

# Love is Dedicated

*John Botha, Willows Methodist Church, 2024-11-24*

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## Preface

I have already put the PDF of the sermon up at

[willows.org.za/sermons](http://willows.org.za/sermons)

so you can get all the references from there if you want to go into this a bit deeper.

## Introduction

This sermon forms part of my devotion series ‘How Will They Know?’ The last few weeks I have been using as major source the book ‘Love Works’ by Joel Manby, and will be concluding that on Wednesday, but today we are looking at the importance of balancing both power and love.

Martin Luther King Jr. said that

Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anaemic.

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

When we are under stress we have great difficulty to use both power and love, and according to Manby, <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> of us will revert to the one with which we are most comfortable, *ignoring the other*. Sadly, most of us have very strong models of people using power without love. Maybe some of us were fortunate to grow up with someone who mostly worked in love, but it is clear simply by looking around that there are very few people, indeed, who work in both.

I would like to pray before we continue.

*Dear Lord God,*

*You are all-powerful, and You are all-loving. Thank You that when You exert Your power, You do so in love, and when You love, You do so from a position of power. Help us, O Lord, to follow Your lead in this as we go about the business of our lives.*

*Amen.*

# Body

## Power without love

Just after 10 *p.m.* on Monday the 26<sup>th</sup> of August this year, I stumbled upon a so-called special report on ENCA. It was called 29 Days in June and through various interviews with participants, gave a view on the negotiations between mainly the ANC and the DA in trying to forge our GNU, or Government of National Unity. The URL is in the PDF of this sermon, if you'd like to watch it. As interesting as it was, there were two quotes which jumped out at me. They start at 4:11 in. Just remember that both quotes are in the context of needing to form a GNU and he is speaking of the behind-the-scenes process.

The first strategic question you ask yourself is, 'How do we safeguard power?'

Maybe I'm naïve, but aren't politicians supposed to serve the people and not themselves?

They then cut to a different part of the interview, where the same politician says this.

At that time people expect leadership, not slogans, rhetoric, talking things that are unreal. You are dealing with a real situation.

I am not identifying the politician, because I am not trying to cast aspersion on any person or party. But actually, I am pretty sure many politicians from other parties share these views, so let's agree that this is how people who want to cling to power see things.

This is not limited to politics, however. Business is another area where power gets exercised over others. I worked at a global corporation for many years and one year the regional head of the division in which I worked was one of the best-performing persons globally. He was head over divisional operations for the about 30 countries which constituted our region, so this was no small feat, and he was richly rewarded.

But then the trouble started. In our region, in country after country our division had resignations, disciplinaries, and lay-offs. What he had done was to take *his* sales target given him by global, upped it by a massive number, and then used that to set the various country targets (it was considerably more complex, but that's the gist of it). The result was that even if every country did not make their target, he probably would make his, and that is what happened. The problem was of course the massive collateral damage, because not making your target has consequences.

Another time, our account manager for a multi-billion, multi-country company pulled a rabbit of a hat: he managed to get something like 90% of that company's IT budget for the year spent with us. He was a hero, but the following year he was a zero being hauled before a disciplinary committee, all because some spread sheet manager had decided that *this* number — *plus more* — was the account manager's new target. Our competition welcomed him with open arms.

So Martin Luther King was right: 'Power without love is reckless and abusive...'

# Love without power

On the other hand, without power we can do nothing. That is reminiscent of what we read in James:

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled’, without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

— James 2:15–17

That’s rather obvious, but the point is simply this: without power, without the ability to do things, all our good intentions are exactly that — intentions!

We are called to make a difference, to help others to come to salvation. And that requires effort, it requires power.

## Balance

So, how do we get power? Is it something we should crave? I believe that this requires very careful consideration. Also, power is a very dangerous thing, as stated so eloquently by Lord Acton:

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

— Lord Acton

We’ve all probably heard this quote, but it continues:

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. **Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority...**

— Lord Acton

Here the term ‘great men’ refers to those who wield a great deal of power, and notice how he includes those who, though they do not have direct authority, can impact people and events through their influence. The phrase ‘the power behind the throne’ comes to mind.

With all of that, it certainly seems like a bad idea to *seek* power, whether directly or via influence. Yet we need at least *some* form of power to put our faith into action, so what do we do?

We look to Jesus. Perhaps His prime example of how to influence is Him washing His disciples’ feet the night before He was crucified. He also gave us both a test and an outline of the road to power. Firstly the test:

One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

— Matthew 16:10

Your faithfulness and honesty permeates your entire life. It may not do so immediately, but its influence grows over time. It is reminiscent of the story of the two wolves fighting within us: one good and one bad. When the grandson asked his grandfather which one would win, the answer was simply, ‘The one you feed.’

Are we all sinners? Yes. Do we all fall short of God’s glory? Yes. Does that mean we might as well give up trying? No, and the reason is very simple: a core example used in the New Testament is that we are Christ’s body. Also, that a body grows and matures. That means that at times we are immature, but that as we grow and as we mature, we are conformed into Christ’s likeness more and more. While our salvation is instantaneous, our sanctification takes time.

Jesus says and promises us in John 14:15–17

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth...

— John 14:15–17

So we have the Help we need to keep Jesus’s commandments, and here is a very important one, outlining the road to power:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you.

But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

— Matthew 20:25–28

So we need to exercise both power and love: power putting love into effect, and love directing the power. That is how the *use* of power does not become the *abuse* of power. At the same time, we are not to seek power, but to keep Jesus’s commandments. We are unable to succeed in this by ourselves, which is why He has sent us The Holy Spirit. Once we have proven our faithfulness in the small things, we shall be entrusted with greater, because our faithfulness and our honesty is part of the fibre of our being, and as children get more responsibility as they grow, so do we. Jesus is our prime example, and we should likewise serve others.

## Be versus do

Not all sayings are true. A case in point: ‘The end justifies the means’ is easily refuted. Manby gives an important insight to help us, which he calls ‘be goals *versus* do goals.’ Another way of looking at it is ‘how *versus* what’, or ‘means *versus* end.’ Recall my two business examples from earlier: the divisional head who gave his reports (and thus theirs all the way down the chain of command) extremely inflated targets so that he would make his, but they not theirs, plus that of the account manager who managed to pull off a near impossible feat that most never manage, but who was then expected to improve upon it the following year, and punished when it was not possible. These are both cases where there were ends to achieve, but no thought had been given to the means to do so.

While *do* goals are necessary (we need to know where we are going), we definitely need *be* goals as well, since we need to know how we are to achieve the *do* goals. For example, is it OK to steal, manipulate, cheat, lie, *etc.*, or are we going to prove honest in everything? Is our family going to pay the price of our so-called work ethic? Work can be consuming, and there is almost always more of it than we can actually do properly. That means we need to decide what *not* to do, and unless we base those decisions on our *be* goals, we may very well decide badly. When you are between a rock and a hard place, the best you can hope for is a values-based decision, but if you hardly ever make any of those, it's going to be very difficult.

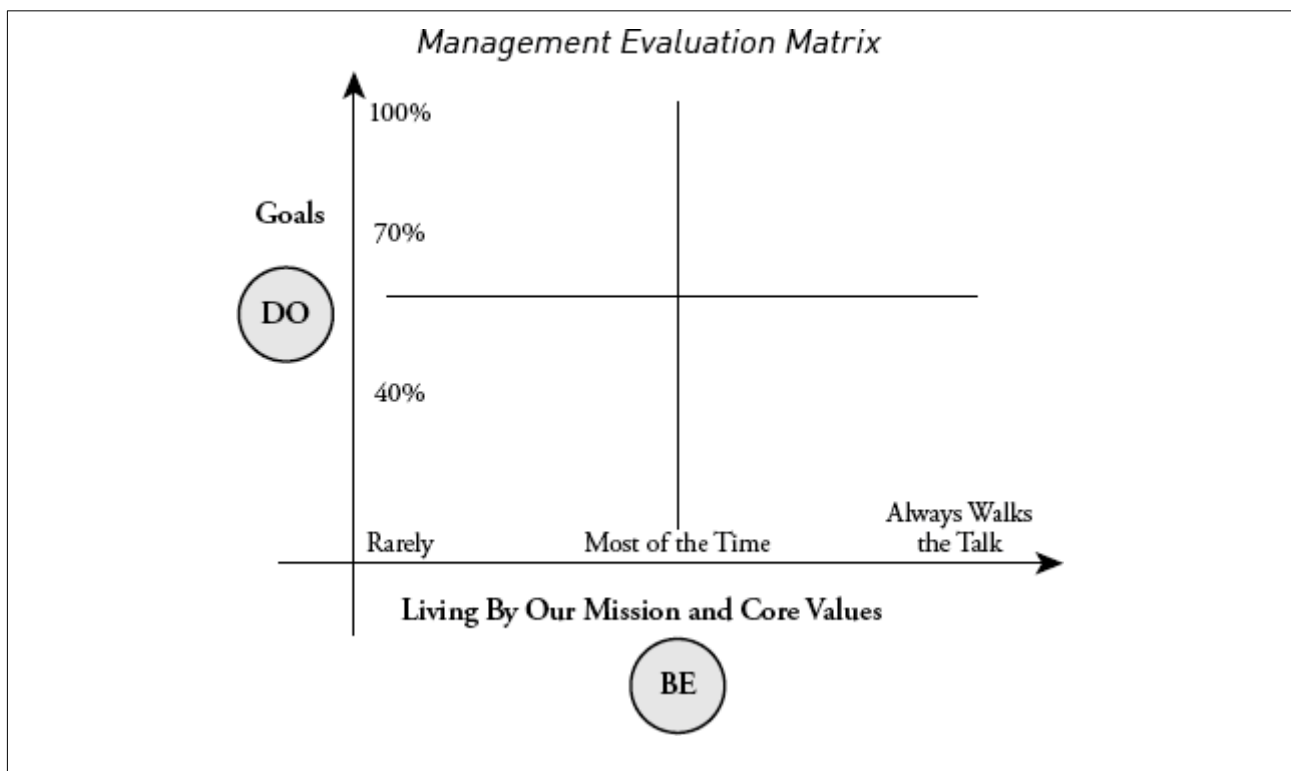
So, start working on a *to-be* list which will not only help you achieve your *to-do* list, but will also help to define it in the first place, because you will be better at deciding what not to do. Another term for our *be* goals is our values. So spend some time and write them down. And be very clear: if you struggle to write them down when things aren't falling apart around you, how do you expect them to guide your decisions when the going gets tough?

This quote from Manby puts it well:

*Do* goals will constantly change over time, while *be* goals should be timeless and rarely, if ever, change. *Be* goals represent the heart and soul of an organisation, its culture.

— Joel Manby

Manby shares this matrix they use in their management evaluation:



As a classic two-axis management matrix you want to be in the top right quadrant, and here that means that not only do you achieve your goals, but that you do so the right way.

# Love works — especially in the hard times

Manby gives an example of *be* goals in action. At the time he worked as CEO of Herschend Family Entertainment (HFE), and it was a few years after the 2008 market crash. By far the greatest part of their business is themed amusement parks, so it is easy to imagine the kind of hit they took after the 2008 crash, because their entire income was from the discretionary spend part of people's budget. When people struggle to pay rent or to buy food, then there is no chance they're going to spend money on roller coasters, so HFE was in a crisis — and they had *sixteen* properties! They had a *do* goal to achieve if they were going to stay in business: since they could not increase income, they simply *had* to cut costs. Their *be* goals defined a different way for them from most other companies, however.

Manby got his senior team together and asked them 'How can we handle these difficult financial decisions in a way that is consistent with our values?' His COO answered 'We need to identify the overall expense numbers we need to cut and give our local leadership the freedom to achieve it the way they believe is best. We shouldn't decide for them.' The result was that when the management of all their different properties got together, they came up with a solution which cut 50% of their capital expenditure plans for the coming year — within 30 minutes, and without any job cuts.

While that helped, in the end the recession was so deep and so long that job cuts became necessary, but again, they went about it in a way which was based upon their values and which valued their staff. Staff voted to freeze and in the case of some senior managers reduce their pay. This saved 350 jobs at the parks, but they still needed to cut 10% of the corporate office staff. Manby explains so well how they applied each of the six points of leading with love, that I want to quote it in full:

**Patient.** We were methodical and handled all job-loss discussions with integrity and openness. We took the time to get input from each property and never rushed to judgment.

**Kind.** We encouraged our employees to get through this together and come out of it a stronger company. We also encouraged those losing their jobs and actively helped them look for new work.

**Trusting.** We treated those being laid off with trust by letting them stay for six months while looking for a job. All of them honoured that trust, and all of them found jobs.

**Unselfish.** All the properties made sacrifices, and Dollywood chose to extend the pay cuts to all managers to save jobs.

**Truthful.** We were very open in our communication and didn't mince words. Our employees appreciated hearing the truth up front.

**Forgiving.** There was a lot of tension in the midst of tough discussions. We disagreed, we "fussed and discussed," but in the end we made the best decisions we could and moved forward in a positive way.

As Manby says, 'Dedication to leading with love isn't just a theory; it's living out organisation-wide processes that identify and measure the necessary behaviours. It's one thing to *talk* about values like leading with love, but it's another thing to *deliver* on those values, especially in tough times.'



# Conclusion

In my devotion this coming Wednesday I will wrap up using Manby's book, but I want to make the point now that the reason I chose to use his book as major source for part of my 'How Will They Know?' series is found in Colossians 3:17.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the Name of The Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God The Father through Him.

— Colossians 3:17

This verse is very, very important. If we live our lives as these 25 words say, our witness would be very difficult to refute. Referring to what we do, whether in word or in deed, the words *whatever* and *everything* include everything and exclude nothing: there is simply no escaping it. I am more and more conscious of this requirement, and am trying to mature in how I say and do things, so that others can see that I am doing so in the Name of The Lord Jesus. Do I fail? Yes, but I am not going to stop coming before The Lord and asking Him for His help. I know that I am growing, late though it is, but I am not giving up.

Let us pray.

*Dear Lord God, we are so grateful that You are so clear in Your Word about how we are to live. Not only have You told us, but You have shown us, Jesus, by Your sacrifice for us and have left us examples from Your life here on earth. Even though we have all of this, Lord, we still struggle with our own inclination to selfishness and to sin. We need Your help, God. We cannot do this in our own strength. Thank You that You have given us everything we need for life and for godliness, Lord. We declare that we need Your help to live as You would have us do, and we thank You that You do help us through Your Holy Spirit.*

*Amen*

## References and Sources Consulted

- Manby, Joel. *Love Works: Seven Timeless Principles for Effective Leaders*. Mobi-ASIN: B006BEVZ94
- <https://www.enca.com/shows/29-days-june-annika-larsen-special-report>