

Evangelism Newsletter

Fall - November 2007

Dear Friends in Christ,

First of all, thank you to everyone who has supported me in one way or another. It is greatly appreciated and as the Gospel goes forth, you have a part in it for eternity. There was a number of you who I didn't get a chance to see in person and for that I apologize. I love the Pacific Northwest and the people there. When I got back home I was sunburned on our first weekend outreach October 13. For better weather than here in the Bay Area you would have to go to the Canary Islands (about 72 degrees year round).

SAN FRANCISCO

Love and acceptance is always desired among the street people in any town, however I notice a hardening of hearts in general. Jesus said that the Gospel shall be preached to the poor. In most cases, they are the most receptive although the hardest to follow through with their commitment. Lately it seems that the poor, down-and-out or various other names we give them are harden to the things of God. I think of when Moses was delivering the people out of Egypt, at first they wouldn't believe Moses because of cruelty of spirit and hard bondage. That must be it, so I ask that you would continue to pray for these people. Also pray for me that the compassion of Christ would flow through me to them. It is easy to get frustrated and bitter myself.

On any given day when preaching in the city, all walks of life hear the Gospel; The very rich - poor - affluent - addicted and discarded, and everyone in between. Many people from around the globe visit here and they are hearing the Gospel as well.

BERKELEY

Last summer we had several groups out with us who had too much equipment that produced a little more volume than we normally have out in Berkeley. Since then we have been up against a number of merchants and citizens who have complained to the city and protested. The news made several local area papers including the San Francisco Chronicle. After checking our sound levels the city maintains we are within our legal limits. This has caused a great stir in Berkeley and has affected some of the other area evangelists. One of the fellows here, Eric, was arrested (Catch & Release) recently on the UC Berkeley Campus when preaching in the "free speech" area with some friends of our ministry. They have since dropped the charges.

ARMY OF GOD

Paul tells Timothy - You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. (2 Tim 2:3,4) I like to refer to street evangelism as a military campaign. There are many analogies I like to draw from the armed forces. Going out on the street has all the aspects of a real war. Below are a few I have listed:

- Collateral Damage - Bombing civilians with words or attitudes that are not Christ-like unintentionally. Like the real army we try to minimize the collateral damage as much as possible, however knowing we can and will make mistakes

- Friendly Fire - Encountering negative comments and verbal attacks from other Christians

- Rules of Engagement - Perimeters and guidelines in the scriptures for engaging in warfare. Practical example: At a parade I never try to do any witnessing once the parade starts, only before or after.
- Self-Inflicted Wounds - Not witnessing by justifying disobedience with excuses (ouch!)
- Wounded Soldiers - Bibles, tracts, and publications that are discarded, damaged, and or wet. No one is left behind, if they cannot be used again, they are given a proper burial
- AWOL - Thank God after being disciplined I have been reinstated

FRUIT OF THE MONTH

I was introduced to Dennis by Bill, a preacher and friend of SOS. At first I thought Dennis was just an ordinary street person whom Bill took under his wing. After getting to know Dennis, I found him to be someone who actually walked with the Lord. This is how Bill met Dennis: “We met one night during Christmas 2005 while I was across the street from Union Square passing out tracts. He said he was a Christian. At first I was suspicious; I thought, how could a man be living on the streets and be a Christian. A month later I happened to walk up to him while he was using God’s Word to witness to another man. The Lord rebuked me and has given me a desire to help him in whatever way I am able. Dennis is such an encouragement to me.”

Dennis makes his humble living by collecting bottles, plastic, and other recyclables. You won’t see a discarded bottle or can on the street in San Francisco for very long before someone comes by and snatches it up. Many people use shopping carts and have large yard waste bags holding their treasure. Among many of these independent recyclers are elderly Chinese women. They all seem to know each other and from what I see, respect each other for the most part.

Besides collecting recyclables, Dennis preaches the Gospel and on several occasions has joined us on our outreaches. One of the advantages he has is that he knows almost all the city folks from the garbage man, to the bellhops at the finest hotels. As Dennis puts it, “It’s my neighborhood”.

There was a time when Dennis felt as insignificant as the bottle caps he collected. One day as Dennis had all but given up, the Lord ministered to him and encouraged him to keep going and that He was going to use Dennis for the purpose of sharing the Good News to the discarded people lost in the city of San Francisco.

Life on the street is a hard life, I know because I have lived there myself. Despite the positive attitude Dennis has, he has had many trials as well. He has been beaten up and has had many things stolen. Many Christians have encouraged Dennis and even offered practical help for him to get off the streets. He maintains that his calling and mission field is there among the street people.

The most memorable thing from Dennis’s testimony is how he uses the analogy of recycling. Much like the discarded bottles go into the garbage can, they are of little worth to most people, however; they are collected and made into new products. Likewise, our lives are salvaged by Jesus Christ. Because He loves us, He takes and transforms us into something new and beautiful.

This article about Dennis I wrote will appear in the January SOS newsletter.