

Loved When Love Grows Cold

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Love / 2 Timothy 3:1–5; John 15:18–19; Luke 7:36–50; John 10:4–5

This world the love has grown cold for God and one another. In God's kingdom we find true love that never ends.

Nostalgia has been defined as a warm, sometimes bittersweet longing for the past. Many of us have caught ourselves saying, "I remember the good old days when..." While our memories can sometimes exaggerate or overlook the difficulties of former times, they often contain a significant measure of truth. Scripture itself reminds us not to idealize the past ([Ecclesiastes 7:10](#)), yet it also teaches us to recognize the times in which we live. As followers of Christ, we should not be surprised that the world grows darker. Jesus Himself told us it would. Rather than leading us to despair, that reality should remind us that the light of Christ shines brightest in the darkest night. For example, I remember when most families consisted of a husband, a wife, and children all belonging to the same household. Today, approximately 40% of marriages involve at least one partner who has previously been divorced, resulting in many blended families [1]. While many of these families thrive by God's grace, the increasing instability of the family has nevertheless affected people's sense of security and belonging. At the same time, the digital world has transformed the way we relate to one another. Entertainment has become increasingly violent and immoral, often celebrating revenge, greed, profanity, sexual immorality, and cruelty. Christians sometimes convince themselves that allowing such darkness into their lives has little effect, yet over time the conscience can become desensitized to the very sins God calls us to resist.

Twenty-five years ago, families generally spent more evenings around the dinner table, camping, hiking, or simply enjoying one another's company. Today we are connected to more people than ever before through the "internet of

everything," yet genuine intimacy and lasting friendships have become increasingly rare. An American Psychological Association poll found that more than half of adults report feeling isolated, left out, or lacking meaningful companionship [2]. Our world has become more connected electronically while becoming more disconnected relationally. Perhaps the greatest change, however, is society's relentless pursuit of money, fame, and power. Maybe it is simply that modern technology allows us to witness tragedies from every corner of the globe almost instantly. Yet it seems that each day brings another story of political division, nations at war, violence, injustice, or natural disasters. Worldwide military spending now equals approximately 2.5% of global gross domestic product—nearly three trillion dollars annually. While much of that spending is intended for national defense, the daily news reminds us that countless lives continue to be lost or permanently changed through ongoing conflicts around the world.

I am not suggesting that ours is the most wicked generation in history. To do so would minimize the unspeakable evil of Sodom and Gomorrah, the horrors of the Holocaust, the bloodshed of two world wars, and the countless genocides that have scarred human history. The Bible never teaches that every generation becomes progressively more wicked in every possible way. Rather, it teaches that as history moves toward its appointed climax, the moral characteristics of the last days will become increasingly evident ([2 Timothy 3:1–5](#)). As we observe the growing exaltation of self, the cooling of genuine love, the indifference toward truth, and the increasing acceptance of sin, we cannot help but recognize the world Scripture describes.

Yet this is not a message of despair—it is a message of hope. The darker the world becomes, the brighter the light of Christ shines. The more unstable our world becomes, the more evident God's unchanging sovereignty becomes. Human love may grow cold, but the love of Christ never does. Nations rise and fall, cultures change, and generations come and go, but Jesus Christ remains "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" ([Hebrews 13:8](#)). His throne has never been threatened, His purposes have never failed, and His love has never

diminished. Since no one knows the day or the hour of Christ's return ([Matthew 24:36](#)), the purpose of this sermon is not to predict when He will come. Rather, it is to encourage us to live faithfully until He does. In a world where the love of many grows cold ([Matthew 24:12](#)), the Good Shepherd still seeks the wandering sheep ([Matthew 18:12-14](#)), still welcomes repentant sinners, and still holds His people securely in His hands. The darkness around us is not a reason to lose heart; it is the very backdrop against which the love of Christ shines most brilliantly. When the love of many grows cold, the love of our Savior remains as warm, steadfast, and powerful as it has always been.

The World is Growing Colder

The New Testament teaches that the last days began with Christ's first coming and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost ([Acts 2:16-17](#); [Hebrews 1:1-2](#)). For nearly two thousand years the Church has lived in this present age, eagerly awaiting the return of her Lord. Yet Scripture also teaches that as history moves toward God's appointed climax, the characteristics of the last days will become increasingly evident [3]. Jesus Himself described these conditions in what is commonly known as the Olivet Discourse.

Matthew 24:4-14 NIV

Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear

and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

For nearly two thousand years believers have observed these signs and many have concluded that Christ would return in their own generation. Yet Jesus did not give these signs so His people could calculate the day of His return. In fact, He plainly declared that "of that day and hour knoweth no man" ([Matthew 24:36](#)). Rather, these signs are meant to cultivate watchfulness, holiness, and faithful service. While Christ has gone to prepare a place for His own and has promised, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself" ([John 14:1-3](#)), His command to the Church is not to speculate about His return but to live every day in readiness for it. We are to present our bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" ([Romans 12:1](#)), faithfully serving Him until He comes.

Living in readiness also means refusing to adopt the values of the world around us. Paul exhorts believers:

Romans 12:2 NIV

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Just hours before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed not that His followers would be removed from this world, but that they would be preserved within it.

John 17:14-18 NIV

I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

Christ never intended for His people to withdraw from society, nor to become indistinguishable from it. Instead, we are called to live in the world without belonging to it. We are to be sanctified by God's truth while shining as lights in an increasingly dark generation. This is no small challenge, for, as one author observes, "everyone worships something or someone, and one's life tends to be the spillover of that supreme love" [4].

Paul therefore warns Timothy not merely about the world itself, but about the danger of believers imitating its character.

2 Timothy 3:1–5 NIV

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

In contemporary terms, Paul is describing a world captivated by three disordered loves: narcissism (love of self), materialism (love of money), and hedonism (love of pleasure) [5]. These are foreign loves because they compete directly with the supreme love God alone deserves. Sadly, Paul also warns that many who outwardly appear religious have embraced these very affections. They read Scripture, pray, sing hymns, attend worship, and partake of communion, yet their hearts reveal that their deepest allegiance belongs not to Christ but to themselves and to this present world [6]. They possess "a form of godliness," while denying its transforming power. This is precisely what Jesus meant when He said,

Matthew 24:12 NIV

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,

The greatest danger facing the Church is not persecution from outside but spiritual compromise within. A heart that gradually learns to love the world will

inevitably grow cold toward Christ. And that raises one of the most important questions every believer must answer: If the love of this world grows cold, where can we find a love that never does?

The Love That Welcomes

While the world grows increasingly cold, there remains a love that has never diminished. Human affection may fail, friendships may disappoint, and even families may fracture, but the love of Christ continues to welcome the broken, the ashamed, and the repentant. Luke records such a moment in [Luke 7:36–50](#). One day a Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to dine at his home. As a Pharisee, Simon was highly respected in Jewish society. He was carefully trained in the Scriptures, meticulous in observing religious traditions, and regarded by many as one of the spiritual elite. Although Jesus knew Simon's heart was far from Him, He graciously accepted the invitation and reclined at the table according to the custom of the day [7]. Homes in the ancient Near East were often built with an open courtyard, and during a banquet the doors would commonly remain open. Those who were not invited could quietly stand around the edges of the room to listen to the conversation between the host and his distinguished guest. On this particular evening, an unexpected visitor entered—a woman whom Luke simply describes as "a sinner." While Scripture does not specify her sin, many believe she was known publicly for a life of sexual immorality, perhaps as a prostitute [8]. She came carrying an alabaster jar filled with costly perfume, but she did not come to impress anyone. She came broken before her Savior.

Luke 7:38 NIV

As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

Jesus answered Simon's silent criticism with a simple but penetrating parable. Two men owed a moneylender a debt—one five hundred denarii and the other fifty. Neither could repay what they owed, so the lender graciously forgave both debts. Jesus then asked, "Now which of them will love him more?" ([Luke 7:42](#)). Simon reluctantly replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven." Jesus answered, "You have judged correctly." Turning toward the woman, Jesus exposed the contrast that Simon had completely missed. Simon had offered no water for His feet, no kiss of greeting, and no oil for His head. Yet from the moment this woman entered the house, she had not ceased washing His feet with her tears, wiping them with her hair, kissing them, and anointing them with costly perfume. She understood something Simon did not—those who know how much they have been forgiven love deeply because they have experienced extraordinary grace.

Luke 7:47–50 NIV

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

What an incredible contrast. Simon saw a woman defined by her worst sins. Jesus saw a sinner transformed by grace. While the love of this world grows cold, the love of Christ remains steadfast. Simon pursued outward purity while failing to recognize the uncleanness of his own heart. Like so many religious people, he measured himself against other sinners instead of against the perfect holiness of God. Had he understood the depth of his own sin, he too would have fallen at Jesus' feet, realizing that the Savior sitting in his home was about to bear his

guilt upon the cross ([John 3:16](#)). This does not mean we ignore sin or abandon discernment. Jesus warned us not to "cast your pearls before swine" ([Matthew 7:6](#)), yet He also commanded us to "go and make disciples of all nations" ([Matthew 28:19](#)). The difference lies in seeing people as Christ sees them—not merely for who they have been, but for what God's grace can make them. That is one of the greatest challenges for believers living in a self-centered world. It is easy to see someone's failures; it is much harder to see a future brother or sister in Christ. Yet this is precisely how our Lord looks upon repentant sinners [10].

As strangers and pilgrims in a world that is not our home ([1 Peter 2:11](#)), we have been entrusted with the privilege of reflecting the same welcoming love that Christ first showed us. We rejoice not only because we have been loved unconditionally, but because we are called to invite others into that same grace. There are countless people today searching for acceptance in money, relationships, success, pleasure, or approval. Yet none of those things can satisfy the deepest longing of the human heart. Christ alone offers a love that reaches beyond our failures, our reputation, our race, our achievements, and our social standing. Like the sinful woman, all who come to Him in humble repentance will hear words far sweeter than any this world can offer:

"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

The Love That Never Leaves

In [John 10](#), Jesus gives one of the most beautiful pictures of His love found anywhere in Scripture. While the world often values strength, independence, and self-sufficiency, Christ describes His people as sheep and Himself as their Shepherd. At first glance, being compared to sheep may seem insulting. Sheep are not admired for their intelligence or their ability to protect themselves. Left alone, they are prone to wander, easily frightened, and utterly defenseless against wolves [11]. Yet that is precisely why the image is so comforting. The

emphasis is not upon the ability of the sheep but upon the faithfulness of their Shepherd.

John 10:1–5 NIV

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”

When we think about salvation, we often make ourselves the central character of the story. We focus on our decision, our faith, our failures, or our perseverance. Yet Jesus directs our attention elsewhere. The central figure is not the sheep—it is the Shepherd. Salvation is ultimately about the One who knows His sheep, calls them by name, leads them safely, and never abandons them. This truth becomes even more precious when we remember the kind of world in which we live. Ours is a world marked by selfish ambition, injustice, violence, broken relationships, and spiritual deception. Jesus warned that thieves and robbers seek only to steal, kill, and destroy, while false shepherds disguise themselves as servants of God in order to lead the flock astray [12]. Those who faithfully follow Christ should not be surprised when they experience opposition, for Jesus Himself said,

John 15:18 NIV

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

Unlike the world, the Good Shepherd knows you completely. He knows your name before you call upon His. He knows your strengths and your weaknesses, your victories and your failures, your greatest joys and your deepest fears. He even knows every sin you have ever committed, yet His love for His sheep has

never wavered. He does not reluctantly care for His flock—He delights to do so. Throughout Scripture God repeatedly describes Himself as the refuge of His people. He shelters them beneath the shadow of His wings. He is their Rock, their Fortress, their Deliverer, and their Shield. The One who spoke the universe into existence and by whom "all things were created" ([Colossians 1:16](#)) is the very Shepherd who walks beside His sheep. That is why David could write with such confidence:

Psalm 23:1–3 NIV

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,

he leads me beside quiet waters,

he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths

for his name's sake.

When we are weary, He gives us rest. When we are frightened, He gives us peace. When we wander, He lovingly seeks us. When we are uncertain, He faithfully guides us. Even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we need not fear, because our Shepherd has already gone before us [14]. The greatest demonstration of His love, however, is not merely that He guides His sheep—it is that He died for them. Jesus declared,

John 10:11 NIV

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

No earthly shepherd has ever loved his flock as deeply as Christ loves His own. He willingly laid down His life to rescue those who could never rescue

themselves. He bore the judgment that belonged to His sheep so that they might enjoy eternal life in His presence. Jesus concludes this beautiful picture with one of the greatest promises in all of Scripture:

John 10:27–29 NIV

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

What comfort this brings to believers living in a world where human love so often disappoints. Friends may fail us. Families may disappoint us. The world may reject us. But the Shepherd never abandons His sheep. His love is steadfast, His promises are certain, and His grip never weakens. In a cold and restless world, there remains one place of perfect security—the everlasting arms of the Good Shepherd.

Living in the Father's Love

As we come to the end of this message, notice where God has brought us. We began by looking at a world where the love of many has grown cold. We saw a sinful woman welcomed by a Savior when everyone else saw only her past. We met the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep by name, laid down His life for them, and promises never to let them go. So how should this change the way we live? The answer is not simply to try harder. It is to live every day in the Father's love. One of Satan's greatest lies is that God's love must somehow be earned. Yet the gospel teaches the very opposite. We do not obey in order to become loved—we obey because we already are loved. The Apostle John writes, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" ([1 John 3:1](#), NIV). Our identity is no longer

found in our success, our failures, or the opinions of others. It is found in the unchanging love of our heavenly Father.

Because we are secure in His love, we are free to live differently. We no longer need to search for acceptance in money, relationships, success, or pleasure, because in Christ we have already been accepted. We are free to forgive because we have been forgiven. We are free to serve because Christ first served us. We are free to love because He first loved us. As Paul reminds us, nothing in all creation "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" ([Romans 8:38–39](#)). That is why we can face a cold and broken world with warm hearts. Our circumstances may change, but Christ's love never does. People may disappoint us, but our Shepherd never abandons us. The world may reject us, but the Father delights in His children. Zephaniah tells us that "The Lord your God is with you... He will take great delight in you... he will rejoice over you with singing" ([Zephaniah 3:17](#), NIV). Imagine that—the God who created the universe delights in those whom Christ has redeemed.

So when you leave here today, do not leave thinking, "I must love God more." Leave remembering how deeply God already loves you. For it is His love that changes us. It is His love that keeps us. And it is His love that enables us to shine brightly in a world where the love of many has grown cold. May our lives point others to the One whose love never fades, never fails, and never lets His children go. Amen.

Footnotes

[1] Taken from the following website: <https://cometoagreement.com/2025-children-of-separated-or-divorced-parents/>

[2] Taken from the following website:
<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2025/11/nation-suffering-division-loneliness>

[3] David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 185.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Peter Williams, *Opening up 2 Timothy*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2007), 68–69.

[7] Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 218.

[8] Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 123.

[9] Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 218.

[10] Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 220–221.

[11] Matt Carter and Josh Wredberg, *Exalting Jesus in John* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 214.

[12] Matt Carter and Josh Wredberg, *Exalting Jesus in John* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 215–216.

[13] Matt Carter and Josh Wredberg, *Exalting Jesus in John* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 216.

[14] Matt Carter and Josh Wredberg, *Exalting Jesus in John* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 219.