

## Is being busy a sin?

by Dr. Stephen Briix, Academic Dean, International College of Bible and Missions, Johannesburg, South Africa (and Entrust staff member)

In teaching Hebrews this term, God has been showing me the seriousness of sin.

The book of Hebrews appeals to Jewish Christians who were becoming apathetic in their approach to the Bible (2:1, 6:11-12) and were tempted to go back to “following God” through the Old Testament without Jesus (2:1, 3:12, 6:4-8).

I have never ministered to someone facing this temptation.

However, serving cross-culturally, I have realized that each culture faces different temptations of placing something above Jesus. For example, as an American pastor, I would have people decline serving God because they were “too busy with work.” Churches respond to this by offering shorter worship times or serving opportunities so that serving God could fit into their busy schedule. However, I have never heard anyone in South Africa say they are too busy to serve God.

To combat these temptations, the author of Hebrews expresses how Jesus is superior to whatever they would turn to other than him. Each of us face temptations to turn to things other than Jesus. We can become apathetic toward God while placing other things in front of him. I think if Hebrews were written to Americans, the author would warn us about “following God” while placing our finances/job/business above Jesus.

A danger of community sin is that Christian leaders can imply that the sin is not that harmful. Some American pastors seem to emphasize God’s grace so much that sinning by placing work above God is “okay.” But the author Hebrews never offers any type of “that’s okay, we are all sinners” line. Instead, he insists the people repent or face the judgment of God, which he paints in terrifying terms (10:26-31).

God has been stretching me as I wrestle with sins that seemed small when I was in America but now I realize are not. I am thankful for what God has been teaching me as I have studied his word with South African Christian leaders.

### Discussion questions

- What are some things your culture or community seem to tolerate, to allow a higher priority than Jesus?
- How do you struggle with those temptations in your life as you live in that community?
- How could you follow Hebrews and remind yourself of the superiority of Christ to help with those temptations?
- What might be some consequences if you fail in the struggle to keep Jesus as Lord in your life?

