

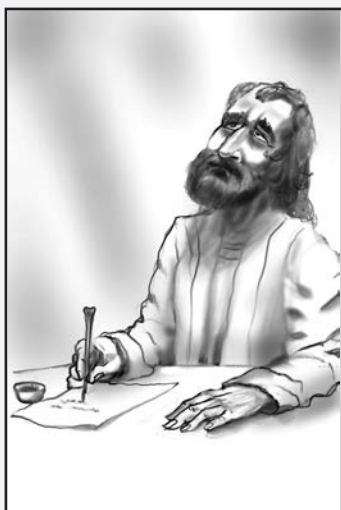
Loving People as Jesus Loved Them



SABBATH—AUGUST 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 2 Corinthians 1:3–14; 2 Corinthians 7:5–13; 2 Corinthians 2:12, 13.

MEMORY VERSE: “When I wrote that letter, I was very sad and upset. I cried a lot. I did not want to make you sad. Instead [but], I wanted you to know that I love you very much” (2 Corinthians 2:4, EASY).



Paul's letters to the Corinthians show us his deep love for them. He never stopped loving them.

PAUL didn't always have an easy life. He spent time in jail. He was often in danger. He wrote: “Five different times, the Jewish leaders punished me with whips. Each time they hit me 39 times. Three times the Romans punished [beat] me with sticks. People threw stones at me to kill me once [one time]. Three times I have been on ships that broke in the sea. Once I was in the sea for a night and a day. I have travelled on many journeys. I have been in danger from rivers and also from robbers. I have been in danger from my own people and also from Gentiles [non-Jews]. I have been in danger in cities and also in the wilderness [desert]. . . . I have been in danger from false believers. I have worked very hard, and I have been in pain. Many times I have not slept [can't sleep]. I have often been hungry and thirsty. Many times I have had no food. I have often been cold and without enough clothes. . . . But also, every day I have trouble in my mind. I worry about the believers in all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:24–28, EASY). Paul's letters to the Corinthians show us his deep love for them. He never stopped loving them. Paul learned from Jesus how to love the churches (2 Corinthians 5:14; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

THANKSGIVING (2 Corinthians 1:3–7)

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–7. What is Paul thankful for in these verses?

Paul is thankful for the hope and help that God gives to people who are suffering. In these verses, Paul says that God “helps us every time we have trouble” (2 Corinthians 1:3, WE; also read verse 4).

When God helps us, we feel hope. We must share this hope with other people (2 Corinthians 1:4, 5). When God helps us, we can help other people who are suffering. We understand their suffering better because we suffered. We know how to help them better because God helped us.

Paul could help other people who were suffering because God helped him when he suffered. “Our hope for you is strong. If you have the same trouble we have had, then you will also have the same comfort [hope] and help we have” (2 Corinthians 1:6, WE). In these verses, Paul shows us a picture of God’s amazing love.

What is Paul thankful for in 2 Corinthians 1:8–11?

Paul talks about his terrible troubles. His suffering was so bad that he and his traveling companions thought they were going to die (2 Corinthians 1:8). But God saved them. Then things got better for Paul (2 Corinthians 1:10). Before, they were afraid they were going to die. But now, they are filled with hope that God will save them again (2 Corinthians 1:10).

What important lesson does Paul’s story teach us? When God saves us in the past, we have hope that He will save us in the future. God uses suffering and hard times to teach us to trust Him. Hard times help us to grow. They can help us to give our hearts to God. Paul’s thankful heart shows another important lesson. We must pray for other people. We also must show God that we are thankful to Him for saving us from our troubles (2 Corinthians 1:11).

We all will suffer hard times in this life. Think of a time in the past when you suffered hard times. What helped you or gave you hope at that time?



Paul could help other people who were suffering because God helped him when he suffered.

HONEST AND GOOD WITH EVERYONE (2 Corinthians 1:12–14)

Yesterday, we read about Paul’s love for the Corinthians. Paul showed his love in the help and hope he gave them during their suffering. God gave Paul hope during hard times. So, Paul knew how to give help and hope to other people who were suffering (2 Corinthians 1:1–11). Today, we will learn about other ways Paul and his friends showed the Corinthians love.



Paul’s heart was filled with love for the Corinthians.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:12–14, along with 2 Corinthians 2:17 and 2 Corinthians 4:2. How does Paul’s honest behavior show his love for the Corinthians?

In 2 Corinthians 1:12–14, Paul introduces an idea that he will talk about for the rest of his letter. Some people in the church doubted that Paul was honest. They questioned Paul’s leadership. Some church members in Corinth thought that Paul had trouble making decisions. They worried that he changed his mind too much. So, some of the Corinthians didn’t think Paul made a very good leader. In answer to these fears, Paul says that his behavior was always honest and good with everyone.

Let’s look more closely at these two words: “honest” and “good” (2 Corinthians 1:12, EASY). The word written as ‘honest’ comes from the Greek word ‘haplotēs.’ Paul uses this word to show that his behavior and his words were always honest and true. In short, ‘haplotēs’ helps us understand that Paul’s heart was filled with love for the Corinthians. The word “good” comes from the Greek word ‘eilikrineia.’ This word also helps us to understand that Paul had no evil feelings in his heart for the Corinthians.

The Corinthians should trust the honesty in Paul’s heart. In 1 Corinthians 1:12, Paul says that his “honest” and “good” behavior and feelings for the Corinthians came from God. Sad to say, some people didn’t understand Paul’s first letter to the church (read 2 Corinthians 1:13, 14). Paul hopes they will understand his words and his behavior on the day when Jesus comes back (2 Corinthians 1:14).

Do people sometimes think the worst of your good behavior and honest words? What does your answer tell you about why we must be careful how we judge the words and behavior of other people?

CHANGING PLANS FOR LOVE (1 Corinthians 16:5–7)

Yesterday, we learned that some church members at Corinth doubted Paul's love. Today, we will look at why Paul changed his travel plans (2 Corinthians 1:15–2:4).

What was Paul's first travel plan? Read 1 Corinthians 16:5–7 for the answer.

In 1 Corinthians 16:5, 6, we learn that Paul planned to pass through Macedonia on his way back to Corinth. Maybe he would stay in Corinth for the winter. From Corinth, Paul would travel to Judea with the offering he collected for the poor in Jerusalem. But then Paul's plans changed. He got a bad report from Timothy about Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10; 2 Corinthians 1:1).

Paul planned to hurry from Ephesus to Corinth to solve the problems Timothy told him about. Paul's new plan was to travel from Ephesus to Corinth, and then from Corinth to Macedonia. Then Paul planned to travel back to Corinth. From there he would go to Judea (2 Corinthians 1:15, 16). Paul went from Ephesus to Corinth. But then Paul went back to Ephesus. His plans changed. He didn't go back to Corinth as planned. At least, not right away. That's because Paul's latest visit didn't go so well. So, Paul went back to Ephesus and wrote to the Corinthians. Paul thought that sending a letter was better than making things worse with another personal visit (2 Corinthians 2:1, 3).

So, the Corinthians felt they couldn't depend on Paul. They felt that he didn't love them enough (2 Corinthians 1:17). In answer, Paul asked the Corinthians to think about Jesus and the Good News. Paul would keep his promises to the Corinthians, just as God kept His promises to them because of Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:18–22). That's why Paul says, "Jesus says yes to all of God's many promises" (2 Corinthians 1:20, NLV). Paul's answer shows us that Jesus "is not someone who changes his message between 'Yes' and 'No.' He always says 'Yes,' and he does what he says" (2 Corinthians 1:19, EASY).

Paul loved the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 2:4). That's why he waited to visit them again. Another visit right away would cause the Corinthians more pain, and not joy (2 Corinthians 1:24; 2 Corinthians 2:3). Paul's experience helps us understand that we can easily believe the worst about other people.



Paul went from Ephesus to Corinth. But then Paul went back to Ephesus. His plans changed. He didn't go to Corinth as planned.

FORGIVENESS AND LOVE (2 Corinthians 7:5–13)

In Macedonia, Paul heard from Titus the excellent news that his strong words caused good changes in the church.

As we saw yesterday, Paul chose not to visit the Corinthians a second time. After Paul went back to Ephesus, he sent the Corinthians a letter filled with strong, painful words. The letter made the Corinthians “sad . . . for a short time” (2 Corinthians 7:8, EASY; also read 2 Corinthians 2:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 7:12).

What happened when Paul sent the strong letter? What did the Corinthians do? How did Paul answer? Read 2 Corinthians 7:5–13 for the answers.

Paul and Titus met later in Macedonia. There, Paul heard from Titus the excellent news that his strong words caused good changes in the church. In the past, some members at Corinth were against Paul. But now the church was on Paul’s side. This news filled Paul’s heart with joy. For sure, our leaders need the support of us church members. Our support makes their work so much easier.

Read 2 Corinthians 2:5–11. What important idea do we read about in these verses?

These verses are about church punishment. Bible thinkers don’t agree who is being punished. Was it the man in 1 Corinthians 5:1–5 who had sex with his stepmother? Or was it someone who was upset with Paul for changing his travel plans? We don’t know for sure. Anyway, 1 Corinthians 5:1–5 teaches the church what to do when a member sins.

1 Corinthians 5:1–5 teaches us that punishment helps the sinner come back to God (2 Corinthians 2:6–8, 10). Love and forgiveness are an important part of church punishment. Punishment may be painful. But it is also necessary. Some churches don’t punish members when they do terrible things or public sins. On the other hand, some churches punish, but they are unforgiving and mean. Church leaders must be loving and kind when they punish sin. Paul loved the church so much (2 Corinthians 2:4)! That’s why he tells the church to show love to the person they punish (2 Corinthians 2:8).

God loved the church, and so did Paul. So, the church in Corinth could show love to the person who did wrong (2 Corinthians 2:8). What does this idea teach us about love?

WINNING WITH JESUS (2 Corinthians 2:12, 13, NlrV)

Where did Paul go after he wrote his painful letter? What did Paul do when he arrived there? Read 2 Corinthians 2:12, 13 for the answer.

Paul felt worried while he waited for Titus (2 Corinthians 7:5, 6). Even so, Paul didn't stop talking about Jesus (2 Corinthians 2:12). Paul loved Jesus so much! At that time, he didn't know how the Corinthians felt about his letter. So, Paul wanted to learn from Titus what the Corinthians thought.

Paul's work at Troas was a big success. "But Paul couldn't stay there long. He needed to take care of all the other churches. He worried most about the church at Corinth. Paul hoped to meet Titus at Troas to learn how the Corinthians felt about his letter. But Paul didn't get the chance. Paul wrote these words about his experience at Troas: 'But I had no peace because I did not find my brother Titus there' (2 Corinthians 2:13, ICB). So, Paul left Troas and crossed over to Macedonia."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 323, adapted.

How did Paul feel when he met Titus in Macedonia? How did he feel when he heard Titus's good news about the Corinthians? Read 2 Corinthians 2:14–17 for the answer.

Paul is filled with joy! He says, "We thank God for the power Christ [the Savior] has given us. He leads us and makes us win in everything" (2 Corinthians 2:14, NLV). What a beautiful verse! When our hearts are filled with Jesus, then "God spreads [sends] the knowledge of [the Good News about] Christ everywhere like [the same as] perfume" (2 Corinthians 2:14, NlrV).

Paul is happy in Jesus because the painful letter helped the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 7:5–9). Paul's letter is a success. Meanwhile, in 2 Corinthians 2:17, Paul says again that he is an honest leader. Jesus Himself sent Paul to do his work (2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 1:12). A false leader is selfish. But an honest leader preaches Bible truth because he loves Jesus with his whole heart.

What helps you to do everything you do for Jesus?



An honest leader preaches Bible truth because he loves Jesus with his whole heart.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Message Heeded,” pages 323–334, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“People who suffered much often bring the most hope to other people. Suffering teaches them important lessons. Their lives are better because of their painful experiences. So, now they know how to fill other hearts with happiness wherever they go. These people don’t stop trusting in God when troubles came. They hold on tight to Jesus and His love. God’s love protects them. Now these same people are living proof that God loves and cares for us.”—Ellen G. White, *God’s Amazing Grace*, page 122, adapted.

“Paul knew that he must punish sin in the church. But Paul didn’t lose his self-control. Paul explained the reason for his actions. He worked hard to make sure that the church understood that he was the friend to the person who did wrong! Paul made the church understand that it hurt him to cause them pain. Paul helped them to know that he cared about what happened to them.”—Ellen G. White, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 6, page 1094, adapted.



“People who suffered much often bring the most hope to other people.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In 2 Corinthians 2:1–14, Paul says that he is an honest leader for Jesus. Why is honesty so important in leadership?
- ② Paul changed his travel plan. What does this change tell us about why we must be open to making changes when needed?
- ③ At times, Paul felt worried and upset during his work for God. He suffered and felt pain because of the decisions he needed to make. Paul was human. His experience helps us remember that our church leaders are human, too. They suffer and feel pain, the same as other people. What can we do, as church members, to make their jobs easier?
- ④ Paul talks about his worries (2 Corinthians 2:13) right before he talks about his success in Jesus (2 Corinthians 2:14). How can he talk about these two different things at the same time? How can we?

A LITTLE BOY'S LOVE FOR SERVING GOD

Myrton Iseminger is a Bible worker who serves God in Lebanon. As a young boy, Myron loved stories that Eric B. Hare wrote. Eric B. Hare was a Seventh-day Adventist Bible worker and writer. Myron says, "As a boy, I read all of Eric B. Hare's stories about Bible workers overseas. But I never thought that I would become a Bible worker myself."

In the late 1970s, Myron's sister announced she was taking a year off from college. She was going to Japan to volunteer as an English teacher. After Myron studied for a year to be a pastor, he also decided to volunteer. He wanted to go to the Middle East. This decision changed the rest of his life.

Myron said, "I thought it would be really neat to go to the Bible lands. I also thought the experience would help me be a better pastor. My Middle East experience gave me so much more than I expected. That year, my view about the world started to change. I saw another way of life and thinking. I went to my students' homes. I heard their stories. I saw their personal suffering and pain. I started to understand life from another person's view. I understood how easily we judge groups of people until we meet them one-on-one and come to love them." Myron started to believe that God was asking him to serve overseas for a very long time.

When Myron went back to college, he decided to study business, too. This decision would also change his life.

A church leader shared some advice with Myron that made him think and pray. The man said, "If you want to serve God in a foreign country, make sure the woman you marry wants to serve God there, too!" Myron's wife, Candace, never traveled outside the United States before they got married. Myron says, "But Candace was willing to go with me to another country."

Not long after, a General Conference leader told Myron about a job for an accountant in the Middle East. Soon, Myron and Candace were moving into an apartment in the Egypt Field office. Myron's new job was hard but rewarding. He says, "I enjoyed working overseas. I liked helping God's people make the most of what they had when their money was limited. Sure, the work was often hard. But I enjoyed making lives better."

Later, Myron worked for the church in different jobs.

If someone told Myron what he would do when he grew up, he wouldn't believe him. The little boy who loved the Eric B. Hare stories about Bible workers grew up to make a living as a Bible worker! Myron says, "If we give our hearts to Jesus, He will use us wherever He needs us. He can plan our lives much better than we can." Your offerings help support Bible workers. Please give during Sabbath School.

INSIDE
Story
by KATHIE LICHTENWALTER



**As a young boy,
Myron loved stories that
Eric B. Hare wrote.**