

7 Deadly Sins: Indifference.

By Fabian A. Oliver

Question: What is the opposite of love?

If you're like me, you'd probably say "well duh! The answer is simple: Its hate." But I've learnt that its more complicated than we think. The truest answer is that the opposite of love is not hate, it is indifference. I heard somewhere that indifference is the very thing that makes the angels weep. According to the dictionary, indifference is the total lack of interest or sympathy. Its embodying the "I don't know, and I don't care" attitude. Or even, "if its not my friend or my family, then it's not my problem."

Is indifference really a sin?

To answer this question, let's think of the great commandment we are taught. This commandment covers all the other commandments. "Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, soul and mind, and the second is like it. Love your neighbour as you love yourself" (Matthew 22: 38-39). If loving God, neighbour and oneself is most important, then how do we know we have missed the mark? When we have stopped loving, right? And how do you know we have stopped loving? When we start hating. Or even when we have become numb and indifferent towards others.

Case in Point.

Remember the #MenAreTrash movement? A lot of people responded and said that not all men were trash. Be that as it may, how many brothers know other brothers who are abusive, cheat, and yet they remain quiet? We simply tell ourselves that as long as I am not doing it, then it's none of my business. Sadly, this just perpetuates the problem. Indifference exists in many forms. As long as I and those in my circle are not affected by poverty, gender violence, or any form of exclusion, then it's none of our business. But this is not the Christian way. Jesus challenges us to constantly love everyone. And loving is all about *protection*, *affection* and *correction*. That means protecting the most vulnerable, offering affection where needed but also correcting and standing against those who do wrong.

Indifference causes us to be absent from those who suffer (whom we claim to love). It blocks the magic from happening. The magic of compassion. Scripture often demonstrates Jesus being moved by compassion (Mt 9:36; 15:32; Mk 6:34; Jn 11:34-38). Compassion is the fuel that drives us to act in love and justice for others and ourselves. Jesus also deals with the indifference of the people in his time. This can be seen in his laments, "For the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and in return, I would heal them" (Matthew 13:15).

In the words of Cornel West, "We must never become well-adjusted to injustice and well adapted to indifference." Rabbi Abraham Heschel reminds us that indifference to evil is worse than the evil itself.

Who would have thought that having a "don't know, don't care" attitude could be the great cause of so many of our sins???