

LESSON ONE



LOVE

**BIBLE READING(S):***1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13**John 15:13**1 John 4:19***ELEMENTARY LESSON**

Just like the roots, branches, and leaves on an apple tree work to produce apples, so, too, does the Holy Spirit work to produce His own fruit in our lives. The Spirit isn't going to make us produce actual apples, but He will produce His own variety of fruit that we're going to learn about!

In Galatians 5:22, Paul explains that when we know Jesus and have God's Holy Spirit inside us, we produce fruit, and that fruit is shown in nine different ways: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In our lessons, we are going to talk about each of these nine "fruits" and talk about how Jesus expresses them perfectly and asks us to imitate (copy) Him in doing that. Even better--the Holy Spirit promises to be our Helper and give us all we need to do this! That's why they're not called the "Fruit of Me." They're called the "Fruit of the Spirit" because they come from God.

— Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8,13

The first fruit Paul lists in Galatians is love. We've all heard this word a lot. We tell people we love them and we say we love things, like ice cream, stuffed animals, or TV. We even have a holiday to celebrate love--Valentine's Day! But what really is love? Our passage in 1 Corinthians says that love is a lot of things: patient and kind, not envying or boastful, hopeful and long-lasting. Those all seem wonderful! Does it seem like Paul is writing about a person? Does he describe any person you've ever met on Earth who does all that perfectly? Probably not. That's because Paul is talking specifically about the Person who loves us best of all--Jesus. Jesus loves us more than anyone ever can. But how do we know He loves us?

— Read John 15:13



Jesus says that the best and most perfect love will lead someone to lay down their life for their friends. Jesus did that! And through the Holy Spirit, He gives us the power to show that kind of love to others. Jesus laid down His own life for us, even though we didn't deserve it. Every person deserves death because of sin--the badness in our hearts and in the world. But Jesus loves us so much that He took the punishment for us. Doesn't that sound a lot like our passage in John 15?

Now, it's unlikely that you'll ever have to actually give up your life for someone. But you probably will have chances everyday to love other people, even if you don't feel like it or it costs you something, like time, food, money, or comfort. Let's say you've just had a birthday. You have just one piece of cake left, and you really want to eat it for dessert after dinner. But your brother, who did not have a birthday that week, wants some cake, too. You could most certainly eat all the cake yourself. But you love your brother! So how can you show it? Can you tell him? Yes! But what will have a bigger impact than just saying you love him? Showing you love him. You can take that last piece of birthday cake, and cut it in half, giving some to him. Now, this means that you'll have less cake, but it also means that you loved your brother by sacrifice--giving him something, even though it means that you get less. How cool is it that the Holy Spirit helps us make these choices to love others?

Love is not easy. That is why we need the Holy Spirit to help us. 1 John 4:19 says that "we love because He first loved us." God's love, the love that motivated Jesus to die in our place, is what motivates us to love others, even when it isn't easy.

OBJECT LESSON

You'll need: two clear glasses (one labeled "other person" and one labeled "me"), one sponge, one large bucket labeled "God's Love."

Fill the "me" glass with a little water, about half full. Dip the sponge into it and say: "I want to love another person. I have some love to give them." Shove the sponge down into the "me" glass and fill it up as much as possible. Say, "I want to give them all my love, but this really doesn't seem like a lot. I need help if I'm really going to show them a lot of love." Grab the large bucket and reveal that it says "God's love" and begin filling the sponge and wringing it into the "me" bucket, over and over again until it's really full. Then, dump the "me" glass into the "other person" glass. Say, "look at all the love God gave me that I was able to give this other person!"



Wow! We were able to give so much love when we tapped into the love God has for us. We are able to love because the God of love grows his fruit of love in us. This will be the case with all other good things too - we draw our life in love, joy, kindness, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control from him.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for showing us what love is by giving us your Son, Jesus, to die in our place. Thank you for helping us love others even when it's not easy. We are so grateful that Your love for us isn't based on what we do right or wrong--you love us simply because we're Your children. Amen.

LOVE CHALLENGE

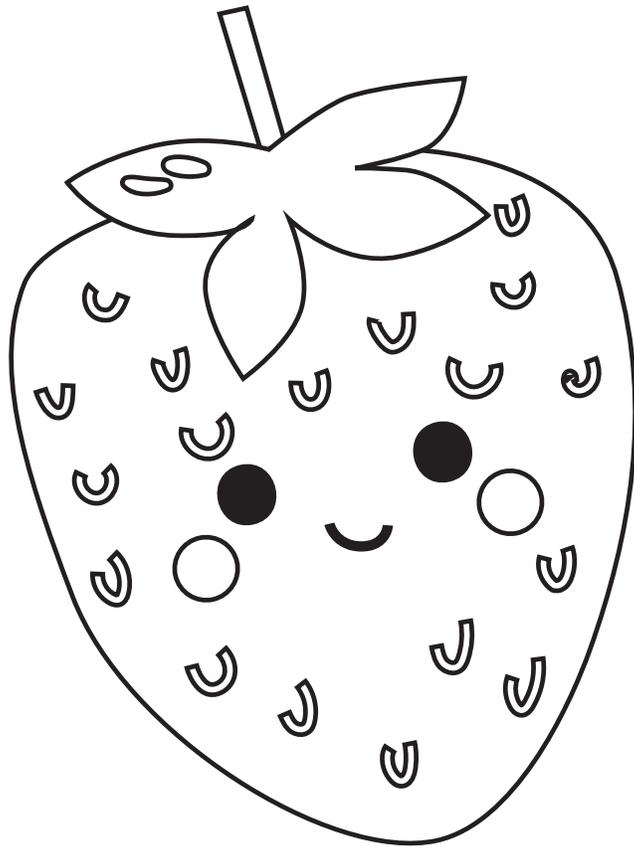
Take a video of yourself with your very favorite food, maybe a candy bar that you only get once in a while. Film yourself with a sibling, friend or parent, and split the food between yourself and the other person, sacrificing some of what you could have had for them to enjoy. Say, "I love because Jesus loved me first!"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are some ways you can love your parents and siblings today?
- Think of a time when you did something loving even though it meant you had to sacrifice something for yourself. Remembering this, how do you see God was at work?
- Is it easy to love other people?

SONG RECOMMENDATIONS

- "Reckless Love" by Cory Ashbury
- "At the Cross" by Chris Tomlin
- "No Greater Love" by Matt Maher
- "How Deep the Father's Love" by Austin Stone Worship



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