

Ministry Update - 4th Quarter, 2005

Twelve Step Recovery Meetings:

Here is a little announcement we sent out for the new year's program coming up: "Join us Mondays and Wednesdays, beginning January 2nd as we begin the year at Step One of the Twelve Steps, and begin another year of intense, practical Bible study that will equip you for overcoming the problems and difficulties of life. These studies are for anyone who is interested, even if you do not have problems of alcohol or drug addiction, eating disorders, anxiety and worry, depression, anger issues, sexual addictions, co-dependency, dysfunctional family issues, other compulsive behaviors, or need healing from the past." We invite anyone and everyone to come to our recovery meetings for a great Bible study, but for those who are really hurting, and struggling with the above issues, we encourage them to come for healing and "recovery out of the snare of the devil." Yes, in the King James Version, our recovery ministry is mentioned in II Timothy 2:25-26, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and **that they may RECOVER themselves out of the snare of the devil**, who are taken captive by him at his will." We do the instructing out of God's word, and we trust in the Lord to bring repentance, and give people the power to "recover themselves" out of all of these dysfunctional, hurtful issues that have kept them in bondage, and prevented them from serving the Lord fully and freely.

Here are a few e-mails we've received from people who are attending our recovery meetings. We do not share people's names unless they want to write up their testimony, so here they are without names: From an e-mail dated October, 16, 2005 - "Dear Tom and Dottie, _____ called me Wednesday morning with great appreciation for the openness, warmth and caring he received on Monday evening. He found the group eclectic and inviting, very much a place to heal and share healing with others. He was "blown away" (his words) by the Bible Study. Having been to secular AA meetings, he was not expecting much, much less as much as he received. I saw him again this morning and he was again very effusive in his praise for your ministry. He'll be there again tomorrow evening. I found a verse (or it found me) which seems to reflect your ministry and has touched me deeply. 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.' (II Cor. 1:4) Amen!"

From an e-mail in December: "Hey guys, How are you? I'm doing good, and I know for a fact that my life has changed thanks to you two and your wonderful meetings =) I have grown a lot stronger with the Lord and can't thank you enough!!!!!!! You really are helping so many people and I know that you will be very, very blessed! See you Monday."

From an e-mail in December: "I just wanted to thank you both from the bottom of my heart for all that you have done for my brother and me. My life has changed so much, even more so since the baptism.....it really did begin a new life. You both have been such a blessing, your rewards will be great. I have learned so much from you, and know that there is still so much there I could learn. I feel that the information from the meetings has helped me work through some things that needed to be worked through, but it also has given me strength and helped my walk with God improve greatly. I still have a few letters to write to those I've wronged, but that will all be handled by the end of the year. All of them will be around for Christmas.....so I figured I'd handle it when I get home. I can't wait to get my certificate of completion! It's been a hard year, but a good one."

Counseling Ministry:

Through one of those unexplainable ways the Lord has of doing things, a dear, sweet Jewish woman got our number from a Christian radio talk show. She called and Tom counseled with

her about some family problems several times on the phone, and then we had a counseling session with her in person. She prayed to receive Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior on November 8, 2005 in our livingroom. Praise God! About a month after she got saved, she told Tom she takes her little "Serenity" Bible we gave her everywhere, and is reading it constantly, and reading the 12-Steps materials in it. Tom is continuing to counsel and disciple her, and on another occasion, he gave her a Bible promises book, some papers printed out from our website, and "A Case for Christmas" by Lee Strobel. She's reading everything we give her, and that's one of the best ways for a new Believer to grow. Tom said she told him several times how thankful she is to have someone she can call and talk to about all this, and also that Tom shares personal things from his own life that are helpful to her. A week or so later, she called Tom, and they had a good counseling session on the phone. She also told him that she's been reading some of the Bible studies on our website, and she finds them really easy to understand. She said she likes the way we put the Scriptures together, and in order, and how easy it is to understand that way. Of course, it's the Lord giving us the ability to do all that, but still, it's nice to hear. Even better, it's such a joy to see a new baby Christian feeding on the milk of the word of God (I Peter 2:2), and seeing how much she's growing! Praise God!

Evangelistic Outreach:

We thought you might like to know what the items are that go in each lunch bag for the homeless on our Venice Beach outreaches. They are: two little cans of Vienna sausages, a package of saltine crackers, a fruit cup, a small pkg. of cookies, a small bag of trail mix, a pkg. of peanut butter crackers, a plastic fork and spoon, napkins, sm. pkg. of Kleenex, and a juice box. Oh, yes, and a gospel tract! Our outreach is primarily to give out gospel tracts to the people out and about on the Boardwalk down at the beach. The lunch bags are for the many homeless who live or hang out at the beach, so that we can give them a tract, but also show a little compassion towards meeting their immediate physical hunger. We can't possibly feed all the homeless all the time, but this is a small thing we can do while we're down there ministering the gospel.

Saturday, October 1st -

It looked like it was going to be a hot one again, but by the time we went out the door to go down to the beach, a fog had rolled in, and it was much cooler. Thank You, Lord! We had 48 lunches again, and our group consisted of Tom, me, Amelia, Angela, Vince, Denise, Youbert, Chris and Gordon. Because of the cooler weather, maybe, it didn't seem like there were as many people down there at first, so we concentrated on finding the homeless people and giving out the lunches. Later, more people were arriving at the Boardwalk, and we gave out 200-300 tracts, at least. Much prayer went into this outreach, again, and most people were open to receive a tract. Vince, Youbert and Chris met a guy from Australia, Glen, who said he had been praying for someone to give him some Chick tracts so that he could hand them out. Before we left, Youbert gave him about 150 of the tracts we had left, so they were going to be given out later in the day by Glen. Then they all put their hands on each other's shoulders and prayed in a circle right there on the Boardwalk with Glen, too. Vince said that was the best part of the whole day for him. Praise the Lord! The tracts that were given out in different languages this time were, of course, many in Spanish, two in Russian, two in Chinese, and one each of Portuguese, French, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Thai and Korean. Of the English tracts, we gave out "The Little Princess" and "Bewitched?", because Halloween was coming up. A lot of people were looking at us, wondering what we were doing, and when they made eye contact, we would offer them a tract, and they took it. We gave out all of the lunches, and many people asked us what kind of group we were, and we told them we were Christians. All in all, it was an excellent day, and we were very encouraged and blessed.

Saturday, November 5th -

Friday night, the night before the outreach, Angela, Eva and Arlene came over to our house to help us put together the lunch bags. We appreciate everyone who helps, whether they can

actually go down to the Boardwalk with us on Saturday, or just work behind the front lines. We appreciate everyone who supports the ministry financially and in prayer. We could never do it on our own, but we need the Body of Christ, and all the spiritual gifts working together. The team for this outreach consisted of Tom, Dottie, Angela, Gordon, Amelia, Jennifer and Walker. We passed out 47 lunches to the homeless, and several hundred gospel tracts to the people down on the Venice Boardwalk and beach. There was not a whole lot different about this outreach than most of the others. Some people were very open, and others refused to even take a tract and read it. Some people, as soon as we told them it was about Jesus, said they didn't want one. Jesus said, in the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-23, Mark 4:2-20, and Luke 8:4-15), that some seeds would fall by the wayside, and some would fall on rocky ground, and some would fall among thorns, but some would fall on good ground and produce fruit. We pray that many of the "seeds" of the word of God we sowed this day fell on good ground in the hearts of people who will receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior and will be saved for all eternity. As for the homeless part of the outreach, there were a lot of homeless and needy people down there, as usual. One group of fairly young people had signs made up of cardboard, asking for food. Another group of young people with painted hair, body piercings, and a general "punk" look, said they were here from New York, but they said they were hungry, so we gave them lunches. Maybe they hitchhiked out from New York, who knows? Everyone was very thankful, and none of the homeless people refused a tract, plus we had tracts in each bag. One woman asked for more tracts, and we ended up giving her about seven or eight different titles. She may pass them around in her little "community" there, so who knows what harvest might come from those seeds?

Saturday, December 17th -

It was cold, but fairly clear and sunny when we went out to the beach for our outreach. This was our first time doing it in the winter, and we weren't sure how many people would be out, but there were quite a few - not quite as many as in the summer, but enough. Our team consisted of Tom, Dottie, Lorén, Angela, Jessica, Amelia and Awilda. We gave away 50 lunches to the hungry and homeless, and gave out several hundred tracts, as usual. We had prayed before the event, and Angela said she noticed that most people were open and receptive. There will always be those down there who are hardened to the gospel, and there are some of the homeless who are out of their heads, but overall, we had good reception, and we pray that God will continue to water the seed we planted, and cause the growth, and eventually bring a harvest of souls into His kingdom. I asked one young lady we gave a tract to if she spoke another language, and she said Japanese. I grabbed some Japanese tracts out of my voluminous bag that I carry, and she was very impressed. She took two in Japanese, saying, "Are these free?" The other foreign languages we gave out that day were German and Farsi. I had a short conversation with the man who spoke Farsi, as he could speak some English. He asked what would make us spend money to go out giving people these booklets. We told him it was because we had a desire in our hearts to bring people to know Jesus, so that they could go to heaven. He then asked, "Nobody goes to heaven unless they believe in Jesus?" We said, "Yes, because Jesus is God the Son, and He said that He is the only way to come to God the Father." "Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father except by Me'" (John 14:6). He looked a little skeptical, but we told him to read the booklets and see if his opinion didn't change. We can't change anyone's mind, but the written word of God together with the working of the Holy Spirit on their hearts can change them and bring them to faith in our precious Lord Jesus. I didn't say this to the man who took the Farsi tract, but another reason we go out and hand out these tracts is because we believe the time is short. Jesus may return at any moment, as we see by the events going on in this world, with all the Bible prophecies coming to fulfillment before our eyes. We don't have much time left, and if we plan to serve the Lord at all, we'd better get busy and do it now!

Prison Ministry:

Emmett Lambert Faught, in Avenal State Prison -

"Hello there my fellow brother and sister in Christ, I have received the Serenity Bible, Companion for Twelve Step Recovery. Thank you very much. I feel really good about this program. God has sent you into my life to finally open up and get rid of all the stuff that does not allow me to grow. I cannot do it on my own. You will both be in my daily prayers. I am looking forward to a new friendship through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

David Basile, in Soledad State Prison -

We sent him a packet of the Christian "comic books" from Chick Publications. He wrote:
"Thank you for the comics - they have been circulating around all the lockdown inmates' cells.
Pretty cool, I think."

Don Johnson, in Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA -

"I really want to get home to see Ma. She's up there in age and has emphysema. I'm sure you know how it is. I hear you talk about all of the people you're counseling, and it sounds like my family in a lot of ways. I put myself here - my actions. These are the things I'm really trying to change and I can't tell you how much your letters and the 12-Step lessons have been a help. Please keep up the good work. I'm dealing with a lot of issues, one most of all now is self-hate and depression. I got the easy job sitting here doing time, thinking about the people I've hurt. I can't undo any of this, but I am trying to go on. I'm taking all kinds of classes, but none has worked for me like the Bible has. It's a friend that's always there - all I need do is reach out and pick it up. You guys are really doing good work. Thank you again, God bless, Don"

Michael Spellman, at Washington Ridge Fire Camp -

"I wanted to thank you for the Christmas card and all you've done in my Steps. I'm on Step 11, and I just finished my lesson, and said to myself, 'I'm going to go call Tom and Dottie and thank 'em.' So thank you, and I love you all for all you do. You all are in my prayers. Thank you all again for being a part of my life - it helps a lot. I love you, Merry Christmas, Michael!"

Stanley Davis, in Soledad Prison -

"I know I can't make up for lost time, but I'm clean today, and I give God all the thanks, and you and Tom, and all the people that are in the program. All I can do is one day at a time, and place the principles of the program before personalities, and have a good life without drugs and alcohol. I know I'm going to have some bad days with the good. I do not want to use drugs anymore. I'm so done! The thrill is gone. I want a better way of life, and prison is the end result of drugs and alcohol, or else death. I'm a survivor that's making a change in my life, running in fear no more, but walking in faith with my Higher Power - He has only the best in store for me. I want to thank you and Tom for all the help you two have given to me, you two have really helped me, and I appreciate it very much. Without you and Tom, I would've been a unsuccessful person. I believe in myself again, and with the help of the Lord, I am capable of achieving what I want. I thank God for putting you and Tom in my life, helping me and others. You two get a standing ovation."

Joe Blackburn, formerly in Soledad Prison, now released -

Tom was able to pick up Joe from the Greyhound Bus station in downtown Los Angeles after he got out of prison, and he stayed with us for a few days, and then went out to the Bible Tabernacle men's ranch in Canyon Country. We received a Christmas card and short note from Joe up at the BT in Canyon Country - our first communication from him since Tom took him out there the first week of December: "Help! They're feeding me too good! This place is just what the doctor ordered. I am happy so far, and I'm not even broke in yet. The atmosphere is incredible! Moving from that gym to here is a total 360! So far I'm in a daze, just basking in the presence of so many of God's children and none of Satan's - I like that. Things are gonna

be just fine - I see plenty of room for all of my skills here. Just wish they'd give more time for Bible reading! Thank you so much for being God's hand in sending me here. I'll never forget. I will not let ya'll down. Love in Jesus, Joe"