

“Love Lifted Me Recovery” - January, 2014
Newsletter for October, November, December, 2013
Pastors/Chaplains Tom & Dottie Hooper

Weekly Twelve Step Meetings

In October, November, and December, we always cover Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve in our meetings, and we start over at Step One in January. 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. See our website: www.LoveLiftedMeRecovery.com for more information.

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

We continue to have our 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 5, 2013 – Saturday was beautiful weather for the outreach, and that usually means more people down at the Boardwalk, too. No, it's not summer anymore, but we had a hot spell, so it felt almost like summer. The members of our team this time were Tom, me, Bob, Keith, Chris, Catharine, Shami, Frank, Mitch, Robert, Ararat, Brendan, and two first-timers, Jaime and Mike. Mike shared that he had been homeless and lived on the Boardwalk himself, so we asked if he'd ever received a lunch from us. He said he remembered some people handing out lunches, but wasn't sure if it was us. I told him we'd been doing this for about nine years now, so it probably was from us. We had 121 lunches this time, plus socks and toiletries. Each lunch contains a can of Vienna sausages, an individually-wrapped stack of saltine crackers, a fruit cup, a bottle of water, a little bag of cookies, and some peanut butter crackers, plus a napkin and fork, and most important, a gospel tract. Since this was October, we included the latest Halloween tract, entitled “Spooky”, from Chick Publications. After handing out all the food and other items to the homeless, we continued to walk up and down the Venice Boardwalk handing out more gospel tracts. Some were the Halloween tracts, and others were just regular gospel tracts, in English and Spanish. The guys from the Bible Tabernacle also had lots of copies of “Our Daily Bread” which they

passed out, some to the homeless, and some to passers-by on the Boardwalk. Brendon gave out one Bible, and the other guys gave out a few New Testaments. Most of the people were receptive to the tracts, and most of the homeless people were grateful for the food, socks and toiletries. We did have a couple of instances of homeless people who refused the lunch and cursed against God and Jesus. We usually don't run into those kinds of people, but there were a few down at the Boardwalk this time. Both Bob and Chris had run-ins with someone who ranted and raved against Christians, Christianity in general, and Jesus. They stayed and tried to talk to them, but finally just had to move on. Brendan and Ararat also said they ran into a couple of guys who cursed God - maybe it was the same ones. Catharine and Shami prayed for a lot of the homeless people they saw, as well as giving them food, socks, and toiletries. They prayed with Edward for healing for his foot, and prayed with a man named Chris, who needed a job. Again, most of the people were entirely thankful and grateful for what was being given to them, so we didn't let the few "bad apples" spoil our day. Even Jesus said that not all of our seed of the word of God would fall on good soil (Luke 8:4-15).

Saturday, November 2, 2013 – Today, we had a small group, but enough people to do the job. We had Tom, Dottie, Shami, Bob, Daniel, Frank, Brian, Mitch and Jaime. We had made 121 lunches, and had lots of toiletry/hygiene items in little baggies, lots of socks, and a few pairs of jeans and some jackets. Every homeless person who received food, clothing and other items from us was truly grateful and thankful, and we got many "God bless you"s from them. We also gave out several hundred gospel tracts in English and Spanish. I saw three boys playing cards, and they looked to be about ten or eleven years old. I gave each one a little gospel comic book, and they all wanted to see what the other ones had, so they each ended up taking several different titles. Later, we saw them walking along the Boardwalk still reading their booklets. Frank, Mitch, Brian and Jaime prayed with a lot of the homeless people, and so did Shami and Daniel. Bob gave his testimony to many, and Daniel also witnessed to a couple, and gave them a great gospel presentation (the man was from France, and said his name was "Papillion"). Shami and Daniel saw a woman on the beach, and she said her name was Kay Lou. She had hitchhiked here from Oregon, and was desperately in need of everything. They gave her food, socks, a pair of jeans, and toiletries, and when they prayed for her, she had tears running down her face. She was barefoot, and her feet were in bad condition, and she really appreciated the socks. Another woman also said her feet got so cold at night, and thanked us for the socks. Jaime met Mariah, a woman he used to work with who was now homeless. He talked with her and prayed with her, and encouraged her to get her life back together. I gave tracts to two men, and asked if they needed food, or if they were okay. They said they were okay, but a homeless man up on the grassy area heard me, and started waving and hollering, "I need one! I need one!" I climbed up the little hill and gave him a lunch, socks, and toiletries. He was very happy and thankful. Brian and Frank prayed for a woman named Priscilla, and she asked to pray for them afterwards. They said they were very moved by her prayer.

Saturday, December 7, 2013 – The day started out with sprinkling, and the weather forecast was for 90 percent chance of rain. We had been praying that God would hold off the rain until after we got back from the outreach, but I guess He had other ideas. Those that showed up in the rain were Frank, Mitch, Ararat and Mike from the BT in Canyon Country, and Daniel and Shami. Tom stayed home to cover us in prayer. It was raining quite steadily the whole time we were out, and we told people that only Jesus could have gotten us up and out of the house on a morning like this. Most of the homeless people were huddling under awnings or the "gazebos" as I call them (concrete umbrella-like structures along the Boardwalk). Shami and I gave out all of our lunches, and let most of the people take two, since the brown paper bags were getting soaked in the rain. Everyone was very grateful for the food, socks and toiletries we had to give them. Shami had brought some hats, and they were well-received also, especially by one bald-headed guy whose head was entirely uncovered. Shami and I went back to the car to get more lunches, and the Canyon Country guys kept going down the Boardwalk. Daniel had said he would meet us down there, but he didn't see Shami and me, and ended up going with the BT guys.

They gave out all of their lunches, and again, most of the people were huddling under awnings for shelter from the rain. There was a marathon going on (they didn't let the rain stop them, either), and when the marathon runners came by, Daniel had to run alongside them for a bit in order to cross over to the other side of the Boardwalk to reach the homeless people. As Shami and I left to come home, we were told by the police that we had to take a detour because of the marathon, and drive down Speedway to get home. Now, Speedway is essentially an alley that runs alongside the beach, so we began to see homeless people congregated under carports along the alleyway. I would pull the car up and Shami would jump out and offer them lunches, socks and toiletries. One group of about eight people were all under one carport, and when one man saw the lunches, he said, "It must be magic!" I told him, "No, it isn't magic, it's Jesus." He gave me a "funny" look. We all prayed that the fact that we cared enough to come out in the rain to minister to these people would be a good testimony of the love of God. Maybe someone just needed to know that Jesus cares enough about them to send us out in the rain and cold. Obviously, because of the rain, we couldn't hand out the tracts to tourists as we usually do (there were none down there), but each lunch has a gospel tract inside, and the BT guys gave out two Bibles, as well. We all got wet, but we had an adventure, and it was fun to do something different. Maybe there were people down those alleys that needed to hear the gospel, and maybe we wouldn't have seen them on our normal walk along the Boardwalk. We won't know until we get to heaven.

"When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor your rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." (Luke 14:12-14)

Prison Ministry

Our dear friend Billy Counts has gone home to be with Jesus, having died quietly in his sleep on December 22, 2013. We wrote to Billy for several years (2007 to 2010) when he was in prison, and he paroled out a little over three years ago, stayed at the Bible Tabernacle for almost two years, and then got married and moved into an apartment in the San Fernando Valley. He was working full-time and taking college classes at night. Now he has graduated to heaven with his B.A. degree (Born Again). We will miss him very much.

Reginald Murray, Substance Abuse Treatment Facility, Corcoran, CA - "I am writing to you this day with regard to continuing our relationship in my recovery. I have recently completed your Twelve Step recovery program of Love Lifted Me Recovery. I would like to start over with the Twelve Steps. I really got a lot out of the first time around, but I feel that there's more there that I need to discover to strengthen my sobriety. I would also like to take a Bible study course, if you have one that is suitable for a 44-year-old man trying to get his life back on track after 25 years in prison. I hope that you can continue to be of assistance to my sobriety and quest for freedom. God bless you and keep you safe always. Respectfully yours, Reginald Murray"

Kevin Johnson, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "I don't know if I say enough of what you both do for us inmates. But if you don't hear it enough, this time I want you to know I appreciate you both from the heart. You're showing that it doesn't take much to care for and help those who need a "push" from time to time. Sincerely appreciate you both, Kevin"

Arprubertito Bontilao, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "I am writing to you to say "thank you" and I appreciate you both for guiding me in a positive way of living. I have to keep myself strong internally, externally and spiritually. Without your guidance and teaching through spiritual Twelve Steps

and Bible study, my tools in my toolbox might possibly rust, but now my tools are always sharp and glossy, that no one can easily damage. I believe God sent you both to me to strongly guide me in a real road. I have not experienced this type of guidance through my parents, so you both are like my parents now. I thank you for everything. Sincerely your servant in Christ, Art”

Jesse Raffensberger, Centinela State Prison, Imperial, CA - “I just wanted to introduce myself and say thank you for going over these Steps with me. It’s truly God’s hand at work. I gave my life over to God and accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior just a couple of years ago. There is still a lot of the Bible I do not know, but I do know that Jesus died on the cross for me. Since the day I let the Lord into my heart, my life has not been the same. Again, I just want to say thank you for your time. God bless, Jesse”

Mary Elizabeth Campbell, Calif. Institution for Women, Corona, CA - “I’m fine and doing well. God is giving me the direction, strength and courage to do all things through Christ who strengthens me. You asked about the puppy program that I am in, and it’s called “Pathways to Hope Prison Puppy Program.” We train dogs to be a service dog for kids with autism. Our program has been in operation since 2012 here at CIW. Thank you for all you do. Sincerely, Mary”

Margaret Doughty, Central California Women’s Facility, Chowchilla, CA - “Thank you for being there for my recovery process, and I thank you both for being supportive of me. It has a huge impact on our lives. By doing your 12-Step program, I have become more open in SAP (Substance Abuse Program). I have also grown to understand that I was mis-taught on my beliefs and values in life. Now that I’ve had time to explore those things, I’ve let them go and started over with a new conception about life. I am a strong believer in Jesus Christ, and He has made me strong. Jesus loves me like no one else does. Stay close to Jesus always, Margaret”

Raul Castillo, Centinela State Prison, Imperial, CA - “Let me share a little bit of what our Lord and Savior Jesus is doing within me and with me: I know I am special in the eyes of our Creator. I know my Lord and Savior Jesus has been watching over me since I was conceived, but I didn’t know it. Little by little, I have been seeing His hand working in my life and lately it is more evident. Here in prison, I have been able to stay out of everything that destroys lives and again and again I see our God’s hand. I know that life is not easy - we live in a world where sin is the ruler, but our Lord Jesus does make the difference. I am glad that my Lord and Savior Jesus changed the course of my life in which I was living. Tom and Dottie, thank you very much for the love that you are sharing with me. For many years I prayed to get enrolled in a program in which I would be able to do the Twelve Steps of AA, but I am getting much more than just the Steps - I am getting the true love of our Lord Jesus. Sincerely, Raul Castillo”

Edin Misael Madrid, Corcoran State Prison - “I’m only 22, and have been involved in the gang lifestyle since I was a kid, but have just recently decided to change my life and let God lead me in my life! I need all the guidance I can get. I have to thank you on behalf of every prisoner for the work you both do. You guys are incredible people, and after reading your testimonies, I found the courage in me that will help me know that everything will be good. You guys are a great example of what the Lord does to those who live by His name. I hope that when I do get out I can help assist you guys and give my own testimony. God bless, Edin Misael”

Gregory Tillis, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - “I can’t thank the two of you enough for all you do for people such as myself. With each lesson I get a better understanding of myself, past and present, as well as the Bible and God. Yes, I am still learning and have a long way to go, but with each Step I can honestly say I can see in me the “new birth” ahead. May God continue to bless the two of you and all that you do. Sincerely yours, Greg”