

Pessimism's Future

Have you ever known (or been, or are you now) someone who could not only *find* but also *focus on* the **dark cloud** to every *silver lining*? To swap metaphors, someone who could find and take an Eeyore attitude and approach to every Winnie the Pooh situation?

“Pessimism” is thinking that anything that can go wrong, and doesn’t, is just waiting for a much worse time to do so. It’s the fellow who not only realizes it could always be worse, but also assumes it will. Our world seems to see “pessimism”- along with its associates, *sarcasm* and *anti-socialism* (not a “people person”), as a mark of distinction to which to aspire. But the *optimistic* outcome of pessimism is that it leaves us with no more than *half-empty* deserted lives of depression and despair... and the *reality* can be even less.

“You must join her in her resolve or **your pessimism will conjure the future you fear**”- Garrow's Law, S2E4. (Sir William Garrow, 1760 – 1840, was an English barrister, who introduced the phrase "presumed innocent until proven guilty," insisting that defendants' accusers and their evidence be thoroughly tested in court, DBpedia.)

Is this true? Does *pessimism* hold such power? Can it detour our future toward the very destination we despise and fear? No one is suggesting that we adopt some “pie in the sky” naivety that ignores the dangerous realities of living in the real world. After all, Jesus urged the Twelve (disciples) to be “*shrewd as serpents, innocent as doves*,” Matt.10:16. But perhaps too many of us have become far more like *wolves* than *sheep* in our pessimism.

“Pessimism” is:

- **Not genetic-** We don’t *inherit* it from our parents. However, it can be, and often is, *experientially learned, adopted, and perfected* from them. Our perspectives on life, and view of the people and things in it, are largely learned from those of our parents (or a rebellious adoption of the opposite). Nathanael was from *Cana* of Galilee (John 21:2), but had a very *pessimistic* (and obviously *wrong*) view of *Nazareth*, John 1:46. Where do you suppose he got it? He probably grew up hearing it from his parents. What outlooks/perspectives are you teaching your children about the world? Politics? The church? Worship? Pessimism and sarcasm are not “cute,” they’re destructive, cp. Titus 1:15 and 1Cor.13:4-7. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the god Shamash bluntly states “The life you pursue you shall not find” (from The Bible Commentary). In the Dialogue of Pessimism- a 14th century B.C. Babylonian work, suicide is the only answer to the “problem” of life (*Ibid.*). Do not these jarring references resonate today? And where do such attitudes and perspectives begin? The “*pessimism* of parents” is often the somber truth. Be careful parents, your children are listening, watching, and molding their attitudes/perspectives from what you provide them, Eph.6:4; Col.3:21!
- **Contagious-** cp. Matt.21:9-11; 26:3-5; 27:20,22,25. Surely this is an example of much more than *pessimism*, but note how a people who were

shouting “*Hosanna to the Son of David... Hosanna in the highest*” were influenced only a few days later shout “*Let Him be crucified*” and “*His blood be upon us and on our children!*”

- **Pervasive-** If allowed to exist in one area of attitude, vision, and therefore activity, it will soon bleed over and affect all other areas. If we are *pessimistic* about politics, for example, we eventually become so about the persons involved in them, and then the people who support them, then everyone. Such is the nature of any sin, and the perspectives and attitudes that lead to them, cf. 1Cor.5:6-8. But as we’ve noted, *pessimism* seems to be especially pervasive. The *silver lining*, however, is also, Phil.4:4-5!
- **Punitive/Punishing-** A “pessimistic” life is not a happy one. It is *sour, dour, dark, and depressive*. It robs us not only of joy and happiness, but also of faith, hope, and love. Think about it: Would you describe our current world as one of *joy, happiness, faith, hope, and love*? Or as one filled with *sadness, madness, and hate* which breeds *depression, depravity, and (self) destruction*? Is not enough to ask “How did we get here?” We must reverse the trend by changing **OUR** outlook and perspective!

So, how do we stop being so *pessimistic* and influencing our children/family, brethren, and friends to be likewise?

1. First and foremost, **we return to the Source of true joy, peace, and hope-true belief in God, Rom.15:13**. Why shouldn’t our children and their world be pessimistic, dark, and hopeless when we (nationally and worldwide) have removed- by both direct and indirect means, the *Source* of them: *belief* in the *God of faith, hope, and love*, cf. 1Cor.13:13?
2. **Change your input, Phil.4:8**. If virtually everything you watch, listen to, and focus on is negative- how bad everything is, how evil people are, and how bleak the future is, how can we help but be pessimistic ourselves? Tune out and turn off those things and let *your mind dwell* on the (eternally) *true, honorable, right, pure, and lovely* things of *good repute* that are *excellent* and truly *worthy of praise!* (And stop watching CNN, MSNBC, FOX and all the rest of the so-called “news” shows who make their money by making you *afraid, angry, and pessimistic* about everything!)
3. **Stop being anxious (worrying about) everything, Phil.4:6a**. Worried about the world or our country? Tell me this: Does noting, “sharing,” and yelling about every example of *evil* on social media or the news help you to have *peace, joy, and happiness*? Please listen closely, **IF YOU CAN’T PERSONALLY CHANGE IT OR HELP IT, STOP WORRYING AND OBSESSING ABOUT IT**. Just go fishing (just teasing, sort of)! More seriously, note the rest of Phil.4:6-6. If we can’t change or help it, then give it to God in prayer and **LET IT GO!** If you truly want a “better world” for your children, change **YOUR** world of influence over them. Not only *tell* them, but *show* them your *peace, your happiness, and your... dare I say optimism?* Psalm 46:10, “*Cease striving (be still, KJV) and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.*”