

Don't Let Your Love Grow Cold

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Matthew 24:12 (NKJV) “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”

We are living in the last days prior to Christ's Second Coming. Jesus warned His disciples of signs prior to His return. One of the signs is the rise of lawlessness. People will increasingly offend and be offended. Offense will lead to unloving responses. Unloving responses will lead to division and betrayal. Division and betrayal will lead to bitterness and hostility. Bitterness and hostility will lead to injustice. Injustice will lead to hate. Hate will empower false prophets who sanction sin and defend lawlessness. The increase in lawlessness will cause the love of many to grow cold. The increase in lawlessness will prepare the way for the lawless one.¹

As believers, we must not allow the lawlessness to cause our love to grow cold. How do we maintain God's love for unlovable people? How do we continue to share God's love with people who are hard to love? I want to give you some basic principles that I believe will help us in these trying times.

First, we must honor the image of God in every human being. There is only one race—the human race. God created each of us in His image and likeness. However sin may distort that image, we must respect everyone as one of God's image-bearers..

Second, we must remember who our REAL enemy is. Paul said, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”² The devil is the one who works through misguided souls. Through faith in the gospel, God can set them free.

Third, we must love our neighbor. This is God's command. In Matthew 22:35–40 (NKJV) we read, “Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ³⁶ ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’ ³⁷ Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Regarding this, C.S. Lewis said, “The rule for all of us is perfectly simple. Do not waste time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbour; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the greatest secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less.”³

Fourth, we must live peaceably with all men where possible.⁴ Not all men will choose to live in peace. However, we must do our part to live in peace with others whenever possible.

Fifth, we must pursue peace in times of turmoil.⁵ Jesus doesn't call us to be peacekeepers but *peacemakers*.⁶ Peacemakers seek to resolve the underlying cause of conflict so that peace is made.

Sixth, we must seek to listen and understand. They must know we care more about them than just to win the argument. People don't care how much we know until they know how much we care. Caring enough to listen helps us to respond properly and with respect and compassion.

¹ 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 8

² Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV)

³ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 116

⁴ Romans 12:18

⁶ Matthew 5:9

Seventh, we must speak the truth, but we must speak the truth in love.⁷ Max Lucado said, “The single most difficult pursuit is truth and love. That’s the task of a Christian. Love in truth. Truth in love. Never one at the expense of the other. Never the embrace of love without the torch of truth. Never the heat of truth without the warmth of love. Truth and love. Love and truth. Never one without the other.” Ravi Zacharias: “If truth is not undergirded by love, it makes the possessor of that truth obnoxious and the truth repulsive.”

Eighth, we must forgive those who offend, wrong, or persecute us. We must remember that forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. Offenses will come to us all. Offense is the bait of Satan to enslave us in bitterness. We must choose to forgive others even as God in Christ has forgiven us.⁸

Ninth, we must overcome evil with good.⁹ We must overcome evil by showing God’s goodness in the face of evil. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: “Through violence you may murder a murderer, but you can’t murder murder. Through violence you may murder a liar, but you can’t establish truth. Through violence you may murder a hater, but you can’t murder hate. Darkness can’t put out darkness. Only light can do that.”¹⁰ Overcoming evil is not passive but active. Jesus said, “*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’*”⁴⁴ *But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,*⁴⁵ *that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*⁴⁶ *For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?*⁴⁷ *And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?*⁴⁸ *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*”¹¹

Tenth, we must leave final justice in the hands of God. We must be willing to suffer injustice as Jesus gave us example.¹² Justice may escape us in this life, but justice will come by the hand of God. Paul said, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”¹³ We must remember that God rewards those who suffer for righteousness sake.¹⁴

Eleventh, we must perfect God’s love in our heart. Our own human love will fail, but God’s love will never fail. Paul describes God’s love: “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails...”¹⁵

Finally, we must learn to stir up love in one another rather than hate. Evil men consider how to stir up one another with hostility and insurrection. Christians, on the other hand, must stir up one another with love and good works. Hebrews 10:24–25 (NKJV) says, “*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,*²⁵ *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*”

Don’t let lawlessness cause your heart to grow cold. Lay aside your anger, bitterness, and hate. Accept God’s love and forgiveness. Let Him fill your heart with His love for the unlovable. Then be a witness and a vessel to share God’s love in this hate-filled world.

full participation in the Christian community. Christian community is the essence of the church that Jesus came to establish.

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⁷ Ephesians 4:15

⁸ Luke 23:34; Ephesians 4:32

⁹ Romans 12:20–21

¹⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr. [“Where Do We Go From Here?” annual report delivered at the 11th Convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 16 August 1967, Atlanta, GA]

¹¹ Matthew 5:43–48 (NKJV)

¹² 1 Peter 2:19–23

¹³ Romans 12:19 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Matthew 5:10–12

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 (NKJV)

