

"So often, I find it is a struggle to make abstract, spiritual concepts real and relatable to kids. But Christie Thomas has done exactly that in *Fruit Full: 100 Family Experiences for Growing in the Fruit of the Spirit*. By combining Bible stories with some of her own personal adventures, Thomas has created a resource that is both biblically sound and fun to read. She goes beyond explanations to encourage children to look for the Spirit's fruits in their own lives, as well as to seek a deeper connection with Christ. With just the right amount of humor to keep kids engaged, *Fruit Full* is sure to be a sweet experience for your family's devotion time."

—Tama Fortner, award-winning author of more than forty books, including *Simply Christmas: A Busy Mom's Guide to Reclaiming the Peace of the Holidays*

"Christie Thomas's approach to helping children grow in Christ exhibits everything you'd want in a devotional: depth, warmth, and surprising insights."

—Marianne Hering, author of the *Adventures in Odyssey®: The Imagination Station®* series

"In this devotional, Christie does a fabulous job of making big virtues accessible to little people. This guide is practical and relational—easy enough for a tired parent at the end of the day, but deep enough to produce real conversation and a better understanding of who Christ is and who he has created us to be."

—Danielle Hitchen, author of the *Baby Believer®* series

"Christie Thomas provides a tremendous resource for families. . . . Through this kid-friendly, comprehensive study, children will learn how to be rooted in Jesus in order to experience continual spiritual growth."

—Crystal Bowman, best-selling, award-winning author of more than 100 books for children including *Our Daily Bread for Kids*, and *I Love You to the Stars: When Grandma Forgets, Love Remembers*

"Would you like the fruit of the Spirit to be a reality in your children's lives and your family life? Pick up this outstanding book and let it guide you!"

—Diane Stortz, author of *I AM: 40 Reasons to Trust God*

"Fruit Full is grounded in Scripture and refreshingly contemporary. This family-focused devotional is sure to bring you and your kids closer together."

—Brock Eastman, author of *Faith and Science with Dr. Fizzlebop*,
Bedtime on Noah's Ark, and *The Quest for Truth* series

"When Christie was the Children's Director at the church I served as Lead Pastor, I witnessed firsthand her passion for ministry, her love for God, and her deep concern for the children and families she served. Now she has given us a book about the fruits of the Spirit that is beautifully Christ-centered and grace-filled. I can't wait to recommend *Fruit Full* to the families in my church."

—Tom Baird, Lead Pastor, Maranatha Church,
Belleville, Ontario, Canada

"Fruit Full is the most comprehensive, well-written family devotional on the fruits of the Spirit that I have ever read. Using stories from Scripture and her own examples from everyday life, Christie Thomas not only explains the nine fruits of the Spirit in ways that are meaningful and accessible to children, but also includes 100 practical ideas for families to participate in together. A thoroughly easy-to-read, delightful devotional."

—Glenys Nellist, author of the *Love Letters from God* series,
Snuggle Time, and *Good News* series

"As a pastor and father, I often ask myself how to have more Spirit-filled conversations about Jesus with my kids. *Fruit Full* highlights that growing and vibrant faith emerges from families that commit to daily rhythms of sitting, playing, and receiving the gift of God's freedom. I recommend *Fruit Full* to any parent seeking practical ways to have fun and learn more about Jesus with your kids. Not only will your kids be blessed by the love and intentionality in this resource, but you will too."

—Cris Harper, pastor of Bethel Community Church,
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

FRUIT FULL

**100 FAMILY EXPERIENCES
FOR GROWING IN THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**

CHRISTIE THOMAS



KREGEL
PUBLICATIONS

Fruit Full: 100 Family Experiences for Growing in the Fruit of the Spirit

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LETTER TO PARENTS

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

(GALATIANS 5:22–23)*

Dear Parent,

We don't know each other, but I think we probably are more alike than we realize. Have you ever tried to become more patient? I tried to grow in patience for years, and I discovered something about God along the way. He does give sudden supernatural patience . . . occasionally. But more often, he gives us a child whose tantrums get on our last nerve.

Oh, was that just me?

Maybe you've tried to become more gentle and kind, only to have a child who asks for snacks 80 million times a day, causing your brittle temper to crack and your words to spill out, unkind and ungentle. Or maybe that was just me too.

Sometimes it seems like growing spiritually is like trying to roll out pizza dough. I squash it with my rolling pin only to have it snap back to its original shape. I roll it again and it snaps back again, but this time it's a little bit wider. It takes a lot of tugging and rolling to get that pizza dough to conform to the pan.

Growing spiritually is similar because we tend to grow a bit, then snap back—like that elastic pizza dough. Then the Lord tugs and rolls our souls again, and we grow a little . . . only to ooze inward once more.

* All Scriptures are quoted from the New Living Translation unless otherwise specified because I personally find this translation to be the most accessible to children. Feel free to look up each passage in your preferred translation before or after reading the devotion.

But it's worth letting him work in us, kneading and growing and rolling our souls, because in the end, the pizza he's making is a life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Maybe with a mushroom garnish.)

The key is that *God* does the rolling, tugging, and growing, usually by giving us situations that force us to depend on him. And this applies to our children's growth as well. Alas, my pizza dough spiritual growth analogy isn't in the Bible, but there's another one that is: the fruit of the Spirit.

THE FRUITY PROBLEM

In my more than twenty years in children's ministry, I often used curricula that turned the fruit of the Spirit into character traits we wanted to see in our kids. We labeled apples and bananas with permanent markers and gave them grape-scented stickers and magnets, but kids just didn't understand. Worse, they didn't grow spiritually. Finally, I figured out why.

The fruit of the Spirit isn't a to-do list.

Training our kids to do better at each fruit of the Spirit isn't Christian because the fruits of the Spirit aren't just nice character traits to practice. They are evidence of a life that is crucified with Christ and living in the resurrection power of his Spirit. They're fruit, not rules.

Training kids to obey God without also telling them about the hope of Christ will either create moralistic children or make them rebel. Just ask the ancient Israelites. They were given law, and they rebelled until they lost their land. Then they turned into legalistic Pharisees, adding to the law until it was an incredible burden on everyone.

The law is not the Christian way. The gospel is the Christian way.

But what is the gospel?

The gospel is the good news of how God sees you and treats you. Not only did God make you, he adores you. But you (and everyone else on this planet) have sinned. It breaks the relationship between you and God because he is holy. God's holiness and your sinfulness are like oil and water. They just don't mix. God fixed it from his end by coming as a man to remove the power of sin over us through his death and resurrection. He invites you into relationship with him. Your job is to believe in his love. Accept his forgiveness, then put your hand in his and let him help you choose love every day.

The gospel brings so much freedom—to our kids and us. It frees us from the expectation that they'll behave well (because honestly, they're sinners,

just like us!) and it reminds us to depend on God for our goodness.

Just like we can't tell an apple tree to try harder to bear fruit, we can't tell our kids to try harder to bear spiritual fruit. No one can force themselves to love more—at least, not on the inside. To be truly transformed into more loving people, we need to be changed from the inside out.

Therefore, writing the word *love* on an apple won't help kids actually grow that fruit of the Spirit (or even truly understand what it is). Even making our kids memorize verses about love or make goals to be more loving is unlikely to help them grow the fruit of love. Any growth they do experience is outward obedience instead of true heart transformation.

SO HOW DO WE GROW IN THE FRUITS?

When Paul wrote about the fruit of the Spirit, he was giving us a metaphor for true life change. We are like plants, and to grow good fruit, we need to be rooted in God's love for us. Jesus said he is the Living Water and the Light of the World, so when we spend time with him, our lives grow and change, just as if we were plants with proper watering and sunshine. Then, like a tree, we will grow good fruit. And the good fruit that grows in our lives as a result of being with Christ is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The fruit of the Spirit is evidence of a soul that is growing in Christ.

God is all the fruits rolled into one amazing, all-powerful being who cares for you and your child with a fierce, eternal love. "God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ" (Colossians 1:19), meaning that "Christ is the visible image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). Jesus is all of God's attributes displayed in a single human being, which is why we're going to spend most of this devotional studying Jesus.

There won't be any hacks here, no "tips and tricks to make your child be good." Our kids will only be good when they fall in love with the good God who loves them enough to die for them. He covers them with his goodness and gives them his Spirit to help them grow a beautiful character that reflects Jesus.

John 15:5–8 reminds us that the only way to grow good fruit in our lives is to live deeply connected with Jesus, every day.

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch

and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.”

The book you’re holding centers around this concept: that as we spend more time with Jesus, connected to the vine, we will grow in the fruit of the Spirit. The fruits then will naturally grow because they are the evidence of a life rooted in Christ. Each of the one hundred devotions will help kids see the fruit of the Spirit through the hands, heart, and habits of Jesus. As children connect with him, the Holy Spirit will change their own hands, hearts, and habits to be more like Christ.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Over the next one hundred devotions, you’ll discover the fruits of the Spirit as seen in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Each day, your family will

- explore a Christ-centered Bible passage and short devotional;
- start a fruitful conversation using the suggested discussion starter; and
- engage in a meaningful prayer that will help you draw closer to Jesus.

Each ten-devotion section also opens with ten simple, hands-on activities you can incorporate into your days to help your kids connect deeper with each aspect of Christ’s character. Feel free to use those activities any time or not at all. Please visit fruitofthespiritbook.com for Bible verse printables and other activities.

For an Easter-focused thirty-day devotional, read the last three devotions in each fruit section. If you start on Ash Wednesday and read every weekday, you’ll be done just before Easter.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT



HANDS-ON GROWTH ACTIVITIES

Use these activities as a hands-on supplement to the daily devotions. You can add in one per day, flip to this page for an idea only on days when you have a few extra minutes, or use a few of the activities each Sunday.

Memorize it: Memorize Galatians 5:22–23 together over the next two weeks.

Write it: Write out the memory verse. Use fun lettering and hang it somewhere obvious.

Draw it: If you were a tree, what would you look like? Draw yourself as a tree, bursting with good fruit.

Pray it: Pray a breath prayer: As you breathe in, say, “Be in me . . .” And as you breathe out, say, “and produce good fruit.”

Research it: How is Psalm 1 similar to the idea of the fruit of the Spirit?

Imagine it: Pretend to be a tiny seed. Imagine that it’s raining on you, and then the sun is shining. Stretch up and grow into a beautiful tree!

Play it: Plant a real seed or even a tree. Watch it grow over the next few weeks as you read about the various ways we are like plants.

Sing it: Find a song about the fruit of the Spirit (or make up your own).

Ask it: Why does God care that we grow good fruit in our lives?

Speak it: Grab a piece of yummy fruit and hold it up in the air as you recite the memory verse.

For Bible verse printables and other activities,
please visit fruitofthespiritbook.com.

DAY 1

WHAT IS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT?

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

(GALATIANS 5:22–23)

Have you ever planted a seed? It's fun to watch, but you can't just put a tomato seed on your kitchen table and expect it to magically produce juicy tomatoes. The seed needs certain things in order to grow.

Near the end of winter, my boys and I love to plant tomato seeds in tiny little pots on our kitchen windowsill. We tuck them gently into the soil, which will hold their roots in place and provide the food they need to grow.

Next, we give them water. Not too much, or they'll float away like a bug in a creek. They need just enough water to make the seeds swell up and crack open.

The most exciting part is when each stem breaks through the soil. It starts out curled up, then straightens and lifts its new leaves toward the sun like praying hands.

Eventually, we take the seedlings out of their little pots and replant them in the garden. They get a little annoyed at this and refuse to grow for a bit. But once they start, they don't stop.

After lots of rain and sun, small yellow flowers turn into delicious tomato fruits.

Do you like to eat fresh tomatoes? I take a big bite and let red juice dribble down my chin. Perhaps you like to enjoy them on a juicy hamburger instead.

Did you know you and I are like plants?

In this book, we're going to talk about the things we need in order to grow fruit in our lives and what the fruit looks like. You and I won't grow tomatoes

out of our ears (thankfully!), but instead, we grow a different kind of fruit when we follow Jesus and let the Holy Spirit work in our hearts. The Bible calls this “the fruit of the Spirit.” What are these fruits? They are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Those sound wonderful, don’t they?

A healthy tomato fruit is proof my plant has received the right amount of nutrients, water, and sun. In the same way, the fruit of the Spirit is proof our hearts have received the right amount of God’s Spirit, and we’re becoming more like Jesus.

Are you ready to grow?

DISCUSSION STARTER

- Picture a tree in your mind. What helps this tree grow big and strong? Can a tree force itself to grow fruit?
- If your life is like a tree, what helps you grow more of the fruit of the Spirit?
- Which fruits of the Spirit do you want to grow?

PRAYER

God, please work in our hearts so we can become more like you. Please give us your Spirit so we can grow in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Amen.

DAY 2

TO BE FRUITFUL, WE NEED JESUS

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”

(JOHN 15:5)

Have you ever picked a flower, then tried to plant it at home? In case you haven't, here's a tip: it won't grow because it is dead. It might not look dead, and it might even look lovely in a vase on your kitchen table for a few days. But you can be sure it will go from fresh to funky smelling very quickly.

It's the same with trying to grow the fruit of the Spirit all on our own. Becoming more loving, patient, and kind on our own is like a picked flower trying to turn into fruit. It's impossible.

Today's verse reminds us of the most important thing we need in order to produce much fruit: Jesus.

Jesus was the only person in the world who had all the fruits of the Spirit all the time. Jesus was full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, and because of this, people loved to be with him!

Sometimes we think in order to be more like Jesus, we just have to study him and copy him. Jesus touched a leper? OK, I'll go touch a sick person. Jesus fed five thousand people?

Um . . . that one's a little tricky.

Unfortunately, we can't become like Jesus by literally copying him. Instead, Jesus says we need to remain in him.

We can remain in bed on a cozy Saturday morning, but how can we remain *in* Jesus?

Here's how we remain in Jesus: we connect with him every day.

First, we connect with him when we're alone by praying and reading the Bible. You might not be able to read the Bible yet, but you can talk to God anytime you want.

Then, we connect with him as a family when we read the Bible, memorize verses, or pray together. That's what we're doing right now. High five!

Last, we connect with him in community when we go to church and serve together.

When we connect with Jesus every day, we remain in him. Then Jesus's Spirit, also called the Holy Spirit, hangs out with us, and it's his power that makes us more like him. The Holy Spirit actually changes us to become more like Jesus. Without him, we can't do it.

DISCUSSION STARTER

- Pick one specific way you can connect with Jesus each day—maybe reading this devotional or praying before bed. What time of day will you do it? How will you remember? (You can also decide on this as a family instead of as individuals.)

PRAYER

Jesus, you are the vine and we are the branches. Thank you that we don't have to do this Christian life in our own power. Teach us to remain in you and to connect with you every day. Amen.

DAY 3

HOW DO WE GROW GOOD FRUIT?

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.

(2 PETER 1:3)

Do you ever feel a lie fly out of your mouth like a nasty bug? That happens to me sometimes. I'll be talking and a lie will slip out. It seems weird to be an adult Christian who still lies at times. And yet, I do.

Maybe you don't have a problem with lying, but you boss your little sister around a lot, or you have a grumpy attitude. Maybe you have cheated, or taken something that wasn't yours, or been selfish. You know what? We all have. All those bad choices we make are called *sin*. Anyone who says they never sin is flat-out lying. Except Jesus. He was the only human ever who never sinned.

Paul, one of Jesus's most famous followers, wrote in Romans 7:19, "I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway."

When Jesus died, he offered forgiveness for all those bad choices we make. But that doesn't mean we turn into perfect people overnight. Even when you're a Christian, sin can sometimes feel like a monster in your stomach trying to tear its way out.

The verse we read today says we have everything we need for living a godly life. Imagine that all these godly living things are in a backpack you carry around with you. What's in your backpack?

You might have some snacks and a good book or two. You'll need a Bible for sure, but beyond that, who knows? A journal? A skateboard? A pair of fuzzy slippers?

Thankfully, God has given us everything we need for godliness, and it's not a backpack full of fuzzy slippers. God has given us forgiveness through Jesus, and through the Holy Spirit he gives us the ability to say NO to sin and YES to things that help us live a godly life. The Holy Spirit helps us in those times when the sin monster wants to tear its way out. When we ask the Holy Spirit for help, he's right there, ready to smash that monster down to size and give us the power to choose what is right.

DISCUSSION STARTER

- What is one sin you feel like you can't stop doing? Let's bring our sins to God and ask him for the power to get rid of them from our lives.

PRAYER

Thank you, God, for forgiving us and also for changing us to be more like you. Holy Spirit, thank you for your power. Please change us to become more like Jesus! Amen.

DAY 4

THE FRUIT OF LIGHT

So now there is no condemnation for those
who belong to Christ Jesus.
(ROMANS 8:1)

Have you ever picked up a piece of rotten fruit? You might grab an orange only to have your thumb squish right through the peel. It may have looked good on top, but it was covered in green fur on the bottom. Blech. Rotten pears have brown, squidgy spots all over them, and if you bite in without noticing, you'll get a mouthful of mold.

Rotten fruit is good for nothing. You can't eat it, turn it into jam, or feed it to your dog. It's only good for the compost heap.

We've been talking about the good fruit we grow when we're connected to Jesus, but the Bible tells us that people can have bad fruit too. Quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfishness, envy, and greediness are all bad fruit. They may look good on the outside, but they'll rot your heart from the inside. (You can read Galatians 5:19–21 if you want a nice, long list of bad fruits.) Those bad fruits will grow in a person who has their spiritual roots in the kingdom of darkness.

The great news is that God "has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins" (Colossians 1:13–14). God has adopted you into his kingdom.

However, it's not always easy to go from darkness into light. Imagine you've been adopted as a child of an important king. It would take a while for you to learn how to act like a prince or princess, right? You would have to learn how to bow and which fork to use at meals, how to make good decisions and which advisors to listen to. It's the same with God's kingdom. You've been adopted into his kingdom, but it takes a while to learn how to act like a child of God.

Even though we mess up and sometimes have more bad fruit than fruit of the Spirit, God says “there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). No condemnation means God doesn’t get angry with us when we make a bad choice.

We grow in the fruit of the Spirit because God slowly takes over all the dark parts of our hearts and shines his light on them. He cleans us up and helps us make better choices as we keep growing closer to him.

DISCUSSION STARTER

- What comes to mind when I say “kingdom of darkness” or “kingdom of light”?
- Tell me about a time you felt like a rotten person. How does Jesus see you?

PRAYER

Thank you, God, for bringing us into your kingdom of light and for not condemning us when we mess up. Help us to grow the fruit of the Spirit, not the fruit of darkness! Amen.

DAY 5

WHY SHOULD I BOTHER?

Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?

(ROMANS 6:1-2)

We've been talking a lot about growing the fruit of the Spirit, and I wonder if you've secretly had this question: "Why should I even want to grow the fruit of the Spirit? It's a lot easier to just do whatever I want."

You wouldn't be the first person to ask that question. The first Christians thought about this too. In fact, some people thought that since God forgives us, it doesn't matter how we live our lives, like we can keep sinning because God will keep forgiving us.

Imagine you have always lived on the streets, and the only way you can survive is by stealing. You sleep in a cardboard box with someone's old jacket as a blanket, and you rummage through garbage cans to find food. Then one day the King decides to adopt you as his child. Incredible! You are taken back to his palace, given royal robes, a canopy bed, and all the snacks you could ever dream of. But along with your new life, you have to start acting like a child of the King. You need to learn to be a protector, leader, and helper of the King's people.

Now imagine you don't want to live like that, so you run away to live on the streets again. You would still be the King's child, but you wouldn't be acting like one. You wouldn't get the perks of living as a child of the King, and the King's people won't get the protector, leader, and helper they need.

Jesus talked a lot about the kingdom of God, and he wasn't talking about heaven. The kingdom of God is here, now, and we get to be part of it. You and I are God's children, and it's our job to protect, lead, and help others, but God needs to change us in order for us to do a good job. God doesn't want to

change us so we can be obedient little robots, roving around the world doing his bidding. He wants to change us so we can change the world through his love.

When God changes you to be more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled, you are able to become the person God created you to be.

DISCUSSION STARTER

- What's something that seems easier to do in the moment but always has consequences afterward?
- What do you imagine when you think of the kingdom of God?

PRAYER

God, thank you for saving us and giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us follow you. Thank you for forgiving us. Please help us not to take your gift for granted but to follow you with all our hearts. Amen.

DAY 6

THE RIGHT FOOD

Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will
never be hungry again."
(JOHN 6:35)

A few years ago, I planted an apple tree. The first year, it grew six of the most delicious apples I had ever tasted. The next year, the tree grew a little taller and gave twelve delicious apples. I was hopeful that the next year I would have twenty delicious apples.

Except . . . it didn't have *any* apples the next year! Or the next. Or the next. I was so confused. My tree was growing taller and stronger, so it should have been growing fruit.

Finally, I talked to a tree expert.

As it turns out, I had been giving my tree the completely wrong fertilizer! The fertilizer I was giving it was perfect for growing nice leafy branches, but didn't give the tree what it needed to flower. It was getting the wrong food.

The tree expert told me to stop giving the tree the wrong food, and start giving it the right food.

So what does that have to do with Jesus? Well, in the verse above, Jesus said he is bread. If this sounds a little gross to you, you wouldn't be the only one to think so! After Jesus said this, a lot of people stopped following him because it was so confusing. Did he want people to nibble his ears or chomp his toes for dinner?

Thankfully, Jesus didn't mean we should eat a big slice of Jesus bread for lunch each day—he's not food for our stomachs! But there's another part of you that needs food, and it's called your soul. Your soul can't be seen on an X-ray or with a microscope, but it's part of you. If you were stuck in a hospital bed and couldn't move or talk or even breathe on your own, you would still have your soul, so you'd still be you. So, while food is important for our

bodies, it is even more important that we feed our souls, because your soul is the part of you that will be with God forever.

Jesus is the *right* food for our souls. We often try to give our souls the wrong kind of food, just like I was giving my tree the wrong kind of food, but only Jesus will help us grow.

If we want our souls to grow and produce the fruit of the Spirit, we need to feast on Jesus. Feasting on Jesus doesn't mean eating him. It means we need him, just like we need food.

Oh, and my tree? A couple years later it gave me baskets and baskets of apples. All because I gave it the right food.

DISCUSSION STARTER

- How can we, as a family, feast on Jesus?
- How can you feast on Jesus on your own?

PRAYER

Thank you, Jesus, for being the food our souls need. Help us learn to feast on you and your words so we can grow healthy and strong. Amen.

DAY 7

THE STRONGEST ROOTS

Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.
(EPHESIANS 3:17-18)

Have you ever planted a seed in a piece of wet paper towel and watched it grow? The very first thing to come out of that seed is a single root. It looks kind of funny as it comes out, because it wiggles around like a worm, searching for soil and water. This tiny root-worm knows that water comes from below, so no matter which way you plant your seed, the root will always end up pointing down. If you plant the seed upside down, the root will go around the seed so it can head down as soon as possible. A seed's roots can always find water. God created seeds that way.

A seed doesn't need us to put an arrow next to it to show it the way to the soil. Can you imagine all the tiny little arrow signs we would need to make for all the seeds in the world? Thankfully, the root knows exactly what to do. After the first little root settles into the soil, other roots grow out of the first root. They spread out in order to find water and nutrients but also to keep the growing plant from toppling over. The roots help the plant stand strong.

We are like these seeds. God has created us to seek out his love like a root seeks out water. Last time, we learned that your soul is the part of you that thinks and has feelings and will be with God forever. Close your eyes and imagine your soul having little roots shooting out, seeking out love. When they grow deep into God's love, your soul will grow strong.

What does that even mean? Well, in order to love God more, you need to understand how much God loves you. When you get ignored, God's love can

remind you that he always sees you and you are precious. When you make a mistake, God's love reminds you that you don't have to be perfect; he loves you because you are his child, not because you're a good person. Trusting that God loves you, no matter what, will help you be more loving to yourself and to others.

To really understand God's love, we need to spend time with God, letting him show us his love. Ask him to show you how much he loves you. I think you might be surprised!

DISCUSSION STARTER

- How has God shown his love to you?
- Sometimes we look for love somewhere else instead of from God. Where else do people look for love?

PRAYER

God, thank you for your love that's so wide and long and high and deep that we can't ever be away from it. Please help our spiritual roots grow down into your love so our faith can grow strong. Give us the power to understand your incredible, earth-changing love. Amen.

