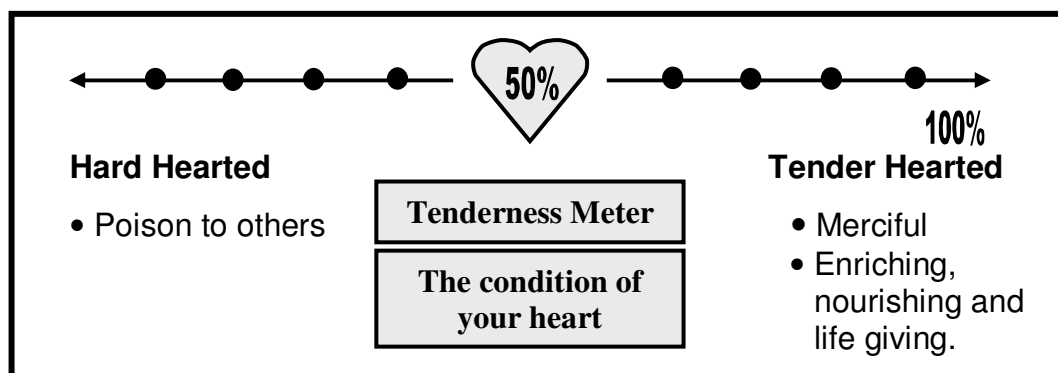


Four T's: 04 Tenderness (an Issue of the Heart)

(Ephesians 4:31-32 NKJV) "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. {32} And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you."

The condition of the heart can be anything from extremely hard and darkened, to soft and pliable, shining with the light of God's love.

CLASS EXERCISE



*(Colossians 3:12 NKJV) "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on **tender mercies**, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;"*

Tender mercies and all that goes with them... Put them on. Wear them! Display them for others to see and know.

Mercies are not really mercies unless they are defined by tenderness of heart and corresponding action! To be tender is to be "pliable, soft, gentle, easy, unresisting, giving, resilient, warm, and easy to cut through." It is all about motivation and attitude.

When we put on and wear "tender mercies," we display our tender hearts to other people. We influence them in the following ways.

1. Tenderness of heart seeks no advantage over others. It takes action to give them an advantage.

Tenderness of heart provides every advantage. A prime example is found in the character of Boaz (The Book of Ruth). Boaz enjoyed a position of great leadership in which he could easily have abused his power over Ruth, both in his fields and the night she came to him at the

threshing floor ([Ruth 2:8-12](#) & [3:7-15](#)). He chose to look upon her with tender mercies in his heart. His motives were pure before God. He was a man who reflected the character of God. He was a true leader.

2. Tenderness of heart can also be our refusal to take action.

(Ruth 3:1-11 NKJV) "Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? {2} Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. {3} Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. {4} Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do." {5} And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do." {6} So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. {7} And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. {8} Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. {9} And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative." {10} Then he said, "Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. {11} And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman."

Boaz could have taken advantage of Ruth. She was totally vulnerable to him. However, his only thoughts were to do what was right in the sight of the Lord. He was a man of integrity and his response was tender and gentle. He did what was best for her.

God is always watching. Boaz would be greatly rewarded for his righteous, tender behavior. He will have a descendant one day, whose name is Mary. She will be with child by the Holy Spirit. His name will be Jesus.

3. Tenderness of heart sees those it is responsible for as “precious and beyond earthly value.”

It protects – encourages – honors – enriches – covers – and empowers those who are discouraged, poor in spirit, and threatened with harm.

Consider the tenderness that **Joseph showed Mary** when he found out that she was with child by the Holy Spirit. He disregarded his own reputation and comfort to protect and care for her. **Joseph teaches us that tenderness of heart is sacrificial and protective of those we care for.** Joseph ministered provision and protection to Mary without regard to his what anybody might have said. He knew what a precious gift Mary was to him and treated her accordingly. He believed God and regarded God’s opinion above any man’s.

4. Tenderness of heart always reacts with gentleness when it is criticized or attacked (by loved ones or anyone else).

In every relationship, there are times of tension, times we are hurt and moments of misunderstanding. In these times, tenderness reacts **as if it was a big cushion or sponge. It absorbs the attack without letting the attacker be damaged.** When the attack has subsided, tenderness bounces back without any indication that it has been damaged. It remains as good as new!

Can you recall some Biblical examples of tenderness reacting compassionately and unselfishly in the face of attack?

5. Tenderness of heart is a “covering act” and a “quieting act.”

- It never exposes or uncovers those it loves.
- It shields others from the storms of life.
- It quiets those whose souls are in turmoil, fear or confusion,

When possible, tenderness goes beyond covering the one in distress and pursues the circumstances around that person to change them. It stills the storms.

Steven
Acts 7:60
Joseph
(his brothers)
Paul
Acts 16:28
Ananias
Acts 9:17-19
Jesus

(Mark 4:39 NKJV) "Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm."

To calm the storms in someone's life is to bring peace and stillness into the midst of stormy circumstances – to change them through your personal intervention. One of the responsibilities of leadership is to intervene in the midst of others' storms, trials, disappointments and tragedies. Tenderness is a quieting act. It may not change the circumstances, but it will minister to the person in need.

(John 14:27 NKJV) "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

(Zephaniah 3:17 NKJV) "The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

Tenderness is a quieting act that imitates the Lord. It is a gift freely given **without expectation or need of return**. It quiets the storms as an act of love.

6. Tenderness of heart is always looking for opportunities to display itself.

The purpose of the display of tenderness is **never selfish**. It points people to the loving goodness of God.

- ☑ It is always planning ahead to send its message.
- ☑ It is not simply reactive. It is proactive.
- ☑ It initiates significant action.
- ☑ It is the essence of Christ, displayed in us.

7. Tenderness of Heart is a guard, a high tower, a wall, a shield, and a shelter.

Tenderness of heart surrounds and protects those it is responsible for. It lifts others above the assaults of life.

Tenderness is the ultimate expression of Christ as our Good Shepherd. He tenderly cares for His sheep. He guards them with His life. He is a Barrier to all that would hurt them! The ultimate call on every Christian is to be the expression of Christ, both in and out of the church.

(John 13:34 NKJV) "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another..."

(John 10:11 NKJV) "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

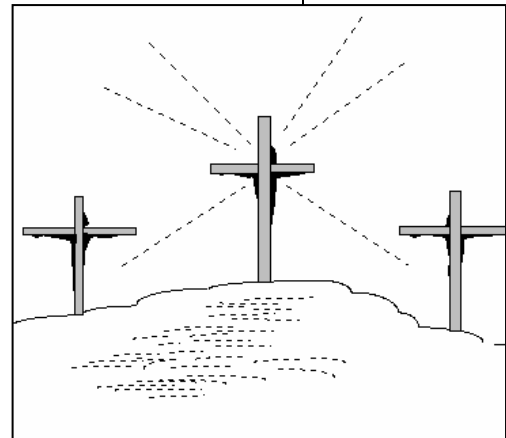
8. Tenderness never sits in the judgment seat!

Again... (Colossians 3:12 NKJV) "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;"

Mercy without tenderness is never an imitation of Christ! His mercy was always seasoned with tender compassion. He looked upon humankind with a Creator's care. His earthly life and ministry was characterized by sacrificial, loving and merciful acts. His ultimate act of tenderness was to endure humankind's ultimate act of violence. The worst cruelty ever imagined was inflicted upon Him, for us!

Jesus' Crucifixion

The Lord Jesus Christ was set upon by those who had no tenderness or mercy in them. He received the full savagery their violence, and though He was fully capable of defending Himself and inflicting terrible annihilation on His persecutors, He chose to hold His judgment and even showed them mercy!



As He endured the torturous pain, His concern for others never drove Him from His tender mercy for others. He looked down from the cross and gave His mother and John specific instructions (instructions of tender mercy).

(John 19:26-27 NKJV) "When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said, "Woman, behold your son!" {27} Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home."

Look again carefully, at the nine characteristics of tenderness (or tender mercies) described so far. Then we will add **a ninth characteristic.**

1. Tenderness of heart (tender mercies) takes no advantage.
2. Tenderness of heart (tender mercies) can be an action we take, but can also be our refusal to take action.
3. Tenderness of heart (tender mercies) sees those it is responsible for as “precious and beyond earthly value.”
4. Tenderness of heart (tender mercies) reacts with gentleness in times of criticism or attack by loved ones (or anyone else).
5. Tenderness of heart (tender mercies) is a “covering and a “quieting act.”
6. Tenderness of heart (tender mercies) is always looking for opportunities to display itself.
7. Tenderness of Heart (tender mercies) is a guard, a high tower, a wall, a shield, and a shelter.
8. Tenderness never sits in the judgment seat!

Finally... Our Ninth Characteristic

Tenderness of heart (in its most powerful and personal demonstration) is the sacrificial love of Christ made known in and through us.

(1 Corinthians 13:5 NKJV) “Love does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;”

A Spiritual Act in the midst of a Carnal World

We can see that tenderness of heart (or tender mercies) is a spiritual act in the midst of a carnal world. It is the essence of sacrificial love. It is the light of Christ, shining ever brighter from within us to bathe the world in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

The Ultimate Act of Tenderness

(Revelation 21:4 NKJV) “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

There is a world of hurting people waiting for you. Will you put on... will you clothe yourself with tender mercies? Is this still only a suggestion for your consideration? Or, do you see it a command for your obedient, immediate action?

(Matthew 5:14-16 NKJV) “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. {15} Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. {16} Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Let us review the definitions of the first three T's.

TRUTHFUL: Truth is the clear, complete and pure expression of the way things are. It is found in the words you speak. (Nowhere in God's Word is lying recommended or approved of. Lying is always a failure to trust God.)

(Ephesians 4:22-25 NKJV) "that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, {23} and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, {24} and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. {25} Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another."

(Ephesians 4:29 NKJV) "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."

What you say is what they get!

TRANSPARENT: Transparency is the clearly accurate, undefiled, pure and complete expression of who you are in Christ.

Our goal in being transparent is to have nothing evil or offensive hidden inside of us that would stop others from seeing God.

Who you are is who they get.

TEACHABLE: To be teachable is to have an attitude of pure and complete humility – to surrender your thinking, your reactions and responses to God... to submit yourself and your future to Him. You are hungry to hear from God, so you can be transformed into all He designed you to be. To be teachable is to be completely touchable in the hands of the Divine Potter.

Teachable people become confident, mature, loving vessels – fit for the Master's use.

Finally - TENDER (TENDER MERCIES)

Tenderness is an attitude, resulting in an action that brings God's healing balm to a person's soul. It seeks no

advantage. It gives safety, healing and grace to the person who has been hurt and may easily be further damaged. It is the cousin of compassion and is the demonstrated gentleness and loving concern of Christ at work in us.

Story: Blind Girl Selling Apples¹

“A few years ago a group of salesmen went to a regional sales convention in Chicago. They had assured their wives that they would be home in plenty of time for Friday night's dinner. In their rush, with tickets and briefcases, one of the salesmen inadvertently kicked over a table which held a display of apples. Apples flew everywhere. Without stopping or looking back, they all hurried to reach the plane in time for their nearly missed boarding.

ALL BUT ONE !!! He paused, took a deep breath, and experienced a twinge of compassion for the girl whose apple stand had been overturned. He told his friends to go on without him, waved good-bye, told one of them to call his wife when they arrived at their home destination and explain his taking a later flight. Then he returned to the terminal where the apples were all over the terminal floor. He was glad he did.

The 16-year-old girl was totally blind! She was softly crying, tears running down her cheeks in frustration, and at the same time helplessly groping for her spilled produce as the crowd swirled about her. No one stopped to help. No one cared. The salesman knelt on the floor with her, gathered up the apples, put them back on the table and helped organize her display. As he did this, he noticed that many of them had become battered and bruised; these he set aside in another basket. When he had finished, he pulled out his wallet and said to the girl, “Here, please take this \$40 for the damage we did. Are you okay?” She nodded through her tears. He continued with, “I hope we didn't spoil your day too badly.” As the salesman started to walk away, the bewildered blind girl called out to him, “Mister....” He paused and turned to look back into those blind eyes. She continued, “**Are you Jesus?**”

He stopped in mid-stride, and he wondered. Then slowly he made his way to catch the later flight with that question burning and bouncing about in his soul: “**Are you Jesus?**”

Do people mistake you for Jesus? That is our Destiny, is it not? To be so much like Jesus that people cannot tell the difference as we live and interact with a world that is blind to His love, life and grace.

If we claim to know Him, we should live, walk and act as He would.

¹ Source: Virginia Zerdelian, New York City (Author unknown)

Knowing Him is more than simply quoting Scripture and going to church. It is actually living the Word as life unfolds day to day.

You are the apple of His eye (even though all of us have been bruised by a fall). **He stopped what He was doing and picked you up on a hill called Calvary and paid in full for our damaged fruit.**

Story: Potato Chips with God²

“A little boy wanted to meet God. He knew it was a long trip to where God lived, so he packed his suitcase with a bag of Potato chips and a six-pack of root beer and started his journey. When he had gone about three blocks, he met an old woman. She was sitting in the park, just staring at some pigeons. The boy sat down next to her and opened his suitcase. He was about to take a drink from his root beer when he noticed that the old lady looked hungry, so he offered her some chips. She gratefully accepted it and smiled at him. Her smile was so pretty that the boy wanted to see it again, so he offered her a root beer. Again, she smiled at him. The boy was delighted! They sat there all afternoon eating and smiling, but they never said a word.

As twilight approached, the boy realized how tired he was and he got up to leave; but before he had gone more than a few steps, he turned around, ran back to the old woman, and gave her a hug. She gave him her biggest smile ever.

When the boy opened the door to his own house a short time later, his mother was surprised by the look of joy on his face. She asked him, “What did you do today that made you so happy?” He replied, **“I had lunch with God.”** But before his mother could respond, he added, **“You know what? She's got the most beautiful smile I've ever seen!”**

Meanwhile, the old woman, also radiant with joy, returned to her home. Her son was stunned by the look of peace on her face and he asked, “Mother, what did you do today that made you so happy?” She replied, **“I ate potato chips in the park with God.”** However, before her son responded, she added, **“You know, he's much younger than I expected.”**

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around. People come into our lives for a reason, a season, or a lifetime. Embrace all equally! **Have lunch with God. Bring chips.”**

² Author and source unknown