



# FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

LOVE

*Family Study Guides*

## FRUIT OF GOD'S SPIRIT

### "Love"

#### Family Study Guide

**Galatians 5:22-23** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

#### Objectives

- Describe ways that God has complete, perfect and unconditional love for all.
- List examples that show how treating others with love is God's way.
- Explain how love is the most important godly trait we can express toward one another. When we sow love, we will reap love in return.
- Explain how the parable of the prodigal son illustrates God's love.

**Definition: Love**—an unselfish concern for others; having a strong devotion, desire or affection.

**\*\*God is love. Love is the most important godly trait we can express toward one another.**

**1 Corinthians 13:4a** [NLT] *"Love is patient and kind..."*

**1 Corinthians 13:13** [NLT] *Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.*

#### Memory Verse:

**John 3:16** [NKJV] *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

#### More than one kind of love

Are these kinds of love the same? Are they at the same level? Do they have the same meaning?

- "I love ice cream!" "I love money." "I love that song."
- "I love my dog." "I just love that actor." "I love school."
- "I love my mother." "I love that cute guy." "I love my best friend."
- "I love God." "Oh, how I love Your law!" (Psalm 119) "I love our Church members."

Which of these things are (or could be) a right kind of love? Which of these could also be a wrong kind of love?

So—there are different kinds of love:

- Some love is good and natural love, such as love between parent and child.
- Some love can be right—or wrong. (You can love having money to attend the Feast [Deut. 14:25] or love money to pursue evil things. [1 Tim. 6:10])
- Emotional love can be right—or wrong. [\*See the lesson below regarding Amnon.]

And there is true godly love, which is a Fruit of the Spirit.



## What is godly love and how can we have it?

### ➤ True love is a gift of God through His Holy Spirit

**Romans 5:5** [GNT] *...God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, [which] is God's gift to us.*

**Ephesians 3:16-17** [NCV] *I ask the Father in his great glory to give you the power to be strong inwardly through his Spirit. I pray that Christ will live in your hearts by faith and that your life will be strong in love and be built on love.*

### ➤ True love involves God and His commandments

**John 14:21** [GNT] *"Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. My Father will love those who love me; I too will love them and reveal myself to them."*

**1 John 4:7-8** [NKJV] *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

**2 John 1:6** [NKJV] *This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.*

**1 John 5:2-3** [GNT] *This is how we know that we love God's children: it is by loving God and obeying his commands. For our love for God means that we obey his commands. And his commands are not too hard for us,*

**If an emotion or action violates any of God's commandments – it is NOT true godly love!**

### ➤ True love does not just "happen." It is not just a feeling. It is not just our emotions taking over, and "falling in love." Love takes effort and is a purposeful positive action.

**1 Corinthians 14:1** [AMP] *Eagerly pursue and seek to acquire [this] love [make it your aim, your great quest]...*

**Colossians 3:14** [ESV] *And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

**1 John 3:18** [TLB] *Little children, let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions.*

Read and discuss the characteristics of love in **1 Corinthians 13:4-6**.

Are these things easy for us to do? Which ones do you have to work at in your relationships with people? Which ones do you need God's help with to show love towards others?

This statement by Jesus implies that we must consciously work at loving others, and that we need to pray to God for His Spirit to help us do so. **Matthew 5:44** [NKJV] *"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you".*

## Christ's Examples of Love

**Christ and God the Father love us, so Christ became our redeemer, becoming flesh to be a perfect example for us and to give His life as a sacrifice for all, making salvation possible. He is a servant. Review some of His examples:**

- Christ loves children: Matthew 6:25-34; Matthew 19:3-15; Luke 18:15-17; Mark 10:13-16
- Christ showed love and compassion for the people. (Matthew 15:32)
- **John 13:1** [NIV] *It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.* [KJV reads, "...he loved them to the end"]

**Family discussion:** Review some of the events that took place that Passover, and discuss how difficult it might have been to love the disciples during that time.

- For example, Judas betrayed him. They argued who would be the greatest. They fell asleep while Jesus was praying. Peter denied him. They all fled from him.

Would you have been as forgiving and loving as Jesus was?

### **Christ's Example – Healing of Lazarus – John 11**

Read and discuss the story about two sisters named Mary and Martha and their brother, Lazarus. They were Jesus' friends, but something happened to them. Jesus showed His love by helping them.

- ✓ What sad thing happened in the story?
- ✓ How do you suppose Jesus felt when He saw Mary and Martha crying?
- ✓ What actions in the story demonstrated that Jesus had love for Mary, Martha and Lazarus?

**Jesus showed love by the way He acted toward others and the things He did.**

### **The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24; John 3:16; John 19:1-30)**

As a family, read together "the Prodigal Son" parable in Luke 15:11-24. This story will help to better understand the subject of love.

What does the word "prodigal" mean? [Prodigal means one who wastes things carelessly.]

In a normal family relationship, there is a natural love between parent and child. But the validity of even that natural love is shown by the principles of God's laws (**2 John 1:6** *This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.*).

- ✓ List some reasons that the Prodigal Son was NOT showing love to his father. Later, the son realized he had sinned (Luke 15:18 *"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you"*). Think about which commandments he was breaking that showed lack of love towards God and his father.
- ✓ Discuss some of ways that the father showed that he really loved his son. Considering what his son had done to him (see Matthew 5:44), do you think the father displayed a higher degree of love than even that of natural love between parent and child? How do you think the father felt when his son began obeying God again?

- ✓ Do you think the Prodigal Son's brother showed love towards him? Why or why not?
- ✓ Think of your relationships with others. Would your display of love be closer to that of the Prodigal Son, his father, or his brother?

**LESSON:**

Jesus told this story to His disciples and us because He wants us to learn a lesson. We all sin, and if we continue in a sinful way of life, we separate ourselves from God. We need to ask God to forgive us of our sins and to obey God and His commandments. He is a forgiving God. He wants to forgive us. All we need do is ask with the right attitude. We are alive or found if we turn to God and His way of life. As this father loved and forgave his son, God loves and forgives us for our sins. God is love and He gave His son as a sacrifice for our sins. Christ, our elder brother, is very different from the older brother in the parable.

**The Parable of the Prodigal Son teaches us how great God's love is for us.**

**Possible class discussion:**

- ✓ How much does God love us?  
Allow each child in your group to respond with one good, complete answer.  
Have them turn to John 3:16.  
**John 3:16-17 [NLT]** *For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.*  
Who is the Son here? [Jesus.] Since the Son is Jesus, what does that make God? [Jesus' Father].
- ✓ Instructor: Explain God's plan for all of us (at whatever level you instruct).
- ✓ Relate God's plan to the Prodigal Son story.  
That father really pictured God the Father. But who was the son? Actually, the son was all humanity, each of us; each one of us human beings is the lost son. And like the parable, the Father is happy when we repent and return to Him. But unlike the parable, our older "brother," Jesus Christ, was willing to lay down His life for us so that we can return to our Father.

**Book of Ruth—Example of Love**

[Ruth showed love to Naomi and reverence for Boaz. Boaz cared for Naomi and Ruth as his own].

**The story:**

There is a famine in the land of Bethlehem, Judah. Elimelech, his wife, Naomi and their two sons were forced to leave and move to a foreign land called Moab, an enemy nation of Israel, about 60 miles from Bethlehem. Reading Deuteronomy 28:15, 22-24 may help explain the famine.

- Then Elimelech died and Naomi became a single mom to her sons Mahlon and Chilion. Eventually they married Moab women, Orpah and Ruth. They lived in Moab about ten years, and then both the sons died. Orpah and Ruth became widows just like Naomi.
- Upon hearing the famine had ended and God's blessings were upon Judah, Naomi decided to return home. Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, *"Go return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as*

*you have dealt with the dead and with me” (Ruth 1:8). Ruth and Orpah were faced with an important choice; to return to their families and their sinful society or go with Naomi and adopt the customs of her people.*

- Orpah returned to her family and her gods. Naomi said to Ruth, *“Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her own people and her own gods. Go back with her” (Ruth 1:15). Ruth decided to stay with Naomi and not go back to her family.*

- Ruth said, *“Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my god. Where you die, I will die and there will be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me” (Ruth 1:16, 17). Even though Ruth was a Moabitess this did not stop her from worshipping the one true God.*

- ✓ Right decisions are very important. Because Ruth made the right decision she became the great grandmother of David and a descendant in the line of Jesus Christ. God loves you just as He loved Orpah and Ruth. You too have an important decision to make, to worship God faithfully or continue in sin.

- Naomi wanted to return to Bethlehem after living in the land of the Moabites for over 10 years. Ruth, a Moabitess, refused to let her go alone. So, they set out on a difficult hundred-mile journey down the mountains, across the floor of the Jordan Valley and through the wilderness of Judea, arriving wearily in Bethlehem. When they arrived, it was the beginning of the barley harvest.

- Since they were both hungry and in need of food, Ruth said to her mother-in-law, *“You stay here, and rest and I’ll go to the field and pick up grain that the reapers have left behind.”* The poor were allowed to walk behind the reapers to pick up, or “glean,” anything the reapers had missed. (Deuteronomy 24:19-22) Ruth went and gleaned after the reapers. She happened to stop at a field that belonged to Boaz who was a relative of Naomi’s dead husband, Elimelech.

- When Boaz saw Ruth in his field, he asked his servant who was in charge of the reapers, *“Who is that new girl I see picking up grain after the reapers?”* The servant explained that Ruth had come to the area with Naomi who had come back from Moab. Ruth asked permission to continue to gather behind the reapers. Boaz granted the request and said, *“Don’t go to any other field to gather. Stay here with my other field girls and follow after them into whichever field they go reaping. I have ordered the young men not to bother you. When you are thirsty, help yourself to a drink of water. If you need a break, take a little rest in the house.”*

- Ruth was grateful for being treated so well and she bowed humbly in front of Boaz to thank him. She asked, *“Why are you so kind to me? I am a foreigner in your land.”*

- Boaz replied, *“I am aware of all the good things you have done for Naomi, your mother-in-law ever since her husband passed away and of how you helped her travel a great distance. You gave up your own family just to come here with her. You have come to this land to take refuge under the wings of the God of Israel. He will repay you for your acts of tender mercies and kindness.”*

- ✓ **Read Galatians 6:7 “Whatever a man sows, that he will reap.”**

If you are kind to others, it will eventually come back to you. Others will treat you kindly in return.

- Boaz was protective of Ruth and ordered his workers to let her pick grain anywhere she wanted to. They were not allowed to hassle her efforts, and they were to leave extra handfuls on the ground just for her. Ruth spent the whole day picking barley and other grains.

- When she returned to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, *“In whose field did you spend the day?”* Ruth replied, *“In the field of Boaz.”* Naomi was happy to hear this because, *“Boaz is a relative of ours. He has a right to claim us.”* According to the law, a relative had the right to reclaim something that belonged to another relative. The law about who can redeem is in Leviticus 25:48; 25:25

- In Ruth 3:12-13 Boaz revealed to Ruth he was not the closest relative, but that he would take care of them if the closer relative refused. Boaz told the closer relative, *“If you don’t want to buy it [the land], tell me because you are the only one who can buy it, and I am next after you”* (Ruth 4:4).

Christ has the power to redeem. *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich”* (**2 Corinthians 8:9**). Jesus paid the debt of the world with His life.

- Boaz was willing to redeem Ruth and take her out of poverty. He was not motivated by self-interest, but by a deep love for Ruth. The close relative answered Boaz, *“I can’t buy back the land. If I did, I might harm what I can pass on to my own sons. Buy it yourself”* (Ruth 4:6).
- Boaz completed the redemption when he paid the price. Boaz said to the witnesses gathered, *“I am buying from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion and Mahlon. I am also taking Ruth, the Moabite who was the wife of Mahlon, as my wife”* (Ruth 4:9-10).
- The story of Ruth ends with Naomi holding her grandson who was named Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of David of the lineage of the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5).

#### **SUMMARY:**

The story of Ruth and her family is easy to relate to. The characters were ordinary people with the same desires and needs we experience today. Ruth, Naomi and Boaz were used by God, not because of their individual greatness, but because they were open to being used to achieve His purposes.

**Ruth** is an example of love and loyalty and faithfulness to God. Through her actions of friendship and love toward Naomi she demonstrated her unforgettable loyalty expressed in Ruth 1:16-17.

**Boaz** was an honest man with high moral standards who followed through with his commitments by buying back the land for Naomi and Ruth. His actions guaranteed their inheritance and showed his integrity. He was a man that did not just talk the talk, but he walked it as well.

Boaz’s plan to redeem Ruth is a picture of Christ redeeming us. To be a kinsman that can redeem, four things are required; 1) the redeemer must be the nearest relative, 2) the redeemer must have the power to redeem, 3) the redeemer must be willing to redeem and 4) the redemption becomes complete when the price is paid in full.

Redemption is costly and personal. Jesus, too, has a glorious plan of salvation. Our salvation has been purchased at a great cost. *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us”* (**Ephesians 1:7**).

God redeemed Naomi and Ruth from their present situation through Boaz. God has redeemed all of mankind through our kinsman Jesus Christ.

**Love is a virtue Ruth showed Naomi, Boaz showed Ruth and God showed to all three when He brought them together for His purpose.**

The book of Ruth is a call to responsible behavior and living. Parents have a responsibility to provide moral and spiritual guidance for their children and to establish godly values through their example. Love is an important virtue to model to children.

### Possible Family Discussions or Activities:

- ✓ How can we be sure we are showing love? (Turn the situation around and put yourself in the other person's shoes. Ask yourself, "How would I like to be treated in this situation?")
- ✓ Discuss some people you can show love to. [Mother, father, sister, brother, grandma, grandpa, teacher, neighbors.]
- ✓ What is something you should do for a family member in need?
- ✓ Together, brainstorm ideas for showing love:
  - Visit someone in a nursing home.
  - Pray for others in need.
  - Visit those who are sick.
  - Grow a garden and give some of the produce to others.
  - Invite someone from your congregation who you don't get to see very often or don't know well for a meal or to your house.
  - Do things for someone in need (clean the yard, garage or home).
  - Make and take something special (cards, cookies, small gift, a drawing) to someone who needs encouragement.

### Further Family Discussion Ideas:

- How does God show that He loves us? Why do you think God wants us to love one another?
- How can children show love to their parents? How can parents show love to their children?
- How can we show our love for God?
- Have each person tell the other family members one thing he or she loves about each of them.
- What did you do today to show your love for someone?
- What tells you you're loved?
- What are other ways that we can show our love for one another?

### Additional resources that you can use in your family studies:

- **The Fruit of the Spirit—Love—The Ground from Which Spiritual Fruit Springs**  
<https://www.ucg.org/good-news/the-fruit-of-the-spirit-love-the-ground-from-which-spiritual-fruit-springs>
- **Fruits of the Spirit: Love**  
<https://www.ucg.org/sermons/fruits-of-the-spirit-love>



## Possible Classroom Activities

1. Discuss some actions showing what love might be.
2. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24). See suggestions above on page 4.

### 3. **ACTIVITY: Unwrap a Gift**

Write the words "the greatest of these is love" on the outside of an envelope. Place inside the envelope pieces of paper with the words that describe what love is in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Write one word on each piece of paper: patient, kind, does not envy, does not boast, is not proud, is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not easily angered, keeps no record of wrong, etc. Place the pieces of paper inside the envelope. Place the envelope inside the box. Seal it and wrap up the box using 10 layers of wrapping paper. On each layer write one gift of the Spirit. Write the words wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, distinguish between spirits, speaking in tongues, interpretation, helping others, and administration. Play a game like musical chairs except have the children pass around the gift while playing some music. When the music stops let the child who is holding the gift unwrap one layer and read the word that shows after taking off the layer. Keep playing until someone gets to open the box. The child that gets to open the box should read the outside of the envelope and pass out the pieces of paper inside. When everyone has a piece of paper, have each child give an example of the words written on his piece of paper.

### 4. **Discussion Activity:**

Every day we have opportunities to choose how we are going to feel and behave.

1. *Ask:* What are some of the emotions we may feel?
2. Write these on the poster board or paper on the wall. Some suggestions may include anger, surprise, love, joy, irritation, frustration, happiness, puzzlement, boredom, excitement, laziness and so on.
3. Let's look at these and rate them either negative or positive emotions.
4. As the students rate these emotions put a minus (-) or plus (+) sign beside each emotion.
5. *Ask:* Which of these emotions would you like to have all the time? Why?
6. *Say:* Positive emotions are good because they produce happiness for us and for others.
7. *Ask:* But which emotion is the most positive? [Let the students guess.]
8. Let's see what the Bible says. Put your hands on your heart when you know!
9. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 13 and 1 John 4:19.
10. *Ask:* What is the best positive emotion? [Let students answer.]
11. Yes, love. God tells us the greatest of these is love.

## TEEN DISCUSSIONS:

1. We all consider certain things to be important—some more important than others.
  - Take five minutes to list some of the essentials of your life right now. Please consider food and water but also clothing, housing and—of course—essential people: Mom, Dad, brothers and sisters.
  - Write down what you need for an adequate life, for a “good” life and for “no” life.
  - And then after five minutes, compare your list with others’ lists for five minutes.
  - Finally, together, decide what you would be willing to give up for eternal life. Then ask yourself, “Would I be willing to give this up for my friend?”

The purpose in this activity is to show God’s complete, perfect, unconditional love. Christ’s story of the prodigal son serves that purpose well.

- Talk about the love God wants us to have as a fruit of His Holy Spirit. What “stuff” is essential for your life? What would you be willing to give up for a friend or family?

### 2. **Amnon and Tamar** - Read **2 Samuel 13:1-22**

2 Samuel 13:1 says that: *“Amnon, [Tamar’s] half-brother, fell desperately in love with her.*

- According to God’s definition of love—was Amnon really in “love” with Tamar? Why or why not?
- Which commandments did Amnon break to show that he was not really showing love?

Sometimes a person will tell you that they love you—but then try to get you to do something that is against God’s commandments. Don’t fall for it!

3. A popular slogan circulating in society is “Love Wins”, which promotes alternative lifestyles. Where is the flaw in this slogan?
4. Sometimes our parents place restrictions on us or provide what seem to be harsh consequences, calling it “tough love”. There are examples where God has shown “tough love” too. How is this really love when it doesn’t feel so lovely? Read Hebrews 12:3-11 and discuss. (One example: look at how God handled Moses breaking the original tablets given to him on Mount Sinai. Read Exodus 32 and 34.)



## MAZE

Help Naomi and Ruth  
on their way back to  
Bethlehem.

