

06 TENACIOUS

A Heart of Tenacity

The previous five “T”s have covered the subjects of hearts that are “Truthful, Transparent, Teachable, Tender,” and “Trustworthy.” All of these are admirable traits that reflect an honorable and God-pleasing person. This sixth “T” will deal with an additional trait, that when combined with the first five, completes the picture of the heart of every person who lives for and is a reflection of the image of Christ. As the title indicates, we will delve into a heart that is “Tenacious.”

“Get Back on the Horse”

I was listening to my friend, Pastor Bill Schwartz preaching one day. In his sermon, he told a true story about his friend, an evangelist named Joey. Here’s Joey’s story.

I was a young boy about fourteen years old, riding in my daddy’s truck when we came upon a group of men trying to break a horse so it would accept a rider. We stopped to watch for a while. The problem was, the horse was so mean nobody could stay on him. Finally, the owner said, “If I cannot find someone to tame this horse, I will shoot the horse.” I would pay a hundred dollars to someone if they could only break this horse.

My daddy went to him and said, “Give us two hundred dollars and we will do it.” “It’s a deal,” said the owner of the horse.

My daddy looked at me and said, “Joey, get on that horse.” “Daddy, I can’t do that”, I said. “I have never tried to tame a horse.” He ignored that and said, “Joey, get on that horse. You can do it!” “Well, my daddy said I could do it, so I got on the horse. That horse began to run, and jump and shake. He quickly

threw me to the ground.” My daddy said, “Joey, get back on the horse! You can do it.” “I got back on the horse. The same thing happened.” Again my daddy said, “Joey, get back on the horse. You can do it.” I got back on the horse. The same thing happened again. I was getting discouraged and besides, it hurt.

But my daddy said, “Get back on the horse, Joey. You can do it.” So I got back on the horse again. This time the horse broke through the fence, ran down the road, doing all he could to get me off. I just held on as tight as I could. Finally, the horse began to slow down and then he began to walk. I did it. I tamed the horse! I rode him!”¹

My friend Pastor Bill said he asked Joey, “Why did you think you could stay on that horse and tame him?” Think carefully about his answer:

“Because my daddy said I could!”

A Tenacious heart finds its strength to continue to the end because our heavenly Father, in His Word and by His Spirit, says we can. (“My daddy said I could.”) We are authorized by heaven to keep on going until we complete the task, whatever it may be. Never give in! Never give up! Never give out! When you are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a champion and a family member of the Champion of champions. You have been ordained to be a winner. You have the devil under your feet. You are a devil stomper! The only thing that will stop you is not believing you are who God says you are.

**Never give in. Never give up. Never give out.
Stop whining and start winning!
Surrender is not an option.**

¹ I heard Pastor Shwartz tell this story while he was preaching at Trinity Church International in Lake Worth, Florida.

To be tenacious is to “keep a firm hold of something; clinging or adhering closely.” It’s to have “a tenacious grip; not readily relinquishing a position, principle, or course of action.”² It’s to refuse to quit until the desired course of action is accomplished. It is a person’s refusal to be denied his or her destiny. This is an admirable trait that has been validated and approved by Scripture. Perhaps our best biblical example of someone who was tenacious is the Apostle Paul, who wrote of his determination not to be denied his destiny. He never gave up and never gave in. He had no “Plan B.” finished his course and received his rewards.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 (NKJV) “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. {8} Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

**A Tenacious heart will not be denied.
It finishes in faith. It has no “Plan B.”**

We can learn a lot about being tenacious by examining what Paul wrote to Timothy. In the verses above, Paul explained his attitude about the course his life took, following his submission to Christ as his Lord. Paul would not have been surprised at the end awaiting him. He knew his zeal and tenacity for the Gospel had made him a great number of powerful enemies. This never deterred him. Paul had no expectation of escaping from his fate at the hands of the Romans. He told Timothy that, “*the time of my departure is at hand.*” He had accepted the cost. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote that he considered what his past life offered was nothing but rubbish compared to serving the Lord. What awaited him in eternity with Christ was the only thing of value to him. Serving faithfully was his only plan.

² Oxford University Press; Oxford Dictionaries Online project team.

Philippians 3:7-8 (NKJV) “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. {8} Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.”

A Spiritual Battle

Paul understood he had been in a life and death struggle for the Gospel. It was not only a battle against people who were enemies of the Gospel he had preached so diligently, but was also a battle against spiritual enemies. Here are Paul's instructions, concerning the truths of this battle.

Ephesians 6:11-13 (NKJV) “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. {12} For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. {13} Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Paul considered his battle to be a worthy one. It was worth whatever price he had paid. This gave him the ability to keep going beyond the earthly pain his tenacity had caused him. In 2 Timothy 4:7, he wrote, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*” From these words, we can derive the strength of his fight. It was all about faith. Paul embraced the struggle, knowing that a cause worth fighting for is a cause in which to radically believe. Paul was as radical about the cause of Christ as anyone has ever been. He would have no compromise in his faith. He understood the value of having faith for his cause (not only for him, but for those to whom he brought his message). He could have this because of his faith in Christ.

The evidence of Paul's faith was something he could not yet see, but nevertheless, it was and is a coming reality - the return of the King of kings. He fervently believed in the righteousness of his cause, but also knew he would one day wear the evidence of it. He wrote, "*there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness.*" We can only imagine how this must have burned in his heart and fueled his tenacious approach to his task of preaching the Gospel. His tenacity was not only for himself. It was for those of us who would accept his message in the centuries that followed his death. Paul affirmed this by referring to "*the crown of righteousness,*" saying that Christ would give it to him and all of us who love Christ, when the Lord returns in all His glory at His second coming (2 Timothy 4:8).

Putting the amazing life and tenacity of the Apostle Paul into perspective requires us to understand what he was doing through all his journeys, trials and triumphs. He summed it up, when he wrote the following to the Corinthian church:

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NKJV) "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."

A Tenacious heart imitates Christ's determination to fulfill His purpose and establish His destiny.

If we could unpack what it means to imitate Christ, the list would be endless. Obviously, sacrificial love would have to be at the top of the list. It would be difficult to deny that this should also be at the top of a list of the ways Paul imitated the Lord. He was driven by love. However, let's focus on the qualities we have previously discussed. These are: "Truthful, Transparent, Teachable, Tender" and "Trustworthy" ...plus the additional quality of this lesson, being "Tenacious." Paul was all of these things and more. Imitating Christ. It's as good as it gets, and well worth whatever price we might have to pay at the time.

What price would you willingly pay to tenaciously follow Christ? Would there be limits to it, or would you pay any price? I am not naïve enough to think I have the determination and tenacity of heart that Paul had, but I would hope that if it ever came down to it, none of us would deny Him. My desire, in any circumstances, is that we all have the tenacity of heart serve Him, regardless of the inconvenience, pain or ultimate cost.

Christ became everything He hated, so we could avoid our completely deserved, eternal punishment for being sinners, heading toward judgment in hands of an angry God. Instead, Jesus paid the price and willingly put Himself in the hands of God. He received the spikes of His crucifixion, thus atoning for God's anger toward us. It was a demonstration of the limitless love He has for us.

Biblical Guidelines for a Tenacious Heart

Though the order and specifics of these guidelines will vary with the circumstances, they all carry biblically based principles that come from the instructions of Scripture. This means that they will likely bring about a highly successful conclusion when followed. Because it takes a tenacious heart to compliment and complete the effectiveness of our other five "T"s, it carries great weight. Below, we will unpack a normal sequence in which many of the parts that contribute to this final "T" work together:

1. Establish your primary goal and stay oriented to it. Focus! Be sure that it's a goal that would please God and bear fruitfulness of His kingdom.

Philippians 3:14 (NKJV) "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Always consider the effects of what you will accomplish, as they apply to others. You should gauge your goals as if they are ripples in a pond, caused by something that was thrown into it. Each goal should, in positive, loving ways, affect

those who are touched or moved by them. The Scriptures say that if we fail to consider God's love in our goals, our personal witness as born-again believers may well be questioned.

1 John 4:7-8 (GWT) "Dear friends, we must love each other because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born from God and knows God. 8 The person who doesn't love doesn't know God, because God is love."

2. Determine the tasks necessary to reach your primary goal. These tasks ought to include secondary goals. These tasks become stepping-stones that insure attention to detail. As you think through your secondary goals, organize them in a manner in which they will work to achieve your primary goal. You can then break each of the steps within your secondary goals down as necessary, to fulfill them and keep moving toward the primary goal. Then, they will effectively and efficiently join in achieving it.

Psalms 37:23 (NLT) "The steps of the godly are ordered by the Lord. He delights in every detail of their lives."

3. Once you have an idea of what needs to be done, count the cost. Determine to become tenacious in whatever is required to achieve each of the secondary goals, and ultimately, the primary one. A goal worth achieving will always have its costs. These will likely challenge your character many times and in many ways until the goals are reached. Expect this and determine to endure. You will not only be successful, but will be personally transformed through the process. You will no longer be as much in sync with the world, but now, more in step with the perfect will of God.

Romans 12:2 (GWT) "Don't become like the people of this world. Instead, change the way you think. Then you will always be able to determine what God

really wants-what is good, pleasing, and perfect.”

4. Find useful ways to remind yourself to stay focused on the task at hand. Watch for distractions. They will take you off course if you let them. Distractions inherently will take your attention from what you started and draw you to something else. They are roadblocks to God’s will being accomplished in your life. Distractions become temptations that will attract your attention using what may not be wrong or bad. Some temptations are good, but they will keep you from what is best. Ask God’s help to recognize them and avoid them. Keep your heart stayed on the plan. He will never let you down.

2 Corinthians 10:13 (MSG) “No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he’ll never let you be pushed past your limit; he’ll always be there to help you come through it.”

5. Exercise the patience you will need to complete each task. Expect that some will take longer than others. There will be those that will have to be discarded. Others will have to be modified. New ones will make themselves known along the way. It bears repeating - exercise patience! There will be no shortcut to the process if you expect excellence to be the result. Just be sure to make wise choices and listen to the correct advice. When in doubt, go to the Scriptures. They will give you the wisdom that’s more precious than gold. You cannot put gold in your heart, but you can fill yourself with wisdom and it will channel you tenaciously toward your victory.

Proverbs 16:16 (NKJV) “How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.”

6. It's easy to become distracted, discouraged or at times, so disillusioned that you want to lose heart. Stay flexible and remain committed. When necessary, seek the advice of wise counselors and those who will encourage you. Always look to the Bible for encouragement and instruction. Tenacity must be one of the character traits of your heart. One of the best ways to assure this is to remind yourself of the eternal outcomes of your life in Christ. This eternal outcome is our assurance. It will encourage us to be steadfast and immovable in our labors. It will help us to have the tenacity to accomplish our goals.

Hebrews 12:1b-3 (NKJV) "...and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, {2} looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. {3} For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."

I Corinthians 15:57-58 (NKJV) "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ {58} Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

7. Expect that disappointment will be part of the process. Be willing to endure whatever emotional pain it brings. You can be sure that disappointment is always an opportunity for an appointment with God. Keep your eyes on Jesus. He designed the plan for your life and will guard it until the task is completed. Keep your heart tenaciously centered on Him.

Psalms 34:5 (NLT) "Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will

darken their faces.”

8. Allow the combined force of all six “T”s to operate within your heart. Never give any room in it for compromise to rear its ugly head. Always give room for the hope you have in Christ. What you do will be well pleasing to God. Then, you will reach your goals with good success. Let these words of David’s song in Psalm 28:6-7 sing to your heart:

*“Blessed be the Lord,
Because He has heard the voice of my supplications!
{7} The Lord is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,
And with my song I will praise Him.”*

David’s song brings us forward to Acts, Chapter 16. Here we find Paul and Silas demonstrating the power of tenacious trust in God in the midst of what seemed both a barrier and an interruption in their quest to fulfill the plan of God. They were chained to the walls of the Philippian jail, but they would not be denied. They resolutely sang praises to God, looking to Jesus. The parallels between David’s song and what Paul and Silas must have sung in that Philippian jail are loud and clear. Their hearts were filled with tenacity. It carried them through their circumstances. God was faithful to them. He will be faithful to you.

**A Tenacious heart praises God through every
circumstance.**