

*A Short
Journey of Love*

“A Walk of Faith”

Orlando Vasquez

A Short Journey of Love – A Walk of Faith

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Printed in the United States of America

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A True Story

The following is a true story. This story is compiled from my online journal entries while on this two month journey I took back in November 2004. May anyone who has graciously taken the time to read this story be inspired to rest in the Lord Jesus Christ and to daily walk in His love, faith and truth.

"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?" Luke 9:23-25

"Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.'" Mark 12:29-31

"And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere." Luke 9:2-6

November 2004

As I walked on the beach today in San Clemente, California with the sunset coming to a complete close on my left and people walking by at times on my right (who happened to be slowly fading into dark figures); Fong and I were discussing our ventures. I began to tell Fong how I believe people are called by God for different purposes. Some doctors, some teachers, some mechanics, and so on - and that I have felt called by God. I did walk close with God in Maine. And now I have been feeling the call of God to start traveling and seek to hear his Spirit to direct me in love to do His will.

As we spoke of the reason of our travels together, I was moved to tears as I felt the presence of God's love very strong. We both admit that we are being directed by the Spirit of love. Fong states, "What took you so long bro!" We both smile and dance down the beach knowing we are a part of something way bigger than us. And we don't know what lies ahead but we are both excited and open to the Spirit of love. "Lord Jesus, direct our steps to share your love".....and so the story begins.

Austin Personalities

Roland Woods, a wonderful homeless man in a wheelchair, had become my new friend. I met Roland one September night after I performed in a Hawaiian show with Tropical Productions in the downtown area of Austin Texas. On my way, walking to take the bus home, I ran into Roland and hung out with him and realized he was a nice man with a drinking problem that had nobody to care for him or be a true friend. So I began staying with Roland some nights in the alleys to keep him company and watch over him, as some street people would harass him and even beat him up on one occasion. It was the beginning of my training for the adventures ahead.

So in my first entry I shared about Roland (pre-inspiration), who I believe the Lord used to help me sense the need to begin traveling and reaching out to people in love. I also have to mention Maverick, a beautiful woman who lives and travels in her van. I met Maverick at Ruta Maya, a coffee shop in Austin. She was selling some kind of brush that smelled nice, but I don't remember what it was called. Anyway, I spent a couple of weeks hanging out with Maverick. I let her stay the night and shower and such. We shared some nice times. She is a true sweetheart and a sensitive soul. I look forward to going to Kerrville with Maverick next year. But after listening to her speak of the life on the road, I began to sense the Spirit even more and my desire to quit my job and take off increases.

Then as soon as Maverick leaves town, the next day I meet Fong on the strip of Guadalupe in Austin. I'm walking down the street just enjoying the day and all the people on the street when I see this half Chinese half American dreadlock dude sitting on the newspaper stand playing the bass. I walk up and enjoy his vibe for a bit and spend some time talking

to him. He shares his traveling ventures and I share my desire to travel. We decide that I would enter the “Fong’s school of travelology”.

So I finally brought the story up to date. I just wanted to give a little recap of what led up to my journey. The next entry I will start my story from day 1.

The Journey Begins

The journey begins on a Tuesday night of Nov 23rd. My ex-girlfriend, Sabina, drops Fong and I off on 290 by the Sam's club. Our idea so far is to stop in El Paso to visit with my family. I'm looking forward to starting our trip this way as I have not been to El Paso since I left over 4 years ago and I miss my family. I also would like to tell my parents face to face what I'm doing and have them see me off.

We crash behind Sam's Club in the woods and get up in the morning and start hitchhiking on 290. Fong and I feel the love and excitement already, so we make a sign with our destination and begin to become "the dancing hitchhikers".

Some time passes and a cop comes to talk to us. Uh oh - is this not meant to be? He lets us know that hitchhiking is illegal, but then he says "it's OK, just be safe and stay back from the road" DIVINE GRACE.

We sense the Spirit's peace and dance/thumb it until Arturo stops. "Our first ride and it's only 10am?" I don't believe it! Arturo drops us 200 miles out of Austin on I-10. He was a blessing and is very thoughtful concerning where he drops us. We say, "Later and thanks" to Arturo.

After a bit of lunch we hit the side of the road again. So we hitchhike, we dance a bit (entertaining the cars driving by on I-10), then we run out of steam to dance and find ourselves taking a nap on the side of I-10. I begin to feel at complete peace and much freedom.

Unfortunately all day passes and the sun goes down and no one stopped. It looks like we're going to have to camp in the woods so we begin to grab our packs to go to the woods when all of a sudden, an SUV stops.

The SUV backs up to us and the window rolls down. There is a bald headed black guy who looks at us like we were crazy and asks “Ok...what are you all up to?” We say “Heading to California man....sharing the love of the Lord!”

He tells us to get in and we jump with joy and get in the SUV. We share the love and nature of our travels with Mike. Fong shares his anti-government and anti-corporation views with Mike as well of his many ventures and philosophies of the road. I share my desire to share the gospel of Jesus Christ on the trip and testimony. Then Mike tells us not to panic but that he is an FBI agent. COOL! I never met one. I begin to sense that this guy Mike is a very righteous hard working man. And guess what? He's going to California. Hmmm.

So Mike shares with us how he has to go against his conscience on his job working for the FBI. I sense that Mike is carrying a heavy burden. After a couple of hours of driving and much conversation, Mike tells us that he has been in a depression for some time now. He says that he has just realized that it is gone and we had inspired him. THANK YOU LORD FOR USING US KNUCKLEHEADS!

At My Parents House

So I invite Mike to stay the night in El Paso at my parent's home and have Thanksgiving dinner with me, my family, and Fong. We hit it off so well that he gladly accepts and many hours later we arrive at my parent's house in El Paso.

My Dad, who is a retired U.S. Customs agent, hits it off with Mike and we have a wonderful first day of travels. I am at home with my parents and able to begin this trip with their blessing.

We all get up in the morning and my Mom tells us all that we are going to church to start our day of thanks. Though I personally am turned off by the mall like atmosphere in the Abundant Living Faith Center church that my parents attend, I ask the Lord to help me not be judgmental and focus on Him. So the service starts and it is nice. God showed up and moved on our new FBI friend Mike. We all just witnessed the moving of God's spirit. I am now convinced I am in the will of God. "Thank you Lord for using us and allowing us to witness Mike become a new man." Praise the Lord Jesus. He is alive. The rest of the day was so beautiful at my sister's house with lots of food and great times.

SO FAR MY TRAVELS ARE ALL WORTH IT EVEN IF MIKE IS THE ONLY PERSON GOD USES US TO TOUCH. I AM HUMBLLED AND DESIRE TO GET CLOSER TO THE LORD. I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT LIES AHEAD.

Love is a God. God is love. Jesus is God. I love you Lord. I love all people. Keep flowing Lord. Keep it flowing Spirit. Peace and love.

Heading Out

After a great dinner and spending good time with my family Me, Mike, and Fong head out. It's Thursday evening and we are headed to California.

The beautiful thing about this trip is that I feel like I have known Mike and Fong forever. I'm filled with love. We drive all night. We help Mike drive so he can sleep as well. Of course I slept the most, as driving puts me to sleep.

As we arrive in California, Mike takes us to San Clemente. Fong hopes to meet with Shelly, a friend he hopes to travel with also. Mike buys us a great breakfast at a diner called the "Sugarshack". The waitress is real cool and gives us a warm welcome and great service. She also takes our picture. I ask her if she could join us in the picture and she says, "Only after I finish putting on my makeup". Cool! So we take a picture with the waitress. Unfortunately, I don't remember her name but her kindness is not forgotten.

After breakfast we head to the main pier of San Clemente. We depart from our new brother Mike with a group hug and a word of prayer. Although there are tears of thankfulness and goodbyes, I feel we will see our brother Mike again.

Mike tells us that in the near future he will be calling us and no matter where we are he will send us to Hawaii to visit him and his family. I will miss Mike and I do look forward to seeing him soon. Although Mike proclaims thanks to us for what has taken place in his life, I only feel humbled knowing that I am only a mere man like any other. I am witnessing the moving of God's Spirit and feel that I am the one that is

blessed. “Thanks God for allowing me to be a part of your Love plan. I love you Lord and can't wait to go home one day.”

After seeing Mike off it brought joy and a smile to my face when Fong ran down to the beach and into the ocean like a kid going to Disneyland for the first time. My excitement mounts again with the thoughts of what our travels will bring to us - good times and much love.

We spend the rest of the day at the beach just soaking in the California sun, watching the surfers, playing hacky sack, frisbee, and watching the train go by. It's a beautiful day and I feel thankful to God to be alive. Much smiling.

San Clemente State Park

After talking to some folks we decide to head to San Clemente state park to camp overnight. It's a beautiful state park right on the beach with cliffs, plenty of trees, and showers (HOORAY). Fong calls me "a road wimp" for desiring to shower. We are all different, but I will try my best to stay clean on my travels. I'm sure my Mom will like to hear that!

While at the bathroom we help a struggling man move his trailer. A few minutes after we help, his wife brings us a bag of candy. Cool! Treats! Small favors go a long way!

Then a guy starts setting up his camp by us and we offer to help him. His name is Andy. He is a trip! After a short period of talking with Andy, I pick up that he is an angry, short tempered, at times rude, loner of a guy. We help him and share what we are all about. Andy thinks we are crazy, but invites us to share his camp spot - another divine provision because we do not have the money to pay for our camping.

Over the next week of spending time and camping with our new friend Andy, I realize that this is a test for me. Can I show unconditional love and acceptance to this man whom I witness to be hurtful to other people with his strong nature and what I consider to be rudeness?

Well I believe the Spirit is moving because it seems Andy has taken on a father type role with us - like sharing his food and bringing us coffee and donuts each morning. Though he is my neighbor, Andy is very rough on the outside. I begin to sense that he is angry with God. Yet he only wants companionship and love, what I believe we all are designed for.

During our stay in the state park we meet two hum bums that live there named John and Job. Great guys! Sadly, they have an alcohol problem.

They share how both of them have wives in big homes in San Clemente - that they left for “reasons”. I feel much love for them and we all share food and conversation.

One day as we were watching the sunset (which we saw most every day in San Clemente State Park), I spoke with a sweet girl whom I forgot her name. She was working on her Spanish class work. She was also a believer in the Lord and was pleased to hear of our travels. As Fong watched the sun go up, she shared with me how she helped at an orphanage. I was blessed speaking with her and she promised to keep us in her prayers and tossed us a \$5 for our cause (God provides again).

Strolling Up the Road

We had a great week in San Clemente State Park and I'm sure that we touched a lot of lives in different ways. Fong and I stroll up the road singing and dancing as usual about the love we both have for God and people.

We pass an artist's house waving and complimenting her on her artwork in her garage. I think Fong was digging her. We wonder about town and play some music in the downtown streets (making no money). While playing music I look up and see an older woman on the second floor of a building. She smiles. Our job is done and we move on.

While we are walking through town the artist comes up peddling on her bike. She gives us her card. She tells us that if we need anything we can call her. I was touched and blessed.

Fong dumpster dives at a flower shop. Later, we pass by the artist house again. I encouraged him to go to the door and offer her the flower he got out of the dumpster. He goes and she invites us in for tea. Turns out she is married. I notice before long she is full of love and she has a gentle spirit. We chat a while and then she and Fong play the piano. She shows us her art. It was a beautiful visit with a beautiful person.

Later that day as we walk back on our way to the beach the artist and her husband are in their garage. So we get a chance to meet him also. What a beautiful couple.

Heading to Laguna Hills

We decided to head out to Laguna Hills after a couple of days with Andy, our camping buddy. He drops us off at the food stamp office. We apply for food stamps and for day labor. While waiting for our bus to go to Laguna Beach, we decide to fly a sign that says "Nothing but Love!"

As we are making our sign, a guy drives up to see what we're doing and where we are going. We share our love with him and he digs it and throws us a bunch of change. We talk some more and share of God's love and our desire to share with others. When he's about to leave he throws us a \$20 and then he buys us some pizza. God provides once again! This guy was such a nice man and was right with us on our desires. May the Lord bless him with all he desires!

At the bus stop we fly our new sign and dance around to see how many smiles can be produced from such stuffy people in the area. To our joy, we get many smiles and waves. Then Mr. Policeman comes up....

"Hey boys, what are you doing?", the policeman says. I reply, "Just sharing the love officer!" He asks if we have ever been arrested. We say "No." Then I think to myself, "arrested for sharing love, you gotta be kidding me."

Then our bus shows up (divine intervention). "Officer that's our bus. We'll get on it if you let us." The officer shakes his head and says, "Get out of here you guys." We get on the bus and are greeted with a ton of smiles and curious faces. Life is too good and so is the Lord. "Thank you Jesus for watching out for your kids while playing!"

We head to Laguna Beach. It doesn't take long to get there on the bus. As we walk around the town, it is glowing with art and beauty. It is obviously well known for all the art galleries. It has an awesome boardwalk on the main beach. I really like this town and I am looking forward to spending time here.

We play hacky sack on the boardwalk. A nice guy walking by looks interested so we invite him to join us. We all have a great game of hacky sack. He smiles and goes on his way. I don't remember his name but seeing him enjoy himself was a blessing. I love to play hacky! We all had a good time. Simple things in life are a beautiful thing and sharing good times with a stranger is something we all should do more often. Nothing but love.

We talk with some street people and they invite us to join them for a free dinner in the park on the cliffs in the beach. We have a great spaghetti dinner and play some more hacky. The people serving are just some locals that have been doing it for years. May the Lord bless each of them for sharing love and for being kind to the homeless.

We watch the sunset from the park on the cliff overlooking the ocean. I am so awestruck by the beauty of Laguna Beach as the sun sets. I wonder what lies ahead for us here in Laguna. I spend time singing to the Lord as the sun goes down and reading bible scripture out loud from the book of John I. "God is love". I feel God so close and my love for Him grows. How I desire to know and experience God more. Beauty is all around. God is alive and leading our way.

Ooh, Aah...Much Love!

After talking with some of the homeless in Laguna, we heard of a nature preserve on the edge of town. We headed there to crash for the night. On the way we stopped at a Whole Food type store and we did another dumpster dive. Amazingly we found perfectly good, non-expired, sealed food. We wondered why the store threw it away. We only assumed that they did not have space. So we filled a milk carton full of this food.

Some of it is things like crab and tuna and some really good stuff. We head to the area that the local “hum bums” (homeless folks) hang out in order to drop it off. On our way we walk up to a homeless guy that rides a bike and he is standing by himself with his hands pointing up to the sky. We ask him if he needs some food. He yells out, “Thank you God for hearing my prayer!” He begins crying and saying “I was just asking God for some food and here you guys are with food!” He could not believe it and was very thankful.

Fong and I are amazed and thankful as well. We take the rest of the food up to the spot where the homeless folks will show up at tomorrow. “Thank you Lord for using us knuckleheads again...you are truly amazing!”

We continue to head to the Nature Preserve. It is a big hill right on the edge of town and we walk up the hill, which is very steep (I'm going to be in such good shape in a short period of time). We find a clear spot amongst the many short trees and brush. The view from where we are is amazing! We are looking down on Laguna Beach and the ocean. This is truly the bedroom with the best view on my trip.

The next day Fong takes off on the bus to Laguna Hills and I spend the day in the town. I meet a guy named “Music Man”. He is a really cool

guitarist and is very talented. He invites me to hit the sticks with him and we play on the main street to make a little cash. He and I play well together and even make a couple of bucks. Music Man is from Huntington Beach and he takes the bus back there at the end of the day. He also tells me that he is gathering up a band. He plans on getting an RV in about a month and wants to hit the road and play music. He asks me to be his drummer. I let him know that right now my heart is being led by the Spirit to play with Fong, but I will pray about it and let him know.

Later that evening the town closes off the main street and all the shops and galleries have an open house for the kicking off of the Christmas season. The streets begin to fill up with all kinds of people, young and old. Santa has a parade down the street and there is free food in every shop as well as wine. As for me, I am enjoying all the Christmas spirit, food, and entertainment (no wine for me today thanks).

I'm looking for Fong because he is supposed to meet me somewhere here in Laguna Beach. The next thing I know Fong is prancing down the street yelling, "Where's my drummer! Where's my drummer!" So we meet up and walk around awhile.

We decide to stop and play some music on the curb. Fong starts playing his bass and opens his bass cover bag for any donations. I tap my sticks on the curb, shake the egg shaker, and we play a couple of songs. We are really jamming. I begin playing not only the curb but the phone booth, the parking meter and anything else around. Then all of a sudden a bunch kids come by and enjoy our sounds. They begin throwing money in our bag. Cool! Appreciation.

The Spirit really starts to move and God's love is flowing. I turn around and the next thing I know, there are well over a hundred people gathered and sharing in the love. Fong and I begin to really beat on the trash can and anything I can find. We get the people singing with us. We get the whole crowd to sing, "Ooh aah...much love...ooh aah, much love."

To the praise of the Lord everybody is smiling, dancing, and chanting about love. An older woman comes up to me and says, "I don't know who you guys are or where you came from but this community really needs this." I smile and tell her that we are only a couple of knuckle heads that love God and love sharing His love. All glory to God. She smiles and keeps singing and dancing.

Even the police were gathered around - about ten of them. Fong went over to make sure they didn't mind us banging on the city property. They told him, "We love it. Just keep it up." The love is overflowing tonight. I realize that something magical and divine has just taken place. Nothing but love. Something that really touched me as well was that most of the people were high school kids.

The whole event goes on for quite some time. At one point, we even have the kids get in the center and play drum solos on the trash can as I "play M.C." and have the crowd cheer for each kid. I have a kid play a solo and then ask their name and yell to the crowd, "Hey this is Johnny! He's a rock star!" Everyone yells and claps. It was AWESOME!

This has been truly one of the most exciting times in my life to see God work in such a way and to share my love of God and of music with people. Fong and I walked off filled with the Spirit and realizing that something is developing here that is way, way bigger than us. We are true Rock Stars in the name of love and in the name of God! What lies ahead is now even more exciting. "Lord, use us for your glory and the healing of many souls and softening of many hearts."

Coyotes!

We go back up the hill over the city and we get ready to crash. We count our money and we made over \$80 bucks! But even more we sense the Spirit developing something here. The thoughts of all the smiling faces is completely priceless! Street musicians? Vessels of love? Only the Lord knows and we are truly excited!

As we lay out our sleeping bags Fong opens a can of minestrone soup for his late night snack. All of a sudden we hear a sound. "Aaaaauuu!" I look at Fong and his expression is priceless (I'm sure my face looked the same). Coyotes! Oh, great! I then realize that my dear, three year experienced traveling brother, does not know squat about coyotes. Great! Neither do I. So we decide to use one of our life lines and phone a friend. And to make things worse my phone is about to die.

So we call my Dad and he just laughs at us. He tells us that there is no serious threat, but just to be ready to throw some rocks or something if we need to. Fong decides to bury his minestrone can some distance from our sleeping spot to be safe. We walk away from camp and up the dirt road a ways and we bury the can. We go back and hear a couple of more howls, but we eventually fall asleep.

The next morning we are walking back to town and see our can dug up and put in a different spot. Those coyotes! We walk into town and are sitting at a bus stop when Fong blurts out, "Damn the Coyotes!" This is a very comical saying and we find ourselves yelling it at times. We decide that when we become rich and famous this expression will be the name of our 1st album. Band name: "Nothing But Love". First album: "Damn the Coyotes".

We head into town again. Fong wants to trade his bass guitar for an acoustic guitar. We make the trade in town and Fong now has a beautiful guitar. I have some cash to buy a hand drum. We head over to the train station, which is closed, and have some eats. We do an impromptu jam with Fong's new guitar and we play beautifully. I sing some scripture and we both sing - all improvised. There is no one around to hear our first great jam with Fong's new guitar, but we both know we are playing to an audience of one (God), as usual. Good times.

“Lord, continue to lead us and use us to share your love. I love you Jesus and thank you for dying on the cross for me to give me life and love. May you speak loudly through my life. Till next time...”

Music Man and Friends

After the train station jam, we go walking to find a spot to get some shut eye. As we are walking in Laguna Hills I spot an abandoned building that has a covered parking lot. We decide to camp there for the night.

The spot is awesome because it has a picnic table and an overhang which turns out to be a great spot to camp or as some say “squat”. The next morning we take a bus and head up the coast. We stop at Huntington Beach. Music Man, the guitarist I jammed with in Laguna Beach, lives there. I decide to visit him as Fong goes back to Laguna Beach to go to the Krishna Temple. I spend time with Music Man and his friends (Shannon, Kelly, Chris and Elie), as well as other street folks.

We spend the day hanging in the streets. I actually am bummed as the only thing they all want to do is ask for money to drink beer. Never the less, I hang with them and play lots of hacky, even though it bummed me out that they all wanted to worship the "beer god". They are all nice people, but I wonder why they choose to live on the streets. They all have different reasons. I realize that I can only pray for them and share the Lord and his love with them. Music Man and Shannon, his girlfriend, offer me a vehicle to sleep in. I sleep there for the evening. Quite comfortable I should say.

The next day I go to the pier with Music Man and see all kinds of wildlife! I see dolphins, sea lions, and different types of birds. It is truly amazing and beautiful. I feel like I'm watching discovery channel highlights or something.

Music Man tells me that he has not seen so much wildlife out here before and hopes we see a whale. I think to myself, “God you are awesome. Thanks for the show! No whale, but I did get a call from my mom and

my dear friend Rebecca. I try to tell them what I am seeing so they can share in the experience. I have to say that I am thankful to God for my parents. I have been blessed with the most wonderful and loving parents anyone could ask for. I am also thankful for my friends, but especially for Rebecca, who I will introduce now. Rebecca has been my true support every since I first decided to leave Austin on this journey. "Thanks Rebecca for being so supportive and for all your love and friendship!"

Rebecca knitted me a beanie hat that has the words "Love, Joy, Peace" on it. She didn't finish before I left Austin, so since Music Man had a P.O. Box, she mailed the hat to me in Huntington Beach. "Thanks again Rebecca! You are a true sweetheart!"

Later this day Fong calls me. He is in LA County visiting his friend Toby. He wants me to meet him there. I spent another night in Huntington Beach. This time one of the homeless kids, Kelly, shows me a good sleeping spot in a parking garage and we crash for the night. I get up the next morning early and head to the bus stop.

I wait at a nearby coffee shop until the bus comes and I sit outside to have hot tea and read the bible. A man walks up to me and asks, "What am I reading?" I let him know that I'm reading the book of Matthew where Jesus sends out the seventy two disciples to share the gospel. He asks what it means to me and I explain that I believe today people get caught up in programs and "trying" to be Christians, but that we should be seeking to know and experience God's presence and to be lead by His Spirit. The man is inspired. He is a believer and invites me to meet with him and a group of guys at another table to have fellowship. This is a true blessing and an answer to my prayers as I have been in need of some fellowship and bible study.

They all go to the Huntington Beach Calvary Church in town and I have a great time with them. "Thank you Lord, for letting me meet these brothers and the fellowship! Lord I love you and desire to hear your voice."

Next, I get on the bus and head to LA County to meet Fong.

Finding Fong

“Drums” is my street name given to me by a traveler we met. It turns out that most people who are homeless and professional travelers all have street names.

I leave Huntington Beach with thankfulness to the Lord for the encouragement and nourishment of the fellow brothers in the Lord I recently met. As I get on the bus for a long ride to the edge of Orange County, the bus driver asks me "Where's your traveling buddy?" Previously, I let the bus driver know that I was going to meet Fong in LA. After some introductions he tells me that he was the bus driver the other day while Fong and I were on the bus from San Clemente to Laguna Beach. He then says, "I have been a bus driver for over twenty years and the other day when you guys were on the bus, I have never seen a bus come alive like it did...are you a Christian?"

With a smile, and as humbly as I could, I let him know that I am a believer in Christ and I gave the Lord all the glory for the love that day. It turns out that the bus driver is a believer also. He goes to the same church as the group of men I just left. Go figure! We share wonderful conversation over the couple of hours on the bus ride which seems to fly by. At the end of the stop he even walks me to the spot I would pick up the LA bus and he blesses me with \$20 bucks. “Thanks Lord for the blessing and friendship of this man.” Unfortunately, I cannot remember his name.

I pick up the bus in LA County that takes me to Westwood where I re-connect with Fong and Toby, a friend of Fong's, and a fellow musician (guitarist, pianist, vocalist). Toby will be joining our travels in January (Lord willing).

They pick me up and we head to UCLA. Fong wants to visit and eat with some “Krishna’s” on campus. Now I can say I’ve been to UCLA (though not as a student!) We sit and listen to the Krishna’s as they chant and play music. Fong and Toby decide to eat some food prepared by the Krishna’s. Fong explains to me that this is “holy food”. I myself am not hungry and I pass on that meal (I must stay obedient to God and his word...Romans 10:19-28).

We sit for about 15 minutes and we listen. We then walk back through the campus. Toby and I head to a Veggie Burrito stand that Fong has been raving about as Fong goes to visit a friend, Ann, close to campus.

Toby and I meet a hum bum at the burrito stand. He is very pushy and asks for money for food. Though I felt that this man was not honest, I decided to buy him a taco. As I am ordering his taco, he insists that I buy him a burrito, which is more expensive. I explain that the taco is all I can afford and that I thought he was humbly asking for some food. His attitude is aggressive.

After I give him his taco, he throws the paper on the floor right next to the trash can. I say something to him about keeping “our house clean” as I am a traveler and homeless as he is. He gets upset and pulls out a roll of money from his pocket and says he doesn't need my help for anything.

This was quite an experience. I realize that LA has a whole different breed of folks on the street. This experience increases my desire to be led by the Holy Spirit. It shows me that I should have gone with my first instinct - that this man was not truly in need nor was he honest.

Fong shows up and we talk a bit about how we will not be hanging out in LA. I completely agree. I do not feel led to stay in LA. We head out to Toby's mothers place because he needs to stop there. We go in and visit with her and even help her hang some Christmas decorations, which I enjoyed doing. It brought back wonderful memories of Christmas with my wonderful family growing up.

Toby then takes us to Venice beach so we can crash for the evening. The next day we will all be going to a town called Ojai. Fong has a friend named Brett there. Fong and I sleep on the beach next to some cool looking walls that have beautiful spray paint art on them. This spot is right next to the basketball courts that the movie "White Men Can't Jump" was filmed at. It is also right next to the police station (can't get safer than that Mom).

Trek to Ojai

After waking up, we walk thru Venice to look for the Library. Our plan is to meet with Toby at Starbucks, then take off to Ojai. We walk by beautiful homes on the canals of Venice. This was a beautiful area and Fong tells me that a lot of movie stars hang out here. It was also the stomping grounds of Jim Morrison. After finding out that the Library is closed, we head to meet Toby at Starbucks. We all pile in the car to go to Ojai, California.

We drive along the coast and pass some beautiful ocean views, million dollars homes, and about 3 different movie sets filming on the beach. California is an awesome place! We stop at some cliffs over the ocean and take some pictures. The view is just amazing! Words cannot describe it.

We stop at a gas station to do some bathroom business on the way. At the gas station, I meet a Native American woman named AJ. She is a student at a film school. She was at the end of filming a movie when her car broke down. We talk and she shares how she also did some street traveling in the past. It turns out that she lives in Ojai.

She asks me to call her to see if we could hang out if time allows when we arrive in Ojai. I take her number and then we are back on the road. About an hour and a half of traveling and we arrive at Ojai.

Ojai, California is a small town of about 8,000 nestled between a valley. I'm told it's the only valley that goes east and west in the country.

I feel like I am growing closer to Christ and my hunger and desire to love the Father with all my heart and to be led by the Holy Spirit. This desire is growing daily. “Lord Jesus, thank you for this awesome opportunity to travel and to allow me to walk in faith and not by sight. Thanks for allowing me to enjoy your beautiful creation. Father in heaven I desire to know you more and to share your love. Pour out your Spirit Lord!”

As we arrive in Ojai, California we park on the main street in front of an art studio shop. Toby sees a guy playing piano in the art studio and talks some piano stuff with him. The piano player is an artist and an elderly gentleman who seems to be the owner of the shop. Toby tells him that he himself plays and he has written some of his own pieces. He invites him to sit and play a piece.

Toby sits down and with brilliance, plays the piano. He plays with such passion and experience - it is obvious he is very gifted. He plays a classical sounding piece with even a hint of the band “Queen” mixed in. I was truly amazed and so were the two gentlemen that worked in the shop. They talked some more and the elderly gentlemen even mentions the name of a composer that Toby is influenced by. The two gentlemen were both blessed to have Toby play. It was truly beautiful!

We say goodbye and head to the main park in the center of town which is only at the end of the block. Ojai is a small town and is filled with art and beauty. We start to play in the park. I tap my sticks on the cement bench to keep the beat with Toby and Fong. A flutist walks up and joins us in creating some beautiful sounds. Then a photographer with a very nice camera comes up and asks to take our picture. We all jam with great pleasure and it turns out that the flutist’s name is Fred. He is an all around musician. Fred even gives Toby some great tips to improve his guitar playing. I personally enjoy Toby’s style as he plays a lot of Spanish sounds.

Fred was a cool dude with some serious musical knowledge. Toby is appreciative and has just expanded his playing through the little hints Fred gives him. As for the photographer, I don’t remember his name but he is a student at a school here in Ojai. There are very nice people here in

this town. We all had a great time. We then head out to explore the streets of Ojai.

Toby takes off back to LA County as he has to work the next day. Fong and I meet up with his friend Brett. She picks us up and takes us to her parent's house where she is staying. Her parents are out of town, but her boyfriend, Mark, is preparing a very healthy vegetarian meal. Mark is from Canada and is a tree planter. I love his Bob and Doug McKinsey "take off A" accent. They are very nice people and very hospitable. It was great to see Fong and Brett enjoy one another's company again. I'm told they met in UCLA campus a couple of years ago.

After a great meal we get into some deep, good conversation about being a vegetarian, about God, and each other's opinion on the matter. I was the only one who professed to believe in Christ and the God of the Bible. We discussed a little bit about what sin was and if the bible is from God or man. I did not feel equipped to get into deep discussions, but we all had a good conversation that evening and came away with our different beliefs.

This time made me hunger and thirst for more of Jesus and the empowering of His Holy Spirit. Fong and I sleep in Brett and her sister's room. Fong insisted on sleeping in the bunk bed that was above the desk that had a slide. He said he wanted to sleep there so he could slide down in the morning. I love Fong and his child like heart.

In the morning I woke up just at the time he was sliding down. I got a big kick out of it and it brought a big smile to my face. That morning Fong went back to bed and everyone else slept late. I could not sleep, so I went into the back yard. The sun was shining bright and the day was going to be gorgeous! I spent some good time in the bible and with the Lord.

Later that day I spoke with AJ, the film director student, and she invited me to go with her to Orange County to pick up her niece and to film the

last scene in her movie. We left early in the evening and drove a couple of hours to Huntington Beach.

Earlier, Rebecca mailed me the hat she knit for me to Music Man's PO Box. So we picked up the hat and said hello to the Music Man and his friends. We ate some Taco Bell and headed out to AJ's mother's place in Dana Point. We crashed at her mother's until 4am. We then left to go pick up her niece and then headed to the Chumash Indian Interpretive Center.

Filming on the Rez

We arrived right before the sun came up. We saw a bunch of deer walking around in groups. This was awesome because I love to see God's creation in their natural habitat.

We met the rest of the film crew which was three guys and a girl. They were very nice folks. AJ realized that she had left some important props back in Ojai about an hour and a half away. So I took her rental car and headed to Ojai with a map they drew up to get the stuff at AJ's place. I have to admit I flew down the highway and was back in record time.

When I got back they were filming. I watched a bit and then took off walking the land on the reservation to check it out. It was so beautiful and peaceful. On our way last night AJ shared with me how she went through a therapy the Indians use called "sweat lodges". I walked past some teepees and sweat lodges. From what she said it helped her let go of all her desires to do drugs and alcohol. It had been a struggle in her life and with most of her family. She said she felt born again.

And as I listened to her speak, I realized and shared with her about Jesus and the bible and how the Lord has worked in my life. She had not followed Christ but she mentioned that her mother was a believer. After hearing her explain what happened to her and that she believed it was God who worked in her life, I encouraged her to study the bible. I explained how she could know Jesus who healed her personally. I liked AJ and from what I witnessed, she may become a famous director one day. I do pray that she will seek Christ and grow in her relationship with the Creator.

I spent some alone time on the mountainside of the reservation and sang some worship songs to the Lord. It was a peaceful time with God.
“Thanks Lord!”

After the filming, we headed to AJ's sister's house. When we arrived, only her nineteen year old cousin and his sixteen year old friend were there. AJ fell asleep. I was moved by the Spirit to share with these guys all the Lord had done since I started this trip. The Lord was speaking to them. I encouraged them to seek the Lord as well. They told me that they never met anyone like me. I told them that the only thing different about me was the presence of Jesus in my life. I will pray for these guys as I hope they come to a deep and meaningful relationship with our Lord. I had a great time sharing with these guys and I will remember them in prayer.

We all laughed at many of the silly things Fong and I did and the amazing things God did through us. All the glory to God! AJ headed to her mother's because she needed more sleep. I had her drop me at the bus stop so I could visit Huntington Beach until she heads back to Ojai tomorrow.

After getting dropped off by AJ, I began to hitchhike back to Huntington Beach. This guy pulls over and offers me a ride. I tell him that I am heading to Huntington Beach to check out a free concert. I sense that this guy has wrong motives. He places his hand on my leg. I kindly remove his hand and ask him “not to confuse kindness for lust”. I let him know that I am a Christian and that Jesus loves him and can set him free. He is very uncomfortable now and even though he initially offered to give me a ride all the way to Huntington Beach, I sense he is not interested in that after all. I let him know that he could drop me off if he chooses or he can join me at the free concert. He immediately pulls over and lets me out. I let him know that I Jesus loves him and so do I and that I will be praying for him.

I decide to catch a bus to Huntington Beach. I missed the free concert that was on the beach that day. But I did find Music Man jamming on the main street corner with another musician. I stopped and tapped a beat on

the sidewalk with them for a few minutes. A thick fog rolled in and we had to quit because they had to get their guitars out of the fog. Bummer.

I hung out with Music Man and two other guys. They wanted to drink so we all walked to the liquor store and they bought drinks. As we hung out the only thing on these guy's minds was to drink and party. I really wasn't too interested. So the whole time I focused on sharing the Lord and some scriptures with Music Man. He told me that he loved my company, but did not want to hear so much of the "bible stuff". I figured that our time was over and so I headed out to find a place to crash for the night.

I walked through some neighborhoods looking for a safe place to crash. As I walked near a convenience store, two guys were walking out with some beer they had just purchased. One of the guys turned to me and asked me out of the blue, "So what do you think? Which day is more important to Christian's, Easter or Christmas?" I paused and answered, "Every day is important to worship and acknowledge Christ" He said, "Whoa, interesting!" Then he walked off. I did not know what to think of that. I just prayed for them and kept walking.

I finally found a slightly broken leather recliner next to the dumpster behind an apartment building. I pulled it completely behind the apartment building out of sight and then I crashed. It was very comfortable. I thanked the Lord for it, thinking popcorn and a movie would be cool. As I slept there it got cold. Before I caught some shut eye, I prayed for the city of Huntington Beach and for Music Man and his friends. I woke up in the middle of the night shivering.

I walked into the apartment complex and found the laundry room open. It was quite warm. So with the lights out I crashed on the floor. I got up right at sunrise and it seemed no one even noticed I was there. I thanked the Lord again for a safe night. I headed toward the coffee shop on the main street to get some hot water for tea. I got some tea and walked around until AJ called. She said she was heading back to Ojai in about an hour and that she would pick me up.

As I walked by the main pier, there were a bunch of arts and craft tents selling some cool stuff. As I walked around I heard some drummers by the beach. I walked over and I saw about three drummers. One was playing a jymbai and one was playing two congas. The other had just set up three congas to play. As I walked over with a big smile listening to the beats, one of the guys said to me, "You look like you want to jump on these (the 3 congas)." I replied, "I'd love to. Thanks." I jumped right in. We all jammed for about fifteen or twenty minutes. I have to say that it was a great time. After we played to my surprise, people all around clapped and cheered. We had a good jam and the public seemed to enjoy it as well. It was a good time jamming with those drummers from Huntington Beach!

Back in Ojai

AJ shows up and we head to Ojai. When we get there, AJ drops me in town and ask me to give her a call later because she needs to rest and study for her finals. I thank her and then I begin to head into town to look for Fong. As I walk into town I stop at a cloth store to check prices on material to make a head band. I want to replace the regular black bandana I have.

As I'm looking around the store, a lady with a beautiful smile and eyes that shine with love stops me and starts to ask me where I'm traveling from and where I'm headed - I have my backpack on. I begin to share with her about my travels and my desire to share God's love. She tells me she is a follower of Christ. I tell her that the Lord's presence in her life is very obvious. She insists on buying me some material to make two different headbands. She asks me to let her take them home and sew the edges for me. She explains that I can call her tomorrow and come visit her and her family and then pick them up. I was truly blessed by Laura's love for the Lord and her desire to bless me with these gifts. I take her number and head into town to meet with Fong. I am feeling like I just encountered a dear saint and faithful follower of Christ. I was truly blessed. "Thanks Lord!"

I meet up with Fong and find him on a bench in the middle of the shops playing music. We share our experiences of the past day apart and grab some lunch on a bench just off a street that heads up towards the mountain. After we eat, we decide to take a hike.

Fong and I hike up a trail that leads up the mountains. We end up on top of a mountain above Ojai and watch the sunset. It is a beautiful sight. We are overseeing the whole city of Ojai. We can also see a lake in the distance. We are overlooking the entire valley. If it wasn't for the fog in

the distance, I'm sure we could have seen the ocean too. It was a beautiful time, and the sunset was awesome.

As we hike down the mountain we decide to call AJ in order to make her dinner. We have AJ pick us up and we cook dinner for her. Veggie/bean burritos are on the menu and we have peaceful meal.

Then Fong's friend Brett and her boyfriend Mark ask us if we want to head to the hot springs that evening. We decide to head out with them and search for the hot springs (it's evening and dark by now). The hot springs are right outside the city near a country road. Despite our efforts to locate the springs and smelling the sulfur, we were never able to find them. So, we head out to go back to the trail up the mountain that we hiked earlier. We want to spend the night there. Fong's friends walk with us to find our sleeping spot.

They hang with us a bit and we watch a meteor shower in progress. We make our beds on the grass and we all see different shooting stars (meteors). Two particular meteors I saw were some of the best I ever seen. They had a trail of smoke behind them and they shot all the way across the sky. "Thanks Lord for a beautiful show." We spend the night under the starry sky and get up in the morning to head into town.

Parting Ways

At this point my hunger for more of Jesus and to walk in the Holy Spirit is increasing. But Fong and I seem to be growing apart. He even seems annoyed with me at times.

We head to a coffee shop on the main street. Brett and Mark meet with us there. Fong wants to head to Ventura. Brett and Mark happen to be headed that way, so they all plan to head out to Ventura together. Laura calls me and I decide to let Laura pick me up. I go spend some time with her and her family.

As I arrive at Laura's house and I walk up the drive way, I notice at the window a beautiful little blonde haired girl. She is smiling and waving. I am already feeling the love and acceptance of the Lord. As we go in Laura introduces me to her husband and to her daughter that was in the window. She also introduces me to her grandson who is playing video games in the back house. Her older daughter is at work and she will be home later.

Laura and I begin to share about my travels and what God has been doing each of our lives. I am overwhelmed by the hospitality and love Laura and her family give to me. I know that I am in the home of a true spiritual woman of God. Laura makes me the two bandanas as we talk. She also showers me with some gifts for the road (a cd player/walkman, a goose down pillow, and some dry food). She also invites me to have some dinner with her family.

At this point I really feel God's love and I'm amazed at her thoughtfulness. As we share, the Lord really speaks to me through her. I feel comfortable to share my feelings: that the Lord is drawing me closer

to him and my discouragement with my buddy Fong as he and I seem to be following different “spirits of love”.

Laura’s friend comes over and they feel led to pray for me. It was very powerful and I feel God’s hand touch me. She invites me to crash on her couch and I fall asleep in complete peace knowing the Lord has led me to this beautiful sister. But I feel that my travels with Fong might not last much longer; as I completely desire to follow Jesus Christ and the Creator of heaven and earth (the God of the Holy Bible).

The next day Laura drives me to meet up with Fong. We spend the day together hanging out in town and going to the library. We have an early dinner on some benches not far from the library.

As we are eating Fong and I have a detailed conversation of our beliefs. We decide that I definitely desire to follow Jesus Christ and he does not feel interested in following Christ. We both agree to disagree and unconditionally accept one another. I truly love Fong and desire him to come to a saving knowledge and experience of Christ. I tell him that I will always pray that Jesus will reveal Himself to him. Also at this time, we thank one another for how we have become better people for the experience of traveling together. I give the Lord Jesus all credit and glory for all things!

We head to the bus stop and grab a bus to Ventura, California. We decide we will head to Ventura and look for a place to serve at a food kitchen during the Christmas holiday.

It is already night time. We were planning on hitchhiking, but with nightfall and the fact that we were not on a major highway - we decide to take the bus and get to Ventura. As we walk off the bus we immediately see a young girl who is obviously a traveler. She is carrying a guitar. We walk with her and invite her to hang out with us. We all head to a coffee shop and grab some hot tea and munch on some of the food we have. The new girl sings a song for us. She has a beautiful voice and is truly a sweetheart.

We all decide to head to a small park in town to try and write a song. While we are there, Fong plays a song for us and the girl (who unfortunately, I forget her name) is touched and moved to tears. Fong is truly a gifted songwriter and musician.

We then get somewhat hassled by the cops who warn us of getting in trouble in Ventura. They give us advice to sleep on the beach to the left of the main pier. We decide to head over to the beach to get some shut eye. Fong and the girl hook up and share sleeping space as I fall asleep.

In the morning I am woke up by a voice in my head that says, "It's time to leave Fong now!" I wonder if it's the voice of God. Truthfully I am scared to travel on my own. So while Fong and the girl sleep, I get up and go to the edge of the shore by the beach. I begin to pray and ask the Lord if that was Him.

While I am praying, the Lord gives me a scripture to look up in one of the gospels. I look it up and start to read. I get to a point in the scripture that says, "Do not be afraid". At that point I am moved by the Spirit and realize it is time for me to move on by myself. So since Fong and the girl are still asleep, I pack my stuff and head out. I didn't want to wake them. I felt that I should just go right then and then contact him later.

I walk down the beach and find a small park. I sit down and cry out to God for some direction. As I am seriously and literally crying to God, my cell phone rings. On the other line is my mother who immediately says, "Are you OK?" I know that the Holy Spirit spoke to my mother and had her call. I share with her what is happening and she lets me know that I can always head back to El Paso to be with my family. I thank my mom for being so supportive and loving. I let her know that I will call her back if I decide to go home. I feel encouraged. I head the library to get on the internet.

After the library visit, I find the Salvation Army so I can get some razors. As I am leaving the Salvation Army I begin to pray and ask the Lord

what I should do next. Right then, as I am walking up to the street corner, AJ from Ojai pulls up! This totally blew my mind. “Thank you Lord for your provision again.”

AJ asks me where I'm heading. I tell her I don't know just yet. She invites me to go with her to change cars at the rental place. She offers me some pizza she had left over. She drops me off at the rental car place to watch her stuff while she goes to return her car at another rental place. As I'm waiting, Laura from Ojai calls. She tells me that she feels the Lord wants me to spend the holidays with my family in El Paso. She says that she would like to bless me with a bus ticket to El Paso. I feel complete peace and I know that the Lord is speaking to me to go home to be with my family.

When AJ returns, she takes me to the bus station. I purchase a ticket to head home. I have a couple of hours to kill, so AJ invites me to hang out with her until she drops me off back at the bus station.

I feel led to share more about Jesus with AJ. I want to tell her what the bible has to say about our need to seek Christ and His word. However, AJ doesn't really want me to talk anymore about Christ. She gets frustrated, but then she asks me more questions. I let AJ know that I will continue to pray that she seeks the Lord through his word. She drops me off at the bus station. I thank her and she heads out. I thank the Lord for AJ and her kindness. “Lord Jesus I ask you to touch AJ in a special way and bless her life.”

I got on a bus that stopped in LA and then took me to El Paso by 6pm the next day.

So my journey of love stops in Ventura, California at 8pm. I was on this journey for just about two months. This journey was a wonderful experience. I could only capture some of the things that I witnessed the Lord do in me and around me. I met a wonderful person – Fong, who seeks truth and love. I will never forget him. I always pray that Jesus saves him. I met other wonderful people as well. I also witnessed some

of God's beautiful creation, which I would never have seen if I did not take this walk of faith.

I am completely in love with Jesus and more free from anything that would keep me from seeking to walk in the Spirit. As I head home I thank my Lord for the wonderful experience and the rekindled desire to seek the face of God and to be led by the Holy Spirit. I know that the Lord wants me to go to my family in El Paso and serve them in any way I can. I will seek the Lord for his direction in my life. Much love and peace to Fong and all the people I met while on the road.

An interesting side note: When I started this journey, I left with fifteen dollars in my pocket. When I made it back, I had twenty five bucks in my pocket. I never once begged for money or food. The Lord always provided. I learned to dumpster dive and find perfectly good food. I learned how to live off the waste of our country. I learned that God provides for our needs when we trust him and walk in love. I will never forget these times. I know that this story does not capture the true beauty of my adventures. Again, this was such an exciting little journey and walk of faith for which I am very thankful to have experienced and now hold precious memories. Much love to all and glory to God in the highest!

“Come, my Lord Jesus! Come and change the hearts of your creation to seek and serve you!”

