

## Daily Devotional, July 20, 2020

***“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.” Matthew 24:10-12 (NIV)***

I want you to allow yourself to honestly ask the Lord to examine you: Is my love hot or cold? There may be another person whose thoughtlessness may have wounded you deeply, but instead of forgiving the wound or going to that other person and discussing it, we go to others with our complaint. The wound then begins to fester into a source of bitterness, and as a result, many are being damaged. What is growing in us is not love but bitterness, which is unfulfilled revenge.

Jesus warned that stumbling blocks would come. There will be times when even good people have bad days; there will never be a time when stumbling blocks will not appear upon your path. Remember that, people do not ordinarily stumble over large boulders but over small, ordinary stones—little things. When you have stumbled over something, you have been stopped dead in your tracks.

Have you stumbled over someone else’s weakness or sin lately? Have you gotten back up and loved that other person as you did before, or has that trip-up caused you to shrink away from moving forward in love? To sustain the quality of your love, you must forgive those who have caused you to stumble. Depending on the problem itself, it may be that you rightfully cannot trust them, but that does not give you a legitimate reason to stop loving.

Every time you refuse to forgive or fail to ignore a weakness in someone else, your heart not only hardens toward them, it hardens toward God. You may still think your relationship with God is an open book, but the Scriptures are clear: “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. ***For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 1 John 4:20 (NIV)***. You may not like what someone has done to you, but you do not have an option to stop loving them.

What does this kind of love mean? First off, I do not mean the type of “*tough love*” advocated by many. I mean gentle, sensitive, and persistent love. God will be tough when God needs to be, and we will be firm when God tells us to be, but beneath our steadfastness, must be an underlying stream of love waiting to gurgle into action. When I have love for someone, I have decided that I am going to stand with them, regardless of what they are going through. I will not waver in my commitment to them.

We all need people who love us, people who are committed to us despite our imperfections. The fullness of Christ will not come without Christians standing with each other in love. We are not talking about salvation, but we are committed to growing in salvation until we care enough for each other, even as Christ has committed Himself to us.

The goal of overcoming the bastion of cold love is to see our hearts restored as the heart of Christ. This will challenge you, but if you persist, you will discover the height and depth and breadth of Christ’s love. ***“You may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians. 3:19.(NIV)***

Is your love growing to be more evident to others? Or is it becoming more discriminating, more calculating, less vulnerable and less open? This is an extremely important issue, for your Christianity is only as real as your love. A measurable decrease in your ability to love is evidence that a stronghold of cold love is developing within you. Ask God to unfreeze your heart and to open it to real change.

***Prayer: “Lord, with humble hearts we approach you. We deserve nothing, yet you shower us with unmerited grace and favor. As we draw near to you, we know that you will draw near to us and show up in many ways. As we go through the day, may we be peacemakers, wise influencers, and doers of good. May you shine through in all our actions. Keep me humble as I do what you have purposed for me to do. Amen.”***