Crossroads International Church Dr. Rick Griffith

3 May 2015 Message 11 of 12

NLT 40 Minutes

Title

**Don’t Ignore God!**

***Hebrews 12:18-29***

**Topic:** Ignoring God

**Subject:** Why should we worship rather than ignore God?

**Complement:** Embrace God or pay the penalties.

**Purpose:** The listeners will embrace God rather than ignore him.

**Song:** “A Mighty Fortress” (Martin Luther)

# Introduction

### Interest: [We ignore both people and God.]

#### An elephant went for counseling and remarked, “Whenever I walk into a room, everyone ignores me.” It is true, isn’t it, that too often we ignore the very ones that we should pay attention to, but give our full attention to trivia?

Elephant in room

Asian Couple

Friends
(2 slides)

Husband
(4 slides)

Parents
(2 slides)

#### All of us know that we ought to pay close attention to people.

#### But sometimes a husband ignores his wife—or vice versa—though I think men are more skilled at ignoring their wife. One website even promotes the shirt called W.I.F.E.—Will Ignore For Eternity!

#### Too often parents ignore their children—especially dads.

#### People sometimes ignore their friends.

#### Youth sometimes ignore their parents. They say there’s no use trying to communicate.

Youth
(2 slides)

#### It’s also easy to ignore the marginalized.

Marginal

### Need: We speak of those who reject God, but worse than any of these, are you ignoring God?

Ignoring God?

#### You came to church—that’s good!

#### But are you really listening to him?

### Intro to MPI: How can you embrace rather than ignore God?

Subject

### Background: The readers of the letter to the Hebrews were tempted to ignore God—how would they respond to God?

Respond?

Bkgrd

#### The readers were in a dilemma. They had left Judaism to embrace Christ, but persecution tempted them to abandon him—yet they needed to advance with him!

• Advance

• Abandon

#### Perhaps they felt it best just to try to follow a “middle ground”—not deny Christ by returning to their former faith, but also not really embrace Christ by moving forward with him.

• Ignore

Monkeys

#### Frankly this is where many believers are at today. They aren’t ready to *abandon* Christ but they aren’t really convinced that they want to endure the sacrifices it takes to *advance* with him. In between abandoning and advancing is simply ignoring him. Yet ignoring God is the worst choice! We need to press on!

Press on!

How &
• Why?

### Preview: Let’s see *how* to embrace him instead—then *why* we should worship him.

### Text: Hebrews 12:18-29 is our final warning passage in Hebrews.

Heb 12:18-29

(How can we embrace rather than ignore God?)

# I. Realize that God beckons you (12:18-24).

MP

[The unapproachable old covenant is now the new covenant that draws us near.]

## *Don’t fear the unapproachable God* at Sinai when Moses gave Israel the old covenant (12:18-21).

18-21
(4 slides)

Don’t Fear

### God was frightening at Sinai!

#### Exod. 19:10-25 gives the full account.

#### Deut. 4:11-12; 5:22-26 adds even more to this.

How approach?

### How do you approach this awesome God?

#### Some religions grasp God’s “otherness” quite well—like Islam.

#### We need to recall God’s greatness rather than only think of him as our “buddy.” Too often we are too trite without embracing his majesty! However, despite his greatness, we can…

## *Come with joy to the living God* who accepted us into the new covenant as citizens of heaven (12:22-24; cf. Rev. 14:1; Ps. 2:6; 48:1-2, 8).

Come with joy!

22-24
(3 slides)

Views
on v. 22

###  What is meant by “Mt. Zion” in verse 22?

#### Scholars debate whether by “Mt. Zion” (v. 22) the author means the literal Mt. Zion (Jerusalem, or the hill on its southeast portion also called the Ophal) or if he refers to Mt. Zion as symbolically representing heaven.

#### Favoring the literal view is the earlier discussion of entering Canaan rest in the literal land of Israel (Heb. 4) and the fact that he does call Mt. Zion a city here.

#### However, it probably is better to argue for a figurative interpretation for several reasons:

##### Christians do *not* approach a *physical* mountain (12:18).

##### The believers’ entrance to “Mt. Zion” is already accomplished (“you *have* come” 12:22a).

##### The city is called the “heavenly Jerusalem” (v. 22).

### Why are these various people listed (12:23)? These are the present occupants of heaven!

23

#### God (12:22a, 23c)

#### Angels (12:22b)

#### OT saints (“general assembly” 12:23a & “spirits of righteous made perfect” 12:23d)

#### Church of the firstborn (12:23b)

#### Jesus (12:24)

### So don’t beat yourself when God accepts you! He has already made you a citizen with all of these other created beings.

22-23

NAU

Don’t beat yourself

How

MPI

(So we have seen *how* you can embrace rather than ignore him. Just realize that God beckons you.

MPI

Why

Now *why* should we worship rather than ignore God? The reason to embrace him is because…)

# II. Refusing God has consequences (12:25-29).

MP

[Ignore the Lord and you will experience his discipline rather than his grace.]

[We have now come to the 5th and final warning in Hebrews (read slides).]

Warnings
(6 slides)

## If God judged Israel for rejecting him in the desert, then rejecting him now will be even more severe (12:25).

SP + 25
(3 slides)

### He speaks not of loss of salvation or not being a believer, but loss of rewards and loss of physical life itself [explain the 13 slides].

Views
(13 slides)

### The point is that God speaks to us now from heaven!

Fingers in ears

Cross window

### Are you listening to God? Sometimes he shakes things up so we will listen. He will make things even worse before Christ returns. I can’t say I know all of God’s reasons for the Nepal quake, but I do thing he wants us to consider how shaky earthly things are in contrast to his unshakable purposes. Zechariah 14:4 says that the earth will quake under Christ at his return!

Zech 14

Nepal Quake

Premil

## God shook only Sinai in the past, but he will shake the whole earth in the future (12:26-27).

26-27

### The Nepal earthquake last week is an example of this world that can be shaken.

#### This is Pastor Kiran. He is one of three of my doctoral students from Nepal who were scheduled to arrive today for this week’s module starting tomorrow. However, the deadly Nepal quake changed their plans.

Kiran

Street crack

#### The earthquake struck at 11:56 a.m. on Saturday, April 25. Most do not realize that Saturday is the Hindu day of worship—so all the churches of Nepal adopt it as well. Each time I go to Nepal I have to shift my thinking to plan to preach on a Saturday, not Sunday, which is the day we start our courses.

Church

#### One ministry that I have taught with there is BEE (Biblical Education by Extension). Our BEE president wrote, “In Gorkha Barpak (a village with many Christians), 90 percent of the houses and all of the churches were demolished. At least 210 people were killed and many are missing still. Many are severely hurt and are close to death. In this area 32 pastors were third-generation BEE students. It is feared that most of them did not survive the earthquake.”

Man buried
(+2 stretcher)

Road

#### One of my students, Pastor Ananda, told me of a church where 400 believers were worshipping when the quake struck, burying them all. Ananda also lost his childhood home. He has lived in the open air without even money to buy a blanket, so we sent him S$1235 collected last Sunday for this family and others.

Ananda
(3 slides)

Second church shot

#### Another student, an Indian missionary to Kathmandu, wrote me, “It was on Saturday (Christian worship day in Nepal) so many Christian worshiper died in the church while worshiping.  Many of the believers lost their house and belongings while they were in the church. However, many are safe because they were in the church.”

#### Aid is flooding into Nepal so much that all the bays at the airport are filled. But the airport is the most primitive I’ve ever seen—the only one made from bricks.

Anguish

## Thank and worship God because of His grace and holiness (12:28-29).

28-29

### Invest yourself in what God will not shake.

Ps. 33

### Pray for Nepal—and match your prayer with action.

Pray

(Subject: Why should we worship rather than ignore God?)

Subj.

# Conclusion

MI

### Embrace God or pay the penalties (MI).

### Ignoring the Lord has severe results (MI restated).

### Don't ignore God. There are consequences for rejecting him (MI restated).

How?

### How can we embrace rather than ignore God (MPI question)?

#### Realize that God beckons you (12:18-24).

MPI

#### Do you see how he is seeking to draw you near?

Why?

### Why should we worship rather than ignore God (MPI question)?

#### Refusing God has consequences (12:25-29).

MPII

#### Too often we think God is ignoring us—but in reality we are ignoring him.

Button

#### But we are subtle. We don’t say, “How may I ignore you today?”

How may I ignore?

### Think about it.

Think about it.

#### How might you be ignoring God?

• Listening?

##### Are you on “listening terms”? We often talk about being on speaking terms with others, but this often doesn’t happen because we are first not on listening terms!

• V. 25

##### Notice verse 25. Let’s read it together.

12:25

#### How can you draw near to God?

Prayer

##### Are you ready for the Lord’s table? We will take communion in a few minutes, but Paul cautions us to make sure we take it in a worthy manner.

##### Have you already told God “yes” before he tells you what he has in mind?

###### Juan Carlos Ortiz, in his book called *Disciple*, likens God to asking us if we will submit to his plan for our life. We agree, then he puts a contract before us and says to sign it.

###### We look at it and say, “Wow, the God of the Universe has a plan for me! Why *wouldn’t* I want to sign it?!” Then we look at the paper and it’s only a white sheet of paper—completely blank.

###### “But, Lord,” you want me to sign when there isn’t even one word on it?”

###### He responds, “Do you trust me?”

### Prayer: “Lord, we don’t know what kind of earthquakes await us, but we do know that we do not want to ignore you. We want to embrace you, signing on the dotted line of what you have in store. In the name of Jesus, Amen.”

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### The author is now in the final section of his letter to show the implications of trusting in Christ’s superiority (10:19–13:25).

### He has just finished telling his readers not to despise God’s discipline (12:4-17).

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### Now he shares that one of the key ways that people despise God is by simply ignoring him!

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### The readers were in a dilemma. They had already left Judaism to embrace Christ, but persecution tempted them to go back.

### Perhaps they felt it best just to try to follow a “middle ground”—not deny Christ by returning to their former faith, but also not really embrace Christ by moving forward with him.

### Frankly this is where many believers are at today. They aren’t ready to *abandon* Christ but they aren’t really convinced that they want to endure the sacrifices it takes to *advance* with him. In between abandoning and advancing is simply ignoring him. Yet this is the worst choice!

# Questions

### What is the point of comparing Israel’s approach to Sinai and the readers’ approach to God now (12:18)?

#### Judgment applied to rejecting God in both instances.

#### However, judgment in the new covenant is greater!

### What is meant by “Mt. Zion” in verse 22?

#### Scholars debate whether by “Mt. Zion” (v. 22) the author means the literal Mt. Zion (Jerusalem, or the hill on its southeast portion also called the Ophal) or if he refers to Mt. Zion as symbolically representing heaven.

#### Favoring the literal view is the earlier discussion of entering Canaan rest in the literal land of Israel (Heb. 4) and the fact that he does call Mt. Zion a city here.

#### However, it probably is better to argue for a figurative interpretation for several reasons:

##### Christians do *not* approach a *physical* mountain (12:18).

##### The believers’ entrance to “Mt. Zion” is already accomplished (“you *have* come” 12:22a).

##### The city is called the “heavenly Jerusalem” (v. 22).

### Why are these various people listed (12:23)? These are the present occupants of heaven!

#### God (12:22a, 23c)

#### Angels (12:22b)

#### OT saints (“general assembly” 12:23a & “spirits of righteous made perfect” 12:23d)

#### Church of the firstborn (12:23b)

#### Jesus (12:24)

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Don’t Ignore God

# Possible Illustrations

### Ignoring relationships

#### The husband sometimes ignores his wife.

#### Youth sometimes ignore their parents.

#### Too often parents ignore their children.

### Nepal Earthquake

#### Three of my doctoral students from Nepal were scheduled to arrive today for this week’s module starting tomorrow. However, the deadly Nepal quake changed their plans.

#### The earthquake struck at 11:56 a.m. on Saturday, April 25. Most do not realize that Saturday is the Hindu day of worship—so all the churches of Nepal adopt it as well. Each time I go to Nepal I have to shift my thinking to plan to preach on a Saturday, not Sunday, which is the day we start our courses.

#### One ministry that I have taught with there is BEE (Biblical Education by Extension). Our BEE president wrote, “In Gorkha Barpak (a village with many Christians), 90 percent of the houses and all of the churches were demolished. At least 210 people were killed and many are missing still. Many are severely hurt and are close to death. In this area 32 pastors were third-generation BEE students. It is feared that most of them did not survive the earthquake.”

#### One of my students told me of a church where 400 believers were worshipping when the quake struck, burying them all.

#### Another student, an Indian missionary to Kathmandu, wrote me, “It was on Saturday (Christian worship day in Nepal) so many Christian worshiper died in the church while worshiping.  Many of the believers lost their house and belongings while they were in the church. However, many are safe because they were in the church.”

#### Aid is flooding into Nepal so much that all the bays at the airport are filled. But the airport is the most primitive I have ever seen—the only one made from bricks that I have ever seen. The government spent over $1 billion to buy the Airbus A380 mega-plane instead of developing the airport!

### DISC (Jesus was all four)

#### Dominant (Choleric)—active/task (determined, doer)

#### Influencing (Sanguine)—active/people (inspirational)

#### Submissive (Phlegmatic)—passive/people (sensitive, sweet, shy, suckers)

#### Cautious (Melancholy)—passive/task (calculated, correct, critical)

### Implications

#### It takes seven years for the new pastor with his “new personality” to conform the church.

# Possible Applications

### Some say the worst thing you can do to others short of killing them is to reject them outright. I disagree. The worst way to treat others is to ignore them.

### The same applies to God. Often we think being an atheist is the worst way to treat God—to reject him by saying that he doesn’t even exist. But at least many atheists are passionate about their rejection! Worse than atheism is to simply ignore God.

# *Exegetical Idea*: Fifth Warning: The way of refusing God’s voice feared at Sinai at the establishment of the Mosaic covenant by apostatizing would be even greater judgment now since this same God established the new covenant with its even greater blessings (12:18-29).

# *Exegetical Idea*: Fifth Warning: The way believers should come to God is to replace fear with joy and replace rejection with worship (12:18-29).

## Fifth Warning: Ignoring God’s voice feared at Sinai at the establishment of the Mosaic covenant by apostatizing will result in even greater judgment now since this same God established the new covenant with its even greater blessings (12:18-29).

### The awesome God feared and avoided at Mt. Sinai at the giving of the old covenant has now brought believers into the new covenant as citizens of heaven (12:18-24).[[1]](#footnote-1)

#### Believers do not come to the unapproachable God feared in the fire and smoke at Mt. Sinai when Moses gave Israel the old covenant (12:18-21; cf. Exod. 19:10-25; Deut. 4:11-12; 5:22-26).

#### Believers have come to the living God who has accepted them into the new covenant as citizens of heaven (Mt. Zion) with God, angels, OT saints, and Jesus (12:22-24; cf. Rev. 14:1; Ps. 2:6; 48:1-2, 8).

### Believers should never reject God when He speaks from heaven now since this will invite even more severe judgment than Israel experienced in Moses' time (12:25-29).

#### If God judged Israel for rejecting him in the desert, then rejecting him now will bring even more judgment (12:25).

#### God’s judgment at Sinai shook only the area near the mountain, but in the future [after the millennium] He will judge the entire earth and sky by removing them (12:26-27).

#### God deserves to be thanked and worshipped because of His graciousness in providing heaven permanently and because of His holiness shown in judgment (12:28-29).

**Don’t Ignore God!**

***Hebrews 12:18-29***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: Fifth Warning: The reason believers should come to God with joy and worship (instead of fear and unbelief) is because we will be more severely judged than was Israel (12:18-29).

# I. The way believers should come to God is not the dread shown at Mt. Sinai at the giving of the old covenant but the joy of the new covenant as citizens of heaven (12:18-24).[[2]](#footnote-2)

## Don’t fear the unapproachable God at Sinai when Moses gave Israel the old covenant (12:18-21; cf. Exod. 19:10-25; Deut. 4:11-12; 5:22-26).

## Come with joy to the living God who has accepted us into the new covenant as citizens of heaven (12:22-24; cf. Rev. 14:1; Ps. 2:6; 48:1-2, 8).

# II. The reason believers should come to God in worship rather than rejection is because unbelief will be even more severely judged now than it was for Israel at Sinai (12:25-29).

## If God judged Israel for rejecting him in the desert, then rejecting him now will be even more severe (12:25).

## God shook only Sinai in the past, but he will shake the whole earth in the future (12:26-27).

## Thank and worship God because of His grace and holiness (12:28-29).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will embrace God rather than ignore him.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: We ignore both people and God.

### Need: Are you ignoring God?

#### You came to church—that’s good!

#### But are you really listening to him?

### Intro to MPI: How can we embrace rather than ignore God?

### Background: The readers were tempted to ignore God.

### Preview: Let’s see *how* to embrace him instead—then *why* we should worship him.

### Text: Hebrews 12:18-29 is our final warning passage in Hebrews.

(How can we embrace rather than ignore God?)

# I. Realize that God beckons you (12:18-24).

## *Don’t fear the unapproachable God* at Sinai when Moses gave Israel the old covenant (12:18-21; cf. Exod. 19:10-25; Deut. 4:11-12; 5:22-26).

### Some religions grasp God’s “otherness” quite well—like Islam.

### We need to recall God’s greatness rather than only think of him as our “buddy.” Too often we are too trite without embracing his majesty! However, despite his greatness, we can…

## *Come with joy to the living God* who accepted us into the new covenant as citizens of heaven (12:22-24; cf. Rev. 14:1; Ps. 2:6; 48:1-2, 8).

(Subject: Why should we worship rather than ignore God?)

# II. Refusing God has consequences (12:25-29).

## If God judged Israel for rejecting him in the desert, then rejecting him now will be even more severe (12:25).

## God shook only Sinai in the past, but he will shake the whole earth in the future (12:26-27).

## Thank and worship God because of His grace and holiness (12:28-29).

(Subject: Why should we worship rather than ignore God?)

# Conclusion

### Embrace God or pay the penalties (MI).

### Ignoring the Lord has severe results (MI restated).

### Don't ignore God. There are consequences for rejecting him (MI restated).

### How can we embrace rather than ignore God (MPs)?

#### Realize that God beckons you (12:18-24). However, also realize that…

#### Refusing God has consequences (12:25-29).

### Exhortation

#### How might you be ignoring God?

#### How can you draw near to God?

### Prayer



**Rick Griffith**

3 May 2015

Message 11 of 12

**Don’t Ignore God!**

***Hebrews 12:18-29***

# Introduction

### We ignore both people and God—are you?

### How can we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ rather than ignore God?

### The readers were tempted to ignore God.

### Let’s see *how* to embrace him instead—then *why* we should worship him.

# I. Realize that God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ you (12:18-24).

## *Don’t fear the unapproachable God* at Sinai when Moses gave Israel the old covenant (12:18-21; cf. Exod. 19:10-25; Deut. 4:11-12; 5:22-26).

## *Come with joy to the living God* who accepted us into the new covenant as citizens of heaven (12:22-24; cf. Rev. 14:1; Ps. 2:6; 48:1-2, 8).

(Why should we worship rather than ignore God?)

# II. Refusing God has \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (12:25-29).

## If God judged Israel for rejecting him in the desert, then rejecting him now will be even more severe (12:25).

## God shook only Sinai in the past, but he will shake the whole earth in the future (12:26-27).

## Thank and worship God because of His grace and holiness (12:28-29).

(Why should we worship rather than ignore God?)

# Conclusion

### Embrace God or pay the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Main Idea).

### Think about it.

#### How might you be ignoring God?

#### How can you draw near to God?

**Thought Questions**

1. Read the passage aloud. List the ways God draws us near.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Verse** | **How God draws us near** |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |

1. What is the main warning about in the book of Hebrews?

Text

Text

Text

Text

1. When have you ignored God in your Christian experience? What brought you back?

Text

Text

1. Scholars debate whether by “Mt. Zion” (v. 22) the author means the literal Mt. Zion (Jerusalem, or the hill on its southeast portion also called the Ophal) or if he refers to Mt. Zion as symbolically representing heaven. Favoring the literal view is the earlier discussion of entering Canaan rest in the literal land of Israel (Heb. 4) and the fact that he does call Mt. Zion a city here. However, it probably is better to argue for a figurative interpretation since the believers’ entrance to “Mt. Zion” is already accomplished (“you have come”) and the city is designated as the “heavenly Jerusalem” (v. 22). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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