

# Neglecting God | Consequences Of Neglect

By Mike Riley

In this article we want to look at some consequences of being neglectful not only in the physical realm but in the spiritual realm as well. Let us first look at the definition of the word neglect: "To fail to carry out an expected or required action through carelessness or by intention. The state of being lax, inattentive, or indifferent."

It is normally expected that an individual who assumes a responsibility is able to fulfill it. In today's world, this is not the case. Every day we hear of cases of neglect that prove this isn't true. Numerous social problems occur as a result of incompetence and negligence; i.e., (1) medical doctors being sued for malpractice; (2) nursing homes being sued for not taking proper care of the elderly; (3) parents not taking care of their children (mental or physical abuse); (4) auto mechanics charging for parts that have not been replaced or using old parts and charging the customer the same price for a new part; (5) spiritual neglect (Jeremiah 48:10; cf. 1 Samuel 15:3,9; 1 Kings 20:42).

## God's Word Forbids Negligence

Whatever we attempt to do, we must do it with all of our being (Ecclesiastes 9:10). When we accept a responsibility (especially in the Lord's Kingdom), we must see it to completion and "not look back" as Christ stated in Luke 9:62. Our neglectful attitude will cause us to be "cast out" (Matthew 25:14-30). The Bible forbids slothfulness (Hebrews 6:12) and negligence (2 Chronicles 29:11). In Matthew 18:16-17, we read if your brother will not hear you (due to neglect) after explaining to him what his trespass is, you are to tell the matter before the church and "if he neglects to hear the church, let him be as a heathen man and a publican."

## There Are Consequences Of Neglect

1) Because of neglect, man soon forgets God. The Lord through Jeremiah said, "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number." The Lord tells Israel because of their disobedience, "Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness" (Jeremiah 13:24). In verse 25 he continues, "This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the Lord, because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood." Again in Jeremiah 18:15, God declares, "Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up."

2) When we neglect Bible study, we neglecting God's command to "study" His Word (2 Timothy 2:15) and as a result we will forget what we have learned; i.e., "use it or lose it". Christ states the same principle in Matthew 25:29. In verse 30 we see the results of violating this principle, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." God warns us in Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed (cut off) for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." It is God's desire that all men are saved and will come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

3) Neglect prevents spiritual growth (Hebrews 5:12-13; 1 Peter 2:2). Paul told the Corinthians, "I have fed you with milk and not meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" (1 Corinthians 3:2). The Corinthians were still spiritual babies as far as Bible knowledge was concerned due to neglect of God's Word. Forgetting God and Bible study will cause regret. Neglecting to study God's Word will cause one to eventually disobey or outright reject God, be lost eternally, and in the end will produce anguish that will last for eternity (Matthew 22:13; Matthew 24:51; Matthew 25:13; 2 Peter 2:17; Jude

13). Our neglect in studying and applying God's Word influences others to do likewise (i.e., our children, spouse, members of the Lord's church) and also contributes to others outside the body of Christ to remain lost.

4) Neglect will cause us to lose our soul. In Hebrews 2:2-3, this point is emphasized, "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast; and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation..." The point is that we will not escape God's wrath and punishment (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

5) The poor and needy go without when we neglect our responsibility in doing the Lord's work (James 1:27; Gal. 6:10).

#### Some Reasons For Negligence

Individuals become negligent because: (1) They no longer are interested in the task at hand (their zeal is gone); (2) They become "doubleminded" (James 1:8; James 4:8) – Their heart is on something else more important (Matthew 6:21); (3) Laziness and indifference: "I will do the Lord's work tomorrow"; (4) They may not have enough training for completing the required task; (5) They may have a spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7); (6) Failure to do what you know you should do (James 4:17); (7) They may not be aware of the importance of the task; (8) A lack of self-discipline; (9) A failure to pray for God's wisdom (Proverbs 2:1-6; James 1:2-5).

#### Ways To Overcome Negligence

We can overcome negligence by: (1) Performing a personal examination of our heart in all areas of our life (Psalm 26:2; 1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5); (2) Writing down a specific plan of action for overcoming neglect; (3) Praying to the Father for strength and wisdom to overcome the problem of neglect; (4) Making ourselves do it! Action is the key to victory!; (5) Renewing our minds and rededicating our lives every day (Ephesians 4:23-24); (6) Spending time daily meditating in

God's Word (Psalm 1:2; Psalm 119:15,23,48); (7) Associating with "doers of the word" (Psalm 119:63; James 1:22; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9; Hebrews 13:7) in order to receive encouragement from faithful brethren.

## Conclusion

Let's ask ourselves the following questions:

- 1) Have we been negligent as a parent by not being proper role models and Christian examples before our children?
- 2) Have we been negligent as a Christian by having opportunities to teach God's word to others but failed to take advantage of those opportunities?
- 3) Have we been negligent in attending Bible classes and worship services?
- 4) Have we been negligent in obeying the Lord in any way?

If we have, let's humbly and prayerfully ask our heavenly Father to forgive us (1 John 1:9) and help us to "press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14 – ASV).