



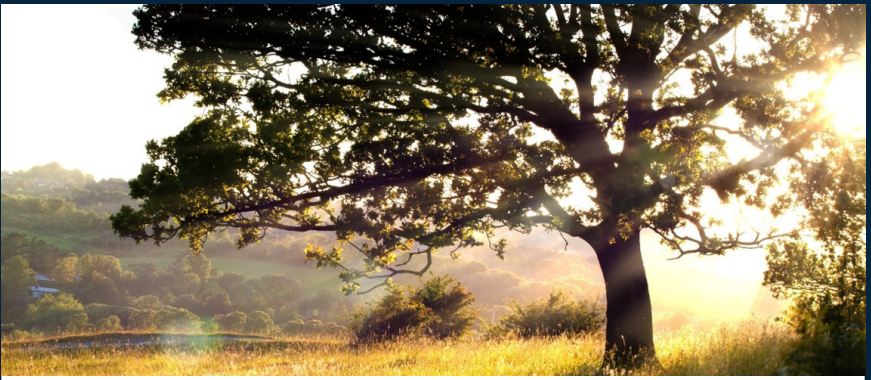
W*hat does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like.*

St. Augustine

Most of us have a basic understanding of what love is. Family and friends remind us daily of the feeling and the actions that accompany the verb. We know intellectually that we should love other people outside of our immediate circle, but what does this actually mean?

Centuries ago St. Augustine took a stab at what love looks like. A few things stand out in this culture that is constantly seeking to be happy and find fulfillment. St. Augustine points out that love “has eyes to see misery and want.” This means getting outside of our safe bubbles and entering into the lives of those in need. Our challenge for today is to open your eyes and ears to others stories. Reach beyond the boundaries that usually limit you and investigate areas of need.





All the darkness in the world
cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.
St. Francis of Assisi

There is so much need in the world. It is easy to feel like nothing we do is going to make a difference. We want to help. We want to change the way some things are, but we don't see a path to something better. What can we do to change the lives of people who seem so removed? The problem looms before us unsolvable and so we turn away. We turn back to things that can be solved and are right in front of us. The task is immense but when we label these problems unsolvable we forget the power a single individual can have in the world. We forget we aren't alone in the battle to make things better. Even small steps towards a goal can make a difference. What would happen if we all joined together with a commitment to fight for a healthier world?





F*ear is such a powerful emotion for humans
that when we allow it to take us over, it drives compassion
right out of our hearts.*

Thomas Aquinas

Fear takes many forms in our lives. Fear we won't succeed. Fear we won't have enough time to complete everything we want to finish. Fear we aren't spending our time wisely. The list goes on and on. Sometimes this fear motivates us but more often than not it consumes us. It centers our activities on our fears and makes us forget the pain or confusion other people are going through. We forget to value other people as we value ourselves. This week our challenge is to look beyond your fears. Take the next right step. Look into other people's lives with the care and attention you look at your own life. Remember each person's value.





But I say to you, love your enemies
and pray for those who persecute you,
so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.
Matthew 5:44-45 (ESV)

Loving people who are persecuting us does not feel logical for most people. We fight for self-preservation. We want to get back at people who are hurting us, but when we do this we forget the grace given to us. We forget that our enemies have stories and are people too. Sometimes these people are truly in the wrong, but we are still called to treat them with the dignity, respect, and even love extended to all human beings. Examine your heart. What does this look like in your daily life? Are there people or groups that you aren't extending love and respect to?





Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly;
defend the rights of the poor and needy.
Proverbs 31:8-9 (NIV)

We often forget the power of our voice. When we stand up and speak for those who can't speak for themselves it does something. Our voices ignite change for people around us. It moves to the people who hear us to consider something outside of themselves. Use your voice this week for the poor and needy. Stand up for the rights of those who are destitute.

