

SENSITIVITY vs. CALLOUSNESS

TAKING NOTICE OF THE PAIN IN OTHERS BECAUSE OF THE HEALING WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM GOD FOR SIMILAR HURTS.

“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Romans 12:15

DEFINITION OF SENSITIVITY

The Biblical word for *sensitivity* is *tenderheartedness*. Scripture instructs us: “Be ye kind one to another, **tenderhearted**, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).

The Greek word for *tenderhearted* is *eusplagchnos*. It comes from *eu* meaning “well and good” and *splagchnon* which literally means “spleen” or “intestines.” Figuratively, it means “to be pitiful” and “to have bowels of compassion.” The same Greek word is translated *pitiful* in I Peter 3:8: “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be **pitiful**, be courteous.” We earn the privilege of helping others by speaking sensitive words and by avoiding hurtful words and actions. “Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing,” (Proverbs 12:18, New International Version).

The Hebrew word for *tender* is *rakak* and means “to be soft.” The antonym of *tenderheartedness* is therefore *hardheartedness*. The Psalmist wrote, “Harden not your heart, as in the provocation” (Ps. 95:8). The writer of Hebrews repeats this instruction. “Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness” (Heb. 3:8). “While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation” (Heb. 3:15). The Hebrew word for *harden* is *quashah*, which means to be dense, to be tough, severe, or cruel, to make grievous; to be stiff-necked.” The Greek word for *harden* is *skleruno*, meaning “to be stubborn, hard, obstinate.” When we harden our hearts, we lose the capacity to understand the hurts of others. Longfellow said, “If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man’s life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostilities.”

God demonstrated the value He places on tenderheartedness by His dealings with a King of Judah named Josiah. God rewarded King Josiah for having a tender heart: “...because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the LORD... you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, neither shall your eyes see all the evil which I will bring on this place,” (II Kings 22:19-20, New American Standard).

HOW DID A KING DEVELOP SENSITIVITY?

Josiah came to the throne of Judah at only eight years of age. The biography that God wrote of his life concludes with an amazing tribute: “And before him there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him,” (II Kings 23:25, New American Standard). According to the record in II Kings chapter 22, his greatness sprang from his tender heart. The account also explains how he developed it.

1. He purposed to please the Lord.

God summarized of Josiah’s life and ministry by saying “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord” (v.2). As a boy, Josiah set his heart to follow the Lord in the same way that Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself by participating in heathen customs.

2. He chose a Godly role model.

Josiah could have easily fallen in with the evil ways of his father and grandfather. Instead, he chose to “walk in all the ways of David his father” (v.2). King Josiah used David’s life as a pattern for righteous living, as David was known as “a man after God’s own heart.”

3. He kept his focus on the Lord.

Josiah maintained a Godly balance in his life as he diligently followed the Lord. He “turned not aside to the right hand or to the left” (v.2).

4. He restored the place of worship.

At age eighteen, Josiah began a program to renovate the temple and restore God prescribed worship. He began by collecting an offering “to repair the breaches of the house” (v.5).

5. He humbled himself when he heard the Word of God.

In the process of repairing the House of God, the high priest discovered a copy of the Scriptures and a scribe read it to King Josiah. “It came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes” (v.11).

6. He acknowledged the iniquities of his forefathers.

Josiah realized that the judgment of God rested upon the nation because his forefathers had rejected the ways of God. He said, “Great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us” (v.13).

HOW GOD REWARDED A TENDER HEART

When Josiah sent officials to inquire of the Lord concerning the evil that was to come upon the nation because of the transgression of his forefathers, God said to him, “Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and has rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord (II Kings 22:19).

HOW SENSITIVE ARE YOU?

- Do you seek the Lord with your whole heart?
- Do you allow bitterness or toleration of evil to cause callousness in your spirit?
- Do you close off communication with family members?
- Have you chosen a Godly role model to follow?
- Have you established a time and place to meet the Lord every day?
- Are you sensitive to the voice of God’s Spirit as He speaks to you through Scripture?
- Do you exercise your spirit to be sensitive to the spirits of other people?