

Ministry Update - 4th Quarter, 2011

Twelve Step Program

In October, November, and December, 2011 we covered Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve in our meetings, and we started over at Step One in January, 2012. Our 12-Step program is 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. It is also about the power of God setting us free from bondage to worry, anxiety and fear. 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, in mind, heart and emotions. Even if there is never a substance abuse problem, this psychological damage may erupt later in life in marriage problems, panic attacks, and other debilitating problems. 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. Because our program is a Bible-based 12-Step program, it is much broader-based than simply a program to help overcome addictions and prevent relapse. Our 12-Step program and Bible study courses include principles that would normally be taught in "anger management" and "conflict resolution" classes, among other things, because those are all biblical principles. The goal of our program is not mere sobriety, but becoming like Jesus Christ.

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

We have a monthly evangelistic outreach to the Venice Beach and Boardwalk area near us. We believe evangelism is important, so we give out hundreds of gospel tracts, and we also take sack lunches to the homeless community at the beach. Since Step 12 in our program is about getting the message of Jesus Christ out to others, these outreaches are good opportunities for those working on their own recovery to step out of their "comfort zone" and reach out to others in the name of Jesus. **Saturday, October 8, 2011** - Saturday morning, we had Tom, me, Billy, Daniel, Catharine, Shami, Frank, Keith, Bob, Bobby, and Brian show up to go out on the Venice Beach outreach. We had 117 lunches for the homeless, some toiletries and socks, and a few items of clothing, and a few pairs of shoes. Shami said they gave out one shoe to a lady who had only one leg. Everyone was grateful for the food, socks and other items we handed out, and after all that was gone, we just continued to give out gospel tracts to anyone and everyone who would take one. Shami, Catharine and Daniel's group gave a new denim coat to a homeless man named Frank, and it was the perfect size for him. They also prayed for a lot of people, and Ricky, Kevin and Kenny all prayed to receive Jesus as their Savior. In fact, Ricky even came up to them and asked for prayer. They also prayed for James, an out-of-work construction worker who is now homeless. They had prayed for a man named Fred last month, and he told them God had answered their prayers, and he would be moving into some HUD housing in a few days. I talked to a man named David, who took a tract, and when I asked him where he was from, he said that he lived "all over the world" (a fancy way of saying he was homeless?). Keith met a young man named Chris, who was passing out small New Testaments. Keith gave him some of our tracts in exchange for some of his Bibles, and they were both passing out tracts and Bibles. Brian prayed for a homeless woman named Tamara, and she in turn prayed for him. We all thought people were very open to receiving the gospel tracts, and we gave out several hundred in English and Spanish, and one in Arabic.

Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor,
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives,
and recovering of sight to the blind;
to set at liberty those who are oppressed." Luke 4:18

Matthew 25:35-36 "For I was hungry and you gave Me food;
I was thirsty and you gave Me drink;
I was a stranger and you took Me in;
I was naked and you clothed Me;
I was sick and you visited me;
I was in prison, and you came to Me."

Saturday, November 5, 2011 - Saturday, the weather was indeed beautiful, and we had a great beach outreach. We got off to a late start, because the guys coming from the Bible Tabernacle out in Canyon Country were almost an hour late. It seems their van broke down, but we prayed and trusted the Lord that He had a reason for us going down to the Boardwalk later than usual. Maybe there would be some people there that He wanted us to reach with the gospel, and if we'd gone earlier, we wouldn't have met up with them. The members of our team this time were Tom, me, Daniel, Shami, Tia, Billy Counts, and the Witnessing Team guys from Canyon Country: Frank, Ararat, Mitch, and Brian. It all worked out great, with Tom staying at home to provide prayer cover for the rest of us. Some real prayer warriors went to the Boardwalk, too, and Shami, Tia and Daniel's group prayed for a lot of people, with many of them praying to receive Jesus as their Savior. Some of the ones who prayed to receive Christ were: Charles, Doug, Joe, Jose (and he had made a little cross necklace for Shami), Allen, Claudette, Justine, Jeremy (they were a very young couple), Ray, Melissa, Arthur, Zoni, and Eric. Eric's friend Nick said he didn't want to pray to receive Christ, but we will keep praying for him, and maybe at least a seed was planted with him. Ararat and Mitch also prayed for several people, and a man named Bobby asked for prayer for healing for his eyes. Billy and I ran out of lunches before we were halfway down the Boardwalk, but when we met up with Sjami, Tia and Daniel's group, they still had some lunches, and gave us some. As we were leaving them, I saw a young woman, and wasn't sure if she was homeless or not. Then, I saw her go over to a young man, and they had all their stuff there covered with tarps (it had been raining the day before). I asked if they needed any food, and when they saw the lunches, their faces brightened up, and they were so thankful. Each lunch already has a gospel tract inside, but I gave them another one, too. All in all, we gave out 116 lunches to the homeless, one pair of shoes, and lots of socks and toiletries. We had lots of toothpaste and tooth brushes this time, and it seemed like that was what people wanted most. We gave out a lot of gospel tracts to tourists and people who were just down at the Boardwalk for a Saturday morning, some to the vendors, and some to the homeless. We gave out lots of tracts in English and Spanish, and one in Arabic, and one in Thai. The man who asked for Arabic had gotten one last time, but I found another one in Arabic that he hadn't read. He was so happy to get it, that he sort of bowed and kissed it, and smiled a big smile. As usual, we give God all the glory, and trust Him to cause the gospel seeds to grow and produce a harvest for His kingdom.

Saturday, December 3, 2011 - It was such a blessing to go down to the Boardwalk and Venice Beach today! The members of our group were Tom, me, Daniel, Shami, Catharine, Jordan, Billy, and a few members of the Bible Tabernacle "Witnessing Team" from Canyon Country: Ararat, Mitch, and Brian. Tom stayed at home to provide prayer cover for the rest of us. We took 120 lunches for the homeless (each one has a gospel tract inside, too), as well as various toiletries such as toothpaste and tooth brushes, soap, little shampoos, and lots of socks, and some sweatshirts. Also, Tikva from church made up a total of 24 backpacks, and inside each one was a pair of underwear, two pairs of socks, a knit cap, a toothpaste and tooth brushes, and a soap. We obviously didn't have enough of those to give to every homeless person we found, but we tried to wait until we came upon people in smaller groups, such as three or four at a time. Ararat, Mitch, and Brian brought a huge box of toiletries that someone had donated to the BT, and we gave out some, and have a lot left over for several more outreaches. Praise the Lord! Catharine, Shami and Daniel's group prayed for a lot of people and they saw a guy they had prayed for a month or so ago. His name is Fred, and Catharine had literally crawled into his tent and prayed with him when he was homeless and camping out on the beach. He's an older man, and she prayed for him to find an assisted living place where he could live (also prayed for healing, as his legs were very swollen). Today, they saw him cleaned up and dressed in nice clothes, and he said he got into a place shortly after Catharine had prayed for him that time. He was just down at the boardwalk visiting his old

friends, and he was so thankful for the prayers, and for God, who had helped him find a place to live. They almost didn't recognize Fred, as he looked so good, and his legs were much better, too. Another man, Eziel, was in a wheelchair, and they prayed for healing for his feet, too. A woman named Cece was praying when they walked up to her, and they gave her a lunch and one of the sweatshirts. She was so happy, and gave God the glory. She also said she realizes she needs to find a Christian community for fellowship. We all had a great time passing out the lunches, backpacks, and other items, and then just handing out gospel tracts when the other stuff was gone. Billy had three of the backpacks left, but no lunches, and he gave them to a group who were camping out on the grass. Immediately, one of the girls put her backpack on, and rode away on her skateboard. We saw her later, along with a few other people also sporting their new backpacks. My favorite thing is giving out the little gospel booklets, and we gave one to a young boy (maybe ten or twelve years old?), and he was reading it when we came back. I said, "Oh, you like that? Would you like another one?" He smiled and took another tract. I'm sure it makes Jesus happy to see the children "coming unto Him" as they read these little booklets.

Matthew 19:14 "But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

Prison Ministry

Dereck Phillips, Ironwood State Prison, Blythe, CA - "Thank you both for everything you are doing for me. I sent a letter to the Bible Tabernacle, and if I can go there, that will help me out a ton. I don't know if I'm going to be released. Hopefully I will, God willing, but no matter what happens, I will stay positive and try to walk with and for God. I'm learning so much and Scriptures seem to come in your letters that help me deal with the dilemmas I'm going through. Thank you for your support. I was feeling down and alone again, and I felt your support and God's. Once again, thank you and God bless you. Please take care, and I can't wait until Step 4. Dereck Phillips"

Ernesto Gallegos, California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility - State Prison, Corcoran, CA - "I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking time out of your very busy schedule to help me to learn about God and to help me become a better man. Thanks again, and may God always bless the both of you. Love, Ernie"

Frank Ford, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "I feel that I'm doing well in the working of all of the Steps. Most importantly, God now controls my will in all that I do! Giving my will over to my "Higher Power" has set me free. Through His power I have learned to not have any bitterness and anger over the past. That has really helped me to do things one day at a time, as I have no worries about the future. Thank you both - I am grateful. God bless, and may your holidays be full of joy, and also a healthy new year. Frank Ford"

Sylvestre Beltran, Avenal State Prison - "This is Sylvestre Beltran here in Avenal. I am on Step 10 in the 12-Step correspondence program. God is so good to me! He gives me a new heart, a new spirit, a new outlook on life, a new vision. I see beauty in this world and in people. I see and feel the love He has for me through my new family members I have in Christ Jesus. Thank You, Lord, for Tom & Dottie Hooper. Thank You for their love to You that pours out to us here in prison. Thank You for the warmth that my heart feels now when I receive Your love through them, through letters and correspondence. Praise God! Your brother in Christ, Sylvestre Beltran"

Timmy O'Neil Charity, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "I received the lessons for Steps 8 & 9, and thank you for your ministry. I joined secular AA in 1984, and have incorporated the Steps into my life. Now, through your ministry, I am able to work them through my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior on February 4, 1996. With Jesus as my Guiding Light, I was able to make my list and my amends for Steps 8 & 9. I have been incarcerated for thirty-one years. I'm not angry or bitter, but grateful that God still has need of me. In God's love and peace, Tim Charity"

Betty Mills, Valley State Prison for Women, Chowchilla, CA - "Well, my Parole Board hearing was held in August, and I was told to try again in three years. Thank you for the support letter, it was very helpful. One of the Commissioners, a Mr. Prizmich, knew of and spoke very highly of your program. I really appreciate all your help. All in all, I feel that my hearing was blessed, and that it may set the tone for my next hearing, as everything was in order, and the Commissioner said I was almost there, and to keep up the good work. I was disappointed, but I trust in God, and I know it will happen for me according to His plan. Please take care and write back soon. I am enclosing my Bible study with this letter. Love in Christ, Betty Ann"

Darryl Alexander, Soledad State Prison - "I was so happy to receive my Step One lesson, which I've completed and I'm mailing back. I'm excited to be a part of this ministry, and I'm committed to the Lord Jesus Christ and to my sobriety. I've been born again since 1995, but I have had trials during this walk with the Lord. Before I repented of my sins, I was lost as lost could be. I come from a Christian home, but in my teens, I went astray to drugs and gang activity. Because of that lifestyle, I took a man's life in 1985. I was sentenced at the age of eighteen to serve a sentence of 25-years-to-life. I tried everything to make me happy and accepted, but all left me empty inside, and needing to hide the pain. I tried Islam, I tried alcohol and drugs, but I was left empty with no joy in my life. But since I truly turned to the Lord Jesus, I have grown stronger in my relationship with God. I have dedicated myself to the study of God's word, and now I teach and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. May the Lord continue to bless you as you share His word and help many in their recovery. I appreciate your ministry so very much. In Christ Jesus, Darryl Alexander"

Norman Smith, Pleasant Valley State Prison, Coalinga, CA - "By the time that you get this letter, I'll be close to being transferred down south. I'm just waiting for the bus to pick me up to take me to RJ Donovan, which is in San Diego County. That will have me very close to home. You see I also live in San Diego County, and if they ever change the Three Strikes law, I will be close to actually getting out. Please pray for me that it happens. And just in case it does happen, I'm going to have to say it is pretty much thanks to you both for having me be as positive and in good spirits, and being the very positive person that I am now. You see, I was in real bad shape before I started to become part of your Bible studies, and I have to say it is because of you, and I thank you for it. One thing I can say is, if I do get released, I promise I'm going to start to do some of the things that you two have been doing. I see how a person can be blessed, and that is by helping those in need. I have learned that from you two. May God continue to bless you both. Love, Norman"