

Ministry Update - 3rd Quarter, 2006

Twelve Step Recovery Meetings

In July, August, and September, we studied and worked on Steps 7, 8 and 9, which are:

Step 7 - "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings", Step 8 - "Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all", and Step 9 - "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others". In some respects, we may work on these steps all our lives, but we try to remove as much "baggage" from our lives as we can for the present. These "Steps" as they are called, are really just biblical principles, and they are necessary for every Christian, not just those with problems of addiction. Every Christian MUST remove the weights and baggage from the past that tend to drag them down and make them less effective in serving the Lord Jesus. None of us can afford to let anger, bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, or any "little sins" that we might call "shortcomings" crowd out the Holy Spirit and keep Him from working in our lives.

- **Hebrews 12:1-2** Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every WEIGHT, and the SIN which so easily ENSNARES us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher (He's the Finish Line in the race!) of our faith....."

Here is something we wrote to one of our guys in prison when he was working Steps 8 and 9 - "Maybe you have a problem in making amends, because you feel that some people on your list "deserved" that treatment from you, because they hurt you. However, God says you must forgive them completely for any wrong done to you. Then, only apologize for your actions, bad attitude, or whatever, and leave out whatever they did. That's between them and God (see Romans 12:17-21). God will take care of any revenge that is needed. What you want to happen in Step 9 is to get the BURDEN of guilt, shame, bitterness, anger, and anything else OFF of you. **It's really not about the other person at all - it's all about YOU being HEALED of all the old baggage that kept pulling you down, especially as it contributed to your drinking, drug abuse or other addictions.** No, it does not make you a "weak person" to do this. You are doing the 12-Step program to try to get healing and recovery in your life, and it takes humility (being willing to be humble), but that does not mean you're weak. It just means you are determined to get your life back on track and right with God at ALL COSTS. Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). Meekness and humility are pretty much the same, but meekness has the idea of strength under control. Jesus is our example to follow of meekness and humility, and He was God in the flesh! He could have squashed His enemies like bugs any time He wanted to, but He CHOSE to be a humble servant and a sacrifice for our sins, and to allow sinful men to kill Him. Jesus knew who He was, and could still be meek, humble, compassionate, kind and gracious, and we should be that way, too. When you choose to forgive someone, even if you think they don't deserve it, you are being like Jesus, and you give up YOUR right to have revenge on those people."

Evangelistic Outreach

Saturday, July 1, 2006 - We had a big turnout of people for the July outreach. Twelve people altogether: Tom, Dottie, Lorén, Lorén's friend Chrysalis, Adam and his son Johnnie, Jessica, Chad, Tabitha, Judy, Sandra, and John. It was another hot day, but we had a blessed, blessed time down at the Venice Boardwalk. We handed out 54 lunches to the homeless, and they were much appreciated. We even heard a few comments, such as, "These guys have the best lunches," and "Check this out, there's two cans of Vienna sausages!" We talked and prayed with several of the guys, including Rocky, "Skinny Kenny", Charlie, and Gregory. Skinny Kenny made us a cross with a rose on it out of a palm leaf. Very talented! He started with a whole palm leaf, and in about five minutes, he had made a beautiful cross with a rose in the center of it. We handed out the usual two hundred to three hundred gospel tracts, and

many people were very receptive. We gave out tracts in English and Spanish, and I gave out one foreign language tract, in French. Ten-year-old Johnnie was a real trooper, and Jessica said he really inspired her to be more bold in going up to people. We came to the Phoenix House as the residents were outside getting some sun, but they said they weren't allowed to take anything from us. In times past, we haven't had any trouble there, and most of the guys would take a tract. Adam went inside and spoke to the supervisor, and was able to leave a stack of tracts inside for the men. John said he was able to give some to the men earlier, before the others came out and said they couldn't take them. Lots of prayer went into this outreach, and again, we were really blessed to be able to go out and spread the gospel. Lorén's friend Chrysalis, who came with us, has not yet made a decision for Christ, so we're also praying that she will come to know Jesus as her Savior soon.

Saturday, August 5, 2006 -

Saturday morning, we were hoping and praying for a good crowd of people to help carry the lunches and go out on the Boardwalk, but only Sheila and John showed up! So, it was just Sheila, John and I that went down to the Boardwalk, and Tom stayed home to pray (he was in a lot of pain from his back and the nerve pain in his leg). We were a little discouraged at first, but I remembered what the Lord said to Paul in II Corinthians 12:9, "'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness' and then Paul said 'Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.'" So, we went out in the power of Jesus Christ, maybe not "boasting" exactly, but certainly not worrying about how small a group we were. We couldn't carry all the lunches in one trip, so we had to go back to the car after handing out the first bunch, and we handed out 69 lunches. Next time, we'll take some kind of cart to carry them in, because I pulled a muscle trying to carry too many at one time. We were all really blessed by our time down at the Boardwalk, and the people seemed very open to receiving the tracts. Regarding the lunches for the homeless, John said he recognized some from last month, and they said, "Are these the lunches with the Vienna sausages and crackers? Thank you so much!" This was Sheila's first time to go on the outreach, and she said she is always blessed to just get out of herself and do something for others. We're sorry for the ones who missed out on the blessing this time, because they couldn't make it. We also want to thank everyone who contributes financially to help in buying the food for the homeless, and the tracts that we hand out. Also, we want to thank those who pray for this outreach. We couldn't do it without you all, and you will not miss out on rewards in heaven for whatever part you played in this evangelistic effort. Jesus said we are to be sowers of seed, and the seed is the word of God. We "sow seed" by giving out gospel tracts that contain the word of God so that someone can read it, understand it, and receive salvation and eternal life right then and there, or later, when they have more time to read the tract. Those who pray for these outreaches are helping to prepare the "ground" or "soil" of the peoples' hearts with whom we will come into contact, and that is what makes them more open to receive the gospel message. As for giving out the lunches, we see so many homeless and desperate people down there at the Venice Boardwalk that we just want to have a little something to give them, and hopefully, in a small way, we can be "fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (James 2:8).

- **Read Luke 8:4-15** "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rocky soil; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But **others fell on good ground**, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold....." (Verses 12-15) "Now the parable is this: **The SEED is the WORD of GOD**. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation (testing) fall away. And the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the **good ground** are those who, **having heard the word with a NOBLE and GOOD HEART**, keep it and bear fruit with patience."

- **Jeremiah 4:3-4 & 14** "For thus says the Lord.....'Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns." Vs. 14 "**Wash your HEART** from wickedness..."
- **Hosea 10:12** "Sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness; **break up your fallow ground**, for it is time to seek the Lord until He comes to rain righteousness on you."

Saturday, September 2, 2006 -

Our team today consisted of Tom, Dottie, Sheila, John, Gordon and James. We were smart, though, and had two little pull-carts that fit 12-16 lunches in each one, so we were able to carry all 72 lunches without having to make a trip back to the car, and without any pulled muscles or other injuries. Praise the Lord! While we were down at the Boardwalk, we met up with two of James' friends, Skip and Willie, and they helped us for part of the time, before they had to go back. We were able to go up farther on the Boardwalk than we've been able to do so far, and had lunches available to give out all the way up. On the way back down, we handed out tracts, and the people were quite receptive. I gave a tract to a young guy working at one of the restaurants, and he took it. Then, another guy came out and took four or five different ones. He said he would read them all. I offered a tract, "The Contract", to a "Goth" kid, with more silver face-piercings than I'd seen in a long time. He said, "Do I have to take it?" I said, "No, it's just a free gift." Then he asked what it was about, and I told him it was about Jesus. He looked through it and said something that I couldn't quite understand, but seemed to mean he wasn't sure about it. I told him it was in comic book form, and a little cartoon story, but it was about serious stuff. I pray he'll read it. I gave out one tract in Polish, and we all gave out quite a few in Spanish. The two guys who were speaking Polish were amazed that I had one in their language. As for the lunches to the homeless, we had lots of good reactions, and two of the guys even said, "I haven't had anything to eat today, or even yesterday." One guy remembered us as the people who give the lunches with the "little sausages", so I guess they're a hit! We put two little cans of the Vienna sausages in each bag, so there's something substantial to eat if they're really hungry, or they can save one for later if they want. This was the first time for James to go out with us, and he said he received a blessing from doing it. Amazingly, I was not as tired as I sometimes am, and I attribute it to having the little cart (Tom bought it for me from Staples, and Sheila already had one), which is a real blessing from the Lord.

Prison Ministry

Our prison ministry has exploded! We now have received requests for "Serenity" Bibles and our Twelve Step lessons from over 60 women in four different prisons: Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla, Leo Chesney Correctional Facility in Live Oak, California, a women's prison in Corona, CA, and Norco Women's Prison in Orange County. We continue to get new men asking for our program, and all in all, with new men and women requesting the 12-Step program and "Serenity" Bible, we have sent out well over 100 Bibles and "beginner's packets" of materials since June, 2006. Please pray for us that we can keep up with so many new ones!

The men are farther along in doing the Twelve Steps, and we've been sending Certificates of Completion to many who have finished the entire Twelve Steps. Certificates have been sent to Don Johnson in Solano State Prison, Arnoldo Treviño in Avenal, Michael Spellman in Washington Ridge Conservation Camp ("fire camp") in Nevada City, Calif., Lyrone Harris in Mule Creek, and Chris Fowler in Chuckawalla Valley State Prison. Congratulations, guys!

Michael Spellman, at Washington Ridge Conservation Camp -

"Yes, I've finished the 12 Steps. I want to thank you guys for everything in helping me thru these Steps. I feel like a new person, and without you this would not be possible. You guys are the best of people. I'll keep you in my prayers, all of you, and please pray for me. I love you,

again for what you helped me do, and that is surrender everything to the Lord. So, the name of your recovery program, Love Lifted Me - your love lifted Michael. Praise the Lord!"

Jefferson Clever, at Mule Creek Prison -

"Hi, greetings in the name of Jesus! Thank you for the latest step I've just received from you. It's always a blessing for me to hear from you. May the love of God richly bless you. I will send you off my step in the next few days. However, I want to say a few words of encouragement to you Dottie and Tom. I thank God for your commitment in going and passing out lunches to the homeless. Wow! You two are really doing the Lord's work. You are in my prayers. Thank you for taking the time to write to me. Hearing about your days and the things you and Tom go through gives me a sense of normalcy from the weird stuff I deal with in prison life."

Erick Schulze, at Avenal State Prison -

"I've never seen anything like your ministry. Thank you so much. I'm really looking forward to working the steps and getting to know you all. I love the Lord. I've been drinking and using since I was 12. My mom was an alcoholic, and most of her side of the family. My Grandpa on my mom's side died young, directly from alcohol. My Grandpa and my Dad's side of the family were functioning alcoholics. This is my 13th time in prison, and I really want a better life. I'm 34 and will be 35 in October, 2006. The Lord is teaching me that he is sovereign - nothing happens by mistake. When I trust that, I'm at peace. I know I am responsible for all my actions. You are in my prayers. I can't say enough how much you mean to me - my family has almost totally slipped away. God bless you, and please pray for me."

Carmen Hillis, at Leo Chesney Correctional Facility in Live Oak, CA -

"Thank you so much for writing me back. I also want to thank you for sharing so much about your lives and what's been happening. I also appreciated the information on "The Enabler" - it really hit home! Believe me, I've done a lot of Bible studies in my life, but I so enjoy doing what you send me. As you can see, I have included Step 2 - I know my life can and will be restored to sanity. I can feel it changing daily! I am willing to do anything it takes to be right with God.....Anyways, since I don't hear from any of my family, I so look forward to your letters."

Richard Anderson, at Wasco State Prison, CA -

"I just want to thank you both for your program. Just doing this first Step made me realize that I am blaming someone else for my addiction..... I now know that it is my own doing and that no one else is to blame. I feel so relieved that I'm in this prison and not out there running amuck any more. I'm so thankful for being here..... I now have one year and 3 days of sobriety as of today (9/25/06), and I have not felt better than this in years. There is no drug that has made me feel better than the Holy Spirit has made me feel in the past year. I really can't wait to start my next Step of sobriety. God bless you both, and all the others in your program."

Elena Marion, at Central Calif. Women's Prison, Chowchilla -

"I want to thank you for the Serenity Bible and 1st and 2nd Steps. God bless you both. I am in a room with seven other women and I have no peace, and the devil is trying to steal my serenity. I pray and listen to Christian music and read my bible. They play the radio so loud, I feel like I am going to go crazy, and they are very mean to me. Please pray for me - I need lots of prayer. I love and feel like I know you both. God bless you! Your sister in Christ, Elena"