



Servant's Corner

May 2011

Keeping Your “Tender Emotions” Tender

By Rich Henderson

...put on a heart of compassion...Colossians 3:12

The Greeks had a funny sounding word for the seat of the tender emotions. They called it the “*splagchnon*”. (It’s fun to pronounce—try it!). We get our English word “spleen” from this word. Literally it meant a person’s innards—bowels, heart, liver, etc. Because we tend to identify such organs as the place from which the emotions of mercy and compassion well up, it came to mean “affection” or “heart”.

God gave us the ability to feel these tender emotions. It’s part of being created in His image. He is compassionate. The gospels tell us that Jesus felt such emotions and that they motivated Him to relieve the suffering of those around Him (e.g. Matt. 9:36-38, 14:14, 15:32). God’s intention in giving us these tender emotions is that they would motivate us to act to alleviate the suffering of people in need. That’s what the word “compassion” means--to “suffer with” another so that their suffering is relieved.

Guard against things that would “de-tenderize” your tender emotions. Here are some examples: Closing your heart against the plight of others. *Feeling* compassion but failing to do anything to actually help. Coming up with excuses why you shouldn’t help, when the Holy Spirit is prompting you to be involved. Included in this would be recalling times you were taken advantage of by those you helped. If you are going to serve Jesus, you’re going to occasionally get burned. Gain wisdom from your past experience but forgive and move on. Finally, a lifestyle of gratitude will help immensely in remaining kind-hearted to people in need.



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