

9. Love-driven Ministry (3Q 2026 1 and 2 Corinthians)

Biblical material: 2 Cor. 1:3–14, 2 Cor. 2:17, 2 Cor. 4:2, 1 Cor. 16:5–7, 2 Cor. 7:5–13, 2 Cor. 2:5–17; 2 Cor. 2:4.

Quotes

- True love is an act of the will – a conscious decision to do what is best for the other person instead of ourselves. *Billy Graham*
- Your ministry is the way that you love people. *Rich Mullins*
- Ministry is too sacred to be motivated by gain. It is too difficult to be motivated by duty. Only love can sustain us. *John Maxwell*
- Ministry is pretty simple. Love people and help them. *T.L. Osborn*
- Ministry, however, is simply loving the person in front of you. It's about stopping for the one and being the very fragrance of Jesus to a lost and dying world. *Heidi Baker*
- You can give without loving, but you can never love without giving. *Robert Louis Stevenson*
- To love someone means to see him as God intended him. *Fyodor Dostoevsky*

Questions

Why does Paul seem so apologetic in 2 Corinthians? What does the tone of his letter help us understand in the way we deal with others? How do we really operate a “love-driven ministry”? What is the best way to act when people are upset with us, especially fellow Christians? How do we deal with false accusations, especially in our Christian behavior? What did Jesus do?

Bible summary

2 Corinthians 1:3–14 is Paul's careful introduction to his letter, arguing that he has always acted properly towards them. He adds that he doesn't profit from his ministry (see 2 Corinthians 2:17). He also says he has not used deceitful ways. On the contrary, “We demonstrate who we are by revealing the truth before God so everybody can decide in their own minds.” 2 Corinthians 4:2. Paul speaks of his plans to come and visit the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 16:5–7). In 2 Corinthians 7:5–13 Paul speaks of causing them sorrow by his previous letter, but that it was necessary. Paul speaks about forgiving someone who has caused them pain in 2 Corinthians 2:5–17. “I was crying many tears when I wrote to you, in great anguish and with a heavy heart—not to make you sad, but so you would know how much love I have for you.” 2 Corinthians 2:4.

Comment

In combining all these texts we see Paul's fundamental motivation behind his ministry: love for people—all people. While he is not swayed from his need to correct problematic ideas and actions in the Corinthian church, he feels sad to have to do so. In this we have a great example of true love in action in the context of gospel ministry.

Jesus' commandment to love is an expression of the most elemental Christian motivation. Laws are observed as they comply with this Law of Liberty, which is based on a relationship with and an understanding of God himself. In its simplest form, it can be summed up in “If you love me, keep my commandments.” Love is the motivational factor for “law-keeping,” which is not legal observance, but an acceptance and agreement of right for right's sake. The observer of the law does not understand the law as compulsion, but as an expression of what he or she acknowledges as the only way to operate. Doing right because it is internally agreed is a far cry from obedience based on obligation, compulsion and fear.

For “Those who keep his commands continue to live in him, and he lives in them.” 1 John 3:24. Why? “We'll receive from him whatever we ask him for, because we follow his commands and do

what pleases him. This is what he commands: we should trust in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us to do.” 1 John 3:22, 23.

Of course love cannot be commanded anyway! This law that cannot be commanded is a truth that is accepted and endorsed. This command to love brings law full circle back to the graciousness of God. For all the laws have this at their heart, every act of obedience is a demonstration of this principle of love in action. Consequently, “let’s not just say we love with words, but show our love in what we do and how we demonstrate the truth.” 1 John 3:18.

Through our ability to love we most clearly reflect the image of God. And because God is love, He made us—for love wishes to have someone to love, someone to relate to. God made us to love and be loved, and when that capacity is hurt or destroyed, then we are that much less like God. This is why your ability to love and be loved is under so much attack, for the Evil One knows that this is the best way to pervert and misrepresent the God who is love.

To love is to give yourself, and to trust that your love will be accepted and returned. That’s why Erich Fromm defined love as “An act of faith, and whoever is of little faith is also of little love.” In other words, loving makes you vulnerable, trusting the other person with your very self. As Fromm also said, “To love means to commit oneself without guarantee, to give oneself completely in the hope that our love will produce love in the loved person.”

Love is a principle that flows from freedom and choice, and as we choose God and His way then we respond out of love. We love because he first loved us (see 1 John 4:19).

Ellen White Comments

He [God] desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him... {DA 22}

[1 John 1:5-10; 2:9-11, quoted.] Could any description be more sharp and clear than John has given us? These things are written for us; they are applicable to the churches of Seventh-day Adventists. Some may say, “I do not hate my brother; I am not so bad as that.” But how little they understand their own hearts. They may think they have a zeal for God in their feelings against their brother, if his ideas seem in any way to conflict with theirs; feelings are brought to the surface that have no kinship with love. They show no disposition to harmonize with him. They would as lief be at swords’ point with their brother as not. And yet he may be bearing a message from God to the people—just the light they need for this time. {16MR 104}

How many do not manifest patience, forbearance, forgiveness, and true love! Many have their likes and dislikes and feel at liberty to manifest their own perverse disposition rather than to reveal the will, the works, the character of Christ. The life of Jesus is full of kindness and love. Are we growing into His divine nature? {AH 178}

Throughout his ministry, Paul had looked to God for direct guidance. At the same time, he had been very careful to labor in harmony with the decisions of the general council at Jerusalem, and as a result the churches were “established in the faith, and increased in number daily.” Acts 16:5. And now, notwithstanding the lack of sympathy shown him by some, he found comfort in the consciousness that he had done his duty in encouraging in his converts a spirit of loyalty, generosity, and brotherly love, as revealed on this occasion in the liberal contributions which he was enabled to place before the Jewish elders. {AA 402}

There is need of personal labor for the souls of the lost. In Christlike sympathy we should come close to men individually, and seek to awaken their interest in the great things of eternal life. Their hearts may be as hard as the beaten highway, and apparently it may be a useless effort to present the Saviour to them; but while logic may fail to move, and argument be powerless to convince, the love of Christ, revealed in personal ministry, may soften the stony heart, so that the seed of truth can take root. {COL 57.1}