

A Love Answer



SABBATH—JUNE 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 John 4:18, 19; Romans 3:19, 20; John 15:13; Romans 5:6–8; John 6:28, 29.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘If you love Me, keep My commandments [rules and laws]’ ” (John 14:15, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: We should work to win souls to Christ. The question we need to ask ourselves is, What makes us do just that?

OUR MEMORY VERSE SPEAKS OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. But there are other commandments. One example is, “ ‘So you must go and make disciples of all nations’ ” (Matthew 28:19, 20, NIV).

Our reason for witnessing and evangelism¹ should be God's grace² to us and not a sense of guilt or debt. One does not need to be a psychologist to know that everything we do as humans is for a reason. This will be true also of us in witnessing and evangelism. We can discover our reasons by asking why we do what we do. Why do we become involved in the church's witnessing and evangelistic³ planning?

This week we will study the right reason for getting involved in the Lord's work. We also will look at the dangers of working for the wrong reasons, such as guilt or shame. We will study why evangelism and witnessing should be our love answer to God's gift of salvation to us.

1. evangelism—the act of spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.

2. grace—God's gift of mercy that He gives us to take away our sins.

3. evangelistic—spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.

SUNDAY—JUNE 3**SPARKED BY LOVE
(1 John 4:18, 19)**

Have you ever wondered why often it seems difficult to encourage people to become involved in church projects for a long period of time? Perhaps the answer can be found as we think of other situations in which people have good reasons for wanting to do something. What is it that makes a parent donate a kidney to save the life of his or her child? Why do moms and dads spend a large amount of money on the best possible education for their children? Are these things done because the parents would feel guilty if they did not? Do the parents think that they owe their children these things? No!

Parents do have a sense of responsibility for their children. But love is surely the best answer. Parents do what they do because they love. In the same way, *we do things for God because we love Him and because we know He loves us.*

What does 1 John 4:18, 19 mean? Write out the meaning in your own words.

Our love for God must be rooted in His love for us. God has been around far longer than we have. And He has loved us greatly from the time He created us. Love can come only as a result of love. If we obey the great gospel command without love, that obedience is without meaning. This is why we should prepare ourselves spiritually

for witnessing and evangelism.

We love God. We are willing to save souls for Him. Our love for God is dependent upon our knowing Him. It is not usual for us to love people whom we do not know. So, it is important that we obey God out of love. To do so, we must know Him personally.



Our love for God must be rooted in His love for us.

What do Joshua 22:5; Luke 7:41–43; John 14:23; and 2 Corinthians 5:12–18 show about love for God and the reasons for obeying Him and working for Him?

Love and obedience are inseparable as long as they are in that order. True love for God will always lead to obedience to His will. But obedience will not always lead to love. (Although sometimes it can.) If we want people to work for Jesus, we must help them to create a loving connection (relationship) with Him.

How much does your love for God guide what you do? Does it encourage you at all? What does your answer say about your relationship

with Him? And what about your relationship needs to change?



True love for God always will lead to obedience to His will.



If God has done so much to save us, how can we not do His work?

MONDAY—JUNE 4

NOT BY GUILT (Romans 3:19, 20)

Over many hundreds of years, guilt has been used to spark people into action. Evangelism leaders have often reminded us that God has given us responsibility. They say that we must use our God-given talents and gifts. We are told that God or the church is depending on us. So if God has done so much to save us, how can we not do God's work? Because of this, we feel guilty when we fail to do God's work. But we must not do the right thing for the wrong reasons. When we think about what we must do, we must think about what God has done for us, instead of our guilt about not doing His work.

Read Romans 3:19, 20. What did the apostle Paul mean when he said the whole world is guilty before God? What is his point?

The way that Paul uses the word *guilty* in these verses shows that we need to realize our responsibility for our actions. Paul said in Romans 3:10 that “no one is right with God, no one at all,” (NIRV). In verse 19 Paul agrees with the fact that the law makes “all the world” guilty before God.

The law is shown to act the same as a mirror, showing us our sinful condition. But the law cannot give us cleansing soap and water. Looking into God's law, we can see our sinfulness. And at the same time, the law drives us to the Savior. Through Him we can receive His free pardon and cleansing.

After we come to Christ, we are no longer driven by guilt. This is because the guilt has been washed away. It has been covered by the righteousness of Jesus. We stand, in Jesus, perfect and without guilt. Yes, we are sinners. But we have been forgiven, and our guilt has been removed by Jesus' sacrifice. Now—being saved—we have

good reasons for witnessing to others about what Christ has done for us.

Read James 2:10. What is the important point James is trying to make? How would you explain this verse to a new believer?

Suppose a person who breaks one part of God's law is made to feel guilty about breaking the law. Then it is useless for him or her to try to gain God's favor through law-keeping. Law-breaking shows that the person just wants to do his or her own will rather than God's.

While admitting your wrongs, you have to surrender them to Jesus and claim His perfect character (who God is), His forgiveness, and His grace. It does not matter how unworthy you are. And you are *unworthy*, more than you could imagine. If not, the salvation offered to you would not be from grace but from a debt God owed you. (Read Romans 4:1–4.) And do you really think God owes you anything?



Looking into God's law, we can see our sinfulness.

TUESDAY—JUNE 5

EAGER TO SERVE (John 15:13)

What would you think of someone who kept on saying that he or she was eager to do something but then did nothing? What about someone who claimed to be dedicated (committed) but showed nothing about being dedicated to doing God's work? As we have seen, love makes people willing to work hard for God. But to say that we love God means nothing if we do not act on that love. In other words, we expect love to be shown through actions. In this sense, love is an active word as it shows itself through loving actions.

Read John 15:13 and Romans 5:6–8. What do these verses show us about Jesus' love as He showed it in His actions? How are we to learn from the principles (important rules) here and show them in our own lives?

What a wonderful Savior is Jesus. He fully gave His life because of His great love for us. Here is the perfect example of love. Jesus, who loves, feels driven to act for those whom He loves. What if Jesus had promised His love for us and remained in heaven? What if He had announced His love but made no promises to us or did nothing for us?

What does John 14:21 tell us about love in action, both on the part of Jesus and of us?

We are not just talking about love here. We are talking about a loving relationship. In any loving relationship, our desire is to please the person we love. Jesus' saving act was driven only by His love for sinners who had broken their connection with God. Suppose we fail to work for God for some reason. This would show that we do not really understand what it means to have a love relationship with God. God does not want us to be involved in witnessing and evangelism because we think that we owe Him. Instead, God wants our connection with Him to be so strong that we want to do the things that please Him. God wants us to love Him so much that we will reach out to the people whom He loves.

How can we be sure that we do things for God for the right reasons? Can we be a blessing to others even if our actions are for the wrong reasons? If so, how? Are right actions for the wrong reasons good actions anyway? Write down your answer and bring it to class on Sabbath for discussion.

WEDNESDAY—JUNE 6

THE LEGALISM⁴ TRAP (Romans 10:1–4)

There is a saying that goes far, "There is no such thing as a free lunch." This suggests that if you receive something for free, it really is not free because somewhere, somehow,

sometime, you will have to pay for it. The idea that nothing is ever really free has invaded Christian thinking. For example, many Christians try to earn God's salvation through obeying His will. This idea is called legalism.

Legalism means the attitude (feeling) of those who believe that by obeying God, they will be made righteous (holy) by Him. God's grace does not prevent Him from expecting obedience. But salvation is based only on this grace and nothing else!

What do Romans 10:1–4; Romans 11:5, 6; and Galatians 2:16 show about the misunderstanding of salvation that is so common among Christians? In what ways can we get caught up in that same kind of thinking? Why is it so easy for us to do?

A legalistic religion⁵ causes a person to think of how well he or she can do by himself or herself. Legalism also depends on how well others do too. But legalistic attitudes (thoughts and feelings) can lead to pride. And pride can cause people to think they are holy enough to be saved. Legalistic attitudes also can lead to discouragement for those who realize just how far they are from God's perfect life. All of this means that legalism is a trap that needs to be avoided, especially by a church that believes that the law is so very important.

Read John 6:28, 29. How does Jesus show the truth of salvation

4. legalism—working for God for the wrong reasons.

5. legalistic religion—a religion that teaches salvation by works.

by faith here? But what does it mean to believe in “him whom he hath sent” (KJV)? How should that belief be shown in our lives? How well do you show that belief, especially when no one is looking?

THURSDAY—JUNE 7

FREE TO BE A SLAVE (Philippians 1:1)

The Bible makes it clear that we were once slaves to sin. But through Christ we have been set free (Galatians 5:1), adopted (Romans 8:15), and born again (1 Peter 1:23).

A good worker for God is the one who has given the past to Him and has accepted His power to work in the present and the future. In other words, those who have been freed by Christ are able to be His slaves. If we do not understand this truth, it may seem strange that freedom leads to slavery. But it is as true as the sayings, “To be spiritually filled we must continually empty ourselves,” and “The way to victory is continual surrender.”

Read Philippians 1:1; James 1:1; and 2 Peter 1:1. What did Paul, Timothy, James, and Simon Peter mean when they announced themselves to be the slaves of God and Jesus Christ? How are we to understand these ideas for ourselves?

Usually slaves would be owned by,

and forced to work under, a master. To work for Jesus in the Christian sense is a totally voluntary choice. God loves us too much to force our will. When Timothy, James, and Simon Peter used these words, they were showing that they were slaves for Christ and His cause. They were announcing their full service to Him as their Lord. They were denying their self-importance so that others would focus only upon Jesus. In this picture of slavery, we see faithful followers making promises of their loyalty and devotion through selfless service.

Read John 8:34–36. What do these verses tell us about slavery to sin and the way to freedom?

Jesus’ hearers knew that slaves had no security (safety). They could be sold at the desire of the master, while the son of the master was always secure (safe) in the household. Here Jesus uses the slave example to teach an important, spiritual truth. If the Son of God makes you spiritually free from slavery to sin, you will be really free. It would be unusual for real, freed slaves to put themselves back into slavery. But this is what happens when we are freed from the slavery to sin and become slaves of Christ (Romans 6:17, 18). If we are free from the things that make us focus on ourselves, we are free to think about others and about what we have that can help them. This is the key to a life of service.

FRIDAY—JUNE 8

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Keeping on Track

Any good car will break down as a result of poor care. In the same way, many good and worthwhile church ministries have failed because of poor care.

To keep your ministry healthy, think about the following checklist:

1. Keep your personal connection with God. Remind yourself often that you are in a partnership ministry with the Lord.

2. Keep your personal vision. Do you still sense the importance of your ministry? Are your goals as clear and as strong as they were when you became involved in it?

3. Keep your communication open. Regular reporting is important to continued support. People are busy, and they need to be reminded of how your ministry is going. Also, let them know how they can become involved.

4. Keep your enthusiasm strong. It is a true saying that “Nothing spreads enthusiasm [eagerness] like enthusiasm.” Show your continued excitement about your ministry, and others will become excited too.

5. Keep your focus. Do not lose track of your goals because of other duties or programs. Do not let these

things prevent you from spending the time and energy that your current ministry needs to succeed and grow.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ In class, go over your answer to Tuesday’s final question.

❷ What wisdom does the following quotation give about the relationship between love for God and service for Him? “The watchful Christian is a working Christian. He always is working hard to do everything in his power for the gospel to grow. When his love for his Savior grows, so also does love for his fellow men.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Teachers and Leaders], page 261.

❸ “Those who have never tasted the winning love of Christ cannot lead others to the fountain of life. Jesus’ love in the heart is a power that leads men to show Him in how they talk about Him and in their lives among people. Christian workers who succeed in their work must know Christ. And in order to know Him, they must know His love.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 550, 551. In class, share your own personal experiences of God’s love and how you have come to know it for yourself.