

THE CONSEQUENCES OF BITTERNESS

A. THERE WILL BE PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES

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CHEMICAL BALANCE : Ulcerative colitis, toxic goiters, high blood pressure are only a few of the scores of diseases caused by bitterness. Our resentments call forth certain hormones from the pituitary, adrenal, thyroid and other glands. Excesses of these hormones can cause diseases in any part of the body. (See *None of These Diseases*, S. I. McMillen, Spire Books, 1968, pp. 69-72.)

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FACIAL FEATURES : Refusing to forgive results in physical fatigue and loss of sleep. We may try to hide our resentments, but soon they will also be etched into our eyes and facial muscles as permanent reflections of our inward feelings.

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BONE HEALTH : The life of the flesh is in the blood. (**Leviticus 17:11**) But the "factory" for the blood is the marrow of our bones. The health of our bones, therefore, determines the health of our body. Bitterness has a direct and devastating effect upon our bones. For a study of this see: **Psalm 32:3; Proverbs 15:30; Proverbs 17:22; Proverbs 14:30; Proverbs 12:4; Ezekiel 32:27.**

B. SPIRITUAL CONSEQUENCES

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An inability to love God is the immediate result of hating another person. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (**I John 4:20,21**)

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Doubts regarding our relationship with God commonly accompany bitterness. This is quite natural since most of us have prayed the Lord's prayer in which we pray, "*And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.*" (**Matthew 6:12**)

Hence, if we refuse to forgive other people, we are actually asking God not to forgive us. The significance of this point is emphasized by Jesus Christ, "*For if you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences.*" (**Matthew 6:14,15**)

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Major hindrances to the spiritual development of others may result when we refuse to forgive-especially if we claim to be in a right fellowship with God. Our attitudes of

bitterness will repel them from whatever it is that we are trying to convince them of. If we are to allow Christ to live in us we must allow Him to forgive through us.

C. EMOTIONAL CONSEQUENCES

Depression is one of the most significant consequences of refusing to forgive the people who wrong us. It requires emotional energy to maintain a grudge. Just as we become weary when our physical energy is exhausted, so we become depressed when our emotional energy is exhausted.

Bitterness and resentment create an "emotional focus" toward the person who offended us. This focus is the chief cause of becoming just like the one we resent. The more we focus on his actions toward us, the more we resemble the basic attitudes which prompted his actions.

D. MENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A medical doctor illustrates the mental consequences of holding resentments with this description:

"The moment I start hating a man, I become his slave. I can't enjoy my work any more because he controls my thoughts. My resentments produce too many stress hormones in my body, and I become fatigued after only a few hours of work. The work I formerly enjoyed is now drudgery. Even vacations cease to give me pleasure. I can't escape his tyrannical grasp on my mind."....

"When the waiter serves me porterhouse steak, it might as well be stale bread and water. My teeth chew the food, and I swallow it, but the man I hate will not permit me to enjoy its taste." (McMillen, p. 72)

It is for this reason that Solomon wrote, *"It is better to be invited to herbs with love, than to a fatted calf with hatred.."* (**Proverbs 15:17**)

E. MULTIPLYING THE CONSEQUENCES OF BITTERNESS

Bitterness is all too easily passed on from one generation to another, thus affecting hundreds of descendants. The sins of the parents are visited to the third and fourth generations of those who hold hatred in their heart. (Deuteronomy 5:9) Notice how this relates to discipline in the following illustration:

FIRST GENERATION Bitterness toward parents for their strict discipline prompts leniency and inconsistency in disciplining their children.

SECOND GENERATION Bitterness toward parents for their leniency-feeling they don't care prompts strictness and inconsistency in disciplining their children.

THIRD GENERATION Bitterness toward their parents for their strict discipline prompts leniency and inconsistency in disciplining children.

FOURTH GENERATION Bitterness toward parents for their leniency-feeling they don't care

about them prompts strictness and inconsistency in disciplining their children.

- **THERE IS A SEQUENCE OF BITTERNESS TO THE THIRD AND FOURTH GENERATION**

An Example:

The mother of two teenagers sensed that there was a wall between her and her daughters. They rarely confided in her and became quite bitter whenever she would try to discipline them, even when they were clearly in the wrong.

She knew of only one problem on her part which may have caused this...she tended to over correct them. One day she asked, "Why am I so strict with my daughters? I find myself constantly being too sharp with them, and I know this has been going on for quite a few years." The following two questions pin pointed part of the problem:

"Did you get married with your parents' full approval?" (more on this in a different post)

"Did they predict that your marriage would not be very successful?"

She was surprised to hear these questions and even more surprised to see how her past lack of forgiveness and bitterness toward her parents affected her discipline of her children. The following sequence began with her parents:

- **FIRST GENERATION (HER PARENTS)**

There were conflicts, bitterness, arguments and lack of discipline in family habits.

These factors had already isolated the grandparents from their parents; and when the children saw these habits and inconsistencies, their respect and desire for counsel from them was shattered.

Discipline was irregular and inconsistent. The daughter resented all that her parents stood for and refused to heed their advice in regard to her marriage. The parents not only disapproved of her marriage but repeatedly warned her that her marriage would not be successful.

She purposed that it would be, and thus a contest was established which would have devastating effects for generations to come.

- **SECOND GENERATION (HERSELF)**

The daughter left her parents physically but not emotionally. She was not free in her marriage because that "contest" had been declared. She was out to prove her marriage

would be successful. She pictured her parents sitting back, waiting to say, "We told you so!"

As the normal adjustments in marriage occurred, she kept imagining what her mother would say and thus kept many problems to herself. When her children were born, she saw this as a new means of winning her point. "After all, it takes successful parents to raise successful children" she reasoned.

This pressure of proving her point and the fact that her reputation was involved with the behavior and performance of her children caused her to be overcritical of them. She was not free to respond objectively in discipline. Always in the back of her mind was the question, "What would my parents think if they knew this?"

Consequently, she over corrected her children, even into their teenage years.

• **THIRD GENERATION (HER DAUGHTERS)**

The teen-age daughters felt that the rules were too strict and that there was not enough freedom. This attitude paved the way for them to develop unwise friendships outside the home and to confide less and less in their mother. At ages sixteen and eighteen, each of them was secretly engaged to fellows who were unacceptable to the mother. They had bitterness toward their mother for over correction and for not understanding them and were quite willing to enter into marriages which were unacceptable to her with the confidence that they would be successful.

The mother warned them that it would not work out and tried to use her own experience as proof. This only re-established the contest more keenly in the minds of the daughters. They felt they could see why their mother's marriage didn't work out; and they were sure this would not happen to them, especially since they "really loved each other" and they could see their parents hadn't loved each other.

• **FOURTH GENERATION (GRANDCHILDREN)**

The attitudes of the grandchildren would become identical to those of their parents unless the chain of bitterness was broken.

Note: The mother did break this chain of bitterness by following the steps of gaining a clear Conscience.

This Article was taken from "A Clear Conscience" the principles of life by the Vatican. 2021.