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Gentleness

By Elise L. Moore

What a need for gentleness there is in the world! A gentle word or touch or thought can smooth the ragged edges of human life.

We were in a small car with a young mother and her child. It had been a long morning, and the boy became fussy and disruptive. Soon the car was filled with shrieks and sobs that the mother could not quiet. Something had to be done. Shifting the child nearer to me, I silently turned to God and asked Him what to do.

I had learned from the Bible that God created man good. I realized, then, that all the good qualities of God are also the real qualities of man as His likeness. So when I turned to God for help in this raucous situation, it seemed very natural to begin quietly saying aloud all the good qualities that I could think of that belong to God's offspring. (I wasn't ignoring the child's obvious distress but was striving to discern his true nature, his God-created spiritual selfhood, which I knew was at peace.)

"What do I know about you?" I said. "I know that you are God's perfect child, that you are good, that you are patient and loving," and so on. The others in the car could hear what I was saying, and in a very short time the crying had stopped. Soon, the child was joining in and helping me think of good qualities to use in describing him. A happy boy returned to the back seat, and the busy day continued.

This experience made quite an impression on me. What rapid and calming effect gentleness had on me as well as on the child. It was as if both of us felt the touch of the healing Christ. And what a gentle touch it was!

Don't we all yearn to be dealt with gently? When we make a mistake at work or with the family, don't we treasure the times when the other person is kind and compassionate? Shouldn't we strive to replace sternness and severity in our own lives with tenderness and temperance?

Gentleness does not imply lack of conviction nor does it indicate weakness in discipline. Actually it is quite the opposite. Gentleness is the crowning glory of a strong moral framework.

We build the foundation for gentle speech and actions by striving to live according to the Ten Commandments and Christ Jesus' teachings. "A new commandment I give unto you," Jesus said, "That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."¹

As we learn more of what God's moral and spiritual requirements are and strive to live according to His will, we will feel the mercy of God guiding and correcting us. This divine shepherding points to the presence of the saving Christ with us here and now. So, from our own experience of feeling God's gentle guidance through Christ, we learn gentleness.

As I continue to work on softening the hardness of human will, I have been helped by something that Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, has said, "A little more grace, a motive made pure, a few truths tenderly told, a heart softened, a character subdued, a life consecrated, would restore the right action of the mental mechanism, and make manifest the movement of body and soul in accord with God."² What an effect even a moment of softness can have on our families, our workplace, and even our community!

¹ John 13:34

² Miscellaneous Writings p. 354