

Sensitivity**960705**

Some of us have a skeleton like a crayfish. Its hard exterior shell illustrates the idea of a 'surface religion,' where the outside is strong and durable, but does not permit a revelation of the inside. Many Christians cloak themselves with 'good works, visible to all.' This covering shows no real warmth or feeling and is actually very uncomfortable to wear. It is cold, impersonal, and insensitive. Paul says that though we do all manner of good works, if we have no sensitivity (love), we are nothing (1 Corinthians 13).

Phillipians 4:13 tells us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. The power we receive from Christ must be invested in our feelings. Many times we suffer because we care. We may decide not to let something bother us because we want to be 'strong.' But we must never let our strength become cold and uncaring in practice. It takes a strong person to cry; a person strong in his love for others.

We have grown up in a society where to be strong, or tough, is synonymous with being callous and insensitive. But the attitudes that the Bible teaches us to instill in our lives indicate that we are to be supersensitive, handling other people's feelings as we would the delicate shell of an egg. Christ himself was at once the strongest and most sensitive person who ever lived. He wept at the passing of a loved one and the hurt it had caused others. Then he summoned his strength and raised Lazarus from the dead.

Studies of monkeys with surrogate mothers have shown that touch is essential to life. Dr. Paul Brand tells about the terrible disease of leprosy, of which we read often in the Bible. It is terrible not because it is very contagious, for it is not! The terror of it lies in the fact that it takes away the sense of touch. It deprives its victim of the ability to feel a loving caress, or to be warned of possible injury. This inability to feel causes lepers to ignore their injuries; the injured areas simply rot and die.

Can you imagine how lonely it would be to not be able to feel the warmth of your sweetheart's hand, to never know just how firmly to grasp someone's hand when you meet? There are not too many people in the world who suffer from leprosy anymore, but a type of the disease has taken root in our hearts, a 'spiritual leprosy.' We have become spiritually insensitive to the feelings of our fellow man. We do not always act out of love. An outer shell hides our heart, and those who reach out to touch it are repelled.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus shows this side of (in)sensitivity. Isn't it funny how all of a sudden when the rich man is in torment he acts like he knows Lazarus! He never noticed him before. But even now he has no idea how unfair it is to ask Lazarus to return to the earth which held such cruelty for him. Many times those who are insensitive to other people still expect to be served by them no matter what. If the rich man had learned anything, he would have at least expressed sorrow at his treatment of Lazarus.

Other people allow their lives to be governed totally by the rules and lose the sensitivity and flexibility that is so vital to living a Christian life. Sometimes those who are so enthusiastic about how wonderful their life is in Christ can be very insensitive to others who, though good people, have had serious problems in their life. Books on prayer, for instance, glow over how prayers were answered for the author which seem so insignificant to one who has lost a child. Sometimes those who have suffered a loss are much more sensitive to the needs of others than those who have had everything go their way. We should try to put ourselves in the shoes of other people so that we can better understand them.

The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 illustrates very well God's teaching concerning sensitivity. Read it again with this idea in mind. Also keep in mind Jesus Christ himself, who was at once the strongest and most sensitive person who ever lived. He was, as Hebrews 4:15 puts it, a 'high priest...able to sympathize.' We must not ever be ashamed of being sensitive towards others. In Romans 12:15 we are instructed to 'rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.' We are to be a loving, touching, sensitive family, if we are to accomplish the purposes of God.

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