

TOUGH as NAILS

When you think about TOUGHNESS, what comes to mind?

There is what we call MENTAL TOUGHNESS. The ability to overcome one's fear or to push one's endurance level past what is normal in order to complete a difficult task. Such as what Charles Lindbergh did to become the first person to complete the very first non-stop transatlantic flight from New York to Paris. Not only was it an all or nothing exercise that would either end in success or end in death, but hanging over him and his attempt mentally was the fact that only 6 others before him had tried and failed and they were much more experienced pilots than he. It was also a grueling exercise in physical endurance as it would take 33 and half hours to complete. Lindbergh would attempt this challenge with no fuel gauge, no radio, and only a quart of water and 5 ham and chicken sandwiches of which he would eat only one of them. That required some real toughness!

Then there is PHYSICAL TOUGHNESS where one endures and presses through great pain to complete a task. This was Charles Lindbergh's grandfather August Lindbergh. Two years after immigrating to America from Sweden August Lindbergh fell into a whirring saw blade that tore through his upper torso. It left such a gaping hole that eyewitnesses said they could see his heart beating inside his chest. He was carried home half-conscious, where he had to wait three days for a doctor. When the doctor arrived he amputated what was left of his arm and sewed up the hole in his chest. Here's the amazing part. August Lindbergh didn't scream or cry. Not even a whimper. He toughed it out in silence. Now that is definitely what I would call a tough man and obviously was part of the stock that made Charles who he was.

The next time someone complains a little too much about their aches and pains remind them of August Lindbergh. But seriously, life is all about perspective and if we are honest most of our problems are what we would consider first-world problems which are really more like inconveniences. We get upset if our internet goes out for an hour or if we are overcharged for something we didn't buy. Or how about when the delivery man hasn't delivered our package, yet it says when we check our tracking that it has already been delivered. Sometimes we need to lighten up and other times we just need to toughen up. Toughen up mentally or toughen up physically. But today I want us to consider the rarest form of toughness and that is what we call TOUGH LOVE!

Welcome to **Week 3** of "**Say It With Your Chest**" where we are looking at **5 Virtues of Biblical Manhood**. These are virtues that we all should have as followers of Jesus, and as men who are ordained by God as spiritual leaders of our families, we should be modeling these virtues for our wives and our children. In **Week 1** we looked at the **1st Virtue of Biblical Manhood and we said that a godly man should Have a CLEAR VISION for his LIFE**. We need to know WHO we are and WHY we are here. In life there are going to be storms, difficulties, and distractions that we will all face. If we do not have a CLEAR VISION we will STEP BACK instead of STEP UP. **Last week we introduced the 2nd Virtue of Biblical Manhood is that godly men should maintain MORAL COURAGE in the face of an ever changing CULTURE**. We need to decide

if we are going to work for the APPLAUSE of Men or for the APPLAUSE of Jesus and His nailed scarred hands. We need to make sure that God's word is shaping our heart or we will be conditioned by the world and culture around us. And that brings us to today and our **3rd Virtue of Biblical Manhood: A godly man should demonstrate a LOVE that is as TOUGH as NAILS.**

Tough love is far more difficult to exercise than physical toughness and it is also far more important. It really is the one thing that sets apart the real men from the boys. A tough guy isn't someone who fights well or can keep taking a punch and keep on getting up. A tough guy is someone who is WILLING to be nailed to a cross for the ones he loves.

Matthew 27:35-50 (NIV) **35** When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. **36** And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. **37** Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

38 Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. **39** Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads **40** and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" **41** In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. **42** "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. **43** He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" **44** In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him. **45** From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. **46** About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. **49** The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." **50** And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

When you hear the phrase "tough guy" who do you think of? Your favorite sports figure? Cal Ripken Jr., Brett Farve, Mean Joe Green, Vince Lombardi? How about your favorite action hero? Rocky Balboa (Sly Stallone), Dirty Harry (Clint Eastwood), John McClane (Bruce Willis). These guys definitely qualify as tough guys for sure but none of them ever carried a cross 650 yds weighing hundreds of pounds to a place called The Skull after being beaten with 39 lashes with a cat o' nine tails only to have 7 inch nails driven into their hands and feet to nail them to that cross willingly. And why did He do this? Because He loved us! You see, like all the virtues that we are looking at through this series, Jesus is our example! And when it comes to TOUGH LOVE nobody demonstrates it better than JESUS! With the time remaining I want to show us 4 Actions of TOUGH LOVE that we must seek to exercise in our lives if we are going to demonstrate a love that is as tough as nails.

Action #1 - Tough LOVE is loving others when they least EXPECT it or least DESERVE it

In 1992, Larry Trapp, a grand dragon of the KKK made front page news when he tore his Nazi flags, destroyed his hate literature and renounced the KKK once and for all. What happened? Larry Trapp had a change of heart brought about by the fact that Michael Weisser, a Jewish leader who Larry had terrorized for many years, took Larry into his home to care for him when he was dying of kidney failure and could not take care of himself. "He showed me so much love," Larry said, "that I could not help but love him back." Tough love loves those who least expect it or least deserves it. And when TOUGH LOVE is experienced by others it changes people's hearts. It will either lead people to embrace the love being shown to them or cause them to run from it.

This is the theme of **Romans 5:8 (NIV)** But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The Gospel message is truly captured in two words: **LOVE CONQUERS!** Tough love is best described for us in **1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV)** **4** Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. **5** It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **6** Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7** It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. **8** Love never fails.

It is a love that is sacrificial in nature. One that is willing to be nailed to a cross for someone else's sin. It is without conditions and it is not dictated by someone else's performance. It is for better or for worse. It is easy to love your wife when everything is great, right? When it isn't, it's not so easy. Why? Because our love tends to be REACTIVE. Tough love on the other hand is PROACTIVE. It's intriguing that where love is spoken about by God in His Word, it's never about trying to find it, but rather about trying to give it. It's not a need-seeking love; instead it's a need-meeting love. It doesn't seek validation, because it doesn't need any. It is a LOVE fueled by God!

One of the great mistakes we make is thinking that God feels about us the same way we feel about others. So we project our imperfections onto God. The reality is we cannot do anything to make God love us any more or any less than He does already. I know we know this but do we actually believe it. **Action #1 - Tough LOVE is loving others when they least EXPECT it or least DESERVE it.**

Action #2 - Tough LOVE is willing to AFFLICT the COMFORTABLE

One of the questions we ask ourselves often, especially if we care about people, is this question, "**Who am I going to offend?**" Here's the reality! You are going to offend someone! So who is it going to be? If we are afraid of offending people we will offend God. If we are afraid of offending God we will offend people. If you have to offend someone, OFFEND a PHARISEE! That's what Jesus did and He did so quite often!!

John 9:13-16 (NIV) **13** They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. **14** Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. **15** Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."

16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."

After confronting the healed blind man a second time and asking him about who Jesus was and where he had come from, the blind man responds.

John 9:30-41 (NIV) **30** The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. **31** We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. **32** Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. **33** If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." **34** To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" **36** "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him. **37** Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." **38** Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. **39** Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." **40** Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" **41** Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

Jesus was a peacemaker who calmed raging storms but sometimes in order to make for true peace He had to rock the boat. We need to make sure that we are peacemakers, not peacekeepers. Peacekeepers oftentimes are just trying to avoid conflict so they can remain comfortable. Jesus knew that conflict, not comfort, is a catalyst for spiritual growth and will ultimately lead to true peace with GOD.

Let's face it, it is so much easier to just avoid conflict. But in the long run that hurts more than it helps. We postpone tough conversations we need to have with someone we love because it is comfortable, but it doesn't help the sin that is eating at our relationship's intimacy with that person. Over time sin will make us bitter and the relationship becomes severed. We see this in friendships, marriages, in our relationship with our children and in the church. Afflicting the comfortable is TOUGH LOVE. Tough love demands tough decisions and tough conversations because it cares more for the person and for the relationship more than we do for our own comfort.

Jesus could have healed on any day of the week. But He chose the Sabbath! Why? Because he wasn't just about trying to heal sick people. He was also trying to heal sinful hearts that were far from God due to the sin of self-righteousness. He knew that by creating a conflict and having

tough conversations with people they would have an opportunity to discover their sin and have a chance to repent. Otherwise, they would stay blind and walk in darkness when it came to a relationship with the Father!

Ecclesiastes 12:11 (NIV) The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one shepherd.

A goad was a spiked stick used by shepherds to guide their sheep along in the direction they wanted them to go. Mark Batterson says this, “*Sometimes we have to say something hurtful in order to be helpful. If we fail to confront someone in their sin, we settle for the status quo. And that’s not loving!*” A word to the wise here! We must use the right words, at the right time, motivated by the right spirit. If you have an agenda or you are simply venting your frustration, keep silent. We must genuinely have the other person’s best interest at heart. So let’s have those tough conversations. Waiting only makes it tougher and it robs us of the opportunity for growth. **Tough LOVE is loving others when they least EXPECT it or least DESERVE it. #2 - Tough LOVE is willing to AFFLICT the COMFORTABLE.**

Action #3 - Tough LOVE requires TOUGH SKIN

Tough skin means you are able to overlook an offense! **Proverbs 19:11 (NIV)** A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense. This means you are unoffendable. People can criticize you and accuse you falsely but it will not impact the way you love others. When we are unoffendable we are free to demonstrate love even though we are exposing ourselves to the possibility of rejection and pain. Is there any better example of this than Jesus!

Matthew 27:39-44 (NIV) **39** Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads **40** and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” **41** In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. **42** “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. **43** He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” **44** In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

Despite these insults and accusations Jesus still loved them because he stayed on the cross. In fact, **Luke 23:34 (NIV)** gives us what Jesus thought of their insults and their mocking! Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

What can we do to have tough skin? First, you need to pray for a soft heart toward God and toward people but for tough skin so that you are not easily injured. In fact, we need to pray that over our children as well, fathers! Secondly, you also need to submit every criticism through the filter of scripture. No one is perfect or above rebuke. So when someone says something about you that is negative, run it through the filter of scripture. If it is true, confess and repent. If it isn’t,

let it wash over you and move on. But whatever you do, don't let it poison your spirit. Bottom line, if you aren't facing some criticism then it probably means you and I are maintaining the status quo rather than challenging it. Criticism can be from co-workers, your spouse, your children. Sometimes it can be from other Christians. How easily are you offended? If the answer is often, you need to man up. You see, when we take offense, we become defensive. The moment we become defensive, the Kingdom of God stops advancing through us. If we are going to be the men and women God has called us to be, we need to be playing offense instead of defense. Playing offense in marriage is called romance. With our kids it is being proactive rather than reactive. At work it is bringing your A-game Monday thru Friday nine to five. In fact, make it your goal to live in such a way that if you are criticized it ends up bringing glory to God.

1 Peter 2:12 (NIV) Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

1 Peter 3:15-16 (NIV) **15** But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

I want you to notice what Jesus never did when it came to being criticized. He never defended Himself in order to protect His own life. He would defend His Father's authority and He would give correct teaching when people had misunderstandings regarding God's word, but he never got defensive regarding Himself specifically. This is especially true regarding the false accusations that were made about Him being a blasphemer and false teacher and when it came to threats against His own life that led to the cross. If you find yourself being defensive, do what Jesus did and forgive them. **Tough LOVE is loving others when they least EXPECT it or least DESERVE it. Tough LOVE is willing to AFFLICT the COMFORTABLE. Action #3 - Tough LOVE requires TOUGH SKIN.**

Action #4 - Tough LOVE calls for BLOOD, SWEAT, and TEARS

Does your heart break for the things that break the heart of God?

John 11:32-35 (NIV) **32** When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. **34** "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

35 Jesus wept.

The intensity here in the original Greek is that of strong emotion. This is not just a little tear but an intense sobbing. Why? Because Jesus felt the pain of those he loved and He is mourning the

darkside and consequence of sin in the world. The pains of death and the heartache it brings to humankind that didn't have to be that way. The lack of faith of His people. The millions who will reject His love and face this heartache without any hope. Jesus got sad. Jesus got mad. Then Jesus got even by resurrecting Lazarus from the dead.

Good leadership requires BLOOD, SWEAT, and TEARS. There are going to be sacrifices we have to make if we are going to lead and lead effectively. That's the BLOOD! It also requires that we work hard. It isn't easy work leading others. Sometimes the days are lonely and you wonder if you are making any difference at all. It can be hard and difficult. That's the SWEAT! But there has to be TEARS! The empathy we feel for those we care for. The heartbreak that we see in the world. The hopelessness that so many are experiencing in a broken world. The ugliness of sin. The pain of loss. Does your heart break over the things that break God's heart?

When was the last time your wife saw you cry? How about your kids? What about your friends? What about before God as you intercede in prayer on behalf of others? If it has been a while since you have you are probably repressing something and we all know that that can lead to obsession and depression. One of the toughest things you can do is be vulnerable.

Tough LOVE calls for BLOOD, SWEAT, and TEARS

Worship Comes Back Up

Invitation:

Recount each action and make it personal!