

## INTRODUCTION

All of God's commandments can be summarized in two simple directives: "Love God with all you've got" and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said *all* Old Testament Law and Prophets are summarized in these two directives. The first four of the Ten Commandments deal with loving God. If you love God you won't take His name in vain or worship an idol. The last six of the Ten Commandments deal with loving others. If you love your neighbor, you won't steal or lie. The great American writer Mark Twain once wrote he knew a ruthless, wealthy businessman in Boston. After the businessman read about Twain's visit to Palestine, he told him his goal in life was to travel to the Holy Land, climb Mt. Sinai and read the Ten Commandments aloud from the top. "I have a better idea," replied Twain. "You could stay in Boston and *keep* the Ten Commandments." You can *keep* all ten by loving God and loving your brother.

As we launch LYN week, we need to understand what love is. Not long ago, some young children were asked to share their thoughts about love. Some of their answers were funny, and some were deeply profound. Here are my favorite twelve observations they made:

1. When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you. *Karen, 7*
2. Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other. *Karl, 5*
3. Love is when mommy sees daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford. *Chris, 8*
4. Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day. *Mary Ann, 4*
5. I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones. *Lauren, 4*
6. Love is when someone hurts you. And you get so mad but you don't yell at them because you know it would hurt their feelings. *Samantha, 6*
7. When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love. *Rebecca, 8*
8. Love is what makes you smile when you're tired. *Terri, 4*
9. Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen. *Bobby, 5*
10. When you tell someone something bad about yourself and you're scared they won't love you anymore. But then you get surprised because not only do they still love you, they love you even more. *Matthew, 7*

11. You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget. *Jessica, 8*
12. God could have said magic words to make the nails fall off the cross, but He didn't. That's love. *Max, 5*

Love is not a feeling. It is something you do—it's a verb. A song is not a song until you sing it, a bell is not a bell until you ring it and love is not love until you give it away. Last week, we read about Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan in response to a legal expert's questions. The first question was, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” We discovered the word “do” spoiled the question. You can't *do* anything to have eternal life—it's already been done for you. Then after, He quoted the two greatest commandments, “love God” and “love your neighbor,” the lawyer had another question: “Who is my neighbor?”

That's an important question for us today, as well. God has commanded His children to LYN. Who is your neighbor? Who is my neighbor? Let's listen to the story again, beginning in verse 30:

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Did you notice that there were at least three different attitudes displayed in that story?

### **I. THE MEAN MUGGERS: “WHAT’S YOURS IS MINE AND I’LL TAKE IT!”**

The robbers violated the commandment “you shall not steal.” There are still plenty of folks with that unloving attitude today. That's why we have to have locks and keys. That's why we have to have police, criminal courts and prisons. Because there have always been thieves who are looking for a chance to rip you off. Most of us feel pretty superior to these bandits. We would never steal ... or would we? If you cheat on your expense account or on your tax return what's the difference? And God even says some people are robbing Him because they have shortchanged Him on their tithes. None of us can get too comfortable, because we all struggle with greed.

### **II. THE TWO JEWS: “WHAT’S MINE IS MINE AND I’LL KEEP IT!”**

The priest and the Levite passed by and simply refused to help a man in need. Their attitude is still common today. Have you ever thought or said, “It’s not MY problem.” Or “I don’t want to get involved?”

Someone showed me a “Dear Abby” column containing a letter from a writer who described a drowning that took place in a large municipal pool. The pool was so large, the city employed several lifeguards. At the time of this tragedy, only one was on duty. Frantic kids ran to the lifeguard to report a swimmer on the other end of the pool was lying on the bottom. The lifeguard’s reply was, “Sorry, that’s not my area.” Eventually some other swimmers jumped in and got the unconscious swimmer to the side. They called 911 and tried to administer CPR, but they were too late and the swimmer died. The writer of this letter was an eyewitness. Charges are pending against the lifeguard. The writer of the letter signed it, “Ashamed of the Human Race.”

The muggers were guilty but according to Jesus, the two Jewish leaders were guilty of violating the command from Leviticus 19 to “love your neighbor.” There is a crime called “negligent manslaughter.” There is also a sin we could call “negligent hatred.” If you have the opportunity to show kindness and love to someone in need—and you don’t do it, you are guilty. Some people sitting here today have already decided, “Sure it’s LYN week. That’s just another one of David’s harebrained schemes. But I’m not going to get involved.” That’s the attitude of these two Jewish leaders.

### **III. THE KIND SAMARITAN: “WHAT’S MINE IS MINE—BUT I’LL SHARE IT!”**

This is the attitude Jesus said each of us should, “Go and do likewise.” Remember, the kind Samaritan showed his love to a total stranger. That’s what LYN is all about. It’s not showing kindness to those who love us and will show kindness back: it’s kindness to strangers. We ought to be doing this all the time, but this LYN week is expose you to the joy of sharing intentional acts of kindness. Stephen Grellet wrote:

“I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now; let me not defer to neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.”

What happens when you LYN? I want to show you five things:

#### **1. Your intentional acts of loving kindness will open closed hearts**

Because there is so much crime and hatred in our world, people have become cynical and skeptical. We are so afraid of being conned or scammed we don’t trust any stranger anymore. That is a real handicap when we are trying to share the love of Christ with people. They think we have an ulterior motive. Before you can give people the Word of God, you must show them the Love of God to soften or open their hearts.

“One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord OPENED HER HEART to respond to Paul’s message.” (Acts 16:14) How does the Lord “open people’s hearts?” One way is by letting them

see His love for them and the best way for people to know God loves them is when we don't just say, “God loves you,” but when we show them.

This past week, I went out to “test the waters” to report to you how people respond when you do what I'm asking you to do—show kindness to strangers. Last Thursday, the Lord laid on my heart to take my shoe shine box and visit some places where people would be sitting and waiting. So I went into some doctor's waiting rooms and I just walked around until I saw some men with shoes that needed shining. I said, “Excuse me, but the members of our church are performing some acts of kindness in our community and I wonder if you would allow me to shine your shoes at no charge—it's free.” Then I handed them the little LYN card. I approached 12 or 14 men and do you know how many of them refused me? Zero. But it's amazing what happened when I knelt down to shine their shoes: They were all totally amazed anybody would do that. Most of them didn't know I was the pastor of the church. They wanted me to explain again *why* I was doing that. It gave me a chance to tell them about how much God loves them. I saw hearts melt right before my very eyes. Tears filled the eyes of the first gentleman as I shined his shoes. Now, I could have just walked through those rooms saying, “God loves you.” But what kind of impact do you think that would have had? Your acts of loving kindness will open people's hearts to hear the message of God's love.

As I shined their shoes they turned the card over and read about Green Acres. They wanted to talk about the church and about God. I didn't have to try to direct the conversation, that's all they wanted to talk about. Acts of kindness will melt cold hearts and they will open hard hearts. Try it and see.

## **2. Your intentional acts of loving kindness corrects the popular perception of “Christian.”**

Most unchurched people out there think a Christian is someone who puts on a coat and tie once a week and goes to church. To a non-believer the term “Christian” is often colored by the fact that they had some unpleasant business dealings with someone who claimed to be a Christian. Or they think a Christian is some Hollywood caricature of a crazed maniac with a big Bible in one hand and a bloody hatchet in the other.

Jesus said the greatest defining mark of a Christian is “loving one another.” What are the adjectives that ought to describe a true Christian? Paul writes in Colossians 2:12,14: “Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, CLOTHE YOURSELVES with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience ... and over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

People need to see Christians are willing to be servants. Jesus said the greatest disciple was the one who demonstrated the deepest level of servanthood. Then He demonstrated it Himself by washing the disciples' feet. This week I shined the shoes of a gentleman, Mr. Miller, who was a deacon in his church. He told me what I was doing reminded him of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. After I finished shining his shoes, I was so blessed. He said, “Now, let me shine your shoes.” At first, I didn't want him to, but I realized I would be denying him the blessing I just received, so, sure enough, I sat in his chair and he shined my shoes. I stood up when he finished and he was crying and I was crying and we hugged each other. Now, what we were doing was

not done for the sake of anyone else, but I couldn't help but notice about 20 other people in the waiting room were watching. If there was an unbeliever in the crowd, they just had a corrected picture of what a “Christian” is.

### **3. Your intentional acts of loving kindness plants seed of evangelism**

What's the point of these acts of kindness? We are simply trying to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus who said, “As you go, make disciples of everybody.” You may think evangelism is sitting down with a gospel presentation and telling someone step by step how to be saved. Or you may think evangelism is Billy Graham preaching to a stadium filled with people. Those *are* evangelistic events but acts of kindness done in the name of Jesus are seeds of evangelism as well. The church at Corinth was confused about who should get the credit for all the converts, and Paul had to clear up their confusion in 1 Corinthians 3:5-6: “After all, who is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe -as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.”

God is the *only* one who gets the glory, but there are different methods to evangelize. Some of you are still terrified by the idea of sitting down and initiating a gospel presentation with someone. If I asked you to come up to this pulpit and tell folks how to be saved, some of you would run for the exit. Evangelism is a team process. Your acts of kindness will plant seeds in the hearts of unbelievers. Then when they are channel surfing some night and come across our broadcast or another Christian program, suddenly their hearts are ready to receive Christ. Or you may give them the LYN card and they'll show up here some Sunday to worship to hear me preach. You planted, I might water it, but it is God who saves. I am tremendously excited about this week because I know thousands and tens of thousands of seeds are going to be planted in East Texas this week.

### **4. Your intentional acts of loving kindness points people to God's love**

I want to say again it is critically important that God gets the credit and glory for these acts of kindness. If you do an act of kindness in your own name and don't give God the credit, you haven't pointed them to God. They must know your act of kindness was motivated by God's love. You can give God credit by simply saying, “I am doing this in the name of Jesus.” Or by saying, “I just wanted to show God's love to you in a special way.” Or the easiest way is to just give them the LYN card because that says it all. For instance, take some of these cards with you this week. If you are in a drive through line at Chick-fil-A or Dairy Queen, ask to pay for the food of the people in the car behind you. Give the card to the cashier and tell them to give it to the driver in the car behind you when they pull up and find their bill is paid. You may want to leave an anonymous gift on someone's desk at work—but be sure to leave the LYN card.

There are hurting people out there who need God's love. They aren't opening their Bible, they aren't coming to church, and they aren't watching Christian television. You may be the *only* example of God's love they see. John wrote: “No one has ever seen God; but if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.” 1 John 4:12. For now, your act of kindness may be the only glimpse of God they get.

After I shined the shoes of these men, most of them reached into their pocket to make a "donation" even though I told them at the start it was free. I said, "Absolutely not. It's totally free. I just wanted to remind you God loves you." See, people still think we *want* something, even though we say it's free. We must be totally pure in our motive. We want to show them God's love. How many times have you quoted, "For God so loved the world ... ?" These acts of kindness are going to make that verse come alive for you and for those other people. Those are four things that happen when you LYN. This last point is actually more of a "How to LYN." Let's talk about how you can participate in acts of kindness this week or anytime.

## **5. Your intentional acts of loving kindness should be planned but flexible**

Now, we have some events planned this afternoon and throughout the week, but you should be willing to be flexible and spontaneous. For instance, this afternoon, we aren't meeting here for worship. We are spreading out through the community from 4 to 6 p.m. to show God's love through acts of kindness. We are asking you to do one of two things. First, some of you bring an ice chest of bottles of water. Others of you bring a bottle of Windex a roll of soft paper towels and a garbage bag. Just gather at one of several locations, Wal-Mart Supercenter, Target, the mall, Best Buy, and Rose Rudman Trail or go to any other area you can think of. In some of these main locations, look for a car with a "Green Acres Flag" and that will be the base of operations. After you wash someone's windshield, write on the LYN card, "I washed your windshield" or they won't know what the card means. If someone says, "get away from my car" just smile and say, "sure." If security people come out and ask you to leave the parking lot, smile, and give them a bottle of ice cold water in the name of Jesus and leave—go somewhere else where there are cars and hot, thirsty shoppers or walkers. Be flexible. What if it rains? Great! Instead of washing windshields, show up everywhere you can think of with the biggest umbrella you've got and offer to escort those without umbrellas to and from their cars and give them the card. In other words, make your plans, but be flexible.

For instance, I only intended to go to doctor's waiting rooms to shine shoes but I discovered most men are wearing tennis shoes these days, so after I shined a few shoes at some doctor's offices I decided to try the surgery waiting room and the ER waiting rooms. It worked.

Now some of you are still not too convinced about this LYN stuff. I have been talking to our staff about this LYN week for months. One of them said jokingly to me, "You sure have been riding us about LYN week!" I said, "Yeah, and I'm going to *keep* on riding you." Our staff is 100% on board and each of them will be leading LYN activities. Some of you may think I'm riding you about LYN as well. Well, that's exactly what I want to do, in fact, I want to do more than ride you: I want to put on some spurs and really ride you, because that's what the Bible says we are to do. Look at Hebrews 10:24, "And let us consider how we may SPUR one another on to love and good deeds." A cowboy may use his spurs to "motivate" a reluctant horse to move along. Some of you may need a little spur today! Come on! Giddyup!!

You probably noticed I preached on the Good Samaritan and LYN last week. It's like a new preacher I heard about who came to a church that had some problems and preached a tremendous sermon on loving your neighbor. The people exclaimed it was a wonderful sermon. The next Sunday, he preached *exactly* the same sermon again. It was still good but the people were a little

baffled. On the third Sunday he preached the same sermon a third time. By now, the people were upset. Some of the deacons went to him and said, "Preacher, when are you going to preach a new sermon?" He said, "When you folks start doing what I said in the first sermon!" I may preach on LYN next Sunday, too!

Look at that verse again. We are to consider *how* to spur one another toward love and good works. I want some of you to consider how you can show the love of God to strangers this week. You folks are so creative, I want you to go beyond the activities we have planned.

Steve Sjogren, who wrote the book, *Conspiracy of Kindness*, says every week, he and some of his men take cleaning supplies and simply visit as many public toilets as they can in couple of hours. These may be in gas stations, restaurants or stores. They clean the toilets and then give a LYN card to the manager. Some of you may want to cut your neighbor's grass, or offer to wash their car in your driveway. There are hundreds of acts of kindness you can perform nobody has ever thought of. I can't wait to hear about some of the ideas some of you will come up with this week!

Just go out there with your plan and ask God to guide you. But he won't guide you if you are sitting on your blessed assurance in your own house. Billy Graham once said, "God has a difficult time guiding a rocket before it is launched. Get off the launching pad and guidance will come to you."

There are several important guidelines for all your LYN acts:

**First**, as I've said, you *must* give credit to God either through a spoken word, or through a LYN card or by giving someone a written note.

**Second**, whatever you do, do a good job. I tried my best to give the very best shoe shine I could give this past week. If you are baking cookies for a neighbor or washing windshields or cleaning toilets, do a good job.

**Third**, don't leave a mess. For those passing our LYN cards in a parking lot, some people are going to read it and drop it. Don't get upset, just pick up any cards that people drop, and use them again. If they don't keep the card, at least they have probably read it and they know that God's love motivated you to show kindness to a stranger. If you clean windshields, pick up the paper towels you use, and while you're at it, go the second mile and pick up any other trash you may see. If someone tosses his or her empty water bottle on the ground, pick it up.

**Fourth**, stay positive and keep smiling, even if people refuse your offer of kindness.

**Fifth**, don't take a penny, even if people try to pay you. Next Saturday, our singles are doing a free car wash. People are used to free car washes, but they think it means you make a "donation." Don't take a *penny*. Showing kindness in the name of Jesus is all the reward you need.

There is one final benefit of LYN not on your outline. You will experience what I call a "blessing boomerang." Did you hear about the Australian kid who got a new boomerang? The

only problem was he couldn't throw away his old one! My friend, you will be blessed in an awesome way by these acts of kindness. Isn't that the way God works? When you try to be a blessing to others by showing them an act of loving kindness. That blessing will come back to you in multiple blessings. It's like when Mary knelt to anoint the feet of Jesus with her expensive perfume and then she wiped His feet with her long hair. What an act of unselfish kindness. Jesus' feet received the perfume, but when Mary got up to leave, the aroma of that unselfish blessing lingered on her hair for a long time.

## CONCLUSION

Can you think of the kindest thing anyone ever did for you? I can. One time I was a rotten, selfish sinner bound for hell because I was guilty. There was this man who was actually the Son of God. Although He was not guilty of any sin, He stepped in and took the punishment I deserved. As the hymn says, "He took my sins and my sorrows. He made them His very own. He bore my burden to Calvary and suffered and died alone." But He had more life than death could handle. That's the kindest thing anyone has ever done for me—and He did the same thing for you. Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) LYN week is all about laying down your life for others. It's about showing God's love to total strangers by performing acts of intentional kindness. You are never more like Jesus than when you set aside your personal schedule and LYN. Let's see what can happen to East Texas when we really start showing God's love to others. I don't want to have to spur you to do this. I hope your motivation is the same as Paul's when he wrote: "The love of Christ constrains me." (2 Corinthians 5:14)

For the LOVE OF CHRIST, let's love our neighbors!

## OUTLINE

1. THE MEAN MUGGERS: "WHAT'S YOURS IS MINE AND I'LL TAKE IT!"
2. THE TWO JEWS: "WHAT'S MINE IS MINE AND I'LL KEEP IT!"
3. THE KIND SAMARITAN: "WHAT'S MINE IS MINE—BUT I'LL SHARE IT!"

## YOUR ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS

### 1. Will open closed hearts

"One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord OPENED HER HEART to respond to Paul's message." *Acts 16:14*

### 2. Correct the popular perception of "Christian"

"Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, CLOTHE YOURSELVES with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience .... and over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." *Colossians 2:12, 14*

### 3. Plant seeds of evangelism

"After all, who is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only SERVANTS, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." *I Corinthians 3:5-6*

### 4. Point people to God's love

"No one has ever seen God; but if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." *I John 4:12*

### 5. Should be planned but flexible

"And let us consider how we may SPUR one another on to love and good deeds." *Hebrews 10:24*



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes