

“Love Lifted Me Recovery” - April, 2025
Newsletter for January, February, March, 2025
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Love - Fulfillment of the Commandments

Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). I remember as a new Christian wondering, “What are those commandments? Are they the Ten Commandments? I thought the New Testament teaches that we are not under the Mosaic law, but under grace? So how does that fit in with keeping the commandments of Jesus?” The answer is found in several truths which are repeated in the Scriptures: **1.)** If you love Jesus you will keep His commandments **(2.)** All the commandments are summed up in **“LOVE God and LOVE your neighbor as yourself” (3.)** The Holy Spirit gives us the love of God in our hearts and the power to carry out the commandments **(4.)** Keeping His commandments and **abiding in His LOVE** is proof that we belong to Him. So, it is a continuous cycle of God pouring His love into us so that we can keep His commandments, and our obeying His commandments keeps us abiding in His love. If God Himself gives us the power to love and keep His commandments, then what is our responsibility, what is our part in the equation? Jesus said, “You shall LOVE the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This means that we must be WILLING to ALLOW God to pour out His love in and through us. We must turn ALL of our strength and purpose, ALL of our emotions and feelings, ALL of our thought-life towards God, and **ASK Him to use us** as a channel of His love. He provides the power, but He does not force it on us, or give it to us **while our hearts and minds are occupied in selfish, worldly concerns**. He waits for us to be willing vessels, and then He will pour out His love and power into us and through us to others.

All the commandments are summed up in **“LOVE God and LOVE your neighbor as yourself.”** On the surface, you may not think that everything could be covered by those two commandments, but if you find the root cause of any sin, it comes down to not loving God completely and wholly, or not loving others with God’s kind of love. The same commandment is stated in a slightly different way in I John 3:23, **“And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and LOVE one another, just as He commanded us.”** **You can’t really love God without believing in His Son Jesus Christ.** “Whoever denies (does not believe in) the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also” (I John 2:23).

•**Romans 13:8-10** “Owe no man anything except to **LOVE one another**, for he who **LOVES another has fulfilled the law**. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, ‘You shall LOVE your neighbor as yourself.’ **LOVE does no harm to a neighbor; therefore LOVE is the fulfillment of the law.”**

•**Matthew 22:36-40** “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, ‘**You shall LOVE the Lord your God** with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: **You shall LOVE your neighbor** as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.’”

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, January 4, 2025 - It was a nice sunny day, but a little chilly for our monthly outreach. Besides Tom and me, we had Felipe, Josue, Anthony, Ulysses, Sheldon, and Johnny for our ministry teams, and Tom stayed home to keep us in prayer. Sheldon, Johnny and I took the north end of the Boardwalk, and

Felipe, Josue, Anthony, and Ulysses took the south end. We had 180 lunches, hygiene/toiletry packets, lots of socks, some shoes, and used clothing for the homeless, especially jackets and sweatshirts for the cold weather. We also had dog food for the homeless people who have dogs. There were people standing in line to get food from another organization, so we gave out a lot of lunches and clothing to them there. As we walked down the Boardwalk, Johnny saw a man who was asleep, and he put a lunch down by him, and the man gave a big snore! He didn't wake up, but when we were coming back, he was awake and eating his lunch. We gave out lunches, clothing and hygiene packets to a large group, and when I asked one man if he needed toothpaste and stuff, he said, "I don't have any teeth!" and he showed me his mouth - sure enough, he had only a few teeth left. A young woman named Melissa said she was going to be going into a rehab place, so she took quite a few clothing items and was very thankful. A woman named Amber got a knit hat, as well as a lunch, and was very happy. Johnny went up to a man sitting on the sand, gave him a lunch, and the man said his name was "Champion." A man named Anton asked for prayer, and Johnny, Sheldon and I prayed for him right there. We gave out all of our lunches, socks, shoes, toiletry packets, and most of the clothing. We also handed out gospel tracts in English, Spanish, and one in Hebrew, and two in Russian. The men who live at the Phoenix House were out in their yard, so we gave gospel tracts to the supervisor, and he started handing them out to the men. The men all came up to get a tract, so we gave him some more, and also some in Spanish. One of the vendors asked for a lunch, and he said he remembered me, and that I had given him some gospel tracts in Arabic a few years ago. I saw a man and I wasn't sure if he was homeless, but I offered him a lunch. When he saw it, he clutched it to his chest and said, "Gracias, gracias!" with tears in his eyes. I gave him a tract in Spanish, and he said, "Gracias, gracias!" again and had a big smile on his face. Felipe said they had a marvelous time, and they gave out everything. They not only did the south end of the Venice Boardwalk, but they went to the streets of Venice, and several places in West Los Angeles and Culver City. Everyone was very thankful and grateful to receive the food and clothing, and we praise God for a great outreach today!

Saturday, February 1, 2025 - It was a sunny day and another wonderful opportunity to reach out to people with the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet some of the physical needs of homeless people, as well. For the homeless, we had 182 lunches, lots of socks, used clothing, toiletry/hygiene packets, and dog food for those who have canine companions. Our ministry teams consisted of Tom, who stayed home to keep us covered in prayer, me, Sheldon, Victor, Felipe, Ricardo, David, Ulysses, Kaela, and Christina. Sheldon, Victor and I went to the north end of the Boardwalk, and Kaela and Christina went to the south end. Felipe, Ricardo, Ulysses and David covered the streets of West LA, Venice, Culver City, and even down by LAX airport finding homeless people in many different places. Felipe said "It was magnifique! We were just roaming about looking for needy people, and we gave out everything." Felipe also said that the young girl who got a pair of "Crocs" shoes with Disney characters on them was very happy to get the shoes. At the Boardwalk, we didn't find as many homeless as usual, but we gave out all but a few lunches, all the dog food, and most of the other items. Nina, had no shoes, but only a pair of dirty socks on her feet, so we gave her a clean pair of socks, some shoes, some pants, a knit hat, toiletries and a lunch. She was very happy, and we saw her later eating her lunch and wearing the hat. A man who said his name is "Virtue" (a nickname, probably?) took a lunch, toiletries, and some clothing, and we gave him a bag to carry them in. He was so happy that he gave me a hug. Another young man named David had some food he'd received from another group, but his paper bag was tearing, so we gave him a cloth bag that would hold it all, plus the lunch and things we gave him. Some people only wanted the food, but many people were blessed to receive clothing, socks, and hygiene/toiletry packets as well. One man was sitting on a bench and he had a big dog with him. We gave him a lunch and a bag of dog food for his dog who started eating it as soon as the bag was opened. Kaela and Christina said the women and men who got the knit hats were very excited to get something so nice and warm. Each lunch contains a gospel tract, and we also handed out gospel tracts in English and Spanish to people who were just down at the Boardwalk for the day. I saw three teenage boys skate-boarding, and they stopped long

enough for me to offer them gospel tracts. Each boy took a tract - praise the Lord!

Saturday, March 1, 2025 - We were blessed with a small group of volunteers, but enough to do the job. Besides Tom and me, we had Sheldon, Kathleen, Felipe, and Ulysses. Sheldon, Kathleen and I went to the north end of the Venice Boardwalk, and Felipe, and Ulysses went to the south end, and also to find homeless people on the streets, some living in motorhomes, and in grocery store parking lots. As usual, Tom stayed home to keep us all covered in prayer. We had 179 lunches for the homeless, socks, toiletry/hygiene packets, used clothing, shoes, and dog food for those homeless people with dogs. Some of the first people we saw were Aracelli and Alex, who received lunches, clothing, toiletries, and a throw rug. They were so thrilled and grateful. We saw the people lined up for food from the church down in Redondo Beach, and Dan was back, after being in the hospital for quite a while. He was reading the Bible to the people in line, so we waited until he was finished before going down the line and offering our things. The food he gives out is from stores, things past their sell-by-date, and it all has to be eaten quickly. Our lunches are canned, bottled and packaged, so we tell the people it can be saved for later, and they are happy to get one. Plus, our lunches contain a gospel booklet/tract that people can read at their leisure, because I'm not sure everyone listens to Dan when he's reading from the Bible (it's very noisy at the Boardwalk, also). There were some security guards there to make sure people didn't get too rowdy over the food, and we gave them tracts, as well. One man in line took a little book with Bible verses, and many people in the line took shoes, socks, clothing, knit hats ("beanies") and toiletries. I gave one woman a gospel tract in Russian, and she said she was originally from Kazakhstan. As we went down the Boardwalk, many more homeless people gratefully received food, clothing and toiletries with big smiles on their faces. Many homeless people have dogs, and they were glad to get food for their pets. The dogs provide companionship, security, and probably warmth at night. Felipe and Ulysses gave out all their lunches, and said the clothing and hygiene items were very much appreciated. We also gave out gospel tracts to people who were just down at the beach for the day, in both English and Spanish.

Prison Ministry

God has blessed us with a prison ministry that reaches men and women in every state prison in California, some federal prisons around the country, and prisons and jails in several other states. We have 350 or so people doing our Bible studies and 12-Step program by correspondence. Most of them have found the Lord in prison, some have made rededications since coming to prison, and some have come to know Christ through our ministry. They are growing in their faith, because God's word does not return void, but will accomplish His plan and purpose. Here are a few portions of letters we've received from inmates:

In Memory of Linda Rivera - Linda began doing our 12-Step program and Bible studies in 2011, and she continued doing our Bible studies for many years after she was released from prison. Linda went home to be with Jesus on Dec. 17, 2024 and was released from the "prison" of her physical body after a battle with liver cancer. Her family sent us her obituary which said she was very active in her local church, and that she loved to sing, lifting her hands to praise the Lord. We know she loved Jesus and is now not only a graduate of our program, but she has graduated from this earth to be in heaven with the Lord. We will miss her. Here are some comments from the last letter she wrote to us:

"God bless you and your amazing helpers and all those beautiful people that come out and help you to feed, clothe and give your love to the homeless. I was blown away when I received the photos you sent of your outreach to the homeless. I had just been telling my son's friend how I have been learning and growing in my faith through your Bible studies, and I was telling him what you both do in your ministry to the homeless, and here came the pictures to prove it! Sometimes, unbelievers and even family still

kind of think you haven't changed, but then Jesus shows up so powerful even in the smallest of things. Thank you, your sister in Christ, Linda."

Nathan Gould, Sierra Conservation Center, Jamestown, CA - "Thank you both for your time and effort you give in sending us the 12-Step program and Bible studies. I just received my certificate for completing the 12-Step program and I look forward to doing the Bible studies, also. My hope is to get out one day and to be able to give back to the community through my time in volunteering and doing as Jesus wants me to do. I would love to help in the community as you and others do, especially in your beach outreach. Your friend in Christ, Nathan"

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Jay Evans, Pelican Bay State Prison, Crescent City, CA - "All's well here at Pelican Bay, enjoying the presence of the Lord and His guidance of the Holy Spirit. We had a blessed worship service over the weekend from a couple from Chino Hills, Jose and Irene, who come once a month and spend a whole week here doing Bible studies and worship services. I thank you, as always, for my Bible study lessons, and also for the calendar. I am truly blessed. Sending my love and prayers, Jay"

Miguel Venancio, Kern Valley State Prison, Delano, CA - "I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for the letter and the wonderful Bible lessons you sent me. Your kindness and generosity in sharing your time and resources with me are truly a blessing. I enjoyed reading about your ministry to the homeless and others in need. Your selflessness and dedication to serving others are an inspiration to me. Sincerely, Miguel Venancio"

James Diaz, R. J. Donovan State Prison, San Diego, CA - "It's been a pleasure to finish these lessons, and I'm looking forward to the next ones. As I was studying the lessons, I've realized how much God has been working in my life. I had a near-death experience in 2021 and Jeremiah 29:11 was my revelation from God. Even though I was sentenced to 34 years to life, God has a plan for my life, and now I try to see how God can use me for His glory, even in the bad situations. The more I read my Bible, pray and trust the Lord, the more I realize God has a bigger purpose for me. He's right here with me in the midst of my storm. Sincerely, James Diaz, sinner-saved-by-grace"

Richard Newman, High Desert State Prison, Susanville, CA - "Thank you both for everything! Since I accepted Christ into my life, with all my heart, soul, and mind, I see His hand in everything. I am very blessed and every day I thank Him, even for the trials I face every day. I'm returning my lessons for the Romans Bible study. Thank you very much. The Serenity Bible you sent me four years ago is still serving me well. It's all marked up and dog-eared - I love it! Thank you for all the help and insight through studying God's word. Doing your Bible lessons, with the practice and repetition, sure does engraft it in a person's heart. Take care and God bless, Richard"

William T. Jones, Centinela State Prison, Imperial, CA - "I recently went to the parole board and was found suitable for parole, so I may be getting out soon, after thirty-three years in prison. Glory to God! I just wanted to say "thank you" not just for the 12-Step program, or the letter to the board, or all the teachings of the wisdom of God, or the photos and calendars, but for the love - the genuine love of God. Just reading about feeding the homeless always brings tears to my eyes, when I read about the people you encounter, and I can't wait to be a part of that, walking the Venice Boardwalk with you all. Your brother in Christ, William"

David Potter, Corcoran State Prison, Corcoran, CA - "I am so grateful that I've been doing your Bible studies and the Christian 12-Steps. I have come so far in changing from my sinful nature by having my sins forgiven by the blood of Jesus, and trying to be more like Christ. I can wake up each morning and feel good about my behavior and actions. Thank you again! In Christ, love Dave "