

Ministry Update - 1st Quarter, 2011

Twelve Step Meetings

In the months of January, February and March, our meetings are studying the first three Steps of the Twelve Steps. Here is part of our introduction to Step One: **Step 1 - We admitted we were powerless over our dependencies - that our lives had become unmanageable.**

Powerless - if we can get to a point where we are able to be honest and admit our powerlessness over even life itself, then we have come to a place where a loving God can and will empower us to take healthy control of our lives. Just as little children are totally dependent on others to supply their needs, we must get to this place where we are dependent on God. When we do, it will open a door to restoration and enable us to use the tools needed to lift us up and out of the pain and shame of our lives.

Unmanageable - If indeed your life has become unmanageable and you feel powerless to do anything about it, you are in the right place! The First Step is to recognize that life is bigger than you are - you can't control everything! Whether you suffer from substance abuse, relational abuse (co-dependency), depression or inability to function in life because of abuse in your childhood, etc. (family dysfunctions), you will gain new insights and strength to enable you to understand why you are here and how to get past it. You will learn what causes "stinkin' thinkin'" and destructive patterns of behavior, and how they can be replaced with healthy thinking, relationships, and life-styles, thus bringing you to a place of peace and understanding. You will learn just what and who a loving Heavenly Father is, and how He wants His children to have peace and happiness. You will receive incredible power from our Creator as you conform to His will for your life. This of course is a process, and that is why it is broken up into the Twelve Steps. If you will make an honest commitment to yourself to WORK the entire Twelve Steps and stick with us, I guarantee by this time next year, you will be able to look at life and love, trust and happiness, in a much healthier way. There will be brightness in the future where now there may be only dimness and not a lot of hope.

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, January 8, 2011 - Today, our group for the outreach consisted of: Tom, Dottie, Angela, Sheldon, Daniel, Gordon, Yvonne, Alycia, Anthony and Billy. We split up into two groups, as usual, and each group passed out our lunches quite quickly. We had 105 lunches, lots of toiletries and socks, and a few jackets and clothing items. Everything was greatly appreciated by the homeless people we met. At last month's outreach, a woman named Meryl asked if we had any mittens, but we didn't have any then. I found her this time, and gave her a brand new pair of warm mittens I had bought just for her. I gave a nice, warm hooded sweatshirt to a young man who only had on a thin shirt, and then had wrapped himself in a flimsy shawl. He was really happy to get it, and it looked like it would fit him. Daniel, Sheldon and Angela said they found a lot of people who wanted to talk and have prayer, and all the homeless people were very grateful to receive the lunches and other "goodies". Billy gave a lunch to a man who said he wanted the lunch, but didn't need the bottle of water. Later, we ran into a group of young people, and a girl asked for just water. Praise the Lord! Billy had that extra bottle of water to give her, and we also gave her several gospel tracts. Someone had donated a large jacket, and Alycia gave it to a thin man who looked very cold. Once the food and other items were passed out, we concentrated on just handing out gospel tracts. Anthony gave tracts to some vendors who said they would give them out to other people, and place them on their tables. We saw quite a few different vendors this time, and many new faces among the homeless, and they all seemed open to receiving the tracts. Among the homeless, we saw some oldtimers we recognized and who recognized us, but maybe some had found a homeless shelter somewhere to get out of the cold winter weather. Angela went over to the skateboard area, and she said the older teenagers weren't very receptive, but the younger ones, pre-teens, reached out their hands and almost grabbed the tracts from her. As

usual, we gave out many tracts in English and Spanish, and I also ran into some people who spoke Swedish, near one of the small hotels, and surprised them with a tract in Swedish.

Saturday, February 5, 2011 - Saturday, we had a blessed time down at Venice Beach and the Venice Boardwalk. Our outreach team consisted of Tom, Dottie, Alycia, Catharine, Shami, Joe, and Michael. We had 106 lunches, and various items of clothing such as socks and jackets, and a few pairs of pull-on pants, and lots of hygiene items/toiletries. We had a nice, warm jacket donated by my mother, and Michael found a homeless woman whom it fit perfectly. Catharine, Shami and Michael found a deaf man, and Catharine was able to use the little bit of sign language she knew to explain to him what they were doing. All of the homeless people were very thankful, as usual, for the food and other things we were able to give them. Many said, "Thank you!" Joe told them, "Don't thank us, thank God." After giving out all the lunches and other things, we continued up and down the Boardwalk handing out gospel tracts. Both Joe and Michael speak a little Spanish, so they offered Spanish tracts to people in their own language. When Joe gives out the Chick tract "Tiny Shoes" in Spanish ("Los Zapatitos"), he always says to them, in Spanish, "This will make you cry." We were handing out Spanish tracts to some of the vendors who have set up tables to sell things, and one older man came running over to us. He heard that we had little books in Spanish, and he wanted some. At another table, I gave a vendor a gospel tract in Arabic. He said he was from Egypt, and we talked for a few minutes about how bad things were in his country right now. As we were walking back to the car, Alycia, Joe and I handed tracts to two young men. One of them refused to take a tract, but the other one said he loved them, and wanted several different ones. I ended up talking to them for about ten minutes, giving them a little of Tom's and my testimony and how we started our ministry. I asked their names, and Kyle was the one who refused a tract, and Kane was the one who wanted them. After talking to them, Kyle said he would take a tract after all. When he opened it up, he said, "Oh, it's a comic book!" I guess he didn't even know what he was refusing. By the time I was through talking to them, they said they were even interested in coming to our Monday recovery meeting.

Saturday, March 5, 2011 - We had a great time down at the Venice Boardwalk today. Tom stayed home to cover us in prayer (his back was hurting, and he couldn't do that much walking), and the ones who went out to the beach and Boardwalk were Dottie, Gordon, Catharine, Daniel, Mark and Yvonne. We had 107 lunches, and a ton of toiletries, socks, knit caps, and used clothing such as jackets and sweatshirts. After all the cold weather we'd been having, the jackets and knit caps were really appreciated. As usual, the homeless people we met were very grateful to receive the lunches, clothing, and other items. Meryl, the woman who had asked me for mittens a few months ago, said she needed a sweatshirt. We had one that fit her perfectly, and she said, "This has made my day!" Among the homeless, we saw Jan, Marcy, and Jerry, who are down there every month, but we also saw a lot of new faces. After the food and clothing were gone, we continued to hand out the gospel tracts. One young man asked for several different gospel tracts, and another lady (one of the vendors) ran up to us and asked for Spanish tracts. When I gave her several different ones in Spanish, she was happily surprised. When we passed the Phoenix House, a recovery house for men, some men were out on the steps, and they all took tracts. We told them we also have a 12-Step program, including our prison ministry. Of course, the Phoenix House is different, in that it is secular, and not Christian, and also that it is a residential program. All in all, we had an excellent outreach, and prayed that the Lord would use the seed of His word which was planted to bring many souls to faith in Jesus Christ.

"Now the parable is this: **The SEED is the WORD of GOD.** Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their HEARTS, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation (testing) fall away. And the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. **But the ones that fell on the GOOD GROUND are those who, having heard the WORD with a NOBLE and GOOD HEART, keep it and bear fruit with patience.**"

Luke 8:12-15

Prison Ministry

Daniel Sierra, State Prison/Conservation Camp, Santa Clarita, Calif. - "I was wanting to know if I could do the 12-Steps lessons over again. There are some guys here as well, that want to do them. I need to get some things off my chest again, as well as do the Steps over, and I felt it would be best to do them with the guys, since we all need some help, and we can be there for one another. Enclosed are the names of the guys that want to do the Steps as well as receive a Serenity Bible. They need Bibles and studies, and I just need the studies. I hope you can help out with this, so we can better ourselves, and we will all do our best to get the lessons back to you in a timely manner. Until next time, your brother in Christ, Daniel Sierra"

Sylvestre Beltran, Avenal State Prison, Avenal, CA - "Hello, well first I want to give thanks to you two and to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for you guys' ministry and obedience to your calling. You guys provide a lot to so many inmates, as well as people on the street. When I think about you guys, I think of how I experience God's love. Tom and Dottie, when I found out about your 12-Step correspondence program, I knew it was what I wanted and needed, and it is helpful. I've been learning that I need to explore my past, not to dwell on it, or use it for excuses, but to see where I can be holding reservations or resentment. I put into action the Steps to come to terms with them, and ask the Lord to heal me, so I can be healed, and then heal others, and get rid of anything that may hinder my walk with Christ. Amen!"

Victor Blank, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "I want to say thank you for the Bible course and your time and effort. This last Bible study lesson sure had a lot about judging others and judgment in it! I have to say that they really make me open my eyes and realize a lot about myself, and how I act and think. It makes me realize that it is so much better to be in a positive manner as God wants us to be, and treat others with respect and also have integrity in our lives."

Shann Sevier, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "Well, I received the Step 3 lessons yesterday evening, which I have already completed. I enjoy doing them immensely and I look forward to receiving each new one every week or so. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to build myself up internally. I truly do pray that our relationship will grow and last a lifetime. All of my life, I haven't ever had anyone to be a mentor to me or to take the time to give me good counseling. I look forward to calling you and having fellowship with you long after I am free. I am paroling to the Los Angeles area, so staying in touch will be very easy. When I look back on my life, it sure would be nice if I could go back to those days and start my life from there with what I know now to be true about life. How did I ever allow myself to succumb to a false sense of reality? I guess when we fall off course and lose our spiritual connection with God, we forget our real purpose in life. I truly pray that one day God will put me in the right situation in life where I can be of assistance to people like you and Tom are to us. I have so much love, admiration, and appreciation for the two of you. Thank you so much for everything. Until next time, God bless you. Love and respect always, Shann"

Saotamaitai Tausaga, California Institute for Women, Corona, CA - "Greetings to you both in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you for the Bible studies, it really helps me to learn more about knowing God and living the right way. I kept saying to myself that I want to give Him my all, and I don't think I would be in this place if I had. Well, like He says, we all fall short of the glory of God, and I want to continue on living for Him for He is worthy to be praised. Well, I just thought I would write this short note to let you both know that you are always remembered in my prayers. May God bless you both. Till next time. Sincerely, Saotamaitai Tausaga"

Renato Lopez, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "This is a never-ending appreciation that I have towards you guys. I know all the effort, dedication and love that you guys put into this outstanding and powerful ministry that has touched me every time I get a

response from you guys. So, I thought I could give you guys a little bit back of the little talent I have (he sent us a beautiful drawing of Jesus - we are getting it framed). I know it is not much, but I sure did it with all my heart. I love that you guys are helping me develop through Jesus Christ. Please, take this drawing in gratitude for all the phenomenal changes that you guys are helping me with in my spiritual growth."

Yesica Cambero, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla - "I really enjoyed your mail. That was different, I like the way you communicate with us "behind the walls" - you're truly an angel. I wish you and your family the best. Thank you for taking time from your busy life for us. You've really touched my heart. I am a new student of yours, and I am sentenced to 40 years to life for an attempted murder. I was a driver. God has been with me throughout the whole ordeal, but continues to open doors for me in ways I'd never imagined. I'm looking forward to working more with you. God bless you. Yesica"

David Von Haden, Kern Valley State Prison, Delano, Calif. - "I want to thank you for the lessons, for I learned a lot from them, like always. It helps me understand more about God, and I especially like when you use other parts of Scripture to tie it all together. Sure glad you are doing God's work for Him and helping others to bring them closer to God. It sure means a lot to me to know someone cares. Keep up the good work, and all the work you do for the homeless people every month by passing out the clothing and lunches. God bless you all and your family. David"

Harold Naipo, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "I pray that all is well with you both. I always receive your letters and lessons with a smile on my face and joy in my heart. I really enjoy reading your letters about Tom and his handyman jobs around the house, and your ministry with the homeless at Venice Beach. A lot of times I can envision you and the volunteers doing the Lord's work. It always brings a smile to my face. I am in several other groups, such as "Anger Control" and one that teaches cognitive thinking skills. I was thinking of this class when I was reading your Third Week's Steps 6 & 7 lesson, where I read the part about many people being mentally lazy and allowing their negative thoughts to control them. I am very happy that God has brought me to these types of programs, and that He has given me the strength and the open-mindedness to deal with my shortcomings. God has truly blessed me!"