

Ministry Update - 4th Quarter, 2010

Twelve Step Meetings

October, November, and December means we covered Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve in our meetings, and we start over at Step One every January. Our 12-Step program is not just about alcoholism and addictions, but about allowing the healing power of Almighty God to cleanse and free us from the bitterness and anger caused by family dysfunctions and garbage in our past. It is also about the power of God setting us free from bondage to worry, anxiety and fear. A lot of Christians are walking around, looking good on the outside, being good church-goers and law-abiding citizens, but having major damage inside, in mind, heart and emotions. Most of the time, the pastor's Sunday sermons (at whatever church they attend) do not touch on these problems. Or, if they touch on the problem of unforgiveness and other issues that are holding these people back from being what God wants them to be, the sermon may merely tell them what to do or not to do, and not actually go into the HOW of DOING it! In our meetings, Twelve Step materials, and other Bible studies, we try to make God's principles in His word very practical, and show broken people how to apply them in their lives for healing.

Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are oppressed." Luke 4:18

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, October 2, 2010 - Today was a day of weird weather, as it was overcast, but still hot and muggy, and we even got some rain. Maybe it was because of that, but we had a smaller turn-out than usual, with only Tom, me, Daniel, Mark, Gordon and Billy going out on the beach and Venice Boardwalk. Billy is someone we used to write to when he was in prison, and he has paroled out and is living at the Bible Tabernacle in Canyon Country now. He wanted to go on the outreach, as he has read about it in the many letters he received from us in prison. Praise the Lord! Even though we had a small group, there were enough people to carry the 102 lunches, lots of socks, clothing, and toiletries that we gave out to the homeless. Because of the rain, most of the homeless people were clustered underneath some areas that I call "gazebos" as they have concrete umbrellas and benches. Everybody was extremely grateful for the food, socks, and toothpaste, tooth brushes, shampoo and other toiletry items we gave them. After we gave out all the lunches, we continued up and down the Boardwalk just handing out tracts. One couple, Herman and Raquel, said they were already born again, but it was so encouraging to them to see us out there giving out the gospel and feeding the homeless. There was also another man who said he was a Christian after I handed him a tract, as he had asked, "Is this Christian or anti-Christian?" I told him it was very Christian, and if he didn't need the tract, he could give it to someone else. Some of the homeless people we saw also asked for extra tracts to give to their friends. One young man named Joshua took a stack of every title of Chick tracts that I had with me. Daniel, Gordon and Mark prayed with two homeless men named Jeff and Damon. Daniel encouraged them to try to get their lives together after Jeff told him he had lost his job and everything because of his drinking. They offered Jeff a tooth brush and toothpaste, and he was so happy, and said he hadn't been able to brush his teeth in three weeks. They prayed for both men, and Jeff said he felt the Holy Spirit as they prayed. He said, "You gave me goosebumps!" Altogether, we had a great time down at Venice Beach and the Boardwalk, and the Lord prepared the hearts of many people to accept the tracts. We saw several people reading the tracts after we'd given them out, and it was encouraging to see it. Praise the Lord!

Saturday, November 6, 2010 - Praise the Lord! We had a great outreach today on the Venice Beach and Boardwalk. Our group consisted of Tom, me, Angela, Amelia, Gordon, Sheldon, Daniel and Billy. We all enjoyed ourselves so much, and Angela said she felt a real

peace, for the most part, down there among the people on the Boardwalk. Of course, Tom was at home praying for us the whole time, and we had been praying during the week. Maybe you were praying, too? There seemed to be a real openness about the people, with many coming up to us and asking for a tract. One man, Carl, started reading his gospel tract right away, and when Billy and I passed by him later (the others described him to us as "a man with a baby stroller", and we had noticed him, too) he was still reading it intently. Daniel said a much-tattooed girl watched them handing out the tracts, moved closer cautiously, and then reached out her hand for one. A little man came up to me with his hand out for one, and Billy said some people even came running up to him for one. The Holy Spirit was really moving! Amelia went into a lot of the stores and eating places, offering Spanish tracts to the employees there, and she also covered the skateboard park. As usual, I think we gave out several hundred gospel tracts, English and Spanish, including the ones in the lunches. And speaking of lunches, we had 102, and some extra canned food, as well. When we were all out of the regular lunches, I offered one man a bag with canned food. He said, "Canned food? What do I want with that?" I told him there was a can opener, and some of the cans had lift-off lids, and he decided to take it after all. I guess, if you're hungry, Campbell's Chunky Beef soup tastes pretty good even right out of the can. We had some clothing, and with colder weather coming on, it went fast. Gordon gave a nice, warm, lined coat to a man, along with some socks and a lunch. A skinny kid on a skateboard had no shirt at all, and when Sheldon offered him one, he put it on right away. A blind man named Yellow Feather took a lunch and some socks, and a man named Chris put his new socks on right away, as he had none. When Billy and I arrived at the parking lot up at Rose Ave., we gave out about ten lunches to people who were camped out on the grass right next to the parking lot. We saw some people we recognized, and who recognized us, and we saw a lot of new people, too. Billy had some pamphlets about the Bible Tabernacle, and handed them out to a few people. They may go there if they decide being warm, dry, fed and comfortable is worth more than being a "free spirit" and being able to do drugs or drinking on the beach. Camping out on the beach gets old when winter comes along! Several people were watching what we were doing in giving out the food, toiletries and clothing to the homeless, and it opened up some opportunities to witness in that way. Two young men asked what group we were with, and we gave them the "Creator or Liar?" tract with our ministry info on the back, as well as talking with them a little. One lady who was selling things at a table came up and said, "You're doing God's work, I want to give you this bracelet." Another older man came running up to us and gave us a few dollars. Daniel and his group prayed with a man named Paul, who lost his dog. They also saw a young man with a laptop and asked if he needed anything. He said he didn't need a lunch, but was interested in what we were doing. Angela and Daniel had an interesting experience while they were witnessing to a couple they described as "kind of New Agey". As they began to talk to them about who Jesus really is, a homeless man started cursing loudly, and a woman started shouting, "It's Jesus!" Angela said it was distracting at first, but she prayed (and Tom was at home, praying for us all, too), and it stopped soon after that. It reminded me of those incidents in the Bible where demon-possessed men would come up to Jesus and try to distract Him, but He always ordered them to be quiet

Saturday, December 4, 2010 - What a blessed time we had down on the Venice Boardwalk today! Our team consisted of Tom, Dottie, Alycia, Anthony, Sheldon, Shami, Daniel and Mark. We split up into two teams, one starting down at Venice Blvd., and the other up at Rose Ave. We had 101 lunches, about fifty pairs of socks, toiletries, and some jackets and sweat pants to give out to the homeless. Sheldon and Alycia brought umbrellas, because it was supposed to rain, and they even gave away their own umbrellas to those in need when it started raining. Also, Sheldon said that, when they first got down there and were handing out the lunches, two men were watching them intently. He didn't think they were homeless, because they were fairly well-dressed, but he finally went up to them and asked if they needed any food. They said, "Yes!" and were extremely grateful for the lunches. Both groups ran out of lunches fairly quickly, and Daniel said they encountered one of the largest bunches of homeless people they've ever seen. It was a group of young people, all dressed in black leather, body-pierced, etc., and they came over the hill and right up to Daniel, Shami, Sheldon and Mark. They were very happy to get lunches and socks. I had one lunch left, and was looking for one person to give it to, but saw two men coming towards me. I didn't know if I should try giving one lunch

to two people, but I ended up asking them if they needed food, and if they wanted to share this last lunch. Alycia, Anthony and I gave them the last of the toiletries and socks we had, and the men were so grateful. One man said, "Thank you for caring! No one really cares about us." I told him Jesus cared about them. Earlier, when talking to Jerry, one of the homeless guys we see down there quite often, Jerry told us the Bible Tabernacle had sent some men down there to hand out fliers about their Christmas dinner. We encouraged him to spread the word, and told some other people, who hadn't received the fliers, and encouraged them to go on Christmas Day for a turkey dinner at the BT. As always, once the lunches are gone, we concentrated on just passing out gospel tracts. We gave out many in English and Spanish, and also two in Arabic. I had already given one tract in Arabic to a vendor, and then Daniel came up to me asking if I had any tracts in Arabic. He had met another man, and went back to him, giving him a tract in his native language. People seemed very open to receiving the tracts, and some vendors who identified as Christians, even asked for more tracts to give out to their customers. One young man named Tony asked for both English and Spanish tracts, and said he would put them out on his table.

Prison Ministry

We sent out Christmas cards to all the prisoners who are currently corresponding with us, doing our 12-Step program and/or Bible studies. To consider someone "current" means they have written to us at least within the last three months. We sent 269 Christmas cards to prison inmates, both men and women, and a few to guys who have already been released, but are keeping in touch. Praise the Lord! We sent out 197 last year, so that means the ministry has grown. Matthew 25:35-36 "For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to Me."

La Mount Dunlap, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe, CA - "For the past three-and-a-half weeks, something seemed out of sync as I went along taking care of my daily tasks. Then I realized I haven't been working my Steps while I've been waiting for Steps 8 & 9. I can't explain the feeling, but it was like I didn't feel energetic or as vibrant, so I've begun to review the Steps I already completed. As I did this, I started to feel a sense of renewal, and I felt more lively. Now I absolutely understand why I need to consciously work the Steps every day. If I don't, I can easily start experiencing feelings of unease or of feeling down, and as a result, I might get the urge to find something to "up-lift" my feelings - and me. Having said that, I want to thank you for being there, and for giving meaning to the 12-Steps. Sincerely, La Mount"

Herman Gonzalez, Pleasant Valley State Prison, Coalinga, CA - "I just finished the first of my lessons - thank you! I eagerly await my next steps. These lessons make a person really search their heart and take a honest inventory of what is inside us. And as i take this journey with God and with the both of you, I hope it will be filled with constant success as i take each step to heart! The peace of God be upon you. Herman Gonzalez"

Frank Maez, Avenal State Prison, Avenal, CA - "I'm just writing you this short letter to say that I really enjoy doing this Twelve Steps program with you. It is really opening my eyes to a lot of things in my life that were not good. But since I've started your program, it is really helping me grow with my walk with Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior, and also me as a person. I don't worry about what somebody else thinks about me. I am just concerned with whether I am all right with God. That is my main concern, because if I am all right with God, then I am doing what I'm supposed to be doing. Amen. Sincerely, Frank Maez"

Joseph Hasan, Solano State Prison, Vacaville, CA - "Here is my Step 4 inventory. What a journey! What an absolutely humbling experience, to take a long look at one's self, and realize where you were, and especially in terms of what God delivered us from. I'm now beginning to understand in part why He's so adamant about "self" - Matthew 16:24, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." I know that, in myself,

there was nothing but trouble, wrong decisions, and generally no good thing, until God came along in my life. Praise Him! Love and respect always, your brother in Christ, Joseph"

Rudy B. Martinez, R J. Donovan Correctional Facility, San Diego, CA - "Thank you so much for allowing the Lord to use you as His instruments of healing! The first lesson plus the "Serenity" Bible have been so helpful in leading me to discover the beginning of my problem. I've been in self-help groups, but none have been so helpful as "Love Lifted Me Recovery." Most helpful to me is understanding the five points of addiction cycle. It was hard, because I had to go all the way back to my childhood, and recalling those days was hurtful. But at the same time it's liberating. Thank you once again, for if it was not for your pain, my healing would have never begun. Sincerely, Rudy"

Wayne Lairson, Corcoran State Prison - "Thank you for helping me learn who Jesus is. All I want to do live the best I can the way He wants me to live, so I can go to heaven to be with Jesus and my mother. I wish people would realize what drugs can do to you before they do anything bad life I did. Anyway, I wanted you to know I love your lessons, and I'm grateful to you for helping me. You all are the first persons I've been able to write to in ten years. I have no one, no friends on the outside. Thank you, Wayne"

Vanessa Blasingame, California Institute for Women, Corona, CA - "I received your Christmas card. It is beautiful, and I appreciate it. You and one other person were the only ones who sent me one. Thank you! I've been real busy lately studying to take my GED test, which I've already failed 5 times. But it's okay, because I have faith that I'll pass this time. And I refuse to give up until I do, and God has the last say on that anyways. Your sister in Christ, Vanessa"

Jesse Estrella, "New Folsom" State Prison, Represa, CA - "Hello and God bless you! I really enjoy the Steps we are working, and these lessons are truly helping me. I want to tell you I believe you both are helping me, through the power of God, to be a new man. Your program material is life- changing info. that I need to apply to my life. Yes, the glory is truly to God, but he is using you to get it to me. I appreciate all the work you do for getting my recovery materials to me (copies, lessons, etc.). I know it's a lot of work, and I want you to know your godly duties are changing my life, and I thank you so much. In His name, Jesse"