



APATHY

AVOIDING INDIFFERENCE

Growing Christians Study #1

“...they came not to the help of the Lord...” Judges 5:23

What a sad commentary about a blessed people. A people who were never failed by the LORD, failed to help the cause of the LORD. It is safe to say these people were takers. They were users of God without a desire to serve God. Can there be anything more despicable? Is there anything more revolting to a Holy God than to be used but not served? This spirit of apathy angered God. The same verse that contains Spiritual apathy also contains righteous indignation.

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God pronounces a bitter curse on this people for their apathy. We must beware of apathy.

Could it be said of us that the LORD that has never failed us receives a spirit of apathy from us. Do we really care about the cause of Christ or are we living in apathy. In this lesson we will address this deadly topic called Spiritual Apathy.

I. Definition Of Apathy

Matthew 24:12 “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”

This verse describes Spiritual apathy. This verse is speaking of Christians and their love for their Saviour.

There are a few words that we need to understand in this verse in order to comprehend the meaning of apathy.

The first word to understand is the word “*love*.” This word is the Greek word “*agape*.” It is the most supreme of all love. It is the same love that God has for the world. The word love found in John 3:16 is the word *agape*. This is the most pure, sincere, and devout love. This is the love we are to have for Christ according to Mark 12:30. “*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:*”

Therefore, the love that is being spoken of in Matthew 24:13 is a Christian's deep and committed love to Christ.

The second word to understand is the word “*cold*.” This word is the Greek word “*psoo'-kno*.” It means.....

- To breath voluntary but gently
- To breath without forcible respiration
- To breath without visible recognition

In other words, when our spiritual love for God is but a mere shallow breath we are apathetic.

Apathy is not a panting after God like David spoke of in Psalms 42:1, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Apathy is a faint, shallow, breath rather than a passionate panting.

How is your love for God?

- Panting?
- Regular?
- Recognizable?
- Faint?
- Un-noticeable?

II. Development of Apathy

Before we see the elements of that can produce apathy, it is important to that apathy is brought about very slowly.

Matthew 24:12 "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Notice the word "cold." This is the word the Lord used to describe how our love will become apathetic. The word "cold" in the Greek means to gradually change from one state to another.

Take for instance the moon when it is "waxing." A "waxing moon begins with the first ray of light bouncing off the moons right side as it come out of complete darkness from the new moon. Slowly the light spreads from right to left until it is completely covered with light and becomes a new moon.

This process of a "waxing" moon takes 14 days, 18 hours, 22 minutes, and 1.4 seconds to complete. It doesn't happen over night. It is "waxing."

A Christians love "waxes" apathetic. It is a gradual change. It moves ever so slowly from passion to apathy.

By the way, is your love waxing cold?
Are you becoming apathetic?

This slow process is aided by two elements.

A. Sin

Matthew 24:12 "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Notice the word "iniquity." The Lord gives this as a reason our love waxes cold or we become apathetic. The word "iniquity" means to violate God's law. Iniquity is the same as sin. Sin produces apathy. It is that plain and simple to understand.

1. Sin of Society

It may not be our own sin that begins the process of apathy. Simply being continually surrounded by a cess pool of wickedness in this world can cause our love to begin to wax cold leaving us apathetic.

2Pe 2:4-8 "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an

ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)"

Notice that Lot is described as “just.” That is to say he was a righteous man that did right. How then did Lot become so accustomed to a wicked city? How did he become so apathetic?

The answer is found in these two phrases: “*..vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:*” and “*..vexed his righteous soul from day to day..*”

Do you see it? Lot surrounded himself with the sin of society and “vexed” or wore down his righteousness. The sin of the society made Lot content with living in a wicked city without proclaiming Truth. Lot was apathetic because of society’s sin.

That is why we avoid being “of” the world. We should avoid.

- close friends that are worldly in nature
- Hollywood entertainment
- Today’s T.V. sitcoms and the movie house
- The list is endless. You get the idea. Don’t you?

It is not that we are better than them. We are just sinners saved by Grace and still have a sin nature, but we also have a new calling and a higher purpose. That purpose is to serve a risen Saviour with passion!

It is a simple Biblical truth that the more time that we spend with the world, the more apathetic we become! That is why every Christian needs church. Hebrews 10:24-25 “*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*”

Simply put, stay in church in order to fight off a sinful world and not become apathetic!

2. Sin of Self

With every sin that we commit we are speeding up the process of becoming apathetic!

Romans 6:12-16 “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”

Notice the phrase, “*..let not sin reign..*” In other words don’t let it stay. Don’t tolerate it. Don’t keep a pet sin. Why, because if it stays, it will take you over and make you spiritually apathetic. This result is found in the phrase, “*ye should obey the lust thereof..*”

Another verse that teaches the same principle is I Peter 2:11.

1Peter 2:11 “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”

If we allow sin to dwell in our hearts we are dismissing our passion for Christ and inviting apathy as our companion and eventually we are left with our salvation but no passion.

The church at Sardis needed to repent of their sin. Revelation 3:1 describes them as “...*thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*”

Many Christians have the name Christian attached to them, but they have no life in them. They are an apathetic Christian.

The second element that aides apathy is:

B. Satisfaction of Possesions

Amos 6:1 “Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion..”

This group of people was without a doubt Spiritually apathetic. The following verses describe why.

Amos 6:4-6 “That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.”

Notice their possessions that brought them so much comfort:

- Beds of ivory
- Couches
- lambs and calves
- wine
- ointments

They had all of the creature comforts that they could ask for yet the Bible says they were, “..*not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.*” This simply means they were not concerned with the Spiritual condition of Israel. When we have all we need, we often grow apathetic to the needs of a lost and dying world.

If we are not careful, our comforts will lull us into a spirit of apathy. We must not be awake and fight apathy.

Romans 13:11 “*And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*”

III. Discernment Of Apathy

The recognition of apathy by someone infected with apathy is difficult. A Christian can not easily see apathy in their own life. Remember, our hearts can deceive us.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Our hearts deceive us into believing that we are not the problem. There are many Biblical examples that illustrate this blindness to apathy. Saul is one such example.

Notice the apathy in Saul as he had turned away from following the Lord.

1Samuel 15:11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

The Lord saw Saul’s heart clearly, but Saul had a different perspective. Two verse later we see what Saul thought of himself.

1Sa 15:13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

Most apathetic Christians would deny that they are apathetic. Discerning apathy requires a Biblical test to diagnose the disease of apathy. Don't trust your opinion. Trust God's Word!

A good place in the Bible to use when discerning apathy is the book of Haggai. Here are a few facts about the book Haggai.

- Haggai is named for the fourteenth prophet to Israel.
- Haggai prophesied from God to Israel for only four short months during 520 B.C.
- During these four months, Haggai delivered four messages from God to God's people in Israel.
- The first of these four messages was a call to get to work building the House of the Lord.
- However the spirit of the people was one of apathy. They believed that this task did not need to be done.

If there is a chapter in the Bible that is a picture of apathy it is Haggai chapter 1. If a Christian studies this chapter and can discern the attributes of Apathy in that group of people, those same attributes can then be used to discern apathy in our lives.

Notice the apathy of the people regarding the work of the Lord.

Haggai 1:2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.

They said that it was not time to work for the Lord, but the Lord said different.

Haggai 1:4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

This group of people was stuck in apathy. They were busy doing a lot of things, but they were not accomplishing anything of lasting importance.

Haggai 1:6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

Do you see their blatant apathy? God is trying to get them busy doing His work and they are busy doing their own thing with no regard to God's work. Let's look at this passage to learn how to discern apathy.

A. Apathy is present when God's Work is neglected

Haggai 1:4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

Do you see that the work of the Lord was going undone while their own work was being accomplished? Their houses were fine. They were eating, drinking, earning wages, and sowing crops. Their needs were met, but God's work was left undone.

There is nothing that you do for you that is more important than what you should do for God! God's work is more important than our work! An apathetic Christian allows God's work to take a sideline to their work.

God's work is Evangelizing the lost, Edifying the Saint, and Equipping the Believer.

It takes dozens of tasks being completed faithfully to carry out God's work.

- Door knocking
- Handing out tracts
- Proclaiming the Gospel
- Helping the widows
- Visit absent T's
- Visit bus families
- Give to missions
- Cook a meal for a family
- Work on a bus or van
- Help in V.B.S.
- Turn on utilities for church
- Praying for the lost
- praying for the sick
- visit the sick
- Teaching a class
- Drive a bus route
- Disciple a new convert
- Tithe faithfully
- Cut the grass at church
- Clean the church house
- Unlock facilities
- Shovel snow

This is just a small portion of individual tasks that must be done in order to accomplish the "first fruits." Yet these tasks are neglected when we are apathetic.

When these tasks go undone or done by the same small group, somebody or many people are Apathetic! God has enough people to do His work if they simply do it!

B. Apathy is present when God's people are content

The people in Haggai 1 were not only neglecting God's work they were content in doing so. Their contentment was derived from the condition of their lives not the condition of the Lord's work!

God has a way of breaking our contentment.

Haggai 1:9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run

every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

Do you see how God broke through their spirit of apathy?

God will only take so much of an apathetic spirit and self-centeredness before he blows our lives apart and makes them as broken down as we have broken down his work! We may not care about His work now, but He will make us care when our work crumbles. Many times the Lord crumbles our world to remind us it is to be second to His work.

Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

C. Apathy is present when God's people make excuses.

The excuse of the people in Haggai was that the time wasn't right!

Haggai 1:2 ...The time is not come...

God hates excuses, but the Devil will supply them for you for free.

Luke 14:16-20 contains the three excuses that have been used forever. When the master bid all to "come" three men gave three excuses:

1. Somewhere else to go:

Luke 14:18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

2. Something else to do:

Luke 14:19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

3. Someone else to see:

Luke 14:20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

Excuses in place of serving God is a mark of Apathy! How many excuses have we made lately?

Now that we know how to discern apathy will you be honest with yourself and God and ask, “Do I suffer from Apathy?”

Now that we have learned how to discern apathy, let’s see the damage of apathy.

IV. Damage Of Apathy

A. Hinders the Cause of Christ.

The book of Haggai dealt with the apathy that hindered to the House of God being built.

Haggai 1:4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

Nehemiah chapter three deals with the apathy of the Nobles of the Tekoites and their hindering the wall to be built.

Nehemiah 3:5 And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

Numbers chapter thirty-two deals with the apathy of the tribe of Reuben and their hindering the battle and a victory.

Numbers 32:6-7 And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them?

All through Scripture an apathetic spirit always hinders the work of the Lord! Mark it down Apathy in our lives will hinder the Cause of Christ!

A question that we must then consider is, what is the cause of Christ that we will hinder when we are apathetic?

The answer is found in Revelation 2:1-7. In this letter to the church at Ephesus, we find the church’s love was waxing. They were becoming Apathetic. They were busy but suffered from Apathy.

Revelation 2:2-5 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Notice the phrase found in verse four, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

This phrase proves their apathy. Now notice the command of the Lord and what He instructed them to do.

Revelation 2:5 “...repent, and do the first works...”

This verse teaches us that neglect the “first works” is a result of apathy. The “first works” are those of paramount importance. The first works are those things that are the most important to Christ!

The first works are the same as the cause of Christ. These first works or the cause of Christ are:

1. Evangelization of lost sinners - Mark 16:15
2. Edification of the saints - Colossians 2:7
3. Equipping of the servants - Ephesians 4:11-12

When apathy sets in, these works are left hindered! We can not afford to be apathetic if the cause of Christ will be hindered

B. Hurts Our Fellowship With Christ

An apathetic heart is not tender to the Holy Spirit and without the fellowship of the Holy Spirit our fellowship with Christ is drastically reduced.

1Thesalonians 5:19 Quench not the Spirit.

When we quit caring about the things that the Lord cares about there isn't much in common between us and our Saviour. We find it difficult to communicate with the Lord with the exception of our list of wants.

Have ever had a close friend that you had known for years and suddenly one of you began to change your passions and your interest? What happens as a result of that change in position is the absence of common ground. This results in difficulty to communicate because there is no longer much in common. When we become apathetic we lose common interest with the Lord and our fellowship is then hurt because of our lack of common bond. He still loves souls, but we don't. He still loves to bind the broken hearted, but we don't. Do you see how a once sweet relationship is now hurt?

C. Hollows our Joy in Christ

I have often said that the greatest joy in the world is a result of knowing and doing the will of God. It is a Bible principle. A careful study of John 13:17 will prove this to be true.

Joh 13:17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Joy is never obtained by only knowing God's will. A careful study of Jonah will prove this to be true. Jonah knew God's will but was miserable because he did not do God's will. However, joy is always present when we link the knowing of God's will to the doing of God's will.

An apathetic Christian usually knows God's will but will rarely do God's will. This will always result in a hollow joy. What a shame! We are doing what we want to do, but we are sacrificing our joy to do it. It is never a good trade!

Now that we have seen the dangers of apathy, let's move on to the last part of our study the Deliverance from apathy.

V. Deliverance From Apathy

Deliverance from apathy is an essential truth for Christians to know. From time to time, we may all become a little apathetic. We must know how to break out of our apathetic state.

A. The Word of God

The Word of God can break through any apathetic heart. To prove this lets go back to Haggai chapter one. Remember that when chapter one was being spoken the heart of the people was already apathetic. The Lord was at work to break through this apathy. How did the Lord seek to break their apathetic spirit.\?

Haggai 1:1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet Saying

Notice the words “..came the word of the Lord...” Notice almost the same word in verse three.

Haggai 1:3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

When God is trying to break through an apathetic heart He uses His Supreme Word! His Word is powerful enough to accomplish this task.

Jeremiah 23:29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

If you want delivery from apathy, you must get a steady diet of God’s Word! It will change you from the inside out!

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...,

Get as much of God’s Word as you can!

- Listen to preaching
- Read His Word
- Meditate On His Word
- Study His Word
- Memorize His Word

B. The Will Of Man

The second tool to be used in the deliverance form apathy is the will of man. After digesting the Word of God we must surrender our will to His Word! If true deliverance from apathy is what we seek, sooner or later we must yield our will to His will. We must make a choice to change our priorities, opinion, and philosophies to His priorities, opinions and philosophies. This truth is found in Haggai chapter one.

Haggai 1:12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.

Haggai 1:14and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,

Did you see it? They began to fear the Lord and then changed their attitude. They went from not working for the Lord to working for the Lord in just twelve verses! Why? Because they heard the Word of God and yielded their will to His Word! God will do the same for our apathetic spirit if we will only allow him to.

The third and final tool to use in the deliverance from apathy is a withdraw from the world.

C. Withdraw from the World

1 Corinthians 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

The word “communications” means companionship. The word “manners” means habits. Simply put this verse is teaching us that hanging around bad influences will ruin or Godly habits and make us apathetic to the things of God. No man can keep a passion for God while having companionship with a world that is directly opposed to all that God is and loves!

I have seen many Christians try to regain their passion for Christ while keeping friends that have no passion for Christ. I have never seen it work. While we must stay friendly to the world we can not be friends with the world!

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

If we truly want to defeat apathy we must separate ourselves from as much worldly influence as possible. We must then draw nigh to God and His people. Just four verses after the Lord told us to not befriend the world, he tells us who we should befriend.

James 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Let the Lord take you by the hand and lead you from apathy!