

**“Love Lifted Me Recovery” - October, 2022**  
**Newsletter for July, August, September, 2022**  
**Pastors/Chaplains Tom & Dottie Hooper**  
**LoveLiftedMeRecovery.com**

**Let God Forgive You, and then Forgive Yourself**

Paul says “Forgetting those things which are behind,” we must press on towards the goal (Philippians 3:13). Why is it that so many Christians drag their past around with them, and have such a hard time forgiving themselves? Maybe it is because in their past experiences, no one has ever offered **true unconditional love and forgiveness**, so it is a foreign idea. However, **you MUST receive and accept by faith your complete forgiveness and cleansing, just because of what Jesus did for you on the cross, not because of anything you did to deserve it.** It is vitally important that you not only believe that God has forgiven you, but that you also **FORGIVE YOURSELF!** There are no sins that are worse than others - sin is sin, in God’s eyes. Some people will say that this or that sin is worse, because the Bible calls it an “abomination” to God, but you will find Scriptures which state that MANY things are an abomination to God. **PRIDE** is always an abomination to God, and so is lying. Jesus really lambasted the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, self-righteousness, pride, and for leading others astray. In I Corinthians 6:11, Paul speaks to Christians, showing us that the Church of Jesus Christ is made up of **SINNERS**, because he says, “such were some of you.” **It is only by the BLOOD of Jesus Christ that we are forgiven** and **CLEANSED** of those sins. A person who has **NOT** trusted Jesus Christ for salvation and forgiveness of their sins has **NO PART** in the kingdom of God. Jesus said, “Unless a man is **BORN AGAIN**, he cannot [even] **SEE** the Kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

**Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach**

**Saturday, July 2, 2022** - Today for our monthly beach outreach, our volunteers who came to help us were: Felipe, Jose, Ricardo, Sheldon, Kaela and Victor. Tom stayed home to keep us covered in prayer. We had kind of a small group, but we knew we would be okay, because I Samuel 14:6 b says, “For there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few,” so even with our “few”, we could get the job done. We had 175 lunches, lots of socks, shoes and used clothing, and hygiene/toiletry packets for the homeless, and dog food for their dogs. Each lunch contains a gospel tract, and we also passed out gospel tracts to the people who were just down at the Venice Boardwalk enjoying the morning. Felipe, Jose, and Ricardo went up to Venice Blvd. and Sepulveda, where there are a lot of homeless people living under the freeway overpass, and they ministered to them. Felipe said they had a good response from everybody, and there were a lot more people than the month before. Maybe some of the people who were moved off of the park by the library went up there. Victor came with me, and the people who received the shoes were especially thankful, because they said they really needed shoes. One man who said his name was O.G. was barefoot, so he got socks and a pair of shoes in his exact size. Another man said, “Oh, you wouldn’t have my size - I wear a size 13.” Well, we had a nice pair of sandals in a size 13, and he put them on and was so happy. One woman asked if we had a Bible, and I didn’t have one with me, but she took two “Our Daily Bread” booklets. A man named Jason got a lunch, but said he didn’t need anything else except a hug, so I hugged him and Victor hugged him. We had shorts and tank tops, and they went fast in the hot weather, but even the jeans and long pants all got taken. Everyone was very grateful, and one man asked why we do this. We told him it’s because of Jesus, and that we’ve been doing this once a month since 2004. Sheldon said they gave away all of the lunches and most of the clothing. There were a few fire trucks parked on the Boardwalk and the fire department appeared to be trying to relocate a homeless person who wouldn’t move. Sheldon and Kaela walked right down the middle of the trucks and gave lunches to the

homeless that were there, and nobody bothered them. Sheldon said, “The deaf and shirtless young man we see often was really happy to see us. There was also a lady that Kaela remembered that we hadn't seen for a while, so we talked to them for a bit. She and her spouse were no longer homeless, they had housing in a place in Hollywood that was built to house former homeless people, and they said it was working out okay. They came down to the Boardwalk to sell artwork as vendors. It was a very peaceful and fruitful outreach from our end.” Oh, yeah, Sheldon did say that they gave a lunch to a guy who had a big gash on his head and blood covering down the side of his face. Obviously, someone must have attacked him and things had not been so peaceful earlier. Victor and I went to the Phoenix House, a halfway house for men, and we saw Francisco again, who works there. He took a bunch of gospel tracts to give to the men there. Francisco did our 12-Step program in prison, and he's been out since 2018. Victor, who came with me, has been out for over two years, and Felipe and Jose have been out of prison for quite a few years, and they all did our program and Bible studies while in prison. Victor and Felipe both told us that they like to go on our outreach to “give back to the community” as part of making amends and because they are so grateful to God for giving them a second chance at life. There are fewer homeless people down at the Boardwalk than there used to be, and Victor and I had quite a few lunches left, so we went up Rose Avenue to some of the side streets where there are a lot of homeless people in tents. They were very thankful to get food, toiletries and everything, also.

**Saturday, August 6, 2022** - Our ministry team today consisted of Tom, me, Kaela, Felipe, Sheldon, Michael, Ricardo and Lucy. Tom stayed home to keep us covered in prayer. We had 180 lunches, lots of socks, used clothing, and hygiene/toiletry packets for the homeless, and dog food for their dogs. Each lunch contains a gospel tract, and we also passed out gospel tracts to the people who were just down at the Venice Boardwalk enjoying the beach. Felipe, Lucy, and Ricardo went up to Venice Blvd. and Sepulveda again, where there are a lot of homeless people living under the freeway overpass. Sheldon and Kaela went to the south end of the Boardwalk, and Michael and I covered the north end. A lady named Pamela asked for prayer, so Michael and I prayed for her, and also a man named Michael. Pamela writes lyrics for Christian songs, and she sang a couple of them, and they were beautiful. A young man named Aaron asked Michael and me if he could have a Bible, and I did have one this time. A man named David asked for prayer, and we prayed for him, and came to find out later he had also asked Kaela and Sheldon to pray for him, too. I also gave him a couple of gospel tracts in Spanish. Later, we saw Aaron again, and he was with a guy named Chris, and Chris was selling bottles of cold water. We told him we were on our way back to the car, but he gave us one for free, because he said he didn't want us to get dehydrated. Maybe he was also thinking of Matthew 10:42, and he was “giving a cup of cold water” to one of Jesus' disciples, so that he “would not lose his reward”. We had given him a gospel tract, also. As always, everyone was very grateful and thankful, and only one homeless lady said she didn't need a lunch or clothing, as she had a huge pile of clothing and things at her spot. At the Phoenix House, a halfway house for men, we saw Francisco again, who works there. He took a bunch of gospel tracts to give to the men there, because they aren't allowed to accept literature from us directly. All in all, we had a great outreach, and God's word went out to many people in the form of gospel tracts, and He has promised that His word will not return void, but will accomplish the purpose for which He sent it (Isaiah 55:11). We had a few lunches left over, and Sheldon, Kaela and Tom and I will hand them out to homeless people we see during the next few weeks. We really enjoy having something to give to a homeless person if we see them during our running around and doing errands. Also, in doing my errands one day, at the 99-Cents Store, I saw a guy we used to see down at the Boardwalk. I went up to him and said, “Are you Malik?” He said yes, and then recognized me, too. He said he's in a hotel room that the city put him in when they moved off most of the homeless from the Boardwalk last summer. He said he's applied for low-income housing, but there is usually a long wait. It's good to know some of the people we used to see are in a better situation now. I would say we saw Malik homeless at the Boardwalk for at least five years.

**Saturday, September 3, 2022** - Today, those who joined us as volunteers, besides Tom and me, were:

Kaela, Sheldon, Felipe, Victor, Ricardo, Jose and Michael. We had 180 lunches, but officials of some kind were moving homeless people off the Boardwalk even as we were down there, so we ended up with quite a few left over. Sheldon, Kaela, and Tom and I will give out all the extras to homeless people we see during the next few weeks. We had socks, clothing, some shoes and hygiene/toiletry packets, but had some of them left over as well. It was a really, really bad hot spell, so that may have also been why there were fewer people where we went. Each homeless person who got a lunch also got a gospel tract in their lunch, and we handed out tracts along the way, too, in English and Spanish. One homeless man was hiding behind something, and I asked Victor to go give him a lunch. I heard the man speaking in Spanish, so I gave him a Spanish tract, and he was almost happier and more excited to get a little booklet in his own language, as he was to get the lunch. He kept saying, "Español? Español?" with a big smile on his face.

We were also able to give a stack of gospel tracts to the supervisor at the Phoenix House, and he said he would hand them out to the men there. As we were leaving, we saw him already starting to hand them out to the guys who were out in the yard. Sheldon said there was a man who sort of confronted him, asking if the lunches were safe to eat, or if he was "some kind of weirdo" like the people at Halloween who used to put needles or razor blades in their candy for trick-or-treat. Sheldon tried to explain, but finally left. Later, he came back with Kaela, told the man they were down there giving out lunches every month, and they were not "weirdos", and the man said, "Well, okay, then" and took a lunch. Sheldon and Kaela also talked to a woman named Linda (she was not homeless), and when Sheldon asked if they could pray for her, she just opened up and had quite a few prayer requests. Victor and Michael came with me, and we covered the north end of the Boardwalk, and Felipe's group gave out lunches to the homeless people camped out under the freeway overpass. Everybody seemed very happy and grateful to get the food and clothing we were giving out, and when some asked what church we were from, we just said we were giving it out in the name of Jesus, as several churches were represented.

## **Prison Ministry**

**Dakita Brusiter, Kern Valley State Prison, Delano, CA** - "Thank you so much for the opportunity to receive these 12-Step and Bible lessons. I was blind and deep in the dark, and these Bible lessons have opened my eyes completely. I also feel the burden that I carried for numerous years lifting off my shoulders. I cried many nights questioning myself and God, and now I'm getting the answers I need. Praise the Lord! I appreciate the sincerity with which the both of you seem to truly care about us on the inside of these prison walls, those of us who are seeking and wanting to change, such as myself. I felt like no one else cared about me, but now I know God and Jesus love and care about me, and also the two of you. I also received the photos of your outreach feeding the homeless. Bless your hearts. Love, Dakita"

**Alexandria Bayne, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla** - "Thank you, you are both a light and an immense blessing in my life. Thank you for sharing your lives with me and allowing me to reflect on all you do on your personal journey with God and faith. My daughter and my mother both passed away recently, and I take responsibility for both their deaths, because I was not there to maybe prevent them, but God is showing me ways to grow and heal in my heart. Your Bible lessons are helping me and giving me the right words to say to my son and other family members to help them with their grief and heartache. Thank you for touching my life in ways you wouldn't even be aware of. With love, Alexandria"

**Norman Smith, Valley State Prison, Chowchilla, CA** - "Thank you for all your support, and I'm hoping to get out of prison soon. I want to take what I have learned in your Bible studies, and put them to very good use on the streets. This is coming from a person who didn't really care about what the Bible is about or what it said prior to meeting you. I only thought about it when I got in trouble, and never let it guide me before I did anything. Now, it's my livelihood, I read it every morning and every night. I also pray every

day and night and truly believe I could not survive without the Lord and His word. Meeting you back in 2008 and until now has been the best years of my life, and I hope and pray for years to come. Love, your brother in Christ, Norman”

**Burton V. Hebrock, High Desert State Prison, Susanville, CA** - “I want to let you know how much of a part of me getting out of this prison you are. You know I have spent over three decades in prison for a crime that I’m saddened, to the point of feeling sick, to say I committed as a sixteen-year-old boy. I can never repay the harm I have done, but I will spend the rest of my life serving as the good Lord allows me to honor those dear lives I took. You and your ministry are one of the key reasons I am getting a second chance. Your letters, 12-Step program, ministry and Bible studies have helped set me free, and maintain over sixteen years of sobriety. Thanks to God above and to your ministry. You are changing peoples’ lives each day, even if you do not see it as often as you would like. God is working through you and you are bringing His children home to Him. Love and respect, Venny”.

**Arprubertito “Art” Bontilao, ICE Processing Center, Aurora, CO** - “I’m finally free and not in state prison any longer. I’m at this detention center in Colorado. I’m facing deportation back to my country, the Philippines. I’m not going to fight the deportation, because I believe it is part of God’s plan for me to go back to the Philippines and to serve Him there. Thank you for being my sponsors and for all the Bible studies you sent me since starting your program in 2012. Love & respect, Art Bontilao”

**Monica Benavidez, Central California Women’s Facility, Chowchilla, CA** - “Thank you for the Serenity Bible. I really enjoy it, and it is so helpful for my lessons. I read it every morning, and because of it and my Bible lessons, my relationship with the Lord is getting stronger and amazing. God bless you for doing His work at Love Lifted Me Recovery Ministries! Love & light, Monica”

**Gene L. Anderson, Salinas Valley State Prison, Soledad, CA** - “It’s always good to hear from you guys, it makes my day. Thank you for all the hard work you do, you guys are really God’s angels. Some day I hope to be able to meet you in person and do some good work with you, especially helping you with your beach outreach. God bless you guys, Gene”

**Barrett D. Simon, Ironwood State Prison, Blythe, CA** - “Thank you so much for allowing me to be a part of your program since 2018. I am currently re-building my relationship with my father. We had not spoken for four years. I am asking God for guidance and patience, and I am not acting impulsively like I used to. I attribute that to faith in God and the help I am receiving from you and your Bible studies. Love, Barrett”

**Andrew Lopez, Centinela State Prison, Imperial, CA** - “You have no idea how much of an impact Christ has on my life through you and your ministry. I love you guys and am so grateful for all you do. Reading your letters about all you do brings tears of joy to my eyes. You are a true blessing to people like myself. Love, Andrew Lopez”

**Jacob J. Perez, Valley State Prison, Chowchilla, CA** - “Thank you for sending me the 12-Step program, Serenity Bible and Bible studies. The lessons and your letters are inspiring and motivating. I began doing your Bible studies shortly after stepping back from the gangs and criminal activities that consumed my life for over thirty years, and you’ve played a big part in increasing my knowledge and growing in my relationship with the Lord. Love, Jacob”

**Kio Simmons, Kern Valley State Prison, Delano, CA** - “Thank you for allowing me to take your Bible study course. I have walked away from the gang life with the help of Jesus. Thank you for helping me get closer to God and become the man that I’m supposed to be. I don’t have much, but I’m sending you

some stamps so you can continue to bless others as you've blessed me. Sincerely, Kio Simmons"