

## *Overcoming Some Of Life's Problems # 8*

# **The Problem Of Indifference**

### Introduction:

1. The problem with indifference is that many who have it don't know it; and those who do don't care.
2. Indifference is:
  - a. Apathy, unconcerned, and disinterest.
  - b. "1. Characterized by a lack of partiality or bias. 2. Not mattering one way or the other; of no great importance. 3. Having no marked feeling one way or the other...4. Having no particular interest or concern....8. Not active or involved" (AHD, p. 655).
  - c. Lack of diligence, dedication and devotion.
  - d. Attitude and actions that say, "I don't care!"
3. God's people have always been plagued with indifference.
  - a. Lam. 1:1-12 - Judah is doomed to captivity and the people act as if it is nothing.
  - b. 1 Cor. 5 - At Corinth there was a case of fornication in their midst and the brethren had done nothing. They were not even upset about it.
  - c. Rev. 3:15-16 - Church at Laodicea was lukewarm.
4. Indifference is a cancer that eats away at the life of a Christian and a local church.
5. The people of God should be diligent, devoted, and zealous.
  - a. Matt. 6:33 - seek first the kingdom of God.
  - b. 2 Pet. 3:15 - sanctify the Lord (set him apart) in your heart.
  - c. Rom. 12:11 - fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.
  - d. Col. 3:23 - put everything you have into the service of the Lord.
  - e. Ecc. 9:10 - whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.
  - f. Tit. 2:14 - zealous of good works.
6. Let's consider how it works, indicators that it is a problem and what we can do about it.

## I. The *Subtlety* Of Indifference

- A. *Develops gradually and slowly* (Heb. 2:1).
  - 1. Possible to “drift” away from things we know to be right.
    - a. KJV: “let them slip.”
    - b. KJV footnote: “Gr. run out as leaking vessels.”
  - 2. This doesn’t happen overnight. One is not diligent and enthused one day and the next indifferent. That makes it hard to recognize in self.
  - 3. It strikes at the heart first, then manifest itself in our actions.
- B. *Harder to see what we are **not doing*** (Heb. 5:11-12).
  - 1. Overt acts of sin are easily seen by self and others. I know if I lie, cheat, curse, drink or steal.
  - 2. Even sin in attitude that involves *doing* - is easily seen. I know if I hate, lust, am bitter, have envy, jealousy or anger.
  - 3. It is much harder to detect what I fail to do.
  - 4. Even harder to see:
    - a. That I don’t care as much as I ought to.
    - b. That I’m not involved as I ought to be.
    - c. I’m not as dedicated as I ought.
    - d. That I should have grown more by now.
  - 5. This is especially true with one whose apathy has not caused them to quit altogether.
- C. *We focus on the signs / fruit of indifference as being the real problem.*
  - 1. When we see the symptoms, we deal with them.
    - a. If one doesn’t attend as he should, we preach on attendance. It may not seem to help much.
    - b. If one doesn’t study and grow, we talk to them about studying and growing. It may not seem to help much.
  - 2. The real problem is in the heart (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 15:19).
    - a. They are indifferent. They don’t really care!
    - b. Cure the indifference and the symptoms will be removed.

## II. The *Causes* Of Indifference

- A. *Lack of fear of God.*
  - 1. Fear involves:

- a. Afraid of displeasing God (1 Sam. 11:7; Psa. 119:120).
- b. Respect and awe (Luke 7:16; Jonah 1:9).
- 2. What fear will cause us to do:
  - a. Do what God says (Deut. 6:2; 13:4; 17:19; 1 Sam. 12:14).
  - b. Be dedicated (Deut. 10:12, 20; 31:12).
- 3. Those who are indifferent don't fear God!

B. *Focus on the present world.*

- 1. We get **wrapped up in this life** to the point the spiritual things are pushed aside.
  - a. Matt. 13:22 - cares of the world choke the word.
  - b. 2 Tim. 4:10 - Demas forsook Paul having loved the present world.
- 2. When we are **materially blessed**, easy to let our spirituality slide.
  - a. Tendency to forget God (Prov. 30:8-9; Deut. 6:10-12).
  - b. Beware when we are at ease on beds of ivory (Amos 6:1-6).
  - c. Riches make us overconfident in self and material things (Psa. 30:6).

C. *Ignorance.*

- 1. Ignorance destroys God's people (Hosea 4:6; Isa. 5:13).
- 2. Reasons why there is ignorance:
  - a. Some have not learned because they have not been taught (Matt. 28:20). We baptize them and leave them to "sink or swim".
  - b. Some have forgotten what they once knew (Heb. 5:11-12).
  - c. Some ignore that they are taught (cf. Rom 10:3, 17 in context is saying that the reason the Jews didn't believe is that they didn't listen!)
- 3. What we don't know - makes a difference:
  - a. If don't know the commands - can't obey (Eph. 5:17).
  - b. If don't know about the judgment - will not fear (Heb. 10:27).
  - c. If don't know what the text means - may be violating it (1 John 3:4).
  - d. If don't know the truth - led into error (2 Pet. 3:16-18).

D. *Softness.*

- 1. **Soft preaching** comforts those who are indifferent (Isa. 30:10).
  - a. It does little to prick the heart in sin.
  - b. "Positive" preaching, that eliminates the "negative", makes people who are in sin, and indifferent about it, feel good.
- 2. **Lack of "teeth" in the message preached**, encourages the indifferent in their sin.
  - a. It is not enough to preach the truth, elders and churches must discipline.

(That involves correcting, rebuking and withdrawing when there is no repentance.)

- b. The work of elders involves watching for souls to keep them sound in the faith (Heb. 13:17; Tit. 1).
- c. All too often, brethren want the truth to be preached on sin, of which, some of the members are guilty, but never follow through with any application or discipline!

### III. The Signs Of Indifference

#### A. *A loss of zeal.*

- 1. Dedicated people have a burning zeal (Rom. 12:11; Luke 24:32).
- 2. Possible to lose that fire of enthusiasm (Rev. 2:4-5).
- 3. Judah, before and after exile, let their service deteriorate into a weary routine that demanded no real effort (Isa. 29:9-14 ; Mal. 1:6-2:17).
- 4. When a church has some members who have either lost or never had zeal, it has a problem with indifference.
  - a. Some are not excited about the salvation they have in Christ.
  - b. Some are not enthused about worshiping the Almighty.
  - c. Some are not fired up about the hope of eternal life.
  - d. When your service to God is a “ho-hum, no big deal” thing, your fire has gone out!
- 5. In C. S. Lewis’ *Screwtape Letters* (a fictional account of one devil’s instructions to another on how to destroy a Christian) Screwtape instructs Wormwood: “If you can once get him to the point of thinking that ‘religion is all very good up to a point’, you can feel quite happy about his soul. A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all.”

#### B. *A loss of spiritual interest.*

- 1. Easily follows a loss of zeal.
- 2. Lack of desire for the **word** (1 Pet. 2:1-2; Psa. 119).
  - a. No real interest in study and learning. Make little or no effort to come to Bible study.
  - b. Don’t care to know what the text means or how it applies.
  - c. Quit studying on a regular basis (Acts 17:11). Every person who has completely quit serving God will say that he quit studying the word long before.
- 3. Not bothered about **sin** in their own life or others (Prov. 8:13; 16:6).

4. Not bothered by **false doctrine** (Psa. 119:136).
5. Not concerned about the **lost** (Mark 16:15-16).

C. *Missing services.*

1. May start with an occasional absence.
  - a. Maybe we allow work to keep us away. It may bother us at first, then we get adjusted to the idea.
  - b. Then we may miss once in a while to do something else we want.
  - c. It is now becoming easier to miss even more.
  - d. May begin with missing Bible study or Wednesday evening, then Sunday night and so on.
2. Every service we miss, we miss out on that much spiritual growth.
  - a. Thomas did, because he wasn't there (John 20:20-28).
  - b. If by being present we are built up and edified (Heb. 10:25; Eph. 5:19), then if we miss, we are made that much weaker.
3. Do you forsake the assembling (Heb. 10:25) for reasons that are within your control?

D. *Consumed with secular interest.*

1. This life is merely a land we are passing through (Heb. 13:14).
  - a. Means that secular things are temporary.
  - b. Secular matters rank below spiritual matters.
2. When our secular concerns overshadow and crowd out the spiritual, it indicates we have a problem with indifference.
  - a. When we don't have time to worship.
  - b. When we don't have time to study.
  - c. When making money is more important than spiritual concerns.
  - d. When having fun is pushed ahead of serving the Lord.

## IV. The Cure For Indifference

A. *Preach and warn.*

1. Col. 1:28.
  - a. The goal: "that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." This is a mature Christian (not indifferent).
  - b. How it is accomplished: "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom."

2. Preaching is God's remedy.
  - a. The gospel has power (Rom. 1:16).
  - b. Do not need gimmicks, fancy building, social programs, entertainment, or activities for the whole family to interest the indifferent.
  - c. Just need to preach and warn! Soft soap preaching won't do it (cf. Rev. 3:19).

B. *Repent*

1. Churches that had a problem with indifference were told to repent.
  - a. Rev. 2:4-5.
  - b. Rev. 3:16, 19.
2. Repentance is a change of mind.
  - a. Prompted by sorrow toward God (2 Cor. 7:10; Rev. 2:5).
  - b. Results in a change of life (Rev. 2:5).
3. If you recognize the signs of indifference in your life, you need to repent!

C. *Study*

1. Faith is based upon the word (Rom. 10:17).
2. The more we study, the stronger our faith becomes (2 Thess. 1:3).
3. The stronger our faith, the more indifference fades.

D. *Be a doer of the word*

1. Jas. 1:21-25.
2. Activate the faith you have (Jas. 2).
3. The more we exercise our faith, the easier it gets to continue in the practice.

**Conclusion:**

1. Indifference, by its very nature, is a hard problem to battle.
2. It can be overcome.

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