

HELP!

GOD'S HOPE FOR THE HURTING

Apathy

INTRODUCTION

Various Scripture

The problem with our apathy is the object of our apathy. What makes apathy such a challenge, what makes apathy so dangerous, is what we're apathetic about. The most glorious one in all the universe. There's no one more glorious, more beautiful, more wonderful, more satisfying, than Christ, and yet that is the thing that we're apathetic about? The problem is the object of it.

Apathy is ok when looking at my backyard – but not when looking at the Grand Canyon.

Apathy is ok when looking at a middle-school art show – but not when looking at the Sistine Chapel.

The issue here in this passage is not just that you're apathetic or that I'm apathetic. It has to do with that great gap that exists between who Christ is, all His glory, all His wonder, all His satisfaction, and our tepid response. The point here is that He is so much more worthy of a response than the response we give Him. That is the problem with our apathy.

Apathy is a bigger problem than we realize, because at its core is a missing of the greatness and the grandeur and the glory of the thing that's the most glorious in all the world, and that tells you something about your spiritual condition.

Scholars have noticed this over years. A very famous quote by George MacDonald said this: "Complaint against God might just be nearer to God than indifference."¹

Christ himself gives the answer in his letter to Laodicea: "I counsel you to buy from me" (Revelation 3:18). A renewed vision of the beauty and greatness of Christ is always the ultimate cure for apathy.

And Christ invites his people to experience him afresh: "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

In this verse Christ is drawing on the Song of Solomon, presenting himself as the groom and his church as the bride. And he is asking his church to fall in love with him all over again.²

¹ Michael Kruger, *Overcoming Apathy*, 9/5/2018, <https://christcovenant.org/sermons/overcoming-apathy>

² Michael Kruger, *Apathetic about Your Apathy?*, 3/9/2016, <https://www.michaeljkruger.com>

OPEN IT

1. What was your favorite TV show when you were a teenager? Why?

What is your favorite TV show today? Why?

READ IT & SUMMARIZE IT:

Read the following scriptures and to the right of each add a one-word or two-word summary.

(We've done the first few for you.)

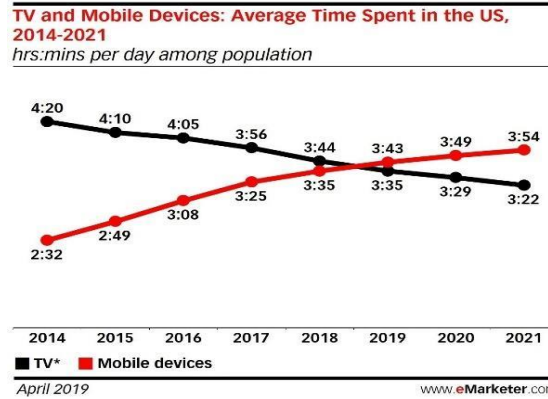
Scripture	1-2 Word Summary
Genesis 1:28: And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."	WORK
Genesis 2:2, 15: - And on the seventh day God finished his work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all his work that He had done... The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.	WORK
Exodus 20:8-11: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.	WORK 6 REST 1
Psalms 82:3: Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.	
Proverbs 6:6-11: Go to the ant, you slacker! Observe its ways and become wise. Without leader, administrator, or ruler, it prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food during harvest. How long will you stay in bed, you slacker? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the arms to rest, and your poverty will come like a robber, your need, like a bandit.	
Proverbs 13:4: The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.	
Proverbs 14:31b: Whoever is kind to the needy honors God.	
Proverbs 15:19: The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway.	
Proverbs 19:15,24: Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger... The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth.	

Proverbs 19:17: Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done.	
Proverbs 22:9: The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.	
Proverbs 22:29: Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand in the presence of kings.	
Matthew 6: 19-21: Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.	
Luke 3:11: John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."	
Luke 10:30-37: A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road... A priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan... went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine... and took care of him... And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."	
John 9:4: Jesus says to the disciples, "We must work the work of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no man can work."	
Galatians 6:9: And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.	
Ephesians 5:16: Make the best use of the time, because the days are evil.	
Ephesians 6:10-12: Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.	
Philippians 3:10: My goal is to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised Him from the dead. I want to suffer with Him, sharing in His death.	
2 Thessalonians 3:6-13: Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you... If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.	
James 4:17: Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.	
1 John 3:16-18: This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.	
Revelation 3:14-22: And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. 'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm , and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing , not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'	

APPLY IT

APATHY IN OUR LIFE PURPOSE

The average American over the age of 13 spends more than seven hours per day on screen media for entertainment. 3 ½ on TV and 4 on a mobile device.³



2. Why do you think Americans dedicate this much time to media entertainment? How does this compare to entertainment in general?

3. Write a definition for apathy.

Our purpose in life, as God originally created man, is to:

- 1) Glorify God and enjoy fellowship with Him –through faith in Jesus Christ and pursuit of Him (Philippians 3:10).
- 2) Have good relationships with others and do good (Proverbs 13:31).
- 3) Work (Exodus 20:8-11).
- 4) Fill the earth and govern it (Genesis 1:28).

³ eMarketer 2019: <https://elitecontentmarketer.com/screen-time-statistics>

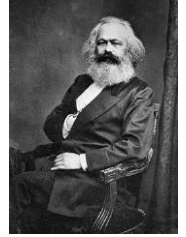
Common Sense Media 2019: www.cnn.com/2019/10/29/health/common-sense-kids-media-use-report-wellness

Yahoo News 2018: www.yahoo.com/news/americans-worlds-biggest-tv-addicts-watching-four-hours-083624277.html

Nielsen 2018: www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2018/time-flies-us-adults-now-spend-nearly-half-a-day-interacting-with-media

APATHY IN OUR CALL TO WORK

Karl Marx, the Father of Communism, said that the primal problem was that human beings were alienated from their labor by modern industry and by the creation of the wage or salary system. Instead, Marx pointed to a future where no one had to work and which people would actually do whatever they wanted to do. (He counted on the fact that at least some of those people would perform the work necessary for society. It was a failed utopian vision.)⁴



4. Does your understanding of the Bible mesh with or clash with Marx' idea of freeing human beings from having to work? Why?

5. In what ways does scripture tie human dignity to work? Is an unwillingness to work a sin?

The problem with so many boys and young men is that their lives are all about play. Everything that is reinforced by many parents is actually about play. Play becomes the obsession. And many people have noted that the absence or alienation of so many young men from the workforce comes with, in so many cases, the development of technology in forms of entertainment, such as video games.⁵

6. It has been observed that our younger generations have moved away from the basic concept of daily life is about work to the sense that life is about play - life is a nonstop game. What ways can parents prepare their children and grandchildren to work – either in a business or in the home?

⁴ <https://albertmohler.com/2021/05/19/briefing-5-19-21>

⁵ <https://albertmohler.com/2021/05/19/briefing-5-19-21>

APATHY IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Apathy - boredom with God - may be one of the most dangerous spiritual conditions out there.⁶ The middle of the road faith has just enough to play the part, but not enough to go crazy. There's no one more glorious, more beautiful, more wonderful, more satisfying, than Christ, and yet that is the thing that we're apathetic about.

7. In what ways have you or do you currently feel lukewarm in your faith? Bored with God?

In Revelation 3:14-22, the Apostle John says that **self-sufficiency** will very quickly lead one to apathy - to lukewarmness. *For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing... you are lukewarm...* The people John is referring to are absolutely convinced that they are just fine as they are and they've got it all together.

8. How can self-sufficiency lead to apathy? Where have you seen this in your own life? Does a circumstance of helplessness or dependence make it any easier to fervently pursue God?

9. Can we live in a “have everything” society and still be dependent on God? If so, how?
Extra credit: How rich you are compared to the rest of the world? howrichami.givingwhatwecan.org

⁶ Michael Kruger, Overcoming Apathy, 9/5/2018, <https://christcovenant.org/sermons/overcoming-apathy/>

10. Based on your response to #8 & #9, what should we hope and pray for in our lives?

In the lives of our loved ones?

APATHY IN OUR CALL TO SERVE

11. God has called us to work – vocationally to provide for our family living needs. He has also called us to work for Him as we love and care for others. Sometimes these overlap and sometimes they are separate.

What are some ways God has called you to serve Him?

12. In Matthew 6: 19-21, Jesus tells us that as we serve Him in this life, we are making deposits in heaven – in a sense, we are making deposits into an eternal 401k and it pays dividends beyond what we can imagine.

If you look at your past week or month, are you living and investing for eternity, or just for the short-term of the next 50 years on earth?

13. What are ways we can be preparing following generations to serve God and invest in God's Kingdom and in our eternal home rather than serving themselves and building their own temporary earthly kingdom? How can we help them to have a long-term perspective rather than a short one?

C.S. Lewis: "If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. *We are far too easily pleased.*"⁷

14. Are you too easily pleased with the things of the world? If you were a little more picky, if you were to DREAM BIGGER, what would be different?

15. Share about something you've done in the past that directly improved the life of someone else?

⁷ C.S. Lewis, sermon: *The Weight of Glory*

16. There are many injustices in the world today. A few weeks ago we discussed the idea of righteous anger in our small groups. Thinking back to that, what stirs up a righteous anger or discomfort in your heart?

17. Of course, we want to make a difference and improve the lives of others in a lot of ways - but often we get stuck knowing where to start or where to focus. If you could only pick one issue to focus your passion on helping:

a. What would it be?

b. What would be your first step?

c. Why are you not investing more time in that one issue now?