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A stable, long-lasting ministry requires leaders who put their spiritual development before their ministry development. This idea isn't new. Jesus clearly explained the importance of loving God: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: „ "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." (Matthew 22:36-39). Note the distinction between these two commandments. Loving the Lord your God is the greatest, and loving others as yourself is the second. Reversing this order can have devastating effects on your spiritual life.

Serving in ministry and loving others can even become an excuse for not falling more deeply in love with God. Failure to see the difference between loving God (focusing on him) and loving others (doing ministry) can result in a ministry-focused life rather than a God-focused life. Please, slow down and reread that last sentence. Does the distinction make sense to you? Your service in youth ministry should never come at the expense of your personal passion and depth for God. Many volunteers start off with a passion for God and a genuine love for students but then allow the business and the pace of the ministry to rob them of their spiritual depth. If you work hard to do great ministry to teenagers instead of nurturing your love for God, you'll end up in the wrong place. There's nothing wrong with hard work in ministry; it's probably motivated by a genuine concern. However, it's nowhere near as important as genuinely wanting to follow Jesus, love him, and reveal that love by loving others.