

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Faculty Publications

12-7-1961

Personal Problems of Christian Living: Hurt Feelings

Charles E. Wittschiebe
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wittschiebe, Charles E., "Personal Problems of Christian Living: Hurt Feelings" (1961). *Faculty Publications*. 3728.

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/3728>

This Popular Press is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

HURT FEELINGS

By C. E. Wittschiebe, Professor of Pastoral Care
Andrews University

Perhaps I'm too sensitive, but some people in the church often hurt my feelings.

THERE are different types of sensitivity. One kind, which we don't see often enough in the church and which never gives rise to complaints, should be a great deal more common than it is. Dedicated Christians feel it "when they see that God is dishonored, and His service brought into disrepute," and "when they see the innocent oppressed" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310). On points such as these we *should* be sensitive. The mind of Christ is ours to the extent that any dishonor done to Jesus seems to be done to us. This is the right kind of jealousy, and it produces the right kind of indignation. To be sensitive in this sense is to reach a high level of Christian nobility.

Another type of sensitivity is much more common. Although it is more human compared with that of which we have just spoken, it is not on that account to be condemned. Here is one example, that of a Brother L:

"L needs to cultivate love for his wife, love that will find expression in words and deeds. He should cultivate tender affection. His wife has a sensitive, clinging nature, and needs to be cherished. Every word of tenderness, every word of appreciation and affectionate encouragement, will be remembered by her and will reflect back in blessings upon her husband." —*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 530.

In his attitude and conduct Brother L reflected an unsympathetic nature, a stiff and cold reserve that had not been softened by divine love. He regarded tenderness and sympathy in words and acts as weakness, something below the level of manhood. His pride and false dignity kept him from meeting his wife's emotional needs, and she was starved for words of tender appreciation and affection (*ibid.*, pp. 527-531).

Throughout this rebuke to the husband, no criticism is directed at Sister

L for being the kind of woman she is. Sensitivity arising out of a legitimate need for appreciation by a gentle and clinging nature in need of affection is evidently considered blameless. All of us want—and need—to be loved. There is a difference in the way individuals react when love is not offered, or when it exists and is blocked off from expression. Some protect themselves from hurt by what is ostensibly a hard exterior. Others have allowed their feelings almost to atrophy. But many go on being hurt. They seek affection and appreciation as flowers seek the sun, and herein lies their sensitivity.

Another example is Sister J (evidently a stepmother), who dealt with her children in a cold and unsympathizing manner. For trivial offenses she would correct and reprove. She would find fault continually and never express approval. The children, as a consequence, were tempted to de-

velop an I-don't-care spirit. Sister J was told:

"Children have sensitive, loving natures. They are easily pleased and easily made unhappy. By gentle discipline in loving words and acts, mothers may bind their children to their hearts. To manifest severity, and to be exacting with children are great mistakes. Uniform firmness and unimpassioned control are necessary to the discipline of every family. . . .

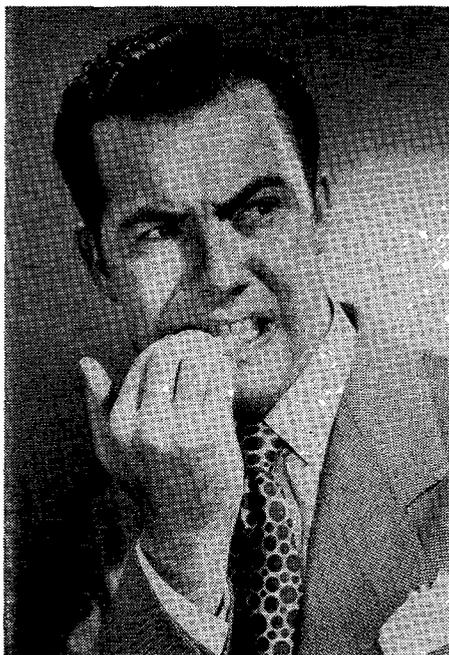
"It will pay to manifest affection in your association with your children. Do not repel them by lack of sympathy in their childish sports, joys, and griefs. Never let a frown gather upon your brow or a harsh word escape your lips. . . . Harsh words sour the temper and wound the hearts of children, and in some cases these wounds are difficult to heal. Children are sensitive to the least injustice, and soon become discouraged under it and will neither heed the loud, angry voice of command, nor care for threatenings of punishment."—*Ibid.*, p. 532.

While this quotation deals particularly with children, the same principle applies to adults. A failure to cultivate the habit of expressing love toward one another can have dire consequences. Nowhere is this stated better than in these words:

"The reason why there are so many hardhearted men and women in the world is that true affection has been regarded as weakness, and has been discouraged and repressed. The better nature of these persons was stifled in childhood; and unless the light of divine love shall melt away their cold selfishness, their happiness will be forever ruined. If we wish our children to possess the tender spirit of Jesus, and the sympathy that angels manifest for us, we must encourage the generous, loving impulses of childhood."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 516.

An Emotional Virus

All these are positive—legitimate—forms of sensitivity and are not involved in the problem before us. The vast majority of those suffering from oversensitivity are afflicted with a negative type of emotional virus. How does this negative form develop? In some families hereditary factors play a part. This is not to say that the characteristic is directly transmitted, but that the individual inherits a nervous system with a tendency in the direction of such a disposition. Given such a tendency, sin with its self-love, its self-interest, can be the main cause for the development of a wrongly sensitive personality.



A. DEVANEY

"I wonder why people always go out of their way to hurt my feelings?"

A Letter From Our President

Furthermore, the way in which a child or young person is treated through the formative years by the significant persons in his life has much to do with his strength or weakness in this area of life. If his opinions are curtly dismissed, and if his feelings are seldom taken into account, he may grow to be quite unsure of himself, and therefore quick to see a threat to his self-esteem whenever his ideas are not accepted quickly by the adult groups to which he belongs. He may grow up with a weak "ego"—the inner "I" that forms the core of his personality—that leads him to defend himself even when there is no intended attack. In short, because of emotional malnourishment or undernourishment he does not have a healthy, self-confident personality. He reacts in terms of what he feels other people think and feel about him rather than what they actually think and feel. He is defensive and more or less suspicious of the motives and words of others. He may have an almost unquenchable thirst for recognition, an almost demanding need for being appreciated. Those who don't meet these needs he considers unfriendly, selfish, and deliberately uncaring about his feelings.

The Remedy

With this limited description of the "disease" let us move on to the "treatment." For the church member the basic principle in dealing with sensitivity of the latter type is the recognition that Jesus offers power and grace sufficient to deal with all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil. This cannot be overemphasized. The evil can be overcome and the sickness healed in the process of sanctification. When Jesus becomes the center of our lives, we have much less reason to defend ourselves as the central "I." Concern about Him and the operation of His grace in our lives will shift the emphasis from our feelings, with the inevitable possibility of being hurt, to His feelings, with the major concern that others not be hurt. Identification with His humility will do away with many possible occasions for feeling slighted.

If we lose ourselves in Him, we have no "self" for which to crave admiration and recognition. If we look at ourselves with the honesty and frankness that His love permits, we shall see that there is no good thing in us and that we ought not to think too highly of ourselves. Putting it another way, in Jesus' acceptance of us we can see ourselves for what we actually are—with all our limitations, deficiencies, and weaknesses—without feeling rejected or unloved. Under His gentle

(Turn to page 4)

DEAR FELLOW BELIEVERS:

The loyalty of our people and their deep love for this cause has again been wonderfully demonstrated. The largest budget in our history was voted by the recent Fall Council. The budget of \$34,049,417.20 represents an increase of nearly four and one-half million dollars over that of a year ago. A substantial increase of base appropriations is thus made possible to all our division fields. The work in the home base of North America will also be materially strengthened. Perhaps no council has ever been so thrilled over a financial announcement as was this last one when this sum available for the world work was announced. It brought the delegates to their feet and set them to singing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." They thanked God and took courage.

There have been a few doleful prophets here and there over the land who declare that the movement is slowing down, that it gives evidence of weakening, and that there is a lessening of interest and enthusiasm for the work of the church. But here is a resounding affirmation of deepening love and enthusiasm. This evidence no word of man can gainsay. This people loves the work of the Lord and gladly gives for its support in increasing measure. What marvelous and generous members we have. May the Lord bless each one!

For the further encouragement of our people, we wish to assure them that this money will be carefully used for the purpose to which it is given. Sound financial policies, long ago instituted, guide the brethren in their administrative councils and planning. A careful system of checking and auditing, instituted long ago, and carefully observed around the world, calls for a careful accounting of all funds.

It is our conviction that our people sense, as never before, that we are rapidly nearing the great and final climax of this world's history. There is little room to doubt this as we look out upon our troubled and confused world. The day of the Lord is hastening on. This explains to a large degree our largest world budget.

There is another factor not to be overlooked in this connection. It is important. Where, in some denominations, individual churches and individual people send their contributions directly to missionary stations or to individual missionaries, we carry on our mission program as a unified effort. The funds we give come into a central treasury. At our world center, the needs of the entire world field are carefully surveyed. Disbursements are then made from this central fund to the various divisions. It can readily be seen that this plan has many advantages. It assures equal consideration of all fields and phases of our work without the danger of one area getting more than it needs and another being neglected and left in want. The plan also ensures an even balance in carrying on our work and a solid basis that individual and haphazard giving cannot achieve.

We thank our loyal, faithful people for their continued support of the world program of the church.

R. P. Fisher

President, General Conference

ministration and discipline the sinful elements can be subdued, the warped and damaged areas can be healed, and those parts that have never grown can feel new life stirring. Just as surely as a soul is reborn by a miracle, just so surely can the soul grow into a mature child of God by a continuing miracle of grace.

The church has its part in this great

transformation by providing these persons with a family of brothers and sisters who are modest, self-effacing, appreciative, and dedicated. These family members will estimate the value of souls by the standard set by Jesus. They will love these sensitive ones as they are, and thereby arouse in them the desire to become what they can be.

Joneses. It is well guarded by the dogs of bias, fear, hate, inferior feelings, and predetermined opinions. This door represents the accustomed train of thought, and it is one that a man will defend to the last. Notice the technique Jesus used—"He disturbed as little as possible their accustomed train of thought."—*Evangelism*, p. 140.

Learning to Be a Soul Winner—

Empathy

By E. D. Nelson

NEW ANALYST ALEX DRYER once defined empathy as being "somewhere between sympathy and love." In sympathy we *suffer* with others, while in empathy we project our own consciousness into another person's life and *feel* with him. Our heart beats with his heart. We respond to his frustrations as if they were our own, and regard his salvation as if our own were at stake. This is "love" in the highest and noblest sense of the word.

Work for a soul begins with sympathy. Christ feels sympathy for the sinner as He stands outside the heart's door knocking. But when the door is opened Christ enters in and empathy begins. Of the relation of empathy to soul winning Sister White wrote: "Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart. By being social and coming close to the people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourse."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 193.

It costs something besides dollars to win souls for Christ. In a very real way it costs one's own vitality and life blood. "I have," said Paul, "become all things to all men, that I might by all means"—at all costs and in any way—"save some" (1 Cor. 9: 22, R.S.V.).

In my soul-winning classes I take a piece of chalk and begin to make crude drawings on the blackboard. I place a man on a mountaintop. At the foot of this mountain I draw a circle with a man in the center. I place a large, thick door on one side and a smaller and thinner door on the other. The man on the mountaintop represents the Christian in his association with Jesus. The circle at

the foot of the mountain represents a man's psychological house. Man is naturally self-centered, but Jesus "lifts men from the narrow circle that their selfishness prescribes."—*Thoughts From The Mount of Blessing*, p. 42. The front door in the sketch represents the "front" a man puts on in keeping up with the

Remember the picture that portrays Christ knocking at the door? A close observer once thought he had detected a mistake in the painting—there is no latch on the outside of the door. But the artist explained that the heart's door can only be opened from the inside. I like to think of Jesus knocking upon the back door of men's hearts, where they are less likely to be on their guard. Entrance here is gained in a more neighborly way.

In the sales world the customer is treated as if he were always right. The object is to agree with him and keep his good will. We must do the same. Said Jesus, "Agree with thine adversary quickly" (Matt. 5:25). "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Man's defenses weaken when he encounters agreement, and strengthen when we disagree with him. In soul winning, a



A. DEVANEY

Personal work for a soul would win to Christ begins with empathy—a sincere feeling of personal interest and concern that leads us to place ourselves in the person's circumstances and to endeavor to see things from his point of view.