

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## *Old Hickory Church of Christ*

841 Old Hickory Blvd.

Jackson, TN 38305

[oldhickorycofc.com](http://oldhickorycofc.com)

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## Alternatives to Indifference

Indifference is unconcern. It is an individual matter, but churches become indifferent to the extent that the people which comprise them are indifferent. It is likely the most common malady among local congregations today. It may be found in every section of the country and in every size congregation. Personally, it pervades the lives of the most spiritually intelligent people just as it does those who have little knowledge of the Scriptures. It is subtle, gradual, and many times, imperceptible. It moves slowly and without fanfare and is thus hard to diagnose, even for the most sagacious person.

The conquering of indifference can be done perhaps more effectively by preventative measures than by diagnostic ones.

The measures for the prevention of indifference are so obvious as to almost seem simplistic. But we must begin with these or we are apt to fool ourselves into thinking we are active when we are, in fact, indifferent. Make no mistake about it, there is no time to lose, for this most pervasive of all spiritual maladies is most assuredly at work.

1. There must be a stronger tendency toward Bible study. Indifference has a hard time making much progress in a life that is

duly influenced by regular exposure to biblical instruction. Bible study is hard, no doubt about it. It takes work, concentration, planning, perseverance. No wonder Paul calls the one who does it a "workman" (2 Timothy 2:15). He says one must "handle aright" the word of truth; it takes a workman to do that. Handling calls for concentration. "Cutting along a straight line" is the idiom in the original language. Cutting is hard work, no matter if it's cutting meat, cutting material, cutting the grass, or appropriating the word of God to one's life. You have to try hard.

And there is no such thing as "corporate study" (it is not so that because there is studying going on, you have studied); but there is such a thing as "corporate knowledge," or the whole of what each person knows, viewed together. Such corporate education is necessary for strong churches. And to whatever extent it does not exist, to that same extent the local congregation suffers indifference, sometimes even moral decay.

2. There must be a greater devotion of worship, both public and private. Worship illustrates commitment. It is unthinkable that a person who meditates about God and His word and is seeking to apply it to his life would be derelict in worship. And yet, we see people who affirm their faith in Christ who are indifferent to such opportunities. You may rest assured that when people are sporadic in attending public worship services, there is an amount of indifference in their lives.

Nor does the mere fact that we attend the public assemblies declare how much private worship we do. What seems to be worship may be an empty ritual, one designed to walk through the various exercises in order to keep down some controversy or maintain family tradition. But true worship is a great combatant against indifference.

Notice, I said true worship. Worship, public or private, must have the right elements (see John 4:23-24), or be "in spirit and in truth." No worship can ever be proper without the right attitude; nor can it be proper when truth is not present. Otherwise, the worshipper has no idea if he is pleasing God. The truest worship you can give begins when you present yourself to God (Romans 12:1-2). Both private and public worship depends on first giving yourself. It means nothing if it starts some other place.

3. We must have a genuine concern for one another. We can do much to combat indifference - both in ourselves and in others - by mutual exhortation. Hebrews 10:23-25 recommends that we exhort one another to greater faithfulness. Sure, there is a risk involved; do it anyhow. If someone were headed toward some sure disaster, you certainly would ignore the risk and warn them, would you not? Hebrews 3:12-14 tells us we should do it "while it is today," indicating that we sense the urgency in the situation. There may be no other opportunity.

Romans 12:4-21 gives an abundance of information which, if implemented, would do much to combat indifference. Among other things, it requires that we not think too highly of ourselves (verse 3); that we each do what we have the gift to do (verses 4-8); that our love be pure, not feigned (9); that we be family affectioned toward one another (10); not flagging in our energetic pursuit of that which is right (11); keeping hope alive for one another, forbearing one another and urgent in our remembrance of one another in prayer (12); benevolent to those who need us, hospitable to each other (13); involved with one another (15); same-minded, always descending to the level of those lower than we are (16); and handling disagreements with care, considering God in all we do (17-21). If these few things were put into service, indifference would suffer a serious blow.

Let's get going again. Let's get ourselves up and begin again to do what we know is right. Let's rid ourselves of the deterrents to our faithfulness, charge ourselves with our own responsibilities, fuel ourselves with a love for God and for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

- Dee Bowman

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## **You Can ... But You Can't**

You can ignore God's warnings: you can refuse His blessing; you can reject all his wondrous love; but you can't go to heaven doing so.

You can believe any doctrine you choose; you can belong to the church of your choice; you can worship God as you please; but you can't please God doing so (2 John 9; John 8:32; Matt. 15:9,13; Heb 11:6; Rom. 10:17).

It seems that Satan has done a remarkable job of convincing the people that their religion is a matter of their choice, not God's; that it is a matter of their being pleased, not God; that is, if they are pleased, then God must be.

People insist, "I have a right to believe as I please. I have a right to join the church of my choice. I have a right to worship God as I see fit." And I reply, "Yes, you most certainly do. Not only does the constitution of our great nation give us this privilege, but so does God himself. 'Choose ye this day whom ye will serve' is the way God would have it."

God created man a free moral agent - that is, He made him with the power to choose. You are admonished to choose between right and wrong, between false doctrine and the truth, between worshipping God as He directs, thus pleasing Him and worshipping God as you are pleased to have it. You are admonished to choose between being a member of some denomination started by man and being a member of the church, between heaven and hell - yes, you have a right to go to hell, but do you prefer to exercise that right?

Yes YOU CAN do as you please - BUT YOU CAN'T please God at the same time.

- B. G. Hope

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## **Preaching Fear**

One of the strange phenomena of our day is the spectacle of religion dropping the appeal to fear while other human interests have picked it up. Just look around. Everybody is preaching fear except the church.

We are being taught to fear everything from AIDS to radon, from the hole in the ozone to the cutting down of the rain forests. We see fear as a good thing - something worthwhile and productive. We want people to fear except when it comes to religion. Then it becomes a "no, no."

We are enjoined to talk exclusively about the love of God. Don't mention the wrath of God. Don't talk about hell. Don't warn the disobedient. So, we are told, don't preach the fear of God.

". . . Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:17).  
Living in fear! It's the right thing to do!

- John Gibson

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- > "The sin we fail to slay is the one that slays us!"
  - > "Whatsoever we ask of God, let us be willing to work for it."
  - > "You will keep on getting what you always got if you keep on doing what you've always done."
  - > "Some people who would never hurt a fly stand by and let their brethren be devoured by Satan."
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: *"Tracing Peter's Growth!"* (Text: 2 Pet. 3:17-18); Sunday evening: *"The Sin of Uselessness!"* (Text: Jas. 4:17).