“A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance” (Proverbs 15:13). You can often sense how someone truly feels by observing his face. A cheerful countenance expresses inner joy, and a frown indicates dislike. As you interact with others, pay attention to their facial expressions. Rejoice with those who are celebrating an accomplishment. Notice facial expressions that reflect distress, sadness, or fear so that you can respond appropriately. If you see a scowl on your brother’s face, you could ask, “What’s wrong?” or “Do you want to talk about anything?” Or if you see your sister trembling with fear, try to discover the source of her distress and, if needed, lead her to safety. Reassure her with a hug and a comforting word. Your sensitivity and attentiveness will reflect God’s love to others.
Quality Overview

What Is Sensitivity?
Read aloud and discuss what sensitivity means and how it applies to life.

The operational definition of sensitivity is “exercising my senses so I can perceive the true spirit and emotions of those around me.” The Bible often uses the word tenderhearted in place of the word sensitivity, meaning one is considerate of others and what they are feeling and experiencing. As you interact with others, you can demonstrate a tender heart by observing, listening, and gently asking questions. Did you know that people communicate unspoken feelings and attitudes through their body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions? Body language, such as posture, hand gestures, and eye contact, often reflects someone’s true feelings. This unspoken communication is even more reliable than a person’s words. Our physical senses can detect verbal and nonverbal clues about someone’s spirit and emotions. If someone is excited, you can rejoice with him. If he is sad, you can sympathize with and encourage him.

The opposite of sensitivity is callousness. A physical callus is created when an area of the skin constantly rubs against another surface, such as a shovel handle or a violin string. The toughened skin (callus) diminishes the area’s sense of feeling. Similarly, a person can become hardened (calloused) to the point that he does not care about others. If a Christian allows sin to fester in his heart, his heart will become less tender to the Lord and to others. Such a person may even avoid interacting with others so that he will not be inconvenienced or hurt. Self-centeredness, fear, or bitterness give the devil an advantage and hinder the Christian from loving others and sharing the Gospel with power. Only when this guarded, insensitive person is willing to repent, forgive, and receive God’s forgiveness will his hardened heart soften toward the Lord and others. (See Ephesians 4:30–32.)

As you seek to understand people, ask God to help you. When Jesus fulfilled His mission to bring salvation to mankind, He interacted with perception and love. He related to people based on His complete understanding of their deeper needs. (See Isaiah 61:1.) Not only did He see people’s outward expressions, He was also aware of their innermost thoughts. Even now He knows every person intimately and understands each situation fully. (See Psalm 139:1–4.) Sometimes you won’t know what your friend needs, but the Holy Spirit does know and He can guide you. He may prompt you to speak words of truth in love or lead you to pray silently for your friend. Rather than using your senses to pry or make judgments, use them to minister to others as Jesus did.
Sensitivity in Scripture

As you read and study God’s Word, see Who He is, and allow Him to work in you, your life will become a radiant expression of Him. God will be glorified as His character is seen in you.

The Character of God

We see examples of sensitivity in God’s character in the following ways:

- Our Heavenly Father knows us intimately and understands everything about us. (See Psalm 139:1–3.)
- God is constantly mindful of His children and is fully aware of their needs. (See Isaiah 49:15–16.)
- God comforts those who are cast down and depressed. (See II Corinthians 7:6, Psalm 119:50.)
- Jesus was grieved when He saw the hardness of men’s hearts. (See Mark 3:5.)
- Jesus, understanding our need, asked the Father to send us a Comforter. (See John 14:16.)
- Jesus’ temptations on earth enabled Him to empathize with us in our weaknesses. (See Hebrews 4:14–15.)
- The Holy Spirit is sensitive to one’s spirit and emotions and prays for those who do not know what to pray. (See Romans 8:26–27.)

Sensitivity in My Life

Now let’s examine some ways God wants us to live out sensitivity daily.

- Who teaches me to speak a fitting word to the weary? (See Isaiah 50:4.)
- How does God want me to treat others? (See Matthew 7:12.)
- How does Jesus want me to respond as I become aware of spiritual needs around me? (See Matthew 9:36–38, 28:18–20.)
- What should my attitude toward others be, whether or not they are sensitive to me? (See Colossians 3:12–14, Luke 6:42.)
- What command am I given about being sensitive to God’s Spirit within me? (See I Thessalonians 5:19, Ephesians 4:30.)
- How do members of Christ’s Body, the Church, affect one another? (See I Corinthians 12:26–27.)
- In what ways can I show consideration to others today? (See I Peter 3:8.)

SENSITIVITY KEY VERSE

“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Romans 12:15
When Joseph was seventeen years old, his ten jealous older brothers sold him into slavery. Merchants took him to Egypt, where he was bought by a high-ranking Egyptian official named Potiphar. As captain of the guard, Potiphar was in charge of the king’s personal security force. Daily, Joseph served diligently in the household of Potiphar, who quickly realized that the young Hebrew slave was trustworthy. Potiphar promoted Joseph to be overseer of his entire household. However, one day Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into prison! Yet, even in prison, Joseph continued to serve faithfully. God showed him favor, and the keeper of the prison entrusted Joseph with the management of the other prisoners. One day, two servants of Pharaoh, the Egyptian king, were imprisoned. As Pharaoh’s chief baker and chief butler, the two men were responsible for preparing his food and tasting whatever he drank to ensure it was not poisoned. These two servants had offended Pharaoh and had been thrown into prison in Potiphar’s house. The captain of the guard charged Joseph with the care of these two prisoners. What would Joseph observe one day as he attended to these prisoners? What would he ask them, and what would they answer?

Let’s read the Bible story in Genesis 40:1–23 and then discuss the following questions.

1. When the offenses occurred, how did Pharaoh feel toward the baker and the butler? (See Genesis 40:1–2.)
   How can you avoid stirring up anger? (See Proverbs 15:1, 17–18.)

2. Where was Joseph when this situation occurred? (See Genesis 40:3.)
   Where is your focus during unpleasant circumstances? How can you be mindful of others?

3. What responsibility was Joseph given in prison? (See Genesis 40:4.)
   How can you serve others who are in a difficult situation? (See Philippians 2:4–7.)

4. What did Joseph notice about the baker and the butler? (See Genesis 40:6.)
   What facial expressions show sadness? What other emotions might you see expressed on someone’s face? (See Genesis 4:5–6, Proverbs 15:13, Daniel 5:6.)

5. How did Joseph show that he cared? (See Genesis 40:7–8.)
   When you are sad, do you appreciate someone who kindly listens or someone who eagerly offers advice? What happens when you don’t take time to understand? (See Proverbs 18:2, 13.)

6. How did Joseph help the two despondent men? (See Genesis 40:12–13, 18–19.)
   Who enabled Joseph to help them? (See Genesis 40:8.)
   Who enables you to comfort others? (See II Corinthians 1:3–4, I Peter 4:11.)

7. What did Joseph ask the butler to do? (See Genesis 40:14–15.)
   What attitude would help you to ask for help and receive grace from God and others? (See I Peter 5:5–6.)

8. When the butler returned to the palace, did he remember Joseph? (See Genesis 40:23.)
   Have you forgotten or ignored someone? How can you make this right? How does God want you to respond when someone is insensitive or disappoints you? (See Colossians 3:13.)

   When have you seen God demonstrate sensitivity and compassion in your life?
Memory Verse
Romans 12:15

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

Memory Verse Game: Unscramble!
Have the children each write a different assigned word or phrase from the memory verse on a sheet of paper. Collect the papers and shuffle them, then distribute the sheets facedown, one per child, so that the children do not see which words they received. On the count of three, have the children look at the words on their papers, and then time them to see how fast they can line up with the words in the correct order. Quote the verse together. Repeat mixing up the papers, redistributing, and timing the children as they line up until the children have memorized the verse.

Doers of the Word: Romans 12:15
In the blank below, write how this verse could be applied in your life, e.g., “be happy for others when they win the game” “sympathize with my brother when he is injured,” or “understand how my choices affect others.”

“Dear Lord, I yield to You and am willing to apply this verse. Help me to ________________
______________________________
______________________________

I ask that You would develop sensitivity in my life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

When the Lord gives you an opportunity to apply this verse, write it in your journal to later recall God’s working in your life.
**Word Puzzle**

**Crossword Puzzle**

**Instructions**

Enjoy meditating on and thinking about the words of the sensitivity key verse and definition as you fill in the crossword puzzle below. *Italicized* words fit horizontally and *underlined* words fit vertically. One word is already done for you. *(Answers can be found on page 13.)*

**Romans 12:15**

“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”

**Sensitivity**

*Exercising my senses* so I can *perceive* the *true spirit* and *emotions of those around me*
Activity
Imagine If . . .

Supplies:
- 8.5" x 11" sheet of white paper
- Pencil
- Markers
- Scissors
- Craft stick

Instructions
Draw lines to divide your paper into six squares. In each square, draw a picture of a place or situation where people go or live. Include some that are different from your usual experience.

SUGGESTED SITUATIONS:
- An elderly person in a retirement center
- A patient in a hospital
- An orphan in a children’s home
- A friend left out of the group
- The pastor of your church
- Family and friends at a funeral
- A homeless person at a shelter
- Persecuted and imprisoned Christians
- A police officer on duty
- An embarrassed waitress at a restaurant
- Someone reading at a library

With the scissors, cut a slit at the base of each picture. Draw a person on one end of the craft stick to look like you. Slide the craft stick through the slit, then “visit” each place on your paper. Look around at the others there. As you enter each place, imagine how you would feel if you were staying there. Ask yourself these questions:

- Who is in this picture? What might he or she be feeling?
- How would I feel if I were in this situation?
- What comforts and enjoyments might I miss if I were here?
- How might the other people treat me?
- How would I want to be treated?

Such questions may help you to consider the feelings of others and respond with appropriate empathy. Empathy is the ability to sense and imagine the feelings of others. We can do this by considering how we might feel or wish to be treated. In Matthew 7:12, Jesus taught, “Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them . . . .” Ask the Lord to help you notice and care about people you might easily overlook or those who are in situations different from your own, and be sensitive to how He may lead you to encourage them.

Variation
Visit people in three of the different situations you drew. Learn how to consider their needs and feelings by respectfully asking them questions, such as “How are you doing?” “How are you seeing God in this situation?” “What can I pray for you?” and “How can I support you?”
Christ Our Righteousness

You will need the following items: sticky notes, pen, and a white bed sheet.

The Bible tells us about God. He is the Creator of the universe and He is holy. God loves us and created us to have fellowship with Him. (See Revelation 4:11.) Select a volunteer who would not mind standing to represent the sin of all people. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Sin is anything we think, say, or do that breaks God’s Law. Can you name some examples of sin? As the children answer, write their examples on sticky notes and place them onto the volunteer’s clothing (e.g., speaking unkind words, stealing, disobeying, doing good with wrong motives).

Because we have all sinned, and God is holy, we are eternally separated from Him. However, because God loves us so much, He sent His Son, Jesus, Who died on the cross to pay for our sin and Who rose again to conquer death! Now we can have fellowship with God forever through Christ. (See John 17:3.) If we accept God’s gift of salvation, Christ’s blood cleanses us from sin, and His righteousness is put upon us! (See II Corinthians 5:21.)

Remove the sticky notes and wrap the white sheet around the volunteer to represent Jesus’ robe of righteousness. Isaiah 31:10 describes what has happened this way: “My soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness….” In Romans 10:9–10, we are told how we can accept this gift: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Are you trusting in Jesus Christ for your salvation? If so, your sins are forgiven and Christ is living in you! Your new, inward identity is one of righteousness in God’s eyes. The more you realize that you are a new creature in Christ and walk in the Spirit, the more your outward actions will demonstrate Christ living in you. Just as the Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20, you can also say, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” God gives us eternal life—sweet constant fellowship in the Spirit with our Savior—and then His righteousness is seen in us for His glory. (See John 15:4–10.)
Hymn History

“Does Jesus Care?”

Sing “Does Jesus Care?” and read about the sensitivity proclaimed by the hymn writer, Frank E. Graeff.

In the late 1800s, a Philadelphia pastor was known by the nickname “the Sunshine Minister.” Reverend Frank Graeff had a radiant personality and an ever-present smile. Because of his sunny personality and simple faith, children were often drawn to him.

Although Reverend Graeff’s nickname indicated a life filled with joy, the man also knew heartbreak and spiritual trials. While his specific difficulties and sorrows are unknown, at one point in his life he struggled with depression. The man recognized by many for his cheerful countenance found himself crumbling under overwhelming burdens.

Amid his helplessness and misery, Reverend Graeff wisely turned to Christ, the only One Who could truly understand his soul’s sorrow. During this trying season of his life, Reverend Graeff reflected upon the words of a particular hymn, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” As he read the words of truth and comfort about Jesus being a Friend Who cares about our sorrows, the despondent minister’s burdens were lifted! Encouraged by the hymn, he turned to I Peter 5:7 in his Bible and read, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” God’s Word strengthened his heart, and Reverend Graeff was inspired to write his own song to proclaim the Lord’s care in difficult times. The hymn “Does Jesus Care?” was the result. The hymn resounds with assurance of Jesus’ sensitivity to our trials:

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained
Too deeply for mirth and song;
As the burdens press and the cares distress,
And the way grows weary and long?
O yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares.

As a result of God meeting the deep need of his soul, Reverend Graeff gained a deeper life message and developed a better understanding of others’ needs. God then used this empathy to enable Reverend Graeff to better care for and serve those in his church who were also experiencing trials and suffering. When we turn to God in times of trouble, He uses those trials to develop sensitivity, which is “exercising my senses so I can perceive the true spirit and emotions of those around me.”

Our God is not callous or uncaring! His knowledge and understanding are infinite. He sees and hears you and is sensitive to your thoughts and emotions. Likewise, we should be sensitive to others. Is someone you know experiencing a difficulty? How might you encourage him? May God enable us to exercise our senses so we may be sensitive to those He brings into our lives.
Does Jesus Care?

Frank E. Graeff (1860–1919)  J. Lincoln Hall (1866–1930)

1. Does Jesus care when my heart is pained
2. Does Jesus care when my way is dark
3. Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed
4. Does Jesus care when I've said “good-bye”

Too deeply for mirth and song;
With a name less dread and fear?
To resist some temptation strong;
To the dearest on earth to me,

As the burdens press and the cares distress, And the
As the daylight fades into deep night shades, Does He
When for my deep grief I find no relief, Tho' my
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks: Is it

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way grows weary and long? O yes, He cares, I

care enough to be near? O yes, He cares, I

tears flow all the night long? O yes, He cares, I

ought to Him? Does He see? O yes, He cares, I

- -

Does Jesus Care

When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I

- -

know my Savior cares.

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Two Prisoners and Their Plight

“And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad” (Genesis 40:6).
Crossword Puzzle Answer Key

Recommended Resources

- 2021 Biblical Character Illustrated Calendar
- Hymns for the Family CDs
  (“Does Jesus Care?” is sung to piano accompaniment on Volume 2.)
- The Power for True Success
- Understanding Spiritual Gifts
- Character Cards
- Character Cards Memory Game
- Character Sketches, Volumes I–III
- Achieving True Success
- Understanding How Others Misunderstand You by Ken Voges and Ron Braund
- The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman
- Heroes of Faith: Joseph Merrick (audiobook, CD, or booklet)
- “Eight Factors of Being Relatable” (message by Chris and Anne Hogan, available at embassymedia.com)
- “The Gift of Moral Pain” (message by Doug Small, available at embassymedia.com)

To view these resources and many more, visit us at: store.iblp.org

Hymn History Bibliography
