PRAISE THE LORD, because he disciplined me by that. Very soon it will be two months since I left home and God is working with me here in Kampala. I prayed about the places where He wants me to go and He provided a couple, one of them is the pregnancy center where I am teaching a little bit of cooking, Bible study, and a little English. I go there once a week, also I go to volunteer twice a week to an orphanage close to where I live. Wed. is the day where I get more busy, because I teach Bible study to children from a school, there are 120 to 150 children in one class room. I have some helpers. After that, friends from church and myself we go to visit students from the university to introduce Jesus to them, and later on with someone from the church where I go invited me a couple weeks ago to visit and disciple some girls from the university and this last Wed. we got about 10 in one small room, PRAISE THE LORD! Also every Sunday I teach to the big children at church, and we have twice a month a program for children at church and I help. Before I come to this place I asked Jesus to help me to come without any expectation and be available. At my church in L.A. I was only a helper, but here I'm a teacher. All this time I am working by myself (and JESUS next to me holding my hand). I live 20 min. from the city, most of the time I take a Van call taxi to move to one place to another. Sometimes where I travel during the night, but not very often. The people where I live here are really nice, they are being missionaries for 30 years or more, and every year they have people at their house, our team was one of the last teams of this year. I am trying my best with everything I do, all the teaching that I learned from Pastor Tom and my sister Dottie I am putting in practice. I never forget one of my pastor Tom's words "nothing happens by accident, everything is for a reason", and I'm glad that I'm here in Kampala because God put this amazing desire in my heart and mind. Before I came here my family and friends were really discouraging about this trip, but God close my ears to don't listen to them. Also I had a problem with my mastercard that I couldn't get money for six weeks, but God provided money from my sister who borrowed money for me and paid my living here in Kampala. I never lost confidence in JESUS. I knew he will provided for all my needs. I will come back home with a full bag of things that I never did before and one of this gift is to be able to preach the word of Jesus to others. Thank you Jesus, thank you to all my pastors, thank you to all my friends." Receive a big hug. God bless you to all of you, your sister who loves you, Amelia

**Amanda Brackett writes from India:** "I am doing well here in India. God has confirmed to me that I am right where He wants me to be...right here in Bangalore, India and He wants me to be built up here and trust in Him. I am also, tonight, going to be performing two songs that I have written with my guitar to 10,000 people at a Crusade. We will also be doing a sign language worship song, a live music video that I co-created, and it is simply amazing to have these opportunities. At one point, I will be giving my testimony and leading a Bible-study, even preaching at one point to a church. Opportunities galore! What a blessing to do these things. I am so blessed I am learning so much and having a blast as a whole... " A Week or So Later - "Yesterday we went out to a park to evangelize and I took tons of the gospel tracts. I have only given a couple of the Hindi tracts, everyone speaks Kannada here. And Tamil I have not found anyone yet, but I have them for when I do meet them! I was so encouraged yesterday as me and one girl, Tami sat down to pray before we started...and we had about 5 groups of families sit down with us and take pictures of them and us and then I would introduce ourselves, ask their language and give them a tract. It was wonderful that God used our being foreigners as a way to get the gospel out in a practical way. We meet so many people and we get to follow up by email and there is a coffee shop ministry that we can all meet at and they preach there too. It is a beautiful thing." Later - "A couple of days after the tsunami hit we began praying to see if God wanted us to go to that area. 'Do not withhold good when it is in your power to do it' (Prov 3:27). So, we started making contacts praying that if He did not want us to go, He would close the doors. We got warned of the huge amounts of diseases there....we still pursued....we prayed so much. We came to a conclusion in prayer that if we were seeking God so earnestly to go there, and He closed all the doors then God for sure wants us to stay here. Well, the government has closed the doors to certain relief, and we are a part of that group which cannot go. Well, that encouraged our team to

continue in prayer that we do what He desires us to do here." Thank you...and I love you and here is a BIG hug for you and Pa... Love, Amanda

**Prison Ministry:** We shared last newsletter that we've had some setbacks in one or two of the prisons in getting our materials and Bibles in to the inmates, even when they request them. We encountered some temporary obstacles at Mule Creek Prison, but Corcoran is still not letting us send in our Bibles. In spite of all this, we've had requests for 12-Step and Bible study materials from many new prison inmates in the last few months. Read Nehemiah, especially chapters 4, 5 and 6, about how the enemies tried to hinder the work of re-building the wall around Jerusalem. In like manner, Satan gets mad when we begin to re-build people's lives so that they will be strong in the Lord, and grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Then later, the enemies tried to lure Nehemiah away from his work, by various tricks, but Nehemiah didn't fall for it, and said, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Neh. 6:3). We are praying, and we appreciate your prayers.

**Nehemiah 4:7b-9** ".....when [they] .....heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches (broken places) began to be stopped, then they were very wroth (angry), and conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them."

**Nehemiah 4:17** "They which builded on the wall.....every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."

**From the Prison Ministry:** Joe Blackburn in Soledad writes: "Wow! I hardly believe it! I finally dogged my way through the 4th Step! Just finished a minute ago, but it seems like it's taken months. It sure took a bunch of thinkin'. I feel so free now!"

**Stanley Davis in Soledad writes:** "First of all, let me thank you for the Serenity Bible. It's a blessing - thanks! You know, when I went to go pick up the book, there were about 5 people picking up stuff, and I sat on a bench waiting for my name to be called. The first guy received a bunch of eating goods and coffee, the second received potato chips, tobacco, deodorant, candy, and the third person received a bunch of junk. I'm sitting there saying to myself, "I did not order anything, who could be sending me anything?" And my name was called, and the guard put a white envelope on the counter with a book in it, and the guard says, "Sign here"..... and it says "Love Lifted Me Recovery" from Tom & Dottie, and I remembered writing the letter to you. By this time I'm thinking, and it hit me like a ton of bricks.....I look at the other people sitting with me, and I say to myself, "Serenity! Not one of the other people received anything like this!"

**Other Outreaches:** We participated in the Billy Graham Crusade that came to Los Angeles in November. Saturday, November 13th, we arrived at the Santa Monica Community Church at 12:00 to help set up and serve at a feeding-the-homeless event connected with the Billy Graham Crusade, and called "Feast of Faith". Several Westside churches were involved, and several of us went as representatives of Love Lifted Me Recovery. We helped set tables, and were in the kitchen wrapping plastic utensils in napkins, as we expected over 100 people. At 1:30, they began the regular weekly worship service of a church-of-the-homeless ministry called "Loveland Church", and that went until about 3:00, their pastor preaching for about an hour! About 100 people were there for the service, but they said Loveland only has about 50 regular members, so that was good outreach. By the time we actually started serving the meals, there were at least 150 people, and about 25 volunteers from different churches. Some helped dish up food, and some of us were servers, as we had the people sit at the tables, and we brought the food to them. There was some overflow outside, as they set up a table out there, and some sat on the steps. The connection to the Billy Graham Crusade was in using this as an opportunity to announce to these 150 or so people that a bus would be leaving from that same church the next Saturday at 3:00 to take people to the crusade. Love Lifted Me

Recovery and the churches on the Westside that had been involved in prayer for the crusade, and this Feast of Faith, also contributed and paid for the rental of a bus to take homeless and needy people to the crusade on Saturday, where there was also a "homeless-feeding" called "The World's Biggest Tailgate Party" at 4:00 at the Rose Bowl, before the crusade.