

# The Christian Tradition is the Spirit of Love

### Text

**John 13:33-35** <sup>33</sup> *Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you. <sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

### Memory Verse

**1 John 5:2** *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.*

## Introduction

Christianity is not a list of rules for rules’ sake. At its core, it is love in action. Jesus said the whole world would know that we are His disciples by one thing: how we love each other (John 13:35).

Think of it like this: if the gospel shows up in a place, it shows up to meet real needs. If people in Nigeria are dying because there is no gas, love builds a gas refinery. If people in Cameroon are

## CHAPTER 2

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dying because there is no kerosene, love builds a kerosene refinery.

Love does not copy-paste what worked somewhere else. Love looks at what is actually hurting people and does something about it. That is why the gospel is different from empty religious tradition. Tradition says “do it like we always did”. Love says “what do these people actually need?”

### **Objective**

To understand love – real ‘agape love’ - and learn how to walk in it, even when walking in love is hard.

### **Presentation**

#### **1. What Love Actually Looks Like**

1 Cor. 13:4-7 gives the definition:

**1 Cor. 13:4-7** <sup>4</sup>*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;* <sup>5</sup>*does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;* <sup>6</sup>*does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;* <sup>7</sup>*bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

## CHAPTER 2

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Let us make it real:

- \* Love is patient - it does not snap when people mess up.
- \* Love is kind - it looks for ways to help, not hurt.
- \* Love does not envy or boast – it is not insecure or showy.
- \* Love is not rude or self-seeking - it thinks about others first.
- \* Love keeps no record of wrongs - it does not hold grudges.
- \* Love rejoices with the truth - it hates fake and celebrates what is real.
- \* Love always protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres - it does not give up on people.

The Hebrew word for love is ‘ahavah’. The Greek word for this kind of love is ‘agape’. ‘Philia’ is friendship love. ‘Agape’ is different. It is love that chooses what is best for the other person, even when that choice is hard to make.

And here is the key:

You can only know love by what it does (Vine’s Dictionary). Love without action is not love. It is talk. God is love (1 John 4:8):

**1 John 4:8** *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

## CHAPTER 2

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The Christian tradition - Jesus's teaching - is the Spirit of that love (John 6:63). So when we live like Jesus, we are living in love.

### **2. How to Walk in Love**

(1) Agape love is principle-based, not feeling-based.

Sometimes you will not 'feel' like loving someone. That is where 'agape' comes in. It is love that chooses to do right because God said so, not because you feel warm and fuzzy.

Jesus told us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). You probably do not feel affection for them. But you can still act for their good, pray for them, and refuse to hate them.

(2) God is our example.

- \* The Father loves the Son with 'agape' love (John 3:35).
- \* The Father also has 'philia' - affection - for the Son (John 5:20).

Jesus says that if we love Him and keep His commandments, the Father will love us too (John 14:21).

## CHAPTER 2

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God does not just talk love. He shows it by giving us everything, including His Son (Rom. 5:8).

(3) Love sometimes means saying no.

‘Agape’ does not rejoice in wrongdoing (1 Cor. 13:6). Loving someone does not mean supporting their sin. Real love wants what is best, and what is best is always what God says.

(4) This is hard, but it is possible.

Loving people who do not love you back is impossible on your own. That is why Jesus died and sent the Spirit. Love is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). When you stay connected to Him, He produces love through you - even for difficult people.

### **Conclusion**

God is love, but He is not an abstract idea. He is a Person who acted. He gave us creation, and when we messed up, He gave us Jesus.

Love was abused when Adam and Eve chose their own way over God’s command. Now we get to choose again. Will you let Jesus’s teaching shape your heart so that His love can flow through you? It might challenge everything you grew up believing. But it is the only thing that actually heals people and changes the world.

### Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. How can we love fellow persons whilst still obeying Heb. 1:9 and Ps. 45:7?
  - \* Heb. 1:9 and Ps. 45:7 say “You love righteousness and hate wickedness”.
  - \* Loving people does not mean approving of sin. Real love wants what is best for people, and what is best is righteousness. So we can love the person whilst hating the sin that destroys them. We correct, warn, and help them turn back to God - not because we hate them, but because we love them.
2. What does it mean not to love the world and the things in it, as commanded in 1 John 2:15-16?
  - \* “The world” here means the system of pride, lust, and greed that runs against God. Not loving the world means refusing to let those values shape your heart and choices. You can still live in the world, use things in the world, and love people in the world. But you do not worship money, status, sex, or approval. Your love and loyalty belong to God first.

## CHAPTER 2

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### 3. Which traditions of men are acceptable to God?

- \* God only accepts traditions that line up with His love and command. If a tradition actually meets human need and reflects God's character - mercy, justice, help for the hurting - then it is aligned with His Spirit. If it is just ritual, pride, or harm, He rejects it (Mark 7:8-9). The test is: does this tradition reveal God's love and fit with His commandments?

### 4. Which is the expansive type of love with wider benefit coverage?

- \* 'Agape' love. It is wider than 'philia' because it is based on God's principle, not just feelings. 'Agape' seeks the highest good of others, even enemies. It is the love God showed by sending Jesus for people who hated Him (Rom. 5:8).

## Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Grow Your love in our hearts - love for You that makes us quit sin, and love for others that makes us want to help them. This is what Jesus died for, and this is the heart of the gospel. In Jesus's name, Amen.