

“Love Lifted Me Recovery” - January, 2024
Newsletter for October, November, December, 2023
Pastors/Chaplains Tom & Dottie Hooper

ABSENT from the BODY and PRESENT with the LORD

We had been watching our mom getting weaker and weaker after she had a stroke. When we visited her, she was mostly sleeping, and she couldn't talk, but mumbled a little and groaned. At ninety-six years old, her physical body was just worn out, and she wanted to go home to Jesus, which she finally did after two weeks. The Bible tells us that this body we have now is only a temporary "habitation" or "tent" and that **the real person, the SPIRIT and SOUL, goes to HEAVEN immediately at death, and will be clothed with a NEW, eternal and PERFECT BODY, if we are believers in Jesus Christ.** Jesus said to those who BELIEVE in HIM, that not only would we have a **BODY like His RESURRECTION BODY**, but that He has prepared a HOME for us in heaven.

• **John 14:2-3** "In My Father's house are many MANSIONS; if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go to PREPARE a PLACE for you.** And if I go and PREPARE a PLACE for you, **I will COME again and RECEIVE you to Myself**, that where I am, there YOU may be also."

• **II Corinthians 5:1-4** "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent (our PHYSICAL BODY), is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. **For in this we GROAN, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven**, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. **For we who are in this tent GROAN, being burdened**, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that **mortality may be swallowed up by LIFE.**"

• **II Corinthians 5:6 & 8** "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home **in the BODY**, we are absent from the Lord." "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be **ABSENT from the BODY and to be PRESENT with the Lord.**"

• **Romans 8:23** ".....we ourselves **GROAN within ourselves, EAGERLY waiting** for the adoption, the **redemption of our BODY.**" ("Redemption of our body" means when we receive our RESURRECTION BODY. When we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior, **our SPIRIT within us is BORN AGAIN** and made NEW, but we feel "naked" until we get **our NEW resurrection BODY**)

• **Philippians 3:20-21** "For **our citizenship is in HEAVEN**, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, **the Lord Jesus Christ, who will TRANSFORM our lowly BODY that it may be conformed to (made the same as) His glorious BODY**, according to the working by which He is able to subdue ALL things to Himself."

If you are unsure of what will happen to you when you die, or are afraid you will not spend eternity in Heaven, pray this prayer, and receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior today:

Lord Jesus, I believe in my heart that YOU are the CHRIST, the SON of the LIVING GOD.
I believe that You, JESUS, PAID the PENALTY on the CROSS for MY SINS, and that
YOU were RAISED from the DEAD. I REPENT of my sins and RECEIVE You,
Lord Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Lord Jesus, come into my heart and take control of my life!

If you have prayed this prayer **sincerely from your heart**, then the Bible says you have been **born again**, you have eternal life, and you have been **SAVED** from your sins (they are forgiven). God is now your Heavenly Father, and His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, is living in you! (Romans 8:9) It is your **FAITH in the PERSON of Jesus Christ** that saves you, **NOT** any religious works or good deeds you may do (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, October 7, 2023 - For our beach outreach today, we had Tom, me, Felipe, Ricardo, Ulysses, David, Kaela, Johnny, and Sheldon as our ministry team. Tom stayed home to keep us covered in prayer.

Felipe, Ricardo, Ulysses and David went to the homeless camp under the freeway overpass and to those by the Culver Blvd. freeway exit, where lots of people live in their motorhomes. They gave out all the lunches and clothes, and gave extra things to a woman who had three young children with her, and they were standing along the road. Sheldon and I went to the north end of the Venice Boardwalk, and Johnny and Kaela went to the south end of the Boardwalk. We had 181 lunches, lots of socks, toiletry/hygiene packets, used clothing, and shoes for the homeless. We also had dog food for homeless peoples' dogs. We gave out most of the lunches (about fifteen leftover), and those that were leftover we will give out to homeless people around town during the next few weeks. A man named LaVell got a lunch, several pieces of clothing, and was very happy to receive them. A woman named Kim got a lunch and some clothes, and she hugged them to herself, thanked us profusely, and had the biggest smile on her face. In fact, there were a lot of big smiles from people, as everyone was very grateful to receive lunches, clothing and hygiene packets, and the shoes were especially appreciated. We also had two pads that could be used for a bed, and the people who received them were very thankful. There were not as many homeless down at the Boardwalk as we usually see, but everyone who received a lunch also got a gospel tract in their lunch, and we also handed out gospel tracts to people walking along the Boardwalk. I gave out a tract entitled "Charlie's Ants" to a man, and he said, "Oh, my name is Charlie. This must be my lucky day!" I thought to myself, "Well, there's no "luck" involved, but maybe it's God's plan and design for him." The morning started out nice and sunny, but then the fog started rolling in just about the time we were leaving. We all had a blessed time, and were able to bless many people with things they needed for their physical comfort, and also for their spiritual needs.

Saturday, November 4, 2023 - The Lord provided us volunteers for our ministry team: Tom, me, Felipe, Ricardo, Ulysses, Anthony, Josue, David, Kaela, Laura, Keith, Sheldon and Sarah and her three kids. Tom stayed home to provide prayer cover for us. The kids, Tyler, Lincoln and Lexi, loved it so much they actually fought over who would give the lunch to each person, and they all had a good time. Kaela said the homeless people were very happy and excited to receive the lunches from the children, because they probably don't get a chance to interact with children most of the time. Many parents would probably try to keep their children away from the homeless, rather than let them approach them and give them a lunch. Four groups went out to different locations. Keith, Sheldon and I went to the north end of the Boardwalk, Kaela, Sarah, Laura and the kids went to the south end, and Felipe, Ricardo, Ulysses, Josue, Anthony and David broke up into two groups and went to the homeless encampments under the freeway overpass at Pico Blvd. and Centinela in Santa Monica, and the motor homes over by the freeway in Playa del Rey. Felipe said they also gave lunches to some women with children alongside the freeway, and some people with cardboard signs asking for food. He said it was all excellent, and they gave out all the food and clothing, and had a great time. It's getting a little harder to find the homeless around here, as the new mayor of Los Angeles is supposedly "fixing the homeless problem", but all it's really doing is moving people from one place to another. Sheldon, Keith and I still had lunches left after covering the Boardwalk, so we went up Rose Avenue and found ten or twelve people in tents by the 99-Cents store, and another ten or so by the parking lot at Smart & Final. Everyone was very happy and thankful to receive food, clothing, toiletries and socks and shoes. We had 183 lunches, and the usual ton of used clothing and socks. Jackets and sweatshirts were especially appreciated, because it's getting much colder at night. One young woman came up to us and she was wrapped in a blanket. She asked if we had any pants, as she was only wearing some shorts under the blanket. We found a pair of women's sweatpants that looked like her size, and she was so happy to get them. We found Jean, who is 88 years old and lives in her van, and we saw a lot of new people, both young and old. We also had dog food for those who had dogs, and it

was all given out. Each lunch contains a gospel tract, and we also handed out tracts to people who were just walking along the Boardwalk. The men at the Phoenix House were out in their yard, so I gave a bunch of tracts to their supervisor, and he said he would hand them out to the men (the men are not allowed to take anything from outsiders). We all had a great time showing the love of God to people and giving out the gospel. Glory to God!

Saturday, December 9, 2023 - Our merry band of volunteers today consisted of Tom, me, Felipe, Amy, Kaela, Laura, Ulysses, David and Ricardo. Amy and I went to the north end of the Venice Boardwalk, and Laura and Kaela went to the south end of the Boardwalk. Felipe, Ulysses, David and Ricardo went to the homeless encampments under the freeway overpass in Santa Monica, to the homeless camps by the freeway in Playa del Rey, and to a couple of gas stations and shopping centers where he said the homeless hang out. Tom stayed home to keep us covered in prayer (Colossians 4:12). We had 182 lunches, lots of socks, toiletry/hygiene packets, used clothing (including warm sweatshirts, jackets, and wool scarves), blankets, and shoes for the homeless. We also had dog food for homeless peoples' dogs. A woman named Jillian got a pair of fleece-lined slippers that were Mom's, in just her size. A man named John was so happy to get a pair of size 13 shoes, because he said the shoes he had were too tight. When he put on the size 13 shoes, he said, "Oh, these feel so good!" He got some clothes and a lunch, also, and when I told John that we were giving all this out in the name of Jesus, he said, "I think Jesus is coming back soon. Things can't get much worse than they are now." Praise the Lord! A couple whose names were Jeremy and Brawn had a little boy in a stroller, and they said they were living out of their car. We told them about the Bible Tabernacle, and hoped there would be an opening for them. Meanwhile, they were thrilled to get lunches, clothing, and Amy noticed her hair was somewhat disheveled, so she offered Brawn a brush and comb (also had been Mom's) and she was so happy to get it. Later, we saw some men in a group, and they took lunches, clothing, and a pillow and blanket. One man did not want to take a gospel tract, because he said he was a Jehovah's Witness. I offered him a little book called "Bible Promises", which has Scriptures for all different occasions and needs, and he was happy to take it, and he put it in his back pocket right away. Felipe and his group had some clothes in very big sizes, but he said they found people who fit in them, and they gave out everything. There were lots of smiles and happy faces as we gave out every lunch, all the toiletries, and most of the clothing. We also just handed out gospel tracts to people walking along the Boardwalk, mostly in English, but some in Spanish.

Prison Ministry

The total number of inmates doing our 12-Step program and Bible studies is around 350-400. We have men and women in every state prison in California, and we also have inmates scattered across the country in Federal prisons and various county jails. They are doing our Christian 12-Step program and Bible studies through the mail.

Steven Robert Sloan, Valley State Prison, Chowchilla, CA - "I just wanted to say thank you for the certificate for the completion of the Bible study on Romans, and for the new study on James. All the programs in the prison are up and running again, but I still put God first every morning with regular Bible reading and prayer before I start my day. Thank you for your continued service to our Lord and Savior, as you have helped so many, especially me, in developing a prayer and study life in God's word. Sincerely, your Brother in Christ the Lord, Steven"

Benigno Espinoza, CTF Central, Soledad, CA - "May the Lord be with you every day, and God is good all the time! I want to take a moment to thank you from the bottom of my heart. I am so grateful to the Lord for Him putting you and your program in my life at the right time, when I was having a difficult time. Because of you I am able to grow spiritually in the word of the Lord. I was found suitable for parole, and when I am released, I may be deported, but wherever I go, I will give back to the community, all thanks to

God. Sincerely, Benny”

Timothy Parent, Avenal State Prison, Avenal, CA - “I have finished Steps 8 & 9 and made amends where possible. I made amends to my family members a while ago, and some of them have passed away since then, but not before I could send them a letter of apology. There are many people from my past where I have no idea of their whereabouts, but I have asked God to forgive me for my behavior and actions towards them. I must try to make amends to them through God, and each part of my baggage is being unloaded one person at a time. My aim is to not cause harm to another human being, both physically and verbally, no matter how small it may seem. I now have empathy towards others, as I humbly make amends. Doing this 12-Step course with you has made me more aware of how I treat others, and it is with God’s help that I am able to stay focused on my recovery. Love in Christ, Timothy”

Lance Wilding, Pleasant Valley State Prison, Coalinga, CA - “Thank you for all that you do, especially with the prison ministry. As it says in Hebrews 13:3, to remember the brothers and sisters in prison. You are a blessing and you give hope in a place that makes things seem hopeless. I just finished my lessons on Romans, and would like to do the Bible study on Ephesians next. God bless you and your ministry. Peace and love in Jesus’ name, Lance Hunt Wilding”

Jose Zavala, CTF Central, Soledad, CA - “I thank God for being so good to us, and for all the great things He is doing in our lives, even when I’m in here behind these walls and sometimes going through difficulties. I feel always the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ and His divine presence. Also, before I forget, I want to thank you for the gospel tracts you have been sending me. We are giving them out to the men on the yard, as I continue to do this ministry on the yard Monday through Saturday. On Sunday, I also preach and evangelize, and wherever I go, I give my testimony about what our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has done in my life. God bless you for all you are doing, and I love you in Christ our Lord and savior. Jose”

Kevin Crocker, Fenner Canyon Conservation Center, Valyermo, CA - “I understand that your 12-Step recovery program is full right now, and actually that is a blessing that God has filled your ministry with men and women ready to change their lives for God’s good. In the meantime, if you could send me a Bible study on the book of James that would be greatly appreciated. I’m a huge fan of James’ approach to straightforward truth in God’s word. Honestly, I am very passionate about all Scripture that brings me closer to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and being able to share God’s word and love with anyone He puts in my path. Your brother in Christ, Kevin”

Dan Witczak, Valley State Prison, Chowchilla, CA - “Wow! That was some great empowering stuff in your last lessons. God has given you a vast understanding, and you have put together some great Bible studies and recovery lessons. I really have been enjoying myself doing your 12-Step program. God’s word has the answer for everything! God bless, Dan”

Oscar A. Garcia, CTF North, Soledad, CA - “Now that I have finished your 12-Step program, I want to do the Bible study courses you have. I am so grateful for your Bible-based 12-Step recovery program, and my life has improved immensely, and I feel human again. Your letters give me so much hope, inspiration, and make me laugh and cry and feel emotions I haven’t felt in many years. I thank you both for your kindness, compassion and dedication to God’s work. You taught me so much in my life and my road to recovery, and today I live for God, positive programming and doing good. I want to make a good, big difference in the world, both inside prison and hopefully, outside someday. Just like Peter when he walked on water to Jesus, but when he took his focus off Jesus and looked around at the storm, he began to sink. We need to keep our focus on Jesus, and I choose to stay focused on Him and His word. Respectfully, Oscar”