

**Love God,
Love Others,
Remember, We are all God's creatures,
& All Believers are Sisters and Brothers**

Have you ever wondered why God created you?
What does He want you to do?
How can you please Him?

Today's character trait is the most important one of all, because all other good traits of character come from this one. It goes hand-in-hand with self-discipline and obedience—its name is LOVE. It is the leader of every other trait, and the basis of Christianity. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."* **John 3:10**

Your obedience to God shows your love for Him. God gave us the Ten Commandments so we would know how to please Him. The first four commandments teach us to love and honor God. The remaining six commandments teach us to love others. God created us to have a loving relationship with Him and to love one another as He loves us.

Jesus said, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another... By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* **John 13:34-35.** And, in **John 14:5** Jesus said, *"If you love Me, keep My commandments."*

When you respect yourself as a child of God, you always try to look your best, act your best, and do your best. You also treat others with love and respect. This shows that you are a follower of Jesus. When you accept someone into your group of friends, speak encouraging words, are kind and gentle, and compassionate—being there for someone when they need a friend—you will feel very good about yourself, and it will show them that following Jesus is a good thing.

On the other hand, there may be someone you do not like, and you don't want them for a friend. You don't have to like everyone—and not everyone may like you—love is a choice. Still, you must remind yourself that they are a person God created—and you need to be obedient to God by treating them with respect. Maybe they don't know God. They can learn from your example what a good thing it is to follow Jesus.

Jesus instructs us to love even our enemies. *"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."* **Matthew 5:44** Jesus wants you to have a heart of compassion, forgiving others, just as He has forgiven you. He taught us to pray the Lord's Prayer, saying, *"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who*

trespass against us.” **Matthew 6:12** On the cross, Jesus prayed for those who persecuted and crucified Him. *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”* **Luke 23:34** Jesus died on the cross to pay our sin debt in full. *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”* **John 15:13**

Suppose someone does something unkind to you (takes something that’s yours; a group leaves you out; calls you a name; shoves you)--How will you respond? With blame, criticism, anger, revenge, bitterness, resentment, jealousy, hostility? Negative responses are self-destructive--bad for us and our bodies. We become upset, unhappy, lose our peace, and maybe lose our temper. Hanging onto negativity can make us physically ill, as well as spiritually ill. Hostility can result in injury.

Responding in love protects us from these negative reactions. What might be some better choices? Nothing speaks louder than silence. Walk away; say, “I’m sorry your feel that way”; let it go, and let God handle it; say a silent prayer for yourself to have the strength and courage to let God handle it, and pray for the other person(s). God knows what they have done, and they will have to face Him one day and account for their actions, just as you will.

Then you can say to God, “Thank you that my soul is peaceful and my life is beautiful—all because of You!” As you give and receive love from others, the message is conveyed that “God loves you and so do I.”

God’s goal is to bring us into the likeness of Jesus. *“And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him and reflect His glory even more.”*

2 Corinthians 3:18 *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...”* **Galatians 5:22-23a** Following in the footsteps of Jesus and practicing the fruits of Spirit will be very pleasing to God.

GAME: WALKING WITH JESUS

Teaching Aim: To emphasize the importance of walking in Jesus’ footsteps

Materials Needed: 4 large sheets of heavy paper or plastic sack,
Pencil or marker

Preparation: Trace two large footprints onto four sheets of paper (to represent the footsteps of Jesus). Decide on a race course (indoors or outside).

Playing the Game:

- ◆ Divide children into two teams, giving the first player on each team two sheets of footprints. If desired, half of each team could be on one side of the course, directly across from the other half of their team.

- ◆ The first player on each team drops a sheet in front of himself, with the footprints facing up.
- ◆ He steps onto the footprints, and then drops the second sheet of footprints in front of himself.
- ◆ He steps onto them, then reaches back, picks up the first set of footprints and places them in front of himself to continue the race.
- ◆ Once he reaches his teammate, (s)he takes the footprints and repeats the action, until all players on the team have completed the course.

Winning the Game: The first team to complete the race course is the winner.

* * * * *

GAME: SEARCH FOR THE FRUITS

Teaching Aim: To help children learn the fruits in our lives that please or displease God.

Materials Needed: Construction paper, marker, bowl, paper bag

Preparation:

- ◆ Cut out eighteen (18) fruit shapes (see patterns below)--9 for fruits of the Spirit which please God, and 9 for those that displease God.
- ◆ Print the name of each fruit of the Spirit onto one of the fruits. (LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL).
- ◆ Print the name of each "rotten" fruit onto one of the fruit cut-outs: CORRUPTION, IGNORANCE, TEMPER, LAZINESS, EVIL, UNKINDNESS, HATRED, JEALOUSY, REVENGE.
- ◆ Hide the labeled fruits around the room.
- ◆ Place a bowl and a paper bag on a table.

Playing the Game:

- ◆ Have the children search around the room for fruits.
- ◆ If the word on the fruit is something pleasing to God, it should be put in the bowl.
- ◆ If it is a "rotten" word that is displeasing to God, it should be put in the bag.
- ◆ Set a time limit on the search.
- ◆ When all fruits have been found, have children take turns pulling a fruit out of the bowl or the bag, telling what it means and why it pleases or displeases God.

