

LOVE

LESSON 1

Loving our Family

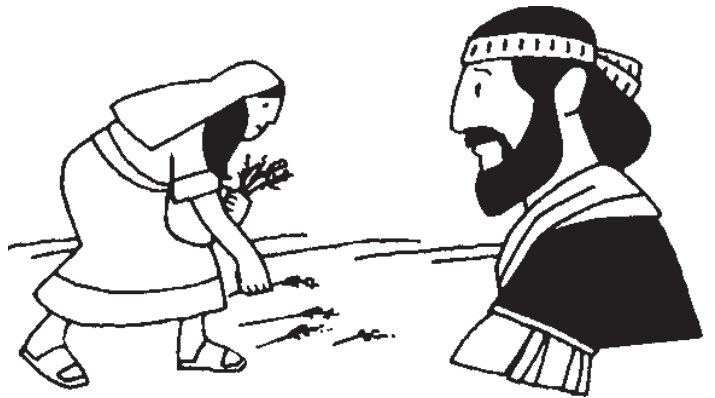
What is love? The dictionary defines love (the noun) as "an intense feeling of deep affection" and love (the verb) as "to feel love for". But is it only a feeling? There are a few different words for "love" in the Bible with meanings ranging from affection, compassion, and delight to amorousness, but the Bible seems to imply that love is an active word. It is not something you do simply because you feel like it -- we are commanded to love God and our neighbour and sometimes it is more like hard work.

God created us to live in families. We don't leave our babies at a young age to fend for themselves. We don't abandon our parents or grandparents when they can no longer take care of themselves. God created the family to care for and support one another throughout our lifetimes. Love is this care.

The story of Ruth is an excellent example of love in a family. It began with a famine in Israel. A man named Elimelech decided to take his wife Naomi and their two boys away from the famine-ridden land to a neighbouring country that had not been affected. Although it was probably hard to leave their home where they had friends and family and go to a place where they would know no-one, often this can strengthen family ties. They settled down in a place called Moab and lived there for the next ten years.

During this time, Naomi experienced considerable hardship. Her husband died shortly after arriving in Moab and then her two sons married women from Moab. Perhaps these two women had already come to know and love the God of Israel (certainly Ruth seems to have) and it was not a worry to Naomi, but we do not know this. Eventually, her two sons died, leaving Naomi alone in a foreign land. There was no reason to stay in Moab. The famine had ended in her homeland and so Naomi decided to return. She did not expect her daughters-in-law to go with her -- she encouraged them to stay with their own families. But Ruth had come to love Naomi and her God and Naomi was her family. She would not leave her.

When they arrived back in Bethlehem, they were very poor. Ruth had to go out every day to the fields to glean enough wheat to keep them both alive. But she did it willingly because she had taken it upon herself to provide for her family. Happily, she gleaned in a field belonging to a relative of Naomi and he was kind to Ruth, protecting her and making it easier for her to gather enough. In time, Ruth was obedient to her mother-in-law and married Boaz and they had a little boy. Naomi once again had family and the faithfulness and love that Ruth showed, put her, a Gentile, in the genealogy of the Messiah.



Student Name: _____

WORKSHEET 1: LOVING OUR FAMILY

ANSWERS FROM THE BIBLE:

Write out the pledge that Ruth made to Naomi (Ruth 1:16,17) _____

Why did Naomi want to be called Mara? _____

How did the people of Bethlehem speak of Ruth? (2:11, 3:11, 4:15) _____

WORD STUDY:

"Ruth" & "Orpah"

Using a concordance, look up these two names. What do they mean? Look up the related Hebrew words. Are they used in a positive or negative way?

APPLICATION:

What makes you feel loved by your family members? Come up with three ways that a family can show love to one another.
