

“Love Lifted Me Recovery” - July, 2021
Newsletter for April, May, June, 2021
Pastors/Chaplains Tom & Dottie Hooper
Web Site: www.Loveliftedmerecovery.com

What Is Joy?

The dictionary defines joy as delight, gaiety, or happiness. The Bible kind of JOY, however, is quite different than happiness. Happiness is an emotion and is **based on circumstances in one's life**. **The JOY that God gives to the Believer in Jesus is a supernatural quality that does not depend on circumstances or emotions**, and can even be experienced in the WORST of outward circumstances. This kind of JOY comes directly from God Himself. **Joy is a FRUIT that grows naturally from a person who is in love with Jesus**. Galatians 5:22-23 lists JOY as part of the Fruit of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus says that if we abide in Him, we produce this fruit.

•**Galatians 5:22-23** “But the **FRUIT of the Spirit** is love, **JOY**, peace, longsuffering (PATIENCE), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

•**John 15:4-5 & 11** “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear FRUIT of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. **He who ABIDES in Me**, and I in him, **bears much FRUIT**; for without Me you can do nothing. These things I have spoken to you, that **My JOY may remain in you**, and that **your JOY may be full**.”

We see from the words of Jesus Himself that **this FRUIT, of which JOY is a part**, comes from **ABIDING in Jesus**. **To ABIDE in Jesus means to remain in a close relationship and CONSTANT FELLOWSHIP with Jesus**. Jesus Christ comes to live in our hearts when we receive Him by faith. He comes to dwell in us by His Spirit, the Holy Spirit. We have fellowship with Him through prayer (just talking to Him) and reading His word (He talks to us).

•**Ephesians 3:17-19** “That **Christ may dwell in your hearts** through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — **to know the love of Christ** which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

•**John 14:16-17** “And I will pray (ask) the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may **ABIDE** with you forever, even **the Spirit of truth** (Holy Spirit), whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for **He dwells with you, and will be in you**.”

•**Romans 8:9** “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed **the Spirit of God dwells in you**. Now if anyone does not have **the Spirit of Christ**, he is not His.”

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, April 3, 2021 - Our ministry team consisted of Tom, me, Johnny, Kaela, Felipe and Michael. Because we had such a small group, Tom came with us, but it was a lot of walking for him, and he was in pain. We had a really blessed time down at the beach and Boardwalk, though, and gave out 180 lunches, hygiene/toiletry packets, socks, lots of clothing and some shoes to the homeless. Most people were very thankful to get food and clothing, and we also gave out several Bibles and lots of gospel tracts. A man named Jack needed pants and shoes, and we had some that fit him. A woman named Laura got two pairs of pants, a lunch, some toiletries, and then asked if we had a Bible. She was very happy to get a

New Testament with Psalms. We had several pairs of jeans in various sizes, and each person who received them was so happy to get the right size. We also saw some others we knew, such as Jean, Jacob, Don, Malik, and Seren. There were lots of other homeless people whose names we did not get this time, but they were all grateful to receive the things we had for their physical comfort. Also, each lunch contains a gospel tract to give them hope for their spiritual comfort. The world we live in right now is a scary, difficult place, and for the homeless, it's even more so. They need to hear the message of hope here in this world and eternal life in Jesus Christ, which we are very glad to give them. We came to the Phoenix House, a residential rehab. place, and gave a big stack of tracts to the supervisor, and he said he would give them out to the men who live there. But speaking of scary things, Kaela and Johnny said they encountered more than the usual amount of people who were argumentative, yelling and railing against Christianity, and even one man chasing after them and cursing them. Well, hello! It was the day before Easter, and Satan does not like to be reminded of Jesus' victory over hell, death and the devil. So, it seems he sent his demons and riled up some of his people to try to discourage our attempts to give out the gospel. Tom, Michael and I also noticed a more than usual amount of argumentative people, but I was focusing on the positive reactions we received from everyone else, so I didn't put it all together until Johnny told us of their encounters. I think it just causes our faith to grow when we see how much the devil hates Jesus, because he wouldn't go to all this trouble if the gospel weren't true! Also, I told Tom that, since he came with us this time, he was not at home providing prayer cover for us, and that may have been part of the problem.

Saturday, May 1, 2021 - We weren't expecting a large group of people to come and help us, as some were working, and some sick. We had Tom, me, Johnny, Kaela, Michael and Felipe and his friend Estella. It all worked out okay, and we gave out 180 lunches, lots of socks and clothing, some blankets, and hygiene/toiletry packets to the homeless. Our friend Kathleen had given us some packages of new underwear, men's and women's, and some satchels and bags for people to carry their stuff in. The underwear and satchels/bags were especially appreciated by the people who got them. Blankets, too. We had heard that the police were moving the homeless off of the Boardwalk, but they must have all moved back already, because there was no shortage of homeless people there. We saw Don, who lives in his van, and he said, "You made my day!" We met a man named Isaiah, and he was very grateful for food, clothing and toiletries for himself and his girlfriend. We talked with Jean, who lives in her van, and Michael invited her to come to the Bible Tabernacle on Sunday, as he would be preaching the message. She said she would come. A man named Tommy recognized Michael, and said he had heard him preach at the Union Rescue Mission. Michael said he had just been at the mission the day before. After we had given out everything we had to the homeless (and they were all very thankful and happy to receive everything), we continued to pass out gospel tracts, and had a great time. Several people asked for more than one tract, and we had different ones we could give them. We prayed with a young man who said his name was Michael, and he said today was his 19th birthday. Our Michael offered him a Bible and said, "This is the best birthday present you could ever get - the word of God." Johnny prayed for several people, including a man named Doug, and he was someone Johnny had prayed for and talked with before. Tom stayed home to cover us in prayer, and we felt the difference from last month. Johnny, Kaela, Felipe and Estella all said people were very grateful and happy to receive the food and clothing, and Johnny and Kaela said the peoples' attitudes were much better, and no one caused any problems. The spiritual atmosphere at Venice Beach can be pretty dark at times, but with prayer and the help of the Holy Spirit, we try to shine a little bit of the light of Jesus Christ into that darkness. Praise the Lord!

Saturday, June 5, 2021 - Jesus said, and it's quoted in Matthew 9:37-38, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." The laborers He sent today, besides Tom and me, were: Johnny, Sheldon, Felipe, Victor, and Michael. We had 180 lunches, lots of socks, toiletry/hygiene packets, used clothing, some shoes and some blankets. We had dog food for those who had dogs, but we couldn't find any this time. People move around, and the dog owners must have moved on - they don't call them "transients" for nothing. Victor and Michael

saw a man who seemed “out of it” mentally, and they weren’t sure if they should give him a lunch. They did approach him, offered him a lunch, and he was so grateful, he dropped to his knees, clutching the lunch to his chest. We gave out food, clothing and toiletries to so many people, new and old-timers included, and everyone was very thankful. We told them it all was being given in the name of Jesus. Some of the old-timers we saw were Jacob, Jean and Malik. Johnny and Sheldon saw a man playing the guitar, and he took a lunch. He opened the lunch and said, “Wow! Usually, we just get a sandwich or something, but this has everything!” He then asked if the lunches were being given out in Jesus’ name, and they said, “Yes.” He was so excited, and told them he had led many people to Christ in his lifetime, and that God had given him that gift. We had men’s and women’s underwear, and some bras for the women. Those items were very much appreciated by those who received them. We also handed out gospel tracts, and Michael gave out a few Bibles. All in all, we had a great time, and it feels good to minister to people for their physical needs as well as their spiritual needs.

Prison Ministry

Because of the Covid-19 restrictions in the prisons, most inmates were not being allowed to go to any classes, church services or self-help groups, so we have received hundreds and hundreds of requests to do our 12-Step program. We cannot possibly take on so many new people, but we are telling them that the Bible studies are available if they have their own Bible. Many of the men and women are choosing to do the Bible studies now until we have openings in the 12-Step program, and we are taking new ones for the 12-Steps, but in order as they have written to us. Things are opening up in the prisons little by little, but our volume of mail is still almost tripled from what it used to be. We continue to minister to our brothers and sisters in Christ who are in prison and who want to grow closer to the Lord. Here are some excerpts from their letters:

Richard Newman, Substance Abuse Treatment Facility, Corcoran, CA - “Thank you so much for the certificate, and for blessing me with more insight as I go through your courses. I thought I would just get a little certificate to show the Parole Board, but this is so much more! I mark inside my Bible all the Scriptures I look up when doing your lessons, so that I can go to them when I go through my Bible. I know I want to be Christ-like and hopefully one day shine like refined gold. Always in Christ, Rich”

Theoran Laws, California City Correctional Facility, California City, CA - “Some things really clicked for me in answering the Step 5 lessons. The question was “Do you want to be the one who breaks the chain of abuse and dysfunction in your family?” A Parole Board member had asked me once about this cycle, and I couldn’t explain it. I think I now can. This cycle of abuse is “hurt people hurting more people”. I get it - thank you. Also, thank you for the photos - those were a surprise. I joined this course looking for a substance abuse program - who knew I would get so much more. God bless you and thank you, Theo”

Jeremiah Williams, California Men’s Colony, San Luis Obispo, CA - “I thank God for you being in my life. Doing your program has been an eye- and heart-opening experience for me. Through your program, Jesus has nourished me and released my potential. I am not angry, selfish, inconsiderate nor feeling unworthy anymore. God has helped me find direction and anointed me. Thank you so much. Love, Jeremiah”

Cesar Ronquillo, Substance Abuse Treatment Facility, Corcoran, CA - “Thank you for everything you do. God has brought you both here on this earth to help people like me who were forgotten to see the light. Your Bible lessons have taught me that God brings hope to those who seek Him. I seek His guidance to help me change for my daughter, siblings, parents, my community, myself, and most importantly for God. God is absolutely merciful and loving, and He will bless me and guide me and help me. He will never abandon me, and with Him by my side, I will be successful and one day He will help

me cross that finish line. Sincerely, Cesar”

James Caldwell, Valley State Prison, Chowchilla, CA - “I thank you and praise God for you and your services. Both of you have been more than a “God send” in my life. I’ve been participating in your program for more than two years, and wondered if you could write a letter to the Parole Board telling them of my involvement, since they recognize your 12-Step program. God bless you, love, James”

Anthony Hart, California State Prison LA County, Lancaster, CA - “I am blessed despite the Covid 19 situation. I’m in prayer and God’s word daily. There’s no better feeling than to start the day with God. God is good! In doing my Step 9 amends, one of the people I’m making amends to is my mom. I was abandoned by my mother, but I’ve learned to forgive her and love her. I had anger towards her, and became disrespectful towards her in the past. It is my job to make amends to her for my attitude. A few months ago, I told my mom about Jesus, and she accepted Jesus into her life. It was a blessed moment to hear her pray and receive Jesus. May God bless y’all. Your brother, Anthony”

Jonathan Mendoza, California State Prison Sacramento, Represa, CA - “I thank God for putting godly people like you in my life, and for the wonderful ministry He has placed in your hands to be a blessing to others like me. The Bible study lesson you sent me is a true blessing, and I know it will help me to grow more and more into the love of God, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can be assured that I will be praying for you. Jonathan”

Rene Funes, California Correctional Institution, Tehachapi, CA - “I wanted to let you know I was transferred to a different prison. It is not the one I was hoping to transfer to, and I realized I was feeling fear, anxiety and worry for a number of reasons. Old negative experiences and memories got triggered, and it was hard to deal with. I got in prayer and stood in faith of my Father God’s promises. I voiced my concerns to Him and just trusted in His will for me. After that, people I talked to, the Our Daily Bread readings, and sermons on TV all were telling me the same thing. God was speaking to me and asking me to just be obedient and have faith, because He has me covered and protected. I found peace, and now as I got here I was like - wow! This yard is so beautiful, and there’s a revival happening here. God is using me and a few Christian brothers to build up the church, His church. God is so wonderful! I found that my own plans are nothing compared to His plans for me. It’s a great and humbling honor to be His vessel here. Thank You, Jesus! Respectfully in Christ, Rene”

Fernando Trujillo, Calipatria State Prison, Calipatria, CA - “I want to thank you for your prison ministry, for providing us with Bible studies and the 12-Step program. I am currently doing the Gospel of John and the 12-Step program. I like the 12-Step format that you put together with God’s word. I also received “How to Deal with Anger”. This was very helpful and provides insight with the word of God. Sincerely, Brother in Christ, Fernando”

Aram Sarukhanyan, Substance Abuse Treatment Facility, Corcoran, CA - “I am positively touched by your ministry. Every time I receive a letter from you, stating all the activities that you guys are involved in, it just fills me with a strong desire to do the same. God willing, once I am released from prison, I would love to volunteer to help you guys in serving God by serving others. Currently, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I try to be a light in my surroundings, by volunteering and helping other inmates in any way I am able. With love, Aram Sarukhanyan”

Steven Robert Sloan, Valley State Prison, Chowchilla, CA - “Every time I get a letter from you is like Christmas with all the great materials to help me spiritually, and with all the great knowledge and wisdom from God’s word in every lesson. I look up all the Scriptures, even though most of them are already printed out, and it helps me to know right where to go in the Bible without fumbling through it. Thank you! Also thank you for your wonderful letters, because they make me feel like part of your family. In Jesus Christ our Lord, Steve”