

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Preacher ≠ Pastor

Preachers and pastors are two different roles in the New Testament church. The modern idea of a pastor being the head leader and preacher of a church is wholly unbiblical.

Pastors, as seen in Ephesians 4:11, Acts 20:28-29, 1 Peter 5:1-4, are guardians and shepherds of the local congregation. They are also called "elders" and "shepherds." They always come in multiples as to not be dictators in the church. They also have qualifications as mentioned in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. They are males, who are married with children, and proven character.

Preachers are men whose job it is to proclaim the gospel. This they do in public, in preaching and teaching, and in private, in personal studies and bible studies. They are also called "ministers" and sometimes simply "teachers." They are to be found faithful and know how to rightly handle the word of truth. Preachers are to speak to please God and not man, and preach the truth in season and out of season.

It is true that a preacher can also be appointed a pastor. But in that case, it is a man wearing two hats. We cannot conflate the two roles as being one.

If someone proclaims themselves as a pastor, without knowing or fulfilling the role that God has ordained in His scriptures, how much does that man know about the word of God that they claim to teach?

- Chadwick Brewer

Signs of Indifference

How can I tell if I am indifferent? Furthermore, how can I see that there is indifference within the local church? Let's consider four signs that point to apathy.

1. A loss of zeal. Dedicated people have a burning zeal. They are fervent in spirit (Romans 12:11). Their hearts burn within them as the two who were on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:32). However, it is possible to lose that fire of enthusiasm. The church at Ephesus had left its first love (Revelation 2:4-5).

Judah, both before and after the exile, let their service deteriorate into a weary routine that demanded no real effort. Isaiah said their fear toward God had become "tradition learned by rote" (Isaiah 29:13, NASV). Malachi rebukes the remnant for offering inferior sacrifices (blind, lame, and sick) to God (1:6 - 2:17).

When a church has some members who have either lost or never had zeal, it has a problem with indifference. Some Christians are not excited about the salvation they have in Christ. Some are not enthused about worshiping the Almighty. Some are not fired up about the hope of eternal life. When your service to God is a "ho-hum, no big deal" thing, your fire has gone out!

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."

2. A loss of spiritual interest. Waning interest in spiritual matters easily follows a loss of zeal. There are several indicators that our desire for the spiritual has decreased.

A lack of desire for the word. All Christians ought to have the same thirst for the word that babies have for their milk (1 Peter 2:1-2). David wrote at length about his love and desire for God's word (Psalms 119). When Christians have no real interest in studying and learning, make little or no effort to come to Bible study, don't care to know what the text means or how it applies, indifference is a problem. Every person that I have talked to who has quit serving the Lord, has said that they quit studying their Bibles long before.

Not bothered by sin. Those who fear God hate sin (Proverbs 8:13) and depart from it (Proverbs 16:6). When Christians are not disturbed by sin in their own life or that of others, indifference is indeed a problem.

Not bothered by false doctrine. David said that rivers of waters ran down his eyes because some had not kept the law of God (Psalms 119:136). God's people, who love the law of God, are bothered when false doctrine is taught. However, there are Christians who are not bothered by uncertain sounds being given. Furthermore, they don't want to hear any warning about it. Indifference indeed!

Not concerned about the lost. When we care little about approaching the lost about the gospel of Christ, apathy is well under way in our lives (cf. Mark 16:15).

3. Missing services. It may begin with an occasional absence. Maybe we start with allowing our work schedule to keep us away. It may bother us at first, then we adjust to the idea. Later we may miss once in a while to do something else we want to do. It is now becoming easier to miss even more. It may start with missing Bible study or Wednesday evening, then Sunday night and so on.

Every service we miss, we miss out on that much spiritual growth. Thomas missed what the other disciples gained when he was not there (John 20:20-28). If by being present we are built up and edified (Hebrews 10:25; Ephesians 5:19), then if we miss, we are made that much weaker.

Do you forsake the assembling (Hebrews 10:25) for reasons that are within your control? If so, you are indifferent.

4. Consumed with secular interest. This life is merely a land we are passing through (Hebrews 13:14). That means that secular things are temporary and rank far below spiritual matters.

When our secular concerns overshadow and crowd out the spiritual, it indicates that we have a problem with indifference. When we don't have time to worship or study our Bibles, we are plagued with indifference. When making money is more important than spiritual concerns, we have a problem. When having fun is pushed ahead of serving the Lord, indifference is taking its toll.

These principles will help us as we examine ourselves (2 Corinthians 13:5).

- Donnie V. Rader, via Truth Magazine, 1999

Have you "dropped out of church"?

In order to become a Christian, one offers his body to the Lord as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1), giving heed to His life-giving commands (John 3:36). Among the many certainties of the Christian's life, he has "escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," (2 Peter 2:20); he has departed from the errors, pollutions, moral corruptions of crimes and vices found in a society that has chosen to live in rebellion to God and His will.

In this context, Peter opposes the popular but false belief, "Once saved, always saved." Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he declares:

"For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them." (2 Peter 2:20-21).

These who become entangled and overcome AGAIN by the sins found in the world are worse off than they were before they declared their allegiance to Jesus Christ and adopted the restraints of His gospel. In returning to the former lifestyle, one forfeits the superior life, the way of righteousness, God's holy commandment.

Is this merely some trivial condition that may be lightly referred to as becoming an "inactive member of the church"? The harsh tragedy of going back into the world of moral filth and self-serving lusts cannot be softened or neutralized by referring to one's apostasy as temporarily "dropping out of the church"! Friend, do you realize that the Bible does not use expressions of that kind in describing a Christian's departure from the faith?

When one stops serving the King of kings and Lord of lords in order to serve himself, he has "trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace" (Hebrews 10:29). The writer's question is appropriate: "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve"? Punishment under the Old Testament Law was bad enough, where "every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty," (Hebrews 2:2). Divine punishment under the New Covenant is worse! When Christians depart from faithful service, "they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame." (Hebrews 6:6). Can any sin be greater than treating Christ with disdain, disregarding His precious sacrifice? When a Christian spurns the mercy offered by Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, is it not the very worst antagonistic repudiation of things holy?

For such a person there is only a terrifying Judgment, when "the fury of a fire . . . will consume" him. (Hebrews 10:27). The most miserable person in the world has to be the one who was once a faithful Christian, knowing the great price Christ paid for his forgiveness, but has deliberately forsaken merciful fellowship with God. The consequences are terrifying (cf. Romans 11:22)!

It is very difficult to repent and come back to Christ when we have intentionally chosen contempt for Him (cf. Hebrews 6:6). It is a terrible state when one is no longer able to recognize or care about the "riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience," that

"leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4), or the precious blood of Christ, "choice and precious in the sight of God" (1 Peter 1:19; 2:4)!

Friend, "we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20)! Be like Peter, who wept bitterly over his sins (Luke 22:62), repented and returned to the Lord to serve Him faithfully (John 21:15-19)! Be like the prodigal son who came to himself, recognized his sins and unworthiness, and returned to the open arms of his loving father (Luke 15:17-24)! Renounce your despicable sins and in repentance return to your loving Father while the opportunity is yours today (2 Corinthians 6:2)! Do not be like Judas, who failed to repent and seek forgiveness by a return to Christ (Matthew 27:3-5)! May we help you?

- Gary Smalley

- * "Jesus Christ is the only fountain who can satisfy the thirsty soul!"
 - * "Spoiled children are given what they want; wise parents give them what they need!"
 - * "All people make mistakes; that's why they put erasers on pencils!"
 - * "A Bible that's falling apart usually belongs to a person who isn't!"
 - * "No one ever grows fat on excuses, but everybody gets fed up with them!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)