

IN THE MARGINS: What Is Christian love? Setting the tone for all relationships

By Tony Martin

Editor

Happy New Year! In talking to God about 2025, my question is: "Hey, Lord, is this my restoration season or is this still the trial by fire?" I may be serious.

As we begin this fresh chapter, I want to focus on the foundation of our faith – **Christian love**. Love isn't just an emotion; it's the cornerstone of everything we do as believers. The Bible describes love as the greatest virtue, the essence of God Himself (1 John 4:8). Today, we'll dig into **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**, where Paul beautifully outlines what Christian love looks like:

"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Christian love is more than a feeling – it's an action, a lifestyle, and a calling. Let's explore the defining traits of this love and how it sets the tone for all our relationships.

1. Love Is Patient and Kind

Christian love requires patience and kindness. In a world where it's easy to rush or react harshly, love teaches us to slow down, give others grace, and respond with gentleness. Kindness reflects the heart of God, who is patient with us every day (2 Peter 3:9).

2. Love Is Humble

Paul tells us that love “does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude.” True love seeks to build others up rather than puffing ourselves up. Humility in love means putting others’ needs ahead of our own, just as Christ humbled Himself for us (Philippians 2:3-4).

3. Love Is Selfless

“It does not insist on its own way.” This is a hard one, isn’t it? Our natural tendency is to focus on what we want, but Christian love is sacrificial. It mirrors Jesus’ love, who gave everything for us (John 15:13).

4. Love Controls Its Emotions

Love “is not irritable or resentful.” Life is full of frustrating moments, but love calls us to rise above irritation and resentment. Forgiveness and understanding are hallmarks of Christian love, reminding us to let go of grudges and choose peace.

5. Love Pursues Truth

Christian love “does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.” Love isn’t blind approval or enabling bad behavior. It’s grounded in God’s truth, seeking what is right and good according to His Word.

6. Love Is Resilient

“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” This kind of love doesn’t give up when relationships get hard. It’s steadfast and anchored in faith, trusting God to strengthen and sustain us in every season.

7. Love Reflects God’s Heart

Christian love isn’t something we muster on our own. It’s the

overflow of God's love in us. Romans 5:5 reminds us that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit." When we stay connected to Him, His love flows through us into every interaction.

In this new year (and it's kinda nice to turn the page on 2024), let's commit to living out these principles in our relationships – with family, friends, coworkers, and even strangers. Imagine the impact we can have if we approach every interaction with patience, kindness, humility, and truth.

Think about someone in your life who might need a little extra love right now. How can you reflect God's love to them? Maybe it's a kind word, a thoughtful gesture, or simply offering your time and attention.

When we love as Christ loves us, we become a living example of the Gospel. Let's set the tone for this new year by walking in love – patient, humble, selfless, and enduring.

Blessings to you all!