

"In the beginning
was the Word,
and the Word was
with God, and the
Word was God."
—John 1:1

The Lord's Flock
Growth
DIGEST
PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES



“Consequences of Spiritual Apathy”

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The Lord said, in Haggai 1:1-7, *"In the second year of Darius the King, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zarubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: "Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say that the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD." Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but never have enough; you drink, but never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes." Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways."*

We will talk about Haggai and the consequences of Spiritual Apathy because the spirit of apathy among the people was best described during the time of Haggai. Haggai was considered a minor prophet but he proclaimed a major message. He proclaimed God's word to awaken Israel, who just got back to Jerusalem after seventy years of captivity in Babylon, for they were filled with spiritual apathy during his time.

Our theme for this year is "Awakening from Spiritual Slumber or Spiritual Sleep." There are different types of sleep. Some people in our church and in our community are already in coma, which means that he or she had been sleeping for a long time.

Evidences of Spiritual Apathy

1. God's work was being neglected.
 - Neglecting God's work means that we are not taking care of God's business.
 - One reason for neglecting God's work is the feeling of contentment.
2. God's people were content.
 - Contentment is a virtue and the gospel teaches us to be content with what God is doing.
 - However, sometimes, we forget the negative connotation of contentment. For instance, after having built the sixth floor of the Heritage, we have grown so content that we do not strive to continue God's temple anymore.
3. Empty excuses were being offered for not doing God's work.

Do you have these evidences today? Are you neglecting God's work now? Are you content with what you are doing for the Lord today? Are you not dreaming of doing bigger things for the Lord or excelling in your service anymore? Are excuses always on your lips

the moment the Lord tells you to do something for Him? These are the evidences of spiritual apathy.

Root causes of Spiritual Apathy

1. Self-centeredness

- St. Paul said, Phil 2:3-4, "*...in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*"
- Do reflect on the following: Do we do things for ourselves and think only about our own interests when the Lord said we have to deny ourselves? Is the Lord really the King in our lives or are we still sitting on His throne and taking charge?

2. Worldly-mindedness

- Are we conforming to the standards of this world today? Are we becoming materialistic and power-hungry again?

3. Ungratefulness

- Are we forgetting that we could never repay the Lord for all the things He did for us no matter how much we serve Him? Are we complaining again instead of thanking Him for all the blessings He has showered upon us?

St. Paul said, in Romans 6:23, "*For wages of sin is death...*" The Lord will forgive us when we apologize to Him but we will still suffer the consequences of our actions. For instance, if you killed someone and say sorry to the Lord, He will forgive you but you will still have to go to jail. Another example would be you borrowing more money than you can pay back. You, as a result, might be sued. That is why the Lord said, in Romans 13:8, "*Owe no one anything, except to love one another...*" Why? Because there will always be consequences! When we obey, we will always be blessed by God; and when we disobey, there are also consequences that we have to face.

Consequences of Spiritual Apathy

1. Their relationship with God was marred.

- The Lord gave us His commandments and we must follow them so that our relationship with Him will not be marred.
- Broken relationships are hard to restore. Let us go back to what the Lord said in Haggai 1 and pay attention to the Lord's response to the people's self-centeredness and ungratefulness. He referred to the Israelites as "these people", instead of "my people" like He used to. There was more than a hint of contempt. It was as if He did not want to be associated with them in any way. He seemed to have had enough of their worldliness, dilly-dallying and time-wasting.
- Sometimes we too keep the Lord waiting. The Lord is not happy when we neglect His work. He sounded like He has had enough with the Israelites. Is it possible to drive God to that point? Yes, though the Lord is slow to anger, He is also a just God. So, let us not drive the Lord to that point.
- When we put ourselves first and think only of our best interests and neglect God's work, we can drive Him to that point. If we can give our best to others, our bosses, clients, and business associates because we want a raise, an award, a contract, or a position, how come we cannot give the best to the source?
- Why are we neglecting God's work? It is because of self-centeredness. We only do the things we want and the things that would benefit us. It is also because of worldly-mindedness. We are, once again, conforming to the standards of this world.

- The Lord said, in Romans 12:2, *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..."*
- In James 4:4, the Lord said, *"...whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."*
- According to 1 John 2:15, *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him."*
- There is always an ongoing battle inside us because the flesh has the desire to be glorified, the desire to be approved, the desire to be so proud, the desire to gratify the flesh, and the desire to do what we want, instead of what God wants.
- In Haggai 1, He addressed them in a way that was, in effect, reproachful. The same form of address is found in Jer. 7:16, *"As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up a prayer or cry for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you."* At that time, the people of Israel were wholly given to idolatry and immorality.
- He addressed them in a similar manner in Jer. 14:10-11, *"Thus says the Lord concerning this people: 'They have loved to wander thus; they have not restrained their feet; therefore the LORD does not accept them; now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins.' The Lord said to me: 'Do not pray for the welfare of this people.'"*
- In Exodus 32:9, after the people made the golden calf and worshipped it, the Lord said to Moses, *"I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people."* In this case, their sins aroused God's anger and as a result they marred their special relationship with God. This was also what happened during the time of Haggai the prophet. The spiritual apathy of the people, their indifference to the ruined state of the temple, marred their relationship with the Lord.
- The temple that the Lord was referring to was not just the building, He is also referring to our own bodies for we are, as it written in the 1 Cor. 6:19, temples of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we neglect that part of us. Sometimes we no longer read the bible and we are too busy to pray and to attend community gatherings.
- We must learn to take care and maintain our relationship with God because, apart from Him, we are nothing. We have to be connected with Him. We get disconnected when we sin because God and sin cannot be together. Gratifying the works of the flesh hurts the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit wants to live in our bodies as His temple, as His residence. But when we disobey Him, He is easily grieved.
- So the Lord no long addressed them in those gentle, loving, and affectionate way that He had used when speaking to them in the past. Instead, He used contemptuous, sharp, abrupt, and cold tone of voice.
- In Revelations 2, the Lord was unhappy with the people. In Haggai 1, He was angry with the people. It was almost as if He virtually disowned them. Of course, God did not disown them. He is faithful and could never abandon His covenant with them. They were still His people, but they were very much out of favor with Him because of their sin. Their relationship with Him was ruined.
- Let us not ruin our relationship with God. It is hard when our relationships with our parents, spouses, other family members and friends are not what they are supposed to be. The hardest is that when our relationship with God is ruined. Of course we, Christians, will always be a child of God but sin can mar our relationship with Him. That is the number one result of sin. The close and intimate relationship that we once enjoyed when we were living in obedience will disappear when we disobey. The relationship is marred because of sin and it will remain that way until we turn away from our sins.

- David experienced this in Ps. 51. It was not until David came to the point of genuine repentance that his broken or marred relationship with God was restored. He asked God not to take away His Holy Spirit from him and to give him back the joy of his salvation.

Today, ask yourselves the following questions:

1. As a Christian, do you feel that God seems somewhat at a distance with you?
2. Have you, in recent months, lost the sense of God's presence and nearness to you and the love that you experienced before?
3. Is your fellowship with the Lord not what it used to be?
4. Do you find that you cannot speak with the Lord as you once did because you are hiding your sins from Him?
5. Does it seem that there is some sort of barrier between you and the Lord?

If so, then perhaps it is because there are some sins in our lives that we have not confessed yet or some sins that we have been indulging for quite some time. Have we been indulging some sin in secret? We can fool people but, remember, we cannot fool the Lord.

Maybe like the people in the days of Haggai, we have fallen into a state of spiritual apathy in the past months. Maybe you are no longer serving Him as much as you used to. Maybe you have been limiting your time in serving God and maybe you have been excusing yourself from community activities because you are too busy. Are there times that you deny the Lord by stifling the Holy Spirit? Maybe the Lord wants to use you but you refused to be His instrument. Maybe He wants to perform a miracle in your life but you do not want to be His miracle ground. Are we filled with excuses lately when it comes to doing God's work? Are we becoming selfish of our time? Are we giving the leftovers of our time instead of our best time to the Lord? Are we serving God because it is what we are expected to do or are we doing it because it is our passion and because we love God so much? We cannot repay the forgiveness that He has given us. We cannot out-pay God in His generosity.

Are we less disciplined in our attendance at worship? During worship, are we texting and playing games instead of truly worshipping the Lord? Maybe like the people in the days of Haggai, we have fallen into the state of spiritual apathy because we have less discipline in our prayer time, speech, and conduct.

We do not know what is going to happen to us in the future. We do not know if we are still alive tomorrow. So, let us serve the Lord while we have the chance because we can never out-pay Him.