

“Love Lifted Me Recovery” - April, 2023
Newsletter for January, February, March, 2023
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A Psalm of Encouragement in Tough Times

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident. One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me..... Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord. Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.... I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!” (Psalm 27:1, 3-6, 11, 13-14).

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, January 7, 2023 - Several of our regulars had to work or were out of town, so we ended up with Tom, me, Kaela, Felipe, Ricardo, Jose and Ulysses. Felipe and his group went to the homeless people under the freeway overpass, and he said there were a lot more people there than the last few times they had been there. Probably, many homeless went there to get out from all the rain we've been having. Kaela and I went to the north end of the Venice Boardwalk, and Tom stayed home to keep us covered in prayer. We had 175 lunches, lots of socks, toiletry/hygiene packets, some shoes, knit hats from Debbie in Phoenix, and lots of used clothing, including sweaters, sweatshirts and jackets for the cold weather. We gave out almost all our lunches, and all the clothing and hygiene packets, and the few lunches left were given out during the next week or so. Kaela and I went much further down the Boardwalk than we usually do, because there was no third team starting at the south end. We saw Michael Spencer, who has a table set up giving out Bibles, and it is called the Venice Beach Bible Ministry. Michael used to come with us on the outreach, but felt the Lord calling him to set up his table more days of the week for giving out the word of God. We also gave out God's word, as each lunch contains a gospel tract, and we handed out many gospel tracts to people just walking along the Boardwalk, in English and Spanish. We had one Bible, and when I asked one group if anyone would like a Bible, one young man spoke up and said, “Oh, yes, please!” His name was Tristan, and he was very happy to get the Bible, along with a lunch. A young woman named Kaye received some clothing, a lunch, a hygiene packet, and some other things, and she was very grateful. Another woman named Mary got clothing, a lunch, hygiene packet, and some things for a friend. One man asked for a sweatshirt, and the only one we had left was too small, so Kaela gave him her own sweatshirt. Everyone we met was so thankful to get some food and the other items we had. When we got to the Phoenix House, a halfway house for men, I asked if Francisco still worked there, and they said he did not, but Jesus was a supervisor, so we talked with him. He asked if our group was a Christian ministry, and we said, “Yes, it is.” It turns out he is a Christian, and he was willing to give out some of the gospel tracts we had, so I gave him a bunch to give to the men there. I also gave him a copy of our last newsletter, and he gave us a donation for the ministry. We had great time, and we give God all the glory, honor and praise for a wonderful outreach today!

Saturday, February 4, 2023 - Our beach outreach for this month took a lot of creativity, because it was

scheduled for the time when I would be at Mom's, taking care of her, and would not be able to go on the outreach myself. Our ministry teams consisted of Kaela, her friend Debbie, Felipe, Ricardo, Jose and Luis.

Ricardo and Jose went to reach out to the homeless people camped under the freeway overpass, Felipe and Luis went to the south end of the Venice Boardwalk, and Kaela and Debbie went to the north end of the Boardwalk and beach. We had made 175 lunches, and had lots of socks, used clothing and hygiene/toiletry packets for the homeless. Because I wasn't there in person, I don't have a lot of individual comments or interesting incidents to report, but Kaela said everyone seemed hungry and very thankful to get the food. Kaela said when she offered food to some of the homeless people, they had tears in their eyes, they were so grateful. All the groups gave out every single lunch, most of the clothing and other items, and they had a good time doing it. It was the first time for Debbie, and she was nervous at first, but she really enjoyed it. Quite often, our first-timers are nervous or even scared, because they don't know what to expect. As soon as they see how grateful and thankful everyone is, they feel good and the fears are gone. Only once or twice in the nineteen years we've been doing the beach outreach (since March, 2004) have we had any "scary" situations. Years ago, I was doing the outreach with Adam, who was one of our prison guys who got out, and we encountered a man who was waving his arms, and ranting and raving (king of scary). We stopped and prayed, and the man soon sat down and we offered him a lunch, which he took gladly. A man was watching us, and I turned around to him and said, "Even crazy people get hungry." Kaela and Debbie had a few more interesting encounters, and one of them was with a group of four young men who were joking around. Kaela joined them in joking a bit, and one of the guys said, "Most of the people around here are so stuck up, they just walk on by us, but you're really relatable - you treat us as actual real people." They also saw a man and woman, and the woman was very thin. They had some clothes in very small sizes, and she was so thrilled to get pants and shirts that fit her. Also, they had clothing in men's small sizes, and they found men that fit them. Remember, each of the lunches contains a gospel tract, so the word of God was given out, and Tom and I prayed for the success of the outreach and for many souls to come to know Jesus through it. Praise the Lord!

Saturday, March 4, 2022 - For our beach outreach today, it was nice and sunny, but still very cold. Our ministry team was made up of Tom, me, Kaela, Johnny, Felipe, Ricardo, Ulysses and Janelle (her first time).

Felipe and his group went to the homeless encampments under the freeway overpass, and Kaela and Johnny went to the south end of the Venice Boardwalk. Janelle and I went to the north end of the Boardwalk, and Tom stayed home to keep us covered in prayer. We had 176 lunches, hygiene/toiletry packets, socks, shoes, used clothing and knit hats for the homeless. The hats were knitted by my friend Debbie in Phoenix, and she sent us a big box of them. The people who received them were very grateful and happy to get them. We also had a large suitcase, one of those on wheels and with a long handle, and the guy who received it was so happy, as all his stuff was in bags. His name was Jose, and he told us he is a believer in Jesus, and that he likes the little tracts we give out. I gave him one in Spanish, and his friend Sergio took one in Spanish, also. A woman named Sarah got a pair of really nice, warm slippers, the kind that have a hard sole on the bottom, and she was thrilled to get them, and also a lunch, toiletries, and some clothing. Two other women, Aracelie and Mary, remembered us from before and took lunches, clothing and toiletries. One man already had food that had been given out by Dan and his church (they give out food donated from grocery stores that has gone past the sell-by date). I told him our lunches can be saved until later, because it's all canned and packaged, as the other food needed to be eaten right away. He said, "I like the way you think!" We saw the men at the Phoenix House coming out for their break in the yard, so we found their supervisor, Jesus, and he remembered us from last time, and was willing to give out our gospel tracts to the men. The Phoenix House is a halfway house for men, and the men who live there are not allowed to take anything directly from us, so we always ask the supervisor. Either because of the rain, or because the city has been putting the homeless in shelters, we did not find as many as usual, so we had some lunches left over. Janelle and I even went down the streets where we had found homeless people before, in tents, and they had all been cleared off the streets. Felipe said they had a lot of people under the freeway overpass, probably more because that's somewhere they could get out of the rain. Kaela, Johnny,

Tom and I took the extra lunches and will find homeless people as we go about doing errands, and will give them away. Each lunch contains a gospel tract, and we also handed out tracts to the people who were just walking along the Boardwalk. Praise the Lord! And here are a few examples of giving out the lunches during the week: I went to the Venice Library to drop off some books in the drop box, because the library was not open yet. I saw a bunch of homeless people near the entrance to the library, because there was an overhanging roof for them to get out of the rain. I felt bad that I had forgotten to put lunches in the car. On my way back from errands, I saw that they were still out there, because the library doesn't open until noon. I ran home quickly and put a lot of lunches in the car, and went back over there. I pulled up the car and offered them lunches, and you never saw so many smiles and happy faces! There was one woman and the rest were men, and I gave out eighteen lunches. Kaela gave out nine lunches the other day to people in front of the Seven-Eleven Store near her home. Tom went to get gas in the car one day, and as he was coming home, he saw a homeless man, and he stopped and gave him a lunch. Tom said the man thanked him several times and seemed very happy to get it. I loaned the car to my sister Amy so she could do errands. Amy saw a homeless man as she left the library, rolled down the car window and asked him if he would like a lunch. He said, "A lunch? Oh, yes!" Another time, at Staples, I saw three homeless people (living out of their van, but otherwise homeless), and I gave them each a lunch. They were amazed that anyone would come up to them and offer them something positive, as I guess they receive insults and negative things all the time. I pray they will read the gospel tracts in the lunches and the Lord will work on their hearts. Johnny was playing pickleball at the park, and he saw a homeless man come from behind a dumpster. Later, as Johnny pulled out of the parking lot, he saw the man and asked him if he was the one who was behind the dumpster. The man looked upset or confused, but Johnny offered him a lunch, and the man's demeanor changed right away, and he thanked him. It's nice to have these lunches left over from the outreach, so that we can bless people as we go out during the day.

Prison Ministry

God has blessed us with a prison ministry that reaches men and women in every state prison in California, some federal prisons around the country, and prisons and jails in many other states. We have well over 400 people doing our Bible studies and 12-Step program by correspondence. Most of them have found the Lord in prison, some have made rededications since coming to prison, and some have come to know Christ through our ministry. They are growing in their faith, because God's word does not return void, but will accomplish His plan and purpose. Here are a few portions of letters we've received from inmates:

Jason G. Young, California Correctional Institution, Tehachapi, CA - "Working the 12-Steps with you has been a positive experience that I greatly enjoy. I have done numerous Bible study correspondence courses and learned a great many things, as well as clarified some things I had wrong from my youth. Your course is a wonderful continuation of all of that prior learning. Being a better person is very important to me, and I never want to be the person I once was that was capable of causing so much harm to those I love. Thank you again for what you do for those who are incarcerated. It really brings a bit of light into a rather dreary environment. With love, Jason"

Angel Sierra, Calif. Health Care Facility, Stockton, CA - "I never really been good at writing but I want to thank you for everything you been doing for all of us in here. I really enjoy reading your letters that you send along with my Bible study course. I'll keep the both of you in my prayers. Much love and respect, Angel"

Lawrence Huhne, California Correctional Institution, Tehachapi, CA - "Thank you for your love and support, as that is something I'm not used to. Since doing your 12-Step course, I have really given myself to God and have let Him work miracles in my life. Steps 8 & 9 were really hard for me, because I have

harmed a lot of people when in my addiction. One of the biggest was making amends to my mother. I lost her back in 2014 when I was under a horrible addiction. I hate that the last time she saw me was when I was doing bad, but a fellow brother in Christ told me, and I will never forget, that she is smiling down at me from heaven because she knows I'm back on the right path of righteousness. Working your program has really opened my eyes, heart and soul to allow God to work in my life, and for that I will be forever grateful. You are in my prayers, Lawrence"

Theresa Barroso, California Institution for Women, Corona, CA - "I want to say "thank you" for allowing me to be a part of your 12-Step program. I'm only on Steps 6 & 7 now, but I am committed to finish the whole program. These lessons have truly helped me to take responsibility for my own actions in so many ways. Also, I'm a part of a program here in prison called "Compassionate Companions" and we go to the medical unit and help the ladies that can't be out in population because of being sick, on oxygen, or just elderly. It feels good to give back to others when I can't help my own family right now. I see them as someone's grandma, mom, daughter, etc. I pray God will bless me with the opportunity to go home and take care of my mom and dad, too. I also want to help you both with the outreach you do. With sisterly love and respect, Theresa"

Chan Park, San Quentin State Prison, San Quentin, CA - "I have been fighting off bouts of depression, and even when I seemed to get through it, I was still feeling empty. That is, until I got your letter and read your gift of a little devotional on Psalm 27. I will make it a point to read that psalm every day. This past year, it has been so difficult to keep my eyes on God. Now, thanks to Psalm 27, I'll pick myself back up, dust myself off, and start to focus on where I'm supposed to be headed. And I will "wait upon the Lord." I had forgotten that I was waiting on Him, and not some man-made determination or what I consider "good". I love you all, thank you, Chan"

Anthony Ott, CTF North, Soledad, CA - "Shortly after I trusted in Christ as my personal savior, I was challenged to dedicate the rest of my life to the Lord. This was not emotionalism; it was a positive biblical encouragement to make a conscious decision to give my life to Christ in a dedicated way. The Apostle Paul tells us to do this very thing in Romans 12:1-2, where he says to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to the Lord. Now, what did they do with a sacrifice in the Old Testament? They killed it. But Paul is not talking about a dead sacrifice - it is a LIVING sacrifice. We have been crucified with Christ (see Romans 6:6), so we are already dead in that sense, but presenting your body as a living sacrifice means you have the resurrected life of Jesus Christ in you, and you are dead to sin, but alive to God. The body is the vehicle through which ministry is done, and God wants us to present our bodies to Him so He can use us to do His ministry here on earth. I hope these words bless you both, and may God continue to use you and bless your ministry. Yours in Christ, Anthony"

Pao Jake Thao, Yolo County Jail, Woodland, CA - "Thank you for the Bible study lessons. Also, I am finished with Step 9 and ready for Step 10 lessons. I have made amends to as many people as I can from here, and for those who I can't reach, I gave it up to God. I can see that I have actually come a long way from how I used to be, and a lot of it is due to knowing the both of you. The way you live your life shows me that there really is light in this dark world. Sometimes, it seems like "good people" are more of a myth or a good story to tell for encouragement, but you two make it real. May God continue to bless you in your ministry. In Christ's love, Jake"

Andrew Lopez, Centinela State Prison, Imperial, CA - "Your Bible studies and 12-Step lessons have been a tremendous blessing, and my favorite literature you sent is "Lessons from the Thief on the Cross." Your 12-Step program has given me insight and clarity in my life. God is most definitely moving in your program, and I want to let you know I'm ready to move forward with Step Ten. Thank you so much for what you do for the Lord, looking out for those in prison, the homeless and fatherless. Your brother in Christ,

Andrew Lopez”