

Preachers’ Pen Points

The Turn-Around from Decline to Growth Love Needed



How does God hear our “music”?

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy; and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing” (1 Cor. 13:1-3). It seems hardly conceivable perhaps to most of us that someone could make these ultimate efforts and sacrifices for Christ and do it without love. Yet, Paul is not proclaiming empty rhetoric. He is showing us that love must be the motivating principle behind all our worship and work for God. To seek to build a church without love is to become “a noisy gong” rather than an instrument making beautiful music for God.

Love is the glue that holds it all together.

Paul urged the Colossians, “Put on love which is the perfect bond of unity!” (Col. 3:14). Successful church work may involve many important actions (which I have tried to describe in these articles), but all of them are made effective and welded together into a unified whole by our love.

All of us must love God.

That ought to be easy if we truly comprehend the great sacrifice God has made for us through Christ (Jn. 3:16). Indeed, “we love because He first loved us”. It is love for God that stirs us to obey Him (1 Jn. 5:3) and serve one another (Gal. 5:13). When we love God with all our heart, we will not cease to evangelize because we know this is what He wants

us to do and commands of us (Mt. 28:18-20).

Leaders must really love their people.

People will not follow someone who only pretends to be interested in them or seems to operate from self-serving motives. Manipulation is moving people for the leader’s advantage. Motivation is moving people for everyone’s advantage! When leaders really love their people, like Jesus loved His disciples “to the end” (Jn. 13:1), they will offer themselves to the work of the Lord willingly and enthusiastically.

All disciples must love one another.

As disciples reach out to each other, praying for one another, affirming one another, protecting one another, and helping one another, a team mindset develops that enables them to enjoy being together and working together. But more importantly, this love is easily seen by those who come among us and its existence proves to them that we are truly the disciples of Jesus (Jn. 13:35).

All disciples must also love the lost.

God’s church shows their love for the lost by showing them the way, by teaching them the truth. All of the helpful things we may do for others may provide temporal benefit to people and may open the door for evangelism. But the greatest act of love we can manifest toward our friends, family, and neighbors is to invite them to hear the gospel or personally teach them the truth (Mt. 16:26).

A challenge for all of us!

No successful work of God can take place outside a context of relational integrity. Can everyone see love working in us? —Johnny Felker