

The Art of Embittering One's Life

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Youth Department of the General Conference

My dear youth:

“The wall always falls towards the leaning side,” and this also has application in the spiritual life. The wall of human nature leans towards evil. All humans tend towards evil.

Natural inclination

Jeremiah says: “**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?**” Jeremiah 17:9. Paul expresses the same thought: “**There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.**” Romans 3:10-12. This is how we are born, this is how we are. Nobody is born good and then the environment corrupts him; this theory is not correct. We are born with a genetic code that will develop. The first negative tendency is given to us by the law of inheritance from our parents, this is called “inherited nature.” The second negative attribute is the one that we develop: “acquired tendencies.” It is not surprising that humans show the fruits of the flesh that Paul presents in the book of Galatians: infidelity, impurity, vices, bad thoughts, idolatry, spiritism, hatred, fights, jealousy, anger, selfishness, arguments, divisions, envy, etc. (Galatians 5:19-21).

This is a clinical picture that presents our human condition regardless of social status, our origin, race, sex, etc. We are all the same.

The tendency to self-inflict harm

With this condition, each person shows negative traits in their character that depend on the education received, the kind of parents, the environment where they grew up, and what the individual cultivated. There is a trend that is becoming more widespread among humans: **embittering one's own life**. "Many look at things on their darkest side; they magnify their supposed grievances, nurse their wrath, and are filled with revengeful, hateful feelings, when in truth they had no real cause for these feelings.... Resist these wrong feelings, and you will experience a great change in your association with your fellowmen." *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, 517.

"The current scientific evidence that indicates that any disorder called physical or organic usually implies equally, and at different levels, psychological alterations, and vice versa (Oblitas & Becoña, 2000). These psychological factors include fear, sadness and anger as negative emotional reactions, and their different clinical forms: anxiety, depression and persistent anger." *Emociones Negativas y su Impacto en la Salud Mental y Física. Suma Psicológica*, Vol. 16. Número 2. Diciembre 2009. Págs. 85-112.

"One of the most investigated emotional reactions is undoubtedly that of anxiety, as an emotional state associated with multiple disorders, especially psychophysiological ones" (Idem). What is bitterness really? Let's look at a definition: "Lasting feelings of frustration, resentment, or sadness, especially because of disappointment or injustice."

We can make a great list of habits that humans adopt that make life bitter.

Anxiety for the future

The first is **anxiety for the future**. In general, we worry about what will happen tomorrow: if we will have a job, if we will be healthy, if everything will function normally in our society, if there will be money to retire, if a war will break out, if we will have resources to feed our family, etc. Jesus tells us: "**Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.**" Matthew 6:31, 32.

Fear of men

Another very powerful factor of bitterness is **what man can do to us**: that they rob us, that they manipulate us, that they control us, that they deprive us of freedom, that they criticize us, that they persecute us, that they hate us, etc. Living in a state of constant emotional tension for fear of what may happen to us is very negative for our bodily health and soul, because we show that we do not trust God. Jesus said. "**So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'**" Hebrews 13:6. This does not mean that we will be careless and that we will not take steps to take care of ourselves or protect ourselves. The ancient Hebrews built a large wall to protect the city of Jerusalem. But once we have done what we consider

logical and appropriate to take care of ourselves, we must leave everything in the hands of God and not live in anguish or bitterness. When there are personal grievances, the cause must be left to the Lord; He knows everything and knows how to solve each problem. Prayer will be our best resource when we are offended.

Fear of what they will say

We humans care a lot about **what people will say** and that is why we tend to hide our faith, because it greatly contrasts with the opinion that people have. It is not that we are going to go with a loudspeaker publishing our faith on the street, there are situations and appropriate times for this, but rather that we must be prudent and when God gives us the opportunity we express our faith, without fear of the opinion of the people.

Let's be authentic. Many mix with others because they do not want to be criticized or rejected, and this often leads them to leave their faith. This was the case of the apostle Peter: **“But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”** Matthew 5:37.

Fear that the planet will be destroyed

Another bitterness for many people is the **fear that our planet will be destroyed**, and we will no longer be able to live on it. This will happen, but when Christ comes, until then we will be here and God will save this world from destruction. The biblical promise is for us and we must not become bitter. Let's do our best. The fact that we do not eat meat is already an extraordinary advantage, because we do not contribute to the slaughterhouse industry that pollutes so much. **“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.”** Genesis 8:22.

Living in Christ

“Bitterness and animosity must be banished from the soul if we would be in harmony with heaven.” *The Desire of Ages*, pg. 310. **“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.”** Ephesians 4:31. Remove bitterness, as garbage is removed from our house so that we do not get sick. We must work on our character to eliminate bitterness, which is born in an anxious heart that does not trust God, because the bitterness lodged in the soul deteriorates faith. It is not worth getting bitter, because this is a feeling that distances us from God, does not allow us to be happy, and projects shadows and pain towards others. The solution is in Christ, the only one who can dwell in the human soul through the Holy Spirit and where Jesus lives there is freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Conclusion

May the Lord help us to base our faith in Christ and all that He is. Christ is the only one who can burn the scum of bitterness so that the flowers of peace and security will bloom in their place. This is my wish and prayer in the name of the Lord. God bless you. Amen.

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For reflection:

1. What does it mean to self-injure?
2. What do you understand by fear of the future?
3. What do you understand by the fear of men?
4. What does it mean to live in Christ?