

## Living in the Wisdom of Accepted Tenderness

We are invited to live well in life as we understand in our head and accept with our heart that God is best described as *tenderness* and *compassion*. Relating to God in tenderness allows our own hearts to be filled with healing for our own pain and compassion for the suffering of others.

***God says, "It was I who taught you to walk; I took you up in my arms; but you did not know that I healed you. I led you with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to you like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to you and fed you." (Hosea 11)***

To the extent that we experience God's love, we won't want to sin because we will see that it isn't good for us and doesn't satisfy our longing for God's love. This puts the focus in recovery work not on improving outward behaviour, as important as that is, but on seeking to experience more of God's kindness. We can come to God with all our needs, and God will fill our heart with the love we crave.

***All this will be because the mercy of our God is very tender, and heaven's dawn is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and death's shadow, and to guide us to the path of peace. (Luke 1)***

To live in the wisdom of accepted tenderness means to receive each moment of life through the gentle and loving hands of God.

1. We look to God for the peace of mind we need.
2. We look to God for the compassion we lack.
3. We experience again and again the acceptance, forgiveness, patience and tender love of one who enjoys us and likes us, who loves to do good to us.
4. We grow in our trust that life today can be sweet and good, even in the midst of troublesome circumstances, as we respond to the tender presence of God. That will sustain us.
5. We grow in a healthy dependence on God, rather than our circumstances, to know how to live gently and when to let go.
6. We learn to forgive those who have treated us harshly and to leave them in the hands of God to deal with. We learn to let the harsh resentments and bitter places in us go by asking for God's forgiveness.
7. We begin to recognize more of the wonder, awe, and delight that is hidden in each moment.

8. We grow in our ability to make peace within ourselves by receiving it from God; then we are able to make peace with others in our circumstances and sort out who is responsible for what.
9. We invite God to heal us and to strengthen us and we experience that He does.

***Now that you realize how kind the Lord has been to you, put away all evil, deception, envy, and fraud. Long to grow up into the fullness of your salvation, cry for this as a baby cries for his milk. (1 Peter 2)***

God invites us today to live in the wisdom of accepted tenderness. ***God is inviting me to switch my focus from looking primarily to others for tenderness, to looking to Him for tenderness.*** He wants to fill our hearts so full of goodness that we will begin to live compassionately around others who are hurting. The basic way God's kingdom works is that as we first give something, we will find more of it in our hearts. It may surprise us how tenderness and compassion grows in us when we treat our circumstances and people with tenderness, even though they seem undeserving. Tenderness may grow in how they express themselves to us and it may not. However, in surprising places we will find ourselves being responded to more gently and thoughtfully. Our job is to first accept and keep on accepting love and tenderness and affirmation from God so our own hearts are full. Then we are to reach out to others and offer compassion and allow God to build healthy relationships

***But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5)***

### Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How has God touched my life with tenderness and compassion?
2. How does a person go about accepting or welcoming tenderness into their life?
3. What seems to challenge tenderness in our circumstances and experience?
4. What do we do with the experiences of life that are not tender at all?
5. What's the difference between healthy expressions of tenderness/kindness and unhealthy co-dependence that does the "walking on eggshells" kind of tenderness?
6. What's going on in my life that seems to block me from experiencing tenderness in some area?
7. What does the next step seem to be that God is suggesting to me so I can be more open to tenderness?