

From: healing <healing@newhorizonscounseling.com>

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DR PIERRE J SAMAAN ; www.newhorizonscounseling.com

NEWSLETTER

Entitlement; A Harmful Attitude

By Dr. Pierre J. Samaan

There was once a man named Haman, who was endowed with everything a man could desire. He was a wealthy man with a large family. Haman was also very powerful politically, for he was second in power to his King, the King of the Persian Empire (modern day Iran). After promoting Haman, the King ruled that Haman has achieved a privileged position requiring everyone to demonstrate honor by bowing to Haman. Esther's Jewish cousin, who became her guardian after her parents died, was named Mordecai. He was observed by the guards refusing to bow to Haman (Esther 3:2). After several days, the guards informed Haman of Mordecai's refusal to honor Haman by kneeling.

"⁵ When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. ⁶ Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes." (Esther 3:5-6 NIV)

Haman's bitterness filled his mind to the point of plotting murder, not only against Mordecai, but against all of the Jews in the nation.

I can envision Haman saying to himself, "I have been elevated by the King and I am entitled to do whatever I want, whenever I want, because I am special."

Now, as you're reading this article, you may be looking back on your life and thinking, "Thank GOD I never felt that way!" Well, resist that thought for a moment longer. Think back when you were a child and grew into adolescence. Did you ever feel entitled to something that your parents or even friends told you "No!" But, you were bound and determined to get what you wanted because you believed that you deserved it and could see no reason for it to be denied to you. At that moment, and perhaps through much of your youth, you were entitled.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word entitlement as: "the condition of having a right to have, do, or get something...the feeling or belief that you deserve to be given something (such as special privileges)...a type of financial help provided by the government for members of a particular group."

Wow! I didn't think entitlement was so all encompassing. It's as if it can be found not only in our youth, but through-out our lives.

Do you often get offended when someone is sitting in your favorite church seat? You have entitlement. Does your spouse often tell you that you are being selfish? You have entitlement. Do you often believe your spouse should do more for you? You have entitlement. Do you often believe you should be treated more favorably at work? You have entitlement. Do you often believe you should have automatic compliance with your expectations? You have entitlement. Do you often believe you can only be understood by special people? You have entitlement. Do you often require excessive attention or admiration? You have entitlement. Do you often have what others would perceive as unreasonable expectations? You have entitlement. Do you often believe rules or laws are only for the minions? You must be named "Gru," as from the Despicable Me movie, and you have entitlement...

There are more entitlements to add to list, but I am sure you get the point. At one time or another, when entitlement surfaces, like an iceberg to a ship, the passerby must steer clear or face a possible harmful impact.

Strangely enough, entitlement can also come out of being victimized during youth or when an adult. A University performed a study in which three experiments demonstrated that feeling wronged often leads the survivor to develop a sense of entitlement and selfish behavior. ^[1]

Whether born with entitlement (if that's possible), learned entitlement from a parent, or victimized into becoming entitled, it is a form of taking instead of giving. A hindrance to trust, entitlement leads to distrust and selfish actions to demand what the entitled person does not believe will be freely given. This can be seen in the example of a child having a fitful rage to get what they want.

Eventually, the entitled person grows frustrated and angry, birthing negativity and bitterness, the fruits of unforgiveness. Being insecure and empty from the dissatisfaction of not having enough, the entitled person must escape the fear and pain by finding something different to satisfy. What they can't have, becomes what they compulsively, must have. This can be seen in the example of Haman, who persuaded the King to allow the genocide of all Jews in the Persian Empire (Esther 3:8-11).

Interestingly, GOD is never mentioned in the story, possibly because we are being taught some important lessons. This was a time where the presence of GOD was not seen through many awe inspiring miracles like fire coming down from Heaven or a tree engulfed in fire without being burned.

An important lesson to learn from the Book of Esther is that the greatest faith is when we not only believe, but act on the belief of GOD's promises. Esther risked her life to save the Jews from a bloody day of genocide. She acted only on the promises of God. The lesson is that we may not see GOD, but we can be assured that HIS hand is behind the twists and turns of daily life.

²⁰ For ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature and attributes, that is, His eternal power and divinity, have been made intelligible and clearly discernible in and through the things that have been made (His handiworks). So [men] are without excuse [altogether without any defense or justification], (Romans 1:20 AMP)

If the evil that fuels entitlement comes anywhere near you, know that GOD is there to guide you through the treacherous waters. HE will humble the pride (like that of the evil one) in those who are not trusting and resting on GOD's Words. You need not battle, only stand and let GOD do what HE does so well.

"Thy way, not mine, O LORD,
However dark it be!
Lead me by THINE own hand;
Choose THOU the path for me.
Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it leads
Right onward to THY rest.
I dare not choose my lot;
I would not if I might;
Choose THOU for me, my GOD:
So shall I walk aright.
Take THOU my cup, and it
With Joy or sorrow fill,
As best to THEE may seem;
Choose THOU my good and ill.
Choose THOU for me my friends,

My sickness and my health;
Choose THOU my cares for me,
My poverty or wealth.
Not mine, not mine the choice,
In things or great or small;
Be THOU my guide, my strength,
My wisdom and my all" - Horatius Bonar ^[2]

Rather than the use of entitlement which led to the death of Haman and his ten sons, here are six principles taught by well-known German Evangelist and philanthropist George Mueller: ^[3]

1. "I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what his will is.
2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to great delusions.
3. I see the will of the Spirit of GOD through, or in connection with, the Word of GOD. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Spirit guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.
4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate GOD's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.
5. I ask GOD in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.
6. Thus, through prayer to GOD, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge; and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. In trivial matters, and in transactions involving more important issues, I have found this method always effective."

Entitlement will eventually cause the entitled person to believe his own lies to be true. Today, we might call that denial and/or sincere delusions.

In the Book of Esther (set in the stage of the Persian Empire) Haman's plotting is a depiction of Satan's plotting to destroy man. Behind the scenes, GOD was preserving HIS chosen people. On the day Haman was to ask the King to impale Mordecai on a post, GOD caused the King to remember how Mordecai saved the King from a plot to assassinate the King (Esther 6).

⁶ When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?" ⁷ So he answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honor, ⁸ have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. ⁹ Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!'" (Esther 6:6-9 NIV)

GOD used Haman's entitlement delusions against him. Mordecai was saved and given the honor that Haman believed was for himself.

In a more up front and visible role, GOD HIMSELF, took a more active part in the times of the New Testament. Esther is a depiction of the willingness of GOD to send HIS only begotten Son, Jesus Christ to be save not only the Jews but, all of HIS believers. All the Jews could do in the Old Testament was to be happy and have a Feast (Purim) to celebrate the death of Haman and the narrow

escape from extermination.

We on the other hand, celebrate Easter (notice how close the name Esther is to Easter) as a day of the resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ. Instead of just having a party, those who choose to believe in GOD's Son, Jesus Christ and celebrate the assurance of eternal life. (Is it coincidence that the Feast of Purim and Easter occur during the same time period? Coincidences are when GOD remains anonymous.)

"Living for Jesus, oh, what peace! Rivers of pleasure never cease; Trials may come, yet I'll not fear, Living for Jesus, He is near..."^[4]

⁹ Because if you acknowledge and confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and in your heart believe (adhere to, trust in, and rely on the truth) that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

¹⁰ For with the heart a person believes (adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Christ) and so is justified (declared righteous, acceptable to God), and with the mouth he confesses (declares openly and speaks out freely his faith) and confirms [his] salvation.

¹¹ The Scripture says, No man who believes in Him [who adheres to, relies on, and trusts in Him] will [ever] be put to shame or be disappointed.

¹² [No one] for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. The same Lord is Lord over all [of us] and He generously bestows His riches upon all who call upon Him [in faith].

13 For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord [invoking Him as Lord] will be saved.

(Romans 10:9-12 AMP)

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New Horizons Institute of Counseling, 970 Peachtree Industrial Blvd., Suite 100, Suwanee, GA 30024
678.348.6442; Toll Free 888.760.0445
SKYPE: dr.pierrej.samaan

^[1] Journal of Personality & Social Psychology. 2010 Feb;98(2):245-55.

^[2] V. Raymond Edman, *The Disciplines of Life* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publication, 1948), 100.

^[3] Morgan, Robert, *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes*, pp 369-70, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN. 2000.

^[4] Charles Frederick Weigle (1871-1966)