

10.2 The Power of Love

the big idea: Faith Requires Mutual Love



Teron was listening to Kirk Franklin's song, "I Smile," on his phone. He managed to keep a smile on his face, but it had been an incredibly challenging two weeks for his family. Dante, his older brother, had gotten in trouble again, but this time he was sure to serve some real time in prison. Teron and his mother were on their way to see Dante in the county jail. They took the subway. The train rocked back and forth and from side to side, matching Teron's thoughts.

Why would Dante hang out with Buster and Lil' Joe, knowing they were trouble? Teron thought as he looked across the subway aisle at his distraught mom. Her look was all too

familiar since Dante turned 21, but maybe a change had come.

The night before, Dante called the house begging for Teron and their mother to visit him the next day.

"I know I messed up. I know I made bad decisions. I've had a lot of time to think in here," Dante said as his voice trembled. "Mom, I need for you and Teron to come down here and pray for me. I'm ready for a change."

After that conversation, they knew they had to make the four-hour commute. Dante wanted prayer and his mom was the perfect one to do it. Dante was beginning to understand the power of prayer and most of all, the power of love.

from your Bible

Hebrews 13:1–3; 1 Corinthians 13:1–13, NIV—Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.² Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing

some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.³ Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

1 Corinthians 13:1 If I speak in the tongues of men

or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.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. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part,¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.¹³ **And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.**

Scripture discussion

God is love. He is the foundation upon which all relationships are built and the driving force for how we treat others. Our love for God is displayed by our care for others. Hebrews warns us to treat everyone equally. 1 Corinthians continues with the same theme and warning. Outward gifts will cease if we fail to care

for those in need. We must humble ourselves, and remember to not be self-seeking and not to rejoice when others are harmed. This is a character shift by the power of the Holy Spirit. As we grow closer to God, we should change.

The writers of Hebrews and 1 Corinthians define love as a sign of maturity. Teron's family chooses to love despite the challenge. This was a tough time for them, but they carried the burden and responded lovingly.

make it real



check it

1. Where were Teron's feelings as he travelled to see his brother?
2. What could have made Dante have a change of heart?
3. How do you think Dante felt once he saw his mother and brother?



think it

1. Why do you think God wants the believer to "remember those in prison"? How is this different from how our society treats prisoners? (Hebrews 13:3)
2. Why is the lack of love (or charity) like sounding brass? Who hates the sound? (1 Corinthians 13:1)
3. How do you know if you are spiritually mature? (v. 11)



do it

Think about ways love can be expressed. Have you experienced people expressing love to you as the Bible defines love? Thank those who've demonstrated the love of Christ in your life.



keep it

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

10.9 Courage Speaks

the big idea: Stephen's Arrest and Speech



The eighth-graders hurriedly gathered into the Mahalia Jackson School auditorium for the annual Uplift Month assembly. Uplift Month consists of various activities preparing the eighth graders for high school. Christian is today's guest speaker and youth mentor from Cross-Town Prep Academy in Cleveland, Ohio. His classmates gave him the nickname "Freddy D." because he speaks like a leader. Christian confidently takes the podium and delivers his speech, "The World Awaits Your Greatness."

"At Cross-Town Prep Academy, we have to recite our school creed every day. I want to recite a portion of it for you. 'We are exceptional. We work hard. We overcome obstacles.'" Christian spoke with boldness as the students

listened attentively. "I'm here today to encourage you to strive for excellence and use the gifts God has given you. Don't waste your talents and don't waste your time."

Christian went on to say that his school had been featured across the nation because 100% of Cross-Town graduates were accepted to four-year colleges, despite facing overwhelming odds.

"Many students like myself came to high school with low G.P.A.s and poor study habits. But today I'm happy to say I'm a senior with a 4.0 G.P.A. with a full academic scholarship. In summary, my friends, great things can come out of adversity. Be courageous. Persevere. Never give up."

The students gave Christian a standing ovation.

from your Bible

Acts 6:8–7:2a, NIV—Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people.⁹ Opposition arose, how-

ever, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen.¹⁰ But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.¹¹ Then they secretly per-

suauded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." ¹² So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. ¹³ They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. ¹⁴ For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change

the customs Moses handed down to us." ¹⁵ All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Acts 7:1 Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are these charges true?" ² To this he replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.

Scripture discussion

Stephen is a role model for faith and courage. He wasn't afraid to address crowds and proclaim Jesus as the fulfillment of the Jewish expectation of the Messiah. His words were so powerful and filled with wisdom that they enraged a group of Jewish leaders. He maintained a strong faith. When the early church was growing, there was a need for honest, respectful, wise, Christians to take care of the business of the church while the apostles concentrated on prayer and delivery of the Word. These believers were called deacons and were

appointed by the apostles. Stephen was the first deacon selected in the early church. He was described as being full of faith and power. Stephen, though called by God, still faced adversity for doing and preaching what was right. We see that in God's kingdom, people model strength, confidence, and tenacity in a world of chaos, weakness, and lack of faith. People need a bold and perceptive leader to articulate truth in times of uncertainty. In today's story, Christian overcame obstacles to stand as a bold leader for other young people. He encourages others to strive for excellence and reach for the God-ordained greatness present in everyone.

make it real



check it

1. What are the eighth-graders gathering to do?
2. How did the speaker encourage them?
3. Why do you think it's important for young people to see other young people overcome obstacles?



think it

1. What was the sign that Stephen was anointed? (Acts 6:8)
2. Research where the Freedmen were from. (v.9)
3. What did they do to induce false accusers? (v.11)



do it

The truth about Jesus and His plan for salvation are still under attack today. In what ways are these truths being challenged? How can you equip yourself to engage in conversation and spiritual warfare as an advocate for truth?



keep it

"Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:8, NIV).