



UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Culture Wars

January 12 -18

Romans 12:11-13

Things to Know

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

*Reminder. Seek to understand and apply God's word, **not** rehash the sermon.*

Sermon Recap

How do we fight back against the apathy the world settles for:

1. Serve the Lord with Zeal.

Paul calls believers to live actively for Christ, rejecting spiritual laziness even in a culture that often values comfort over commitment. He urges us to serve the Lord with genuine zeal, showing passion

and dedication in all we do. We kill apathy in our lives by being filled with zeal for the Lord.

2. Suffer with Patience and Joy.

We are also reminded to endure trials with patience and joy, trusting God's plan even in difficult circumstances. Furthermore, suffering can indicate hardship; we live in a culture that hates difficulty. Christians are called to embrace and endure hardship and suffering because of the joy we have in Christ. We kill apathy in our lives by a resilience to endure, and when we do fall, we keep getting back up.

3. Seek to Meet the Needs of Others.

Paul challenges us to look beyond ourselves and intentionally meet the needs of others, demonstrating love through practical acts of service. Apathy causes us to lose sight of the needs, care, and concerns of others because all we can see is ourselves. We kill apathy in our lives through meeting the needs of others.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you define spiritual apathy? How have you seen it show up in your own life?
2. What tends to dull your spiritual passion the most—comfort, distraction, discouragement, busyness?
3. What are the dangers of apathy in our lives and in the life of the Church?
4. How do prayer and community help protect us from growing spiritually cold?

Read

Read Romans 12:11-13 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
- What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
- Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
- What do you need help understanding about this passage?

Scripture

Romans 12:11-13

¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

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Romans 12:11-13

Living on Mission In Community

Spiritual slothfulness and apathy lead us into a multitude of sins, and destroys our relationship with God and the church. One of the ways we kill apathy in our lives is by living in community with other believers.

- Identify one area in your life where you have become apathetic to the things of God and confess it to another brother or sister in Christ.
- Pray daily for God's help in killing apathy in your life; pray for other believers as we seek to be zealous for the gospel.
- Identify one person in your life who is far from God, who has embraced an apathetic spirit. Pray for them, invite them to our church, and seek to share the gospel with them.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources - January 12-18

Small Group Curriculum - Romans 12:11-13

1. Session Overview

In Romans 12:11–13, Paul addresses one of the most subtle threats to the Christian life: apathy. In a culture that worships individual comfort, Christians are being conformed to a lifestyle of empty pursuits, sacrificing the eternal pleasures and purposes that God has for us now. While outright rebellion is obvious, spiritual laziness often disguises itself as busyness, distraction, or comfort. Paul calls believers to reject sluggishness and instead live with spiritual zeal—serving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, enduring in suffering, and remaining devoted to prayer. This passage reminds us that the Christian life is not passive. A transformed life is marked by active devotion, enduring hope, and sacrificial love within the community.

2. Opening

Prayer:

“Father, you are worthy of our lives. You deserve the very best we have to give. We confess how we have been influenced by the culture around us; we confess in the ways we have been apathetic to you and your word. Forgive us. Ignite in us a passion and zeal for your glory and your gospel. Amen.”

Icebreaker question:

Break into groups of 2–3.

Ask:

“What is something you used to be passionate about that you now feel indifferent towards? What changed?”

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read Romans 12:11–13 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1. Reject Apathy

Apathy is not neutral—it is a slow drift away from wholehearted devotion. It distracts and discourages us from eternal things, and redirects our energies, passions, and emotions towards the fleeting things of this world. If you do not care about the things of God, the people of God, or the worship of God, you are apathetic to Him. We must not only reject apathy in and around our lives, but we must also kill this sin.

- Theological Insight: Apathy leads us down a path of temptation, sin, destruction, and judgement; it leaves us in a vulnerable position to spiritual attacks.
- Pastoral Insight: Apathy does not necessarily mean laziness; we can be busy apathetic people. Yet, spiritual laziness leads to apathy. We must run this race in a way as to win the prize.

2. Fervent in Spirit: Living with Holy Passion

Because the cultural pressure to abandon biblical truth and morality is arguably at an all-time high, a way in which we worship God with our lives is simply to reject the temptation of the world and cling to Him.

- Theological Insight: To be “fervent” can mean to boil over. This passion is not emotional hype but Spirit-produced devotion rooted in truth. It means that we live our lives in the overflow of Christ.

Pastoral Insight: Spiritual fervor is sustained by proximity to God. When we neglect Scripture, prayer, and Christian community, passion fades. The question isn’t *“Do I feel passionate?”* but *“Am I positioning myself to be shaped by the Spirit?”*

3. Serving the Lord, Not Ourselves

Apathy turns us inward; service redirects us upward. Laziness causes us to think, “I don’t feel like it,” whereas apathy causes us to think, “I don’t care.” Apathy makes us numb to the cares and burdens of other people. Through serving God and others, we can kill spiritual apathy in our lives.

- Theological Insight: Serving the Lord reminds us that our lives are not about personal comfort, but faithful obedience. A life of worship expresses itself in action.

- **Pastoral Insight:** Apathy thrives when faith becomes consumer-based. Serving reignites purpose and dependence on God.

5. Discussion Questions

1. How can someone be busy with religious activity and still be spiritually apathetic?
2. What are some personal warning signs that your zeal for the Lord is fading?
3. What does it look like practically to be “fervent in spirit” in everyday life, not just during life’s high moments?
4. What happens to our zeal when prayer becomes occasional instead of constant?
5. What is one specific step you can take this week to move from spiritual apathy to active obedience?

6. Application

Romans 12:11-13 calls us to wake up from spiritual complacency. The Christian life is not a passive wait for heaven, but an active pursuit of God marked by zeal, hope, endurance, prayer, and love. When we resist apathy and rely on the Spirit, our lives become a powerful testimony in a world marked by indifference, distraction, and emptiness.

7. Closing Reflection and Prayer

Reflection:

Where have I allowed apathy to replace passion in my walk with Christ? What would it look like to serve the Lord with renewed fervor this week?

Prayer:

“Father, you have called us to a life of passion, purpose, and joy in this life and in the one to come. This is our hope. Help us to live with fervor this week and for the rest of our lives. Help us to remain steadfast, not falling into the sin and trap of spiritual apathy. In Jesus name, Amen.”

8. Memory Verse

“Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.” Romans 12:11

9. Leader Notes

- Emphasize that apathy is a spiritual danger, not a personality trait.
- Encourage honesty and vulnerability—many believers struggle with spiritual apathy, whether we realize it or not.
- Point the group toward practical obedience, not guilt.
- End with a clear call to live awake, engaged, and on fire for Christ in a distracted world.

