



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## Involvement: Protection Against Lethargy

by Jerry King

Lethargy is defined by Mr. Webster, first as "unnatural sleepiness; morbid drowsiness; profound sleep, from which a person can scarcely be awakened," and then "dullness; inaction; inattention." It is a phenomenon common in our society, sometimes appearing as the involuntary symptom of a medical disorder, but often as the voluntary symptom of a spiritual disorder. The involuntary medical lethargy is unfortunate, and thankfully there are some wonderful medicinal helps to combat it; the voluntary spiritual disorder is sin, and thankfully there are some biblical helps to combat it.

Our English Bibles use a number of words to describe voluntary spiritual lethargy. In the AV we find "slothful," and "dull." In the NASV we find more familiar terms like "sluggish," and "lazy," and "lagging behind." In every case, spiritual lethargy is condemned.

The entirety of Jesus' discourse in Matthew 25 is a condemnation of spiritual lethargy. The five foolish virgins who slept while unprepared for the bridegroom's return were denied entrance into the wedding feast (vs. 10-12). The slave who buried his master's talent in the ground was identified as worthless and cast into the outer darkness (v. 30). Those who had turned a dull ear to the cries of the hungry, naked, sick and imprisoned were accursed and sent away into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (v. 41). Jesus' point? Spiritual lethargy - sluggish, lazy, lagging-behind discipleship - will not be tolerated by Almighty God and cannot be tolerated by the people of God!

Christianity is active! The Christian is the spiritual farmer who plants patiently in hope of a bountiful harvest (Gal. 6:7-9), the spiritual soldier who fights courageously in assurance of victory even in death (Eph. 6:10-13), the spiritual athlete who runs swiftly in confidence of a victor's crown at the end of the race (1 Cor. 9:24-27). And the Christian is the spiritual slave who is willingly spent up in humble and faithful service to God and His people (Rom. 6:16-18; 2 Cor. 12:15), knowing that the reward for faithful service is adoption into the very family of God whom he serves (Rom. 8:14-17).

So how do we guard against spiritual lethargy? We determine to stay involved! We get off the couch (literally and figuratively), and we jump right into the middle of the people of God as they plant, fight, run and serve. We study and teach the Bible (plant); we actively oppose moral error in our community (fight); we remain conscious of the fact that our lives must be exemplary before our family, friends, neighbors and co-workers (run); and we strive to be the greatest possible asset to our local congregation (serve).

So many congregations are beset with spiritual lethargy. Congregational lethargy will end only as individual lethargy is eliminated. Planting, fighting, running and serving congregations (which are the only kind that grow) are so only as each member determines to plant, fight, run and serve. "From whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16).

Do you want to be part of an active, vibrant, growing church? Then get involved and stay involved! 1) *Set lofty goals for yourself.* We have far too few young men who have made it their goal to become deacons and elders, far too few young women who have made it their goal to be their wives. 2) *Develop your abilities.* Can you carry a tune in a bucket? Then learn to lead those who can't! Everyone can pray; learn to lead others in prayer. Everyone can talk; learn to teach. 3) *Sanctify your time, effort and resources.* Personal involvement carries a price. We have only so much time, energy and

money. The more active we become in the Lord's service, the less active we must become in the world's service. We must allow time, energy and money to God. That might mean less time, energy and money for entertainment, recreation, hobbies and extra jobs. 4) *Fight discouragement*. Be patient; often tangible results take time. Crops don't grow up in a day. Soldiers don't win every single skirmish. Athletes train for years before they become the best. So too we must plant, fight, run and serve with endurance, keeping our eye on the goal and maintaining our zeal until the end.

"For you are all sons of light and sons of day... So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober" (1 Thess. 5:5-6).

- *Christianity Magazine*, Sept/Oct 1995

## DEVOTED TO GOD IN EVERYTHING *A Heart Like Jesus*

By Matt Hennecke

The Bible has little to say about Jesus as he grew into adulthood. We do, however, have one brief glimpse of Jesus, at the age of twelve, responding to his mother when she, worried about him, asked about his staying behind in Jerusalem. Jesus responds, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's *house*?" Other translations put it this way: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's *business*?" (Luke 2:49). You may notice in your Bible the word "house" or "business" is in italics. That means it has been added by translators. Why? Interestingly, the Greek text doesn't have a noun to translate as either "house" or "business" so translators added a noun. So, a completely literal translation would read: "Did you not know I must be about my Father?" That sounds strange doesn't it? Without the added noun ("house" or "business") it feels like something is missing or has been omitted. We're left hanging, wondering "our Father's . . . what?"

Now I'm not suggesting I know anything about Greek or about translations, but it is interesting that without the added noun Jesus' statement seems much more expansive. In other words, Jesus' focus isn't just on his Father's house or just on his Father's business, but on his Father's – everything. Leaving off the noun may actually convey better what Jesus was saying. So what's the point? Well, there is a dangerous inclination many of us have to compartmentalize our lives. We develop a compartment for family, for work, for recreation, for hobbies, and for worship. In other words, if we're not careful we may push the Father into a compartment separate from all others and only devote ourselves to Him during worship or Bible study. If we do, then we are not being about our Father's *everything*.

Jesus was wholeheartedly devoted to his Father. Jesus focused on his Father in the temple, while at home, when he ate, when he did chores, when he practiced carpentry, and when he died. In short, Jesus was focused on his Father when he did anything. That is devotion. That is the heart of Jesus. Does your heart beat wholeheartedly for the Father in *every* aspect of your life?

- Source: *A Heart Like Jesus* by Matt Hennecke, CEI Bookstore