

Ministry Update - 4th Quarter, 2007

Weekly Twelve-Step Meetings

Starting in January every year, we begin at Step One of the Twelve Steps. Our meetings are basically a Bible study, but just dealing with the Scriptures that can help us with any issues that are hindering us in our walk with Christ. Don't let the word "recovery" fool you. It may be alcohol and drugs for some, but many "good church members" have bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, anger, worry, anxiety, low self-esteem, "fallout" from growing up in a dysfunctional family, and many other problems on which they need to be working. Our weekly LLMR meetings teach you how to deal with these problems from God's word. In October, November and December, we worked on Steps 10, 11 and 12. Here is a portion of our introduction to those Steps: "Steps 10, 11 and 12 have been called the "Maintenance Steps." As they are put into practice, you will feel a strong desire to tell others about how you found peace finally through the One named Jesus Christ. You will want to get to know Him even better for yourself.

In Step 10, you learn to keep short accounts or mini-accounts for each day. It is suggested that you keep a log of each day, so that you can see any patterns that may develop. Also, it is extremely important to put our thoughts down on paper, and talk with God about the day - both the good and the bad, whether we did what He had for us to do or not (there are sins of omission as well as sins of commission). They must be faced and prayed about, so we can get the job done as God leads.

In Step 11, we will be developing an even stronger prayer life with the Lord, seeking His will first for our life. In every decision we make and direction we take, we must let God speak to us through His Holy Spirit as we seek Him in prayer and meditation on His word. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the strength and wisdom we need to live godly in Christ Jesus.

In Step 12, we will find that through the months of reading God's word, we have found some favorite verses, and have memorized some of them. That is really great! The Psalmist said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." In this phase of our recovery, we need to share and be equipped to share our healing process and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ with a sin-stained world. Dottie and I will work with you individually and corporally so that you will be able to stand firm on who you are in Christ, and be able to share Him effectively with the unsaved of this world. It is, of course, our prayer that our Lord will use you in a mighty way as you dedicate your life to service for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

It's important that we keep in mind that there is "Only one life; 'twill soon be past; and only what's done for Christ will last."

Testimonies

My name is Loren Russ, and I am sixteen years old. I received Christ at the age of ten. When I was growing up I felt that nobody loved me and that nobody cared for me. I was more like the outcast. When my Grandpa Tom told me about Jesus, my heart broke because I thought nobody loved me, but I learned that Jesus did. I never even imagined that someone would die for me, or forgive me for all the bad I have done. That meant a lot to me, it gave me hope in life.

When I got back home I forgot about the One that loved me so much. I was not walking the path God wanted me to. I got into a lot of trouble. I did not go to church. I was just not following God's ways. It was just like I did not even become a Christian. All that happened at my Grandpa's house went out the window. At home it was like nobody wanted to hear what I had to say, and every time I said something it was like it did not matter. I was bullied by my sisters and I didn't want to tell my mom because I was afraid that my sisters would get mad.

And I thought my mom did not care. Once again, I thought that nobody loved me, or if God loved me, why did He let them do this to me? Why did He let me be pushed out? I asked why. When my mom started to work more, it got worse. I just thought that there was nothing left of me. If I cried, I would show that I was weak, so I learned to hold it in. I became very quiet, just not letting people know that there was something wrong. I only talked about the good times we had as a family, I tried to block out the bad, and I was good at it. I even tried to build my own happy family.

I was doing badly and my mom was at the point of sending me away. She could not handle me anymore, because I got so out of hand! So, my mom sent me to my Grandpa's house. I hated it at first, because it was really weird. As I got situated it was hard for me to accept the fact that they wanted to hear what I had to say. It was kind of hard for me, because I was not used to the fact that I had my own space and that I heard "I love you" and I actually believed it and heard it more than normal. I got treated like I was treated in my happy family that I wished I had when I was hurting. I was on a new foundation and a strong one at that. God was back in my life, and I started a new life, in a new home and a new one walking closer with God. I missed my mom and I wanted to go back home, but something was telling me, "This is the place where you need to be". I grew in Christ and I even grew out of my shell that I was hiding in, avoiding getting hurt. I began to open up and show emotion that I was afraid to show for the longest time. My grandparents even helped me to not be afraid to show emotion without apologizing every time. They helped me rebuild my life; they pointed me to the right path. They helped me grow from the broken person I was before I came to live here. I got re-baptized, because I started a new life and walk in Jesus, and it was on my heart to have my life rededicated to Jesus. And since then I have felt like a different person when I came out of the water. I still have many struggles in my life, and that is not going to go away till I am home with Jesus.

Every one of God's creations was made out of love. And even the broken ones can be fixed no matter how damaged they are, because nothing is impossible for God to fix. And that is love. I was damaged and God healed me, when I thought there was no hope and He showed it to me through Him and giving me a NEW ground to walk on.

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, October 6, 2007 - Saturday, our team for the outreach consisted of: Dottie, Tom and Loren (of course), John, Leigh-Anna, Angela, Yvonne, and Amelia. We had the usual 72 lunches, and everyone who got a lunch was very thankful and happy to get one. John, Leigh-Anna and Loren took the route along the beach, and then met up with the rest of us later. John also went down some of the alleys, and gave out a few lunches there. The very first man we came to, I was not sure if he was homeless or not, but he stopped and looked at me, so I said to him, "We're giving out lunches to those in need; do you need one?" He said, "Yes, I recognized you all from before." We all wear our "Love Lifted Me Recovery" hats, and have the lunches in little carts, so I guess we are becoming a familiar sight. We also had some little soaps, little shampoos, razors, and other toiletries this time, and they were well-received. One young couple told us they had had all of their possessions stolen the day before, and needed everything. Another couple was sitting on a bench, and when I asked them if they would like a lunch, they were so happy. They said they hadn't been homeless for long, but they definitely were hungry. We came upon one large encampment, and almost ran out of lunches, until we saw Leigh-Anna and Loren coming down the Boardwalk, and they still had some. Most people were very receptive of the tracts also, but one man wanted to argue about who Jesus was. I told him he could read the tract or not, but I didn't have time to stand there and argue with him. He didn't really want to know the truth anyway; he was arrogant and just wanted to hear himself talk. Angela had fun giving out one particular tract title, and found people very receptive to them. It is one from the Gospel Tract Society called, "Do Good People Go to Heaven?" The rest of the tracts we handed out were the usual from Chick Publications, with many in English and Spanish. I did not have a chance to give out any in any other languages this time. Up at the top end of the Boardwalk, near Rose Ave., is a residential recovery program called "The Phoenix House" and the men who were outside sweeping up and working were all very open and happy to receive the tracts. One young man named Donald asked for

more titles, so he could read them "all"! I gave him about five or six, but that in no way was "all" of the titles we had with us. We just pray that the seed of the gospel was planted, and that the Lord will cause it to grow and bring forth a harvest.

Saturday, November 3, 2007 - Our team for the outreach consisted of Tom, me, Loren, Shannon, Leigh-Anna, and Joe. Yes, Joe came all the way out to Venice from Canyon Country to help with the beach outreach. Joe really enjoyed going out on the outreach, and said, "It was a blast!" Joe had fun giving out the Chick tract "Tiny Shoes" in Spanish, and since he speaks very good Spanish, he would say to the people, "This will bring tears to your eyes" (he said it in Spanish). Leigh-Anna tried to give a tract to one man who said he had a "broken heart", so she gave him "Love Story". We had "Party Girl" and "No Fear?" which are great for the teenagers and young people. One man wouldn't take a "Creator or Liar?" from me, but when I offered him "Party Girl" he took it. As I left, he gave me a kind of sheepish grin, and I said, "Gotcha!" We had razors, soaps, little shampoos (the kind you get in hotels), and all those items were well-received. Of course, the lunches were gratefully received by everyone, and one man commented on how our lunches, with the two cans of Vienna sausages, "Fill you up for the whole day." It was rather poignant, because you knew there were many days when he went hungry. We gave out the usual several hundred tracts in English and Spanish, and I gave out several in Chinese, Hebrew, Russian, and Farsi. There were three different groups of people that wanted Chinese tracts this time: two older couples, and one young man working in a shop. One of the older couples also asked if they could have the same tract in English and Chinese to "Help learn English better." I just happened to have one of the same tract in both English and Chinese. The man who took the tract in Farsi said he was from Afganistan. I asked what language he spoke, and he said "Persian". I said, "You mean Farsi? I have a tract in Farsi!" He was amazed, and had a big smile on his face as I gave him "This Was Your Life" in Farsi. A man sitting next to him asked if we had Russian, and I gave him one in Russian. The Hebrew tract went to another young man working in one of the shops. I offered him one in English first, but then asked if he spoke another language. He said, "Hebrew", so I gave him one in Hebrew, but he also said he wanted the one in English, too. All in all, we had a great time passing out the word of God through these little booklets, and there were quite a few people down at the Boardwalk, even though the weather was cool, and it was no longer the summer season.

Saturday, December 1, 2007 - Saturday, for the outreach, the rain had stopped, but the wind was very cold. Bright and sunny, but chilly. We had Tom, me, Angela, Leigh-Anna, Gordon, John, and Yvonne as our outreach team this time (Loren was in bed with a cold or flu-something she had come down with). We ran out of lunches before we got to the end of the Boardwalk, but we passed out a lot of gospel tracts, and we all had a great time! We found the homeless people to be very grateful for the food, as usual, and Leigh-Anna had brought toothpaste, razors, and we had some soaps and shampoos left over from last time. All of the toiletry items were given out this time, and very much appreciated. One man got weird with Leigh-Anna, saying, "You should have brought sleeping bags, " and when she told him we didn't have any, he threw the lunch back at her. He was probably drunk or mentally ill, but a woman came up and said, "Oh! Don't mind him, he's a big jerk. We all really appreciate what you are doing." We all met and talked with a number of people, some needing shelter, and one guy looking for a church. We directed them to the Bible Tabernacle for shelter, and to Sunrise Church for worship services. We even gave out a flier for the new Spanish-speaking congregation at The Church on Pearl St., where we have our Monday meeting, because one man asked where there was a Spanish church. Speaking of Spanish-speaking people, Amelia was not able to come this time, but I had great success in giving out many Spanish tracts, especially to the employees in the shops, who were setting up the store's wares. Most people we encountered were very open to taking the tracts, whether Spanish or English, and I gave out one in Russian. We gave out the usual several hundred, although maybe there were fewer people out, because of being December. Angela and some others really like giving out the tract, "Do Good People Go to Heaven?", which is a Gospel Tract Society tract, and a great message on how none of us are good enough to get to heaven on our own merits. I always prefer the Chick Publications tracts, and had fun with some of their newer tracts drawn with African-American characters in the story. One young black man looked at the one I gave him and said, "Black characters, huh? Cool!" (Well, it was something to that effect. He may not

have said, "Cool!", but I'm kind of out of it as to the latest slang - ha! Anyway, he liked it).

Prison Ministry

We've been getting the usual amount of new people just from word-of-mouth as someone refers their cellmate or friend to our program, but we are also listed in a prison newsletter at CRC in Norco, and we've been getting quite a few new guys from there. Anywhere from 5 to 14 "Serenity" Bibles per week are being sent out to new people who request them.

Daniel Barker, Pleasant Valley State Prison, Coalinga, CA - "Just to let you know, the Chick Publications pamphlets you sent are all over the yard - and more people than ever are packing into the Friday night services! Coincidence? Nah! The Lord is at work here, and the tracts are helping Him do so!"

Martha Truitt, CCWF, Chowchilla - "Today I'm 10 months clean and sober and I'm very grateful for God giving me the strength just for today. And I have another good news! I'm sending you the answers back for my childhood 4th Step inventory section. I answered the questions to the best of my knowledge, but I won't lie - when I first got this package and read some of the questions, I broke down. It was very uncomfortable and painful to think back and feel those ugly feelings, pain, hurt, mad, not loved or wanted by my mother, to where they came to boil as resentments. It took me weeks to get the full strength to put them down on paper. I cried, I prayed, and I talked to my husband about my feelings about going through my 4th Step childhood inventory. But more than anything I prayed and asked God to give me the strength of going through it and giving it to Him by putting it on paper, so I could free myself. Well, here is my childhood section - I no longer have to drag these painful resentments with me. My next step is to keep working on my adolescence section, and I'll send it to you. Love, Martha"

Kenneth Stanley, Soledad State Prison - "Tom & Dottie, here are my Step 2 lessons, and I guess you can tell I answered questions before reading your paper you sent, "Dealing with Anger". Wow!! Thanks so much, what a great message! Especially at the end of page 2 you start talking about God's will and well into page 3. A light just came on and with it a peace and surrender I had not thought possible. Thank you from my heart for your faithfulness. Your friend, Ken Stanley"

Billy Mayberry, Avenal State Prison - "There is no way you guys can know how much you've blessed me, in all areas of my life. My own family members haven't even come close to what you, Tom and you Dottie, has blessed me with. Although my family loves me, and I love them very much, they don't have what you guys have; such a desire to feed His sheep, and to do His will. Only God knows what is truly in your heart. I'll always thank God for you guys. Your brother in Christ, Billy"

Teddy Aceves, S.A.T.F. Corcoran State Prison - "Thank you for the 4th Step study - it's going to take some time for me to complete it, so bear with me! You guys are different from other prisoner ministries..... you help me through my addictions and attitudes and personal issues that has shaped my life. Now, Christ is my life! Thank you for the info on the Bible Tabernacle. Please pray that our Heavenly Father will open the door for me to go to their New Life Institute. I really wish to go there and grow in my faith in the Lord. I feel the calling of God every day to evangelize and preach the gospel (as I do in here) to all who need to hear how Jesus changed me! Also, thank you so very much for the Bible study on Paradise and Hades..... it helps clear up a lot of theological nonsense I've picked up! Praise God! I love you both in Christ, Teddy Aceves"

Tony Schiffman, Federal Correctional Institution, Florence, CO - "I would like to take time to thank you for your ministry. As I may have said in my initial letter, I have been attending AA and working a program for several years; just under six years, and four of which I've been in prison as part of a relapse gone bad. Is there ever a relapse gone good? I do

suppose, thanks to the Lord, your ministry, AA and several other factors, I can now call this a "relapse gone good". These last four years have really been a spiritual awakening for me. I have been stuck on doing my 4th Step, and when Duke introduced me to your ministry, doors have opened. And I thank you sincerely for your love and effort. I have enjoyed doing the first and second Steps again, in a different light, and I feel in a more thorough and honest way. I'm not rushing anything - I don't want to miss anything that I may have missed in the past, but I am anxious to do my 4th Step and move on. For a long time, I struggled with doing a 4th Step, and mostly because when it came time to do it, I was stuck in a prison without AA. The prison I'm in now has AA with outside volunteers. That is helpful, but truly, I feel my most help is coming from God, but through your ministry. I appreciate the personal touch you give when you share your life with me."

Ramiro Fonseca, CMC West, San Luis Obispo - "Tom and Dottie, you are helping a lot of people like me to become better humans and to obey and respect God's commands. You teach me a lot about God's love for me and for the world. I pray for you guys every time I can and God knows I'm very grateful with you people for all the good things you guys do for me. I'm very happy to call you my brother and sister in Christ. Amen. Love lifted me up also. I was down, but now I'm up all the way. Let me tell you, I'm putting all my effort to this course to learn and to get a better view of my addiction. I want you guys to know you are really helping me a lot, especially with my inner self, which was the most important thing I used to be damaged in. But I believe now in myself - I know I can be a better person with the help and protection of our Lord Jesus Christ. I do know everything is possible, and I'm happy now. I don't need nothing to be happy - Jesus is my happiness. Amen."

Edna Hanshaw, Calif. Institute for Women, Corona - "Hello! I pray you are in the best of health and God's great spirits. Dottie and Tom, God is really blessing me with your studies. I'm in a Walden House program, but I feel I'm going to get more out of doing your Bible study and 12-Step lessons. God has blessed you with a gift of helping people understand more about God, as well as sending a wonderful letter that is very uplifting and has helped me a lot. I just wanted to let you know I look forward to receiving your studies."

Thor Vang, Avenal State Prison - "Just writing to let you know that I appreciated you sharing Steps 8 & 9 with me. It took me a few days to make a list of all persons that I had harmed. When I finished my list, for those I wasn't able to see in the flesh, I wrote to them. On Dec. 15, 2007, my parents and two of my siblings came to visit me that day. I had a great time enjoying their company. I waited until two hours before visiting was over, then I told my family about Steps 8 & 9 and that I wanted to make direct amends to my mother and father, because I had harmed them. We talked about a lot of things that I've done when I was younger, and after almost two hours of speech, we came to terms. All of us were in joyful tears that we apologized to each other and forgave each other. After making amends with my parents, it felt so good to finally leave all the burden behind us. Now, I feel that my relationship with my parents and family will be a fresh beginning. My visiting was great and my future with my family is just getting better. Now, we can move on to succeed in other things in life."