

Love the Brethren

January – 50



INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH REFORM MOVEMENT Youth Department of the General Conference

My dear youth:

Hating and rejecting others is something normal in our days, especially when they harm us or injure us in any way. We live, on the other hand, in an increasingly competitive society that invites disloyalty to make our reason prevail or get the highest position. Therefore, few people can say they have true and loyal friends.

To achieve and maintain a friendship it is necessary to take care of that relationship, nurture it with quality time spent with others, show appreciation with attention and understanding, and not as has been focused today through social networks, which although it is true that they allow thousands of contacts, they are cold and they keep people in virtual realities that are nothing more than islands where each one lives like an eternal shipwreck. There are people who have more than 3,000 contacts on Facebook and when they meet others on a personal level, they are unable to maintain a sincere friendship.

On the other hand, there is a parallel reality to the one mentioned, and it is the fact of living in such a permissive and corrupt society, where Christian values have no place and have been replaced by a humanist philosophy in which the human must be his own master, the one who creates his own happiness outside of God, as Adam and Eve tried to do. When the *Age of Reason* arose, there were exponents like Voltaire and Descartes, who declared: "If there ever was a god who had created the world, he no longer had any contact with it and that men must discover the truth by themselves, on their own account." The Moral Law eliminated, the way was clear to practice all kinds of sins.

Current trend

To what extent does this situation affect the church? One of the oldest struggles of believers has always been the influence of the world. In Israel, this outside influence was always a cause of decline, because they rarely stood as a nation separate from evil. The degrading customs that plunged other nations into sin, and their deceitful philosophies, crept into the ranks of God's people and produced their fruits of destruction.

At the time of the incipient church of Christ, there were communities where disunity and worldly practices that caused much weakness and spiritual decline reigned. It is like a cursed cycle: believers globalize, lose or do not reach their conversion, and cause dissension and controversy within the church with their behavior. All the tide of evil that floods the world, its fallacies and diabolical teachings, end up entering through the door of the church to affect its members. Fanaticism and formalism are another diabolical tool that the enemy uses to stir up divisions.

It is interesting what the Spirit of Prophecy tells us regarding this topic: "If Satan sees that the Lord is blessing His people and preparing them to discern his delusions, he will work with his master power to bring in fanaticism on the one hand and cold formalism on the other, that he may gather in a harvest of souls." *Selected Messages*, Book 2, pg. 19.

Primary objective

The devil is very interested in all these things happening, so we must take into account what the Word teaches us in relation to worldliness, unfair competition, selfishness, enmities, fanaticism, and formalism, since healthy church growth depends on strictly following God's counsel.

The apostle John tells us: "**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.**" 1 John. 2:15-16. And in another place, John will call on the members of the church so that they not only convert, as we saw, but also remain united to their brethren: "**But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.**" 1 John 1:7. "**Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**" 1 John 4:11.

Paul also invites us to avoid all controversy: "**Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.**" 1 Corinthians 1:10.

Maintaining unity in the church is everyone's task and it is the duty of each member to make every effort, with God's help, to avoid any conflict and attitude that endangers the stability of the body of Christ, unless it compromises principle. "**Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.**" Colossians 3:13.

The title of this pastoral letter is based on the text of 1 Peter 2:17. It is a mandate that the apostle orders to maintain stability in the church and be a light in the world; because people judge our message through the prism of our behavior. The first thing people see is what we do and then they listen to what we say, but this is already conditioned by the first. If they don't like our way of being, they will hardly accept the message. One of the most powerful poles of attraction for soul winning is unity in the church. When people visit us and find a relaxed atmosphere, where sincere love and unity among members is evident, they are shocked to say the least and very often end up staying.

To conclude, my dear young people, although it is true that the doctrine is what has to push us to accept the faith, it is no less true that the lack of unity and coherence of the members overshadows the message and neutralizes it. We can't spend our lives telling people not to look at the people, but look at the message. But if we possess the authentic message of Jesus, we will also possess His attributes because the Holy Spirit generates them in sincere and consecrated believers. People did not go with Jesus because he was inconsiderate, sullen, harsh, critical, and cold, as many of us sometimes are despite being in the church. If Christ had shown this character His message would have died in time.

May the Lord help us to be united among those of us who profess to be followers of the Master, to seek the good of the other, to fight to maintain peace and harmony in the house of God, to be peacemakers instead of warriors, because only in this way we can be called children of God (Matthew 5:9). Amen.

José Vicente Giner
*Pastor and leader of the Youth Department
of the General Conference*

For personal and group reflection:

1. Making an assessment as objective as possible, how is our world?
2. Do you think that the condition of society can influence the church?
3. If the answer is positive, explain how.
4. How can we collaborate with each other to maintain unity in the church, that is, among the members?
5. What, in your opinion, is the biggest factor of disunity between the brethren?