



[Matthew 24:12](#)

(12) And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.
New King James Version

Even though we might fancy ourselves as expert judges, at times it can be tricky to determine by observation whether the *agape* love is truly cooling. This is because the word "love" can be a subjective term, and even the phrase "sacrificial love" is wide open to interpretation.

To illustrate this, suppose I asked you to turn in your Bible to page 949. In my Bible, on page 949, in the left-hand column, about half way down, are Jesus Christ's words, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Are we on the same page? Technically, we are, but at the same time, we may not be looking at the same passage. My page 949 is probably at least a little bit different from yours—maybe even very different—though, strictly speaking, we are on the same page. My page 949 contains parts of John 13 and 14; the quotation above is [John 13:35](#). Chances are good that your page 949 is not only different from mine, but that it also differs from page 949 in other Bibles you may have.

This exercise demonstrates that, while we are on the same page with regard to sacrificial love and the need for it, the exact application of that love may be different for each of us, even though it is still exercised within the bounds of [God's law](#). How we show love to others and what we look for in terms of love from others will not always be the same.

This is because we each have facets of [God's love](#), but we do not have the totality, the whole, of it. Each child of [God](#) resembles Him to a degree, but each of us resembles Him more strongly in some areas than in others. Each of us learns or is directed to sacrifice in slightly different ways. This does not mean that *agape* love is absent. It simply means that *agape* love is not complete in us in the way that God's love is complete.

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For example, some people are quite outgoing and excel at making people feel welcome and cherished. They know how to build up, affirm, and encourage people verbally. These are modern types of the apostle Barnabas, whose name means "son of encouragement" or "son of consolation." However, not everybody has that facet of God's love to a significant degree. There was, after all, only one Barnabas among the apostles. Though the other apostles were probably encouraging and affirming in their own ways, only one was named for that aspect of God's love.

Others may not have as much to say, but they will give the shirt off their backs to the needy. They will even have it dry-cleaned first. If it needs to be a different size, they will make sure of that, too.

Some serve behind the scenes, and we may not even be aware of all their sacrifices. They resemble the tireless service of an ox, just as Christ did. Nevertheless, not everyone is able to sacrifice in this way.

Still others have the means to give materially. That may mean giving financial assistance or slipping someone a small token of appreciation or admiration that, even though it does not have much intrinsic worth, stands for a more meaningful sentiment.

As another example, a man I know has a plaque in his office with four short words that explain another facet of God's love. The plaque reads simply, "I teach. I care." But not everyone has that kind of sacrificial love. Other people may instead reflect God's love differently.

On the flipside, because of the way we are as individuals—because our page 949 is not universal—we may not easily recognize the sacrificial love of another if we are looking only for one application of it. Because of the way some people are wired, they may not feel like they are loved unless they receive a hug every time they see you. That is not a shortcoming but simply the way they are. Yet, for others, hugs may make them uncomfortable. We may have to give them more personal space.

Some feel as if they are out in the cold unless they receive an occasional handwritten note. Others may get such a note, but it is not as valuable to them as the sender spending meaningful time with them. Both the card and the time can be examples of sacrificial love, but each means more to one than another.

Some may feel unloved unless the love is verbally expressed to them; for them, "silence is deafening." For others, though, "talk is cheap," and the real evidence of love on *their* page 949 is some form of physical service or gift.

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Thus, although we are all on the same page in one sense, we are not all seeing the same thing. If God is our spiritual Father, then we know that His love is poured out in our hearts ([Romans 5:5](#)), and it will be evident in some way. However, that evidence will not be identical in every case. If we are only looking for one facet of God's love, we may miss a great deal of His workmanship, His outworking, and His image in His other children.

— David C. Grabbe

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