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.
   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).

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).
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.
   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
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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