

Ministry Update - 3rd Quarter, 2004

Recovery Meetings: In our Monday and Wednesday meetings, we've studied Steps 6 and 7, which are about "character defects" and "asking God to remove our shortcomings" or what the Bible calls our "old man" and "besetting sins". A lot of people have problems with anger, so we did a couple of lessons on our paper called "Dealing with Anger" (available on our website). We looked up some Scriptures, besides what ones were on the paper, and just had some great discussions. Tom M. was there, and he's always a good one for sharing. He shared about his experience at the Bible Tabernacle when he got stung by a bee. He was working in the auto mechanics garage there, and had been asking God to help him with his foul mouth, and anger outbursts, when he went to finish drinking an opened can of soda he'd put back in the refrigerator. As he started to drink it, a bee that had gotten in the can stung him several times right on the tongue! He always gives thanks and glory to God for that little object lesson on the tongue. Then, Steps 8 and 9 are on making amends and forgiveness. Making amends is a process, and may take time for some people to locate and speak to everyone on their list. Steps 6 and 7, about getting rid of our character defects and shortcomings, well..... that's a life-long process. We won't be entirely finished with those Steps until we get to heaven!

Testimony from Recovery Meetings: Amanda Brackett - I had been in a church for over a year. I heard all kinds of voices pulling me one way and another. I had no idea how much of a particular sin belonged to me, to the devil, or from others. I was inconsistent in the Bible, and I had absolutely no victory in my Christian walk. My family life was in ruins. I could not keep a friend, and I couldn't hold a job for too long, because I simply did not care. Church seemed a safe place, where people believe you are saved if you act out their requirements, clean up, join this or that group of people, and do these religious things. It was safe, that is, until the heat turned up!

People began to see my inconsistent behaviors, and the harder I tried to cover it, the more they gave me harsh Scriptures: "You reap what you sow" and "I never knew you!", and all kinds of Old Testament sword and famine Scriptures. In June of 2003, I began a systematic study of the Gospel of Luke, with the theme being "following Jesus as a habit for the rest of your life". I was terrified of making a commitment to Christ, because I thought it involved being homeless, being bossed around by a slave-driver, and always being unclear if this or that was God's voice, and if I didn't follow the right one, God would strike me down.

So, one night, I started going back to a recovery group/Bible study that I had attended for a short while, but I had left, because I thought "I don't have any problems THAT bad in my life!" Tom and Dottie, the leaders of "Love Lifted Me Recovery", knew me, and I decided to tell Tom what was going on. I told him I was eating garbage out of the garbage cans, trying to "obey the voice of God". I would also drive this way or that, and turn around if the "voice of God" led me. I was going crazy! Literally! One night, I went to Tom and Dottie's home for some counseling (I was going crazy, and didn't know what to do). When it came time to leave, they put their hands on me for prayer, but I started convulsing and speaking in "tongues" of some kind. Dottie tested the spirit, telling it to speak English and "confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (I John 4:1-3). Whatever was speaking through me would not do that, but it was like I was in the background saying, "I know that Jesus came in the flesh, right? Then why can't I stop and tell them?" When the spirit would not confess that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, they knew they were dealing with a demon. They firmly rebuked the spirit and commanded it to come out in Jesus' name. I continued to have convulsions and was gnashing my teeth, and just when we all thought it was over (Dottie explained that sometimes a demon will do this when leaving - see Mark 9:18 & 26), another spirit started speaking "in tongues" through me again. Dottie started singing "Holy, Holy, Holy" and I covered my ears. It felt like acid, and I thrashed around trying to make it stop! Then it was like something inside of me busted and wanted to get out. There was this voice that said, "Show them what you are really like." They were holding my arms, because I was thrashing around, wanting to destroy something, but I looked at Tom. I looked him straight in the eyes the way I had always wanted to. It was like I unveiled the most secret part of me - evil. But it wasn't really me, it

was the demon. After Tom and Dottie had been commanding the spirits to come out of me in the name of Jesus Christ, they finally did. After they came out, we were all able to sing and praise God together. When I went home, and for the next couple of days, it seemed like it was so quiet in my mind, it was like it was completely swept out. I wasn't thinking the same things, and when I did, I knew it was evil, and just pushed it away to the Lord. I sat in front of that Bible, taking it in like a moth drawn to the light. I knew that if you don't fill your mind with the word of God, then the spirits could come back seven times worse. I was free, and I didn't want any of that old life anymore.

That same week, I went back to Tom and Dottie's and made a confession to them that I didn't know if I was really saved. I confessed Jesus as the Christ, and within the hour we went to Dottie's parents for me to be baptized in their pool. I got baptized because that is what new Believers do in the New Testament. Now I knew with all surety that I was safe in the arms of God. No longer at war with Him, but at peace through the blood sacrifice of Jesus. Clean from all sin. Wow! What a great feeling, and how securely I had set my faith in the Bible that every word is true! I could rest safely.

Within a week, my landlady told me I would have to move out. Praise God! That had been a horrible living situation, and instead, the Lord worked it out for me to move in with two Christian women. It has now been a year since I have surrendered my life to Christ. Satan is a liar and the father of all lies! As I sat with Tom and Dottie in their recovery meetings every single Monday for a year, there was being built in me a solid foundation of the word of God, and a desire was growing in my heart to reach the unsaved. My family life has changed 1000% for the better, and I have learned to be a friend, because Jesus has been my Friend. And now I am on my way back home to Washington to be with my family, and I have been accepted to start going to "Youth With a Mission" missions school in Seattle in September. I am excited, along with all of you, with what God has in store! Tom says the keys to recovery (or overcoming anything in your life) are 100% commitment, 100% forgiveness, and 100% honesty. Each one of these seemed like a big, insurmountable rock to me, until I became 100% humble and 100% the Lords!

Evangelistic Outreach: We continue to hand out our "Creator or Liar?" Chick tracts with our ministry information on the back, and the Billy Graham books and Max Lucado books, both in our neighborhood, and through our prison guys as we send them into the prisons. We provided several hundred Chick tracts in Spanish for Hector and Cecilia Escobedo, as they went down to Mexico on a missions trip with a Calvary Chapel group in September. We feel we had a small part in their missions trip (we provided the seeds, and they provided the laborers to go out in the field). Also, two of our "graduates" of Love Lifted Me Recovery, Amelia Olmos and Amanda Brackett, have begun their short-term missionary work as of September. Amelia has gone for three months on a missions trip with her church to Uganda, and Amanda has gone to "Youth With a Mission" for three months of school, and then a two-month missions trip to an Asian country (we don't know which country yet). Please pray for both of these young women as they seek to obey the Great Commission of our Lord. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). This is our goal for Love Lifted Me Recovery, that God's people can heal and grow to a place of service in His kingdom, whether overseas or here at home. Years ago, they used to talk about sending missionaries to "darkest Africa" and places like that, but we have just as much spiritual darkness here in the United States now, that we can all be "missionaries" in our own back yards.

Prison Ministry Update: The Lord keeps blessing our prison ministry, but Satan has to throw a monkey wrench in once in a while. We had sent over 20 Bibles in to Corcoran Prison without any trouble, when, all of a sudden, a few of them got sent back to us. We've had to go through the wardens office and then the chaplains office to find out what was wrong. Tom has talked to the chaplain several times on the phone, and the chaplain is frustrated with some new regulations from the State of California not allowing certain materials. We wrote a letter

to the chaplain and we sent him one of the "Serenity" Bibles we use, just so he could see what it is we are sending to the inmates there.

Our first two "prison graduates" of the "Love Lifted Me Recovery" 12-Step program finished the program in August. We sent them certificates, but due to prison regulations, we weren't able to frame the certificates as we do for those in our weekly meetings. David Basile and Matthew Chappell of Mule Creek State Prison are the first two prison inmates to complete the entire 12 Steps, including doing their 4th and 5th Steps by correspondence, which is difficult, but the best we could do in the circumstances.

From Soledad State Prison: Joe Blackburn wanted to add this to his testimony: "In my lifetime I've pretty much lived my own Book of Ecclesiastes. I sought what sort of knowledge I wanted, what path of life I wanted, and I did sample many things, yet none of them ever satisfied me till I found God. Money is nothing, fame is nothing, pleasure is nothing, faster cars, bigger guns, pumped up biceps all junk that fades away. God, and the knowledge of Him, and the reverential fear of Him that's the beginning of wisdom. Bit by bit, knowing God has become my goal, pleasing Him my fondest wish - now here is value! Sometimes I get so disgusted with myself, in my feeble efforts to obey His will, I seem only to only get up to fall again! But I realize that this is being human and living amidst Satan's sway, and that as long as I keep on getting back up, I'm on the right trail. I don't have a "hope" in God, or simply a "faith" - I know in my heart for sure He is real, and His word is real, He loves us, cares for us, and has already long ago called and chosen who will come to Him - His children. Who knows - maybe somebody needs to hear this particular part of my testimony?"

From Pleasant Valley State Prison: Step 3 is "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God." Gerald just finished the last lesson of Step 3 of our materials, which includes a short Bible study from Romans 6:13-19, and is about holiness and presenting our bodies to the Lord. Gerald wrote on July 23rd: "In Step 3, the last part you sent me, with open mind and eyes I see very clearly what's happening on TV, how homosexuality is being portrayed as OK, and gay marriages, and so much open sex that is shown in front of kids. Our world is in trouble. What s that saying, "Going to hell in a handbasket"? I was just writing this letter and the floor cops just passed out mail, and I got a letter from you guys with the Fourth Step in it. I started reading it. the 4th Step will take some time, I see, so I will start on it. You know, it seems like I'm trying to be cool, but in prison Satan keeps putting tests in front of me. I keep my temper back, but there are some really stupid people here. What can I expect? I'm in prison, and they're all around, and it would blow your mind to see. I cant tell you the number of people, but its more than half that have Satan or demons tattooed on them. One guy in my building has horns on his forehead, and the devils pentagram on his arms and neck. He's a real piece of work! I cant hardly believe how dumb some of these people are, but I'm in Satan's house, and he's working overtime taking souls. He puts challenges in front of me all the time to see if I will give in, like testing me. Trying to be a good person in prison is the hardest thing I've ever done, but I haven't punched out nobody yet. Pray for me, and thanks for being Love Lifted Me Recovery." Keeping the faith, your friend, Gerald Beldon

From Mule Creek Prison: David Basile wrote: "I received your letter last week with the 2nd weeks lesson for Step 11 and the beginning of Step 12. I can hardly believe that one year ago (last July) I started my 1st Step with you guys. Now I am getting into Step 12. Praise Jesus! I am so happy and grateful that the Lord Jesus led me to you. What I have learned about myself and ways of staying clean and sober during this past year greatly surpasses anything I have been exposed to during 15 years of attending N.A. here in prison."

From Mule Creek Prison: Matthew Chappell wrote: "Well, I guess I'm done with the 12 Steps. I cant believe it has been a whole year already. It feels good to have completed the steps, although I still need to do some step 9 work (making amends). Through this program I have come to the Lord and can feel Him working in my life. I know I need to work harder, though. It is strange, because I believe that the gift of grace and salvation is just that, a gift, and of course I cant earn it, but knowing I am saved I'm convinced that there are things I

must do. Jesus gives me the power and I still rebel sometimes, so I need to work to submit more to gods will. It is both hard and easy, and sooner or later I will get it."

From Corcoran State Prison: Steven Lopez wrote: "Boy, oh, boy! God is good, and He does know what you need, when you need it. The reason I'm saying this is because I was in a bad spot the day before your letter got here. Your letter lifted my spirits and opened my heart. How did you know I was dealing with anger? Well, I started reading the paper called "Dealing With Anger" and my eyes opened up, because I was angry with a person (for no real reason). Just trying not to let someone get in my comfort zone. Then I was angry at myself for letting it happen. Boy oh boy! Me! Me! Me! Well, like I said, your letter couldn't have come at a better time."

From Soledad State Prison: More poems by Wayne Green:

The Message

*I had forsaken the love of Jesus, and felt that I had failed.
Forgetting all His blood shed at the cross where He was nailed.
And I've walked upon the highway in the spirit of evil sin,
Ignoring the Holy Spirit world that once I had within.
And as I walked that highway backward, away from Gods true love,
I received a subtle message from the heaven skies above.
The message was from Jesus, He was waiting for me to see
That just yonder down the highway, He stood waiting.....just for me.*

Bright Illusion

*I once had a bright illusion of the games I had to win;
And most of all the players were deeply involved with sin.
My world was just insanity, playing this evil game,
Hoping I could change the world, but things were still the same.
One day while I was walking, a strong voice spoke to me,
It spoke about a deep, true love that would set my spirit free.
But I was wary of a Spirit who would relinquish all control,
All He wanted in return was the spirit of my soul.
Now my bright illusion is a dream come true -
Jesus Christ, my Lord, oh God, forever I belong to You!*

Where Is Your Heart?

*In the Spirit of the Savior you find true grace and love
Sent down to you from Jesus, in the heaven skies above.
The Lord is here to help you each and every day,
If you're lost in loneliness, talk to God and pray.
For He knows your inner spirit, the struggles you're going to face,
Instead of the glass of whiskey, He wants to take its place.
Addiction is not a problem that just will fade away.
Prepare to face it daily, every single day.
For your addiction is one vast mountain that together we must climb,
With the help of Jesus, we battle one day at a time!*