

Ministry Update - 4th Quarter, 2006

Twelve Step Recovery Meetings

October, November, and December means we covered Steps 10, 11 and 12 in our meetings, but new people come in all the time at different Steps. We start over at Step One every January. One new person who came in December said that she had a lot of anger and unforgiveness issues about her father, and that's what our 12-Step program is all about. It's not just about alcoholism and addictions, but about allowing the healing power of Almighty God to cleanse and free us from the bitterness and anger caused by family dysfunctions and garbage in our past. A lot of Christians are walking around, looking good on the outside, being good church-goers and law-abiding citizens, but having major damage inside, to mind, heart and emotions, and most of the time, the pastor's Sunday sermons (at whatever church they attend) do not touch on these problems. Or, if they touch on the problem of unforgiveness and other issues that are holding these people back from being what God wants them to be, the sermon may merely tell them what to do or not to do, and not actually go into the HOW of DOING it! In our meetings, Step materials, and other Bible studies, we try to make God's principles in His word very practical, and show broken people how to apply them in their lives for healing.

Here's an update in the testimony of Amanda, one of the graduates of "Love Lifted Me Recovery". She and her husband, and other young people in her church up in Oregon, are following our example of feeding the homeless and giving out gospel tracts. It's so exciting to see her living her life for the Lord! This is the e-mail we received recently: "Hello Ma and Pa! I got your newsletter and it is always such a joy to see all the ministry God has produced through you two. I have an exciting bit of news...I went up to Portland to a new ministry that one of the deacons at our church invited us to and it was handing out lunches, the gospel, and talking to the homeless! We are going to start that ministry at our church and here in our town. Recently the woman who did the Helps Ministry at our church got called out and now, close to all the Twenty-Somethings in our church are rising up and we are on it! I just wanted to share this exciting news because I love what you do and you encourage me and I am so grateful that I have the opportunity to do the thing here that I would be doing there if I was there! Ha! Love, Amanda"

Evangelistic Outreach

Saturday, October 7, 2006 -

We had a great outreach on Saturday, and our team consisted of Tom, Dottie, Loren, Adam, Petra, Adam's 10-year-old son Johnnie, and his 7-year-old daughter Destiny, Vince, Youbert, and Dwayne from the Bible Tabernacle. Dwayne and some others at the Bible Tabernacle have started a ministry group called "The Master's Army." We gave out 72 lunches, which seemed to cover all the homeless people we saw up and down the Venice Boardwalk. At the first large group of homeless, camping out on the grass, they said, "We were just wondering about what we would have for breakfast, and here you come with lunches. It must be God!" One guy saw us and asked if we had food, saying he hadn't eaten in several days. Tom stayed home to pray for us, and while we were still out on the boardwalk, a lady called our phone number. She said she had received a lunch, with the tract in it with our phone number, and she was calling to ask about our ministry. She said she wants to come to our meetings, and Tom prayed with her after they talked. We had a great time passing out the tracts, several hundred in English, and lots in Spanish. Of other languages, we gave out two in Farsi and one in German. The first Farsi tract was given to a woman who turned out to be an Iranian Christian, and her name is Soheilah. Later, when Youbert met up with us, he could speak a little Farsi with her, and she walked along with us for a while talking with Youbert. I gave the other Farsi tract to an elderly woman, and when I saw her later, we called Soheilah over to talk with her. It turned out she was a non-believer, and a Muslim, but Soheilah witnessed to her for a while, and she also had

the tract to read later. Pray for this older woman's salvation, because it truly seemed like a God-ordained meeting between the two women. Later, I offered a tract to a young woman who said, "I believe in the Goddess. You should get in touch with the Goddess." There will always be some people like that, but most of the people were open and receptive to taking the tracts.

Saturday, November 4, 2006 -

We had our monthly Venice Beach outreach on Saturday morning. Our outreach this time consisted of Tom, Dottie, Loren, Loren's friend Nick, Petra and her 10-year-old grandson Johnnie, and her 7-year-old granddaughter Destiny, Youbert, John, Angela, Amelia (back from her missions trip to Uganda), James, Sandy, Gordon, Yvonne, and Dwayne from the Bible Tabernacle. I think this was the biggest group we've had on a Saturday so far, and we've been doing this for a little over a year and a half. We handed out 72 lunches for the homeless, and two to three hundred gospel tracts. Things went pretty much as usual, but we picked up one homeless woman along the way who gave us some trouble. At first, she was just walking along with us, pointing out this or that group of homeless people, saying, "Oh! These people need lunches over here!" or "Those two over there!" and so forth. She made a few remarks to seven-year-old Destiny that I didn't like, and I began to think she was mentally ill, at the least. From then on, we all kept a closer eye on Johnnie and Destiny. Then, when we handed lunches to two young people on the Boardwalk, she came right up with us and said, "We're giving these in the name of the goddess." I immediately went up to her and said, "Oh, no, we're not! We're giving these out in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!" Then, we told her she had to leave, and stop following us around. It reminded us of Paul and the demon-possessed slave girl in Acts chapter 16. She made a few remarks about her "goddess" not liking us (which is fine with me!), and then she asked for a lunch. We gave her one, and she left, and didn't bother us any more. All in all, it was a great outreach, and there were many people who were receptive and took the tracts. The people who were going out for the first time said they enjoyed it and were really blessed. I saw a few people that looked like foreign tourists, and when handing them a booklet, I would ask, "Do you want English, or do you speak another language?" One couple said they spoke Chinese, so I gave them a Chick tract in Chinese. Another group of three Indian people said they spoke Hindi, and they started to walk away. I said, "No, wait! I have one in Hindi!" and I gave them a copy of "This Was Your Life" in Hindi. Praise the Lord!

Saturday, December 2, 2006 -

It was a beautiful, sunny day for December! Our outreach team today consisted of Tom, Dottie, Loren, Loren's friends Shannon and Wendy, Petra and her 10-year-old grandson Johnnie, and her 7-year-old granddaughter Destiny, Youbert, Vince, John, Amelia, Yvonne, Dwayne, and Leigh-Anna. Nine different churches were represented with this group, not including "Love Lifted Me Recovery Ministries". We were not bothered or harassed by anyone this time, and lots of prayer went up for our protection, as well as for the Lord to bring the people He wanted to be there. We thought people were especially receptive to the gospel booklets, and we rejoiced with every seed that was planted. We passed out several hundred gospel tracts in English, many in Spanish, and I was able to give one in Tagalog to two Filipino ladies, and one in Hebrew to a young man working in one of the shops. One young man asked me what the booklets were, and I said they were about Jesus. Then he asked where we got them, and I said we ordered them from the publishers. He asked who the publisher was, and I showed him the back of one booklet, and said, "Chick Publications." Then he asked how we were affiliated with Chick Publications, and I just said, "I've been ordering them and handing them out for 35 years, that's how we're affiliated." I don't know what his deal was, if he was trying to irritate me, or what, but he finally took three different tracts and said he would read them. As for the lunches for the homeless, we had 72, but we ran out before we got up to Rose Ave., which is the top end of The Boardwalk. As we were walking back down, I handed a tract to one man, who said he would take it, and that they were down here doing the same thing. I got into a conversation with him, and found out that his group was feeding the homeless up at that end of the Boardwalk, so they would hopefully catch the people we

missed. His group was from Hope Chapel in Hermosa Beach, and he also said they go twice a month to West Hollywood and set up a Christian table near the "gay bars" there. I said, "Oh! Is that the table Dwayna used to do?" and he said it was. It turns out he is Dan, who took over the West Hollywood ministry from Dwayna when she moved to Colorado. Praise the Lord! Back to the homeless ministry, Vince, Youbert and John went up and down some of the side streets and alleys and found people there, so that may have been why we ran out faster than usual, or else maybe the police had not just been by to roust a lot of the homeless people away from the Boardwalk area. Vince said a lot of people recognized our lunch bags, and remembered us from past times. On our way back down, we found we had two lunches left after all, and I saw one of the guys we had given lunches to before on previous outreaches. I asked him if he had gotten a lunch from us today, and he said that he hadn't, so we gave him one. He smiled and said, "God bless you!" Then, with the very last lunch, we saw a lady sitting on a bench, with what looked like all her worldly goods with her. Loren and her friends went up to her and gave her the lunch and a tract called "Best Friend". When she saw the title of the tract, Loren said she said, "Oh, how sweet!" and had tears in her eyes.

Prison Ministry

Our prison ministry has exploded! We now have received requests for "Serenity" Bibles and our Twelve Step lessons from over 200 new men and women, in five different women's prisons and eleven or twelve men's prisons. The women's prisons are: Valley State Prison and Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla, Leo Chesney Correctional Facility in Live Oak, California Institution for Women in Corona, and Norco Women's Prison in Riverside County. The men's prisons are: San Quentin, Soledad, Wasco, Avenal, Solano, Tehachapi, Washington Ridge Conservation Camp, Pelican Bay, North Kern State Prison, Chuckawalla Valley, Susanville, Lancaster, Mule Creek and even a prison in Florida. Also, some of the men and women have been released from prison, but are continuing to work their Steps from the recovery programs or sober-living facilities where they are living. We are getting new requests from a women's residential recovery facility in Pacoima, because one of our women from Chowchilla landed there, and started spreading the word. Most of these men and women are/were in prison for drug- or alcohol-related crimes. We continue to get new men asking for our program, and all in all, with new men and women requesting the 12-Step program and "Serenity" Bible, we have sent out well over 200 Bibles and "beginner's packets" of materials since June, 2006. Please pray for us that we can keep up with so many new ones! Pray for Dottie to be able to go into the ministry full-time.

We have received checks (an offering for the ministry) from two of our prison inmates with whom we correspond. Most prisoners don't have any money, but some have jobs that pay a little bit, or family that sends them money into an account. One check was written from Matt Chappell's account, and was an official State of California check. The other donation was from Exzadrian Williams, and he sent a personal check. We've had prisoners who've sent us a donation of postage stamps, but these are the first money donations we've received through the prison ministry. The prisoner who sent the first donation is also one who was not saved when we first started writing to him, and he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior through our ministry three years ago, on November 23, 2003. Here is Matt's very touching letter below:

Matthew Chappell, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, Calif. -

"Dear Tom & Dottie, Hello, guys! I'm just writing a quick note to go along with this check. I love your stories about Saturday morning feeding the homeless and passing out Chick tracts so much, and I would really like to be a part of something like that. I thought I would send some money to help pay for the sack lunches. Of course, you can use it for whatever you need it for, we all know the stamps and stationery you use staying in touch costs money, but I'd like to think it was going to feed and share the gospel with hungry souls, though. The description you put into your last letter of the food you give really moved me, because I could totally imagine being lost and hungry down by the boardwalk. I would feel so good to be fed in

a situation like that. I wish I could be out there helping you guys, and maybe some day I will, but for now, I hope this money can help. Love, Matt"

Here are some other excerpts from letters from our men and women:

Billy Mayberry, Avenal State Prison -

"I just want to thank you for sending me the Christ-centered 12-Step recovery course. It has already taken me into deep thought. I can't hardly wait until my next lesson. I thank God for allowing me to have this opportunity. I can already see the soul-searching that is in store for me by doing this 12-Step course. I also thank God for the two of you, and I will pray that He blesses you with His grace for always. Once again, thank you both. Much love, Billy Mayberry"

The following excerpt is from Richard, who first wrote and complained about his bunk-mate, who was a "Skin Head" who made fun of him and harassed him when he tried to read his Bible:

Richard Anderson, Wasco State Prison -

"Hello, Tom & Dottie and all of you at Love Lifted Me Recovery! First, I want to thank you all for your support and encouragement. I really do enjoy your 12-Steps and your letters. I have to tell you that I did what you said and left some of the Chick tracts out for my bunkie, and he actually read them and liked them. I have been passing them around, and they are a bit hit, everyone likes them. Anyway, now me and my bunkie are getting along just fine, and we are reading the Bible together and doing "The 40 Days of Purpose" through the book "the Purpose Driven Life" by Rick Warren. He really seems to like it. All I got to say about that is God is great and works in mysterious ways! Oh, by the way, his name is Keith Gorden, and I think he really wants to change his life around."

This excerpt is from Sam, who asked us to send a Bible and materials to his unsaved mother, which we did:

Samuel Vidaurri, Solano State Prison -

"To my new found family in Christ, I am glad to hear from you. You know, when I first started doing your lessons, I did not want to do it at first, I was still into my old ways. But then I started doing it, now look, I got this far, and it brought me and my mother closer. I would always tell her that I am going to do this and that, and now she is willing to help me in any way she can. Not only her, but my uncle has also seen the changes that I have made. He told me that he loves seeing me this way. I am doing things I would not do before, and I just want to say that you and Tom helped me look deep within myself to see that there is more to life than being a hateful person, and if anyone asked me about your program I would tell them I have never met anybody who is so honest and wants to help other people. I am still working on a few things, but so far I feel like a new man. I want to thank you both for everything that you have taught me. Love, Sam"

Kathleen Wasco, at Valley State Prison for Women, Chowchilla -

"Well, I was doing my Step lesson yesterday in open circle and Betty Jean seen me working on 'em in eagerness and she asked me if she could please get your address and be able to get the Steps and Bible. She's been beatin' on the counselors' doors to no avail for some recovery materials, now even more so, she sincerely desires Christ-centered materials over secular. I counseled her on being genuine and sincere, and her letter asking for your program is enclosed. I brought the "Serenity" Bible and showed her the "Spirit, Soul & Body, Mind, Will & Emotions" paper and card you sent, and let her go over it last night. She is so thankful to have her prayers answered on getting some Step work through God in Christ. Also, we got another

girl on board, Debbie, and her letter is enclosed, too. Well, I've gotta get this out to you - these girls are so eager and happy to get an open door like answered prayer, just knowing your ministry exists for us who are serious about recovery, God and change! May God bless the works of your labor and hands, so giving, we love Jesus in you. Your sister in Christ, Kathleen".

Deborah Chatters, at California Institution for Women in Corona -

"Tom and Dottie, Thank you so much for the card and picture. I truly enjoy it. I also received my 4th Step inventory questions. Yes, I do have to take my time. I have to do a lot of soul-searching. I had a wonderful upbringing - a great mom, no father. I took the wrong turn in life at an early age, but God has guided me back on the right track and right road - His grace..... Thanks for sharing your weekly routine with me. I enjoy reading your letters. God bless you and family. Love, Deborah"