



Weekly Inspiration - March 2017



Week Of March 6, 2017

Theme: Love Is Tender and Tough

And become useful *and* helpful *and* kind to one another, tenderhearted (compassionate, understanding, loving-hearted), forgiving one another [readily and freely], as God in Christ forgave you. - Ephesians 4:32 AMP

For many of us, this is not an easy command to follow. Tenderness seems to be a reflex reaction to some people, but for others it is alien and difficult. You see this in public places like airports and shopping centers.

An elderly woman is struggling with luggage or packages, and a steady stream of able-bodied people pass her by. Some even scowl and say, "Get a move on, Grandma." And then a tenderhearted person comes along and takes time to help her.

There are many reasons why some people are tender while others are tough. Part of it can be explained as God's workmanship. He makes us all different. Part of it is due to family heritage, the individual's temperament and the kind of experiences he or she has had. Both tenderness and toughness are important character qualities; both are necessary sides of love.

JOURNAL: Write about a tenderhearted action that you took. Was it yesterday, or last year? Write about what circumstances have made you either tender or tough.

Week of March 13

Theme: Tenderizing Your Heart

I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart. -Jeremiah 24:7

If we are in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, God is already at work on our hearts. For the tough ones among us, he's got his work cut out for him. You may ask yourself how can a person's heart be so hard? Especially if they have experienced the personal love of Jesus Christ firsthand. His love marks our soul and changes us. We know the Holy Spirit resides in our life and is working us over from the inside out, trying to make us a more loving person. But sometimes even the most loving Christian can still be too callous and cold. What more is required to become tenderhearted? What practical steps can be taken to relate to people in a more tender fashion?" Believe it or not, sometimes it takes more courage to be tender than tough.

APPLY: What steps can you take to relate to others in a tender way? What fears or habits keep you from showing tenderness?

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Week of March 20, 2017

Theme: Legacy Of Love

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. – 1 Corinthians 13:13

The greatest legacy we humans can leave is the legacy of love. Whether we're speaking of our place within society at large or in the context of our primary relationships, the most valuable gifts we can offer are those thoughts and actions that flow from a loving heart.

It is within the context of family that loving actions are most appreciated and necessary — and most difficult to maintain. We all have good intentions, but in the rough-and-tumble events of life we tend to bump and bruise each other. Even little wounds to our egos or our souls hurt, and often our natural reaction is to withdraw.

As emotional distance increases, so does resentment. We know we should put an end to the discord. We should talk to the other person and try to resolve the problem. But we know how much time and energy it will take and how frustrating it may be. Don't get lazy and give up. Make the phone call. Write the letter. Take initiative in pursuing reconciliation or a deeper relationship. Don't take the destructive path of the sluggard. Instead, leave a legacy of love.

PRAY: Ask God to show you where you have bumped and bruised those you love. Ask for his help to pursue reconciliation.

Week of March 27, 2017

Theme: Ultimate Love

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. – John 3:16

Because God was concerned with the well-being of people who were precious to him, he gave — he sacrificed — his only Son; and when you are concerned about the well-being of others, you usually have to sacrifice too. You may have to expend your time, your energy or your money for them. You may have to give up your plans, your independence or your privacy. To love as God loves, you may have to part with whatever is most precious to you for the sake of other people.

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Sacrificial love is a difficult concept to grasp, because our culture teaches the exact opposite. We are constantly bombarded with books, articles, radio and TV shows, commercials and ads shouting, "You are number one. Take care of yourself. Don't let others steal your time. Save your energy so you can enjoy leisure moments. Stockpile financial resources so you can spend more on yourself. If you protect your time, conserve your energy and amass your resources, you will be happy." God calls us to be extremely countercultural, to love as he loves.

APPLY: When you've made yourself number one, has it actually made you happier? What about when you made a sacrifice for someone else's sake? Which brought you closer to God?