

The Way Newsletter - September 2004

It has been a long time since our last newsletter. It is good to be back!!

Many of you have been aware that earlier this year I spent a month in USA travelling around meeting new friends and catching up with old ones. Whilst I was in USA God impressed upon me the importance of being broken before Him. This was a challenge to me, but also to us all: there are many today who would call themselves Christians but just like the Bible times they remain almost pharisaical in their attitude. We all need to be broken before God can use us. There are several occasions in the Bible where Jesus talks about those who might not have expected to, who actually will see heaven after all, and those who expect to be there, for whom it will be a nasty shock. Those people who have had personal struggles with their own weaknesses have had to come to a place of complete brokenness. This is particularly difficult as we become vulnerable and exposed to others. Time and time again Jesus elevated the poor, the vulnerable, the broken, the children whilst putting down the proud, the haughty, the teachers of the law. **THIS IS A SPIRITUAL HEALTH CHECK FOR US ALL!!** One of the clearest indications of the ministry of Jesus is in Matthew 9 v 12 -14 'For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'

In Joel chapter 2 God says "return to me with your heart...rend (tear violently) your heart not your garments". God is more concerned about our heart than what we do. David, one of my Bible favourites, was known as a man after God's heart, in Acts 13, though we all know of his weaknesses and failings.

In the Old Testament I believe it was not the sacrifices which were important but the heart of the individual. See Joshua 24 v 14 & 15. Also in Isaiah God talks about 'meaningless offerings', that they are a 'burden' (Chap 1 v 11 - 20) but the good news is in verses 18 & 19! In the above scripture from Matthew Jesus said that He desires 'mercy not sacrifice'. What I believe He was saying was that He was more interested in what is going on on the inside rather than the outside, in the heart of the individual rather than their act of service. I would be interested to discuss this further.

In the news

At long last it would seem the Government is acknowledging the problems caused by 'our favourite drug' - alcohol. Tony Blair himself stated "...when overall crime is falling, alcohol related violent crime is rising".¹ However the anomaly will come when in the same parliament it is discussing extending the licencing laws, to allow people to drink even longer!! It would seem we still have a little way to go!

Meanwhile 'Department of Health statistics show that one in ten people at NHS drug addiction centres are trying wean themselves off Cannabis'*. This figure apparently has 'doubled' in the last decade. With the World Health Organisation's recent revelation that 'one in five 15 year olds smoke in the UK¹' it, as opposed to our own Governments stats which even more worryingly reveal 'one in three trying cannabis' we could be sitting on a ticking bomb. All this of course is in spite of the risks to both physical and mental health which users of the drug can suffer from.

* Source: Addiction Today Vol 15 No 89 July/August Pages 4 & 5

On a personal note

The time in USA was both a refreshing and envisioning time. There were a number of high spots, one was probably meeting Bro. Mickey Evans in Florida who started the work of Dunklin Ministries, just being around him was inspiring and envisioning and inevitably there was a constant stream of pilgrims, much like myself, travelling from all over the world. Though it started in Florida, Dunklin is now in a number of countries as various residents have been trained and envisioned themselves and moved on to establish new centres. The latest being in Columbia, where they were planning to call the center after Mickey. Characteristically Mickey was not very happy with this. A humble man he wanted to ensure that all the glory went to God and not any human.

Another high spot was visiting friends and family! in North Carolina and attending a conference joining together with other brothers and sisters involved in addiction from all over USA. Another was a meeting which almost came about by chance just as I was about to leave, meeting someone who specializes and offers treatment and support for those with shopping addiction. I could go on and talk about the friends in Phoenix, the new acquaintances and love and hospitality from people I had only met over the internet before shown to me in Austin, Texas. The friends in Florida, and then in Washington, Philadelphia and finally New York. In all it was a very special time and I am hugely grateful to all for the love and friendship shown to me. Sadly the low spot was my experiences of Greyhound buses and for all those praying, sadly I still have not seen most of my luggage (including my laptop - thus the delay!) since 25th April!! I trust you are all still praying as I am convinced I will see it again one day. Thank you Greyhound!!

There were two major objectives I have recently set my sights on, one, travelling has now been achieved. The second was Bible College, for which I have recently commenced a theological degree at Moorlands outside Bournemouth. The degree is 'Placement Based' which means the work in Reading is an integral part. I am grateful to you all for your support and prayers for me and this ministry. I look forward with anticipation and trepidation to the future!

Update on the website

Our new Logo is just the Start! The redesigned site will be launched soon. Watch this space!

We always appreciate and value your comments and feedback

C. of R.: Rev. Ron Ross (USA) Major Brian & Margaret Watters (Australia) Mark & Lara Shipperlee, Chris Cane (UK)