

FATHER'S DAY • FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT SERIES

AGAPE

The Father's Kind of Love

A FIVE-DAY INDIVIDUAL BIBLE STUDY

Galatians 5:22–23 • 1 John 4:7–11 • John 14:9 • Luke 15:20–24

Life Church of New Jersey
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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to Use This Study

This study walks through five truths about the love of our Father, Jesus Christ — the same message brought on Father's Day Sunday. It is meant to be unhurried. Take one day at a time, even if you are tempted to do it all at once. Let the Lord finish something in you, not just in your notebook.

Each day follows the same simple path:

Read the Scripture slowly, out loud if you can. **Reflect** on the short teaching. **Search Your Heart** with the questions, and write your honest answers in the space provided. **Take It With You** into your day with one practical step. Then **Pray** — and don't rush it.

Keep your Bible open beside you and a pen in your hand. By the end of the week, our prayer is that agape — the Father's own kind of love — will feel less like a definition you learned and more like a fruit that is growing in you.

Galatians 5:22–23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

DAY ONE

A Love That Does Not Wait to Be Earned

READ**Galatians 5:22–23**

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

Romans 5:8

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

REFLECT

Love stands first in the list of the Spirit’s fruit because every fruit that follows is really love wearing a different outfit. Joy is love rejoicing. Peace is love resting. Longsuffering is love waiting. They all grow from one root.

The word Paul reached for here is agape — not phileo, the love of friendship, and not eros, the love of romance. Agape is not a feeling that happens to you. It is a decision about another person’s good, no matter what it costs you and no matter what they have done to deserve it.

Look again at the order in Romans 5:8: “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Not after we cleaned up. Not after we proved ourselves worthy. God’s love moved toward us before we had done anything to earn it — because real love was never about our performance in the first place.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

Where in your life have you been waiting to feel worthy of love before you could receive it?

Is there someone in your life you find it hard to love unconditionally? What would it look like to love them with agape this week, regardless of what they’ve done?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Today, do one deliberate act of love for someone who has not earned it and cannot repay you — a kind word, a small gift, a phone call. Let it be a decision, not a feeling.

PRAY

Father, thank You for loving me before I ever loved You — while I was still a sinner. Teach me to love the way You love: not waiting for people to earn it, not keeping score, but giving freely because that is Your nature in me. Grow this fruit of agape in my heart today. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY TWO

Jesus — Our Father Who Showed Great Love

READ**Isaiah 9:6**

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

John 14:9

“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?”

John 15:13

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

REFLECT

Seven hundred years before Bethlehem, Isaiah already had it settled: the child who would be born would be called “The everlasting Father.” Not a separate person standing behind the Son — the Father Himself, stepping into human history so He could be known, seen, and touched.

Philip once asked Jesus to show him the Father, as though the Father were hidden somewhere else. Jesus' answer settles the matter for us today: “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” There is no Father standing behind Jesus. Jesus is the Father, manifest in flesh, so that fallen humanity could finally look fatherly love in the face.

Context: In John 14, Jesus is in the upper room with His disciples the night before His crucifixion, preparing them for His departure. Philip's request reveals he still pictured the Father as separate and distant. Jesus' reply is one of the clearest statements in Scripture that there is only one God, fully revealed in Christ.

And that Father did not just provide for us from a distance — He laid down His own life. He did not send someone else to die in our place. He came Himself.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

Before today, did you picture God the Father as separate from Jesus, or distant from your daily life? How does John 14:9 change that picture?

What does it mean to you personally that the Father did not send a substitute, but came Himself to die for you?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Spend a few quiet minutes today simply thanking Jesus as your Father — not just your Savior. Let that truth settle into how you pray.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, You are not distant from me. You are the Everlasting Father who came in the flesh to love me up close. Thank You for laying down Your own life rather than sending someone else. Help me to know You today not just as Savior, but as Father. In Your name, amen.

DAY THREE

The Types of Love — Why Agape Stands Alone

READ

English has only one word for love. The Bible's original language had several. Today, instead of one passage, take a moment to look over this comparison — then read 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 slowly.

Word	Love Type	In Short
Storge	Family Affection	Natural bond of relationship — parent to child, sibling to sibling.
Phileo	Friendship Love	Companionship, loyalty, shared affection between friends.
Eros	Romantic Love	Attraction and desire — marriage, intimacy.
Agape	Unconditional Love	A decision, not a feeling. Gives without earning. God's own love — the fruit the Spirit grows in us.

1 Corinthians 13:4–7

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

Context: The word translated “charity” throughout this passage is agape in the Greek. Paul is describing what God's own kind of love looks like in action — patient, kind, free of envy and pride, not easily provoked, and enduring.

REFLECT

Storge, phileo, and eros are all good gifts from God — family bonds, friendship, marriage. But each one has a condition built in. Storge depends on relationship. Phileo depends on shared affection. Eros depends on attraction.

Agape is the only one of the four that does not depend on anything in the person being loved. It depends entirely on the character of the one doing the loving. That is why agape cannot be manufactured by willpower — it is supernatural. It is the very nature of God, grown in you by His Spirit.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

Reread 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 and replace the word “charity” with your own name. Which quality is hardest for you to live out right now — patience, not being easily provoked, bearing all things?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Choose the one quality from 1 Corinthians 13 you marked as hardest, and look for one specific opportunity to practice it today.

PRAY

Father, Your love is not like any love I can produce on my own. Storge, phileo, and eros all run out, but Your agape never does. Holy Spirit, grow this fruit in me — a love that does not depend on how lovable someone is, but flows from who You are in me. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY FOUR

How We Must Love One Another

READ**1 John 4:7–11**

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

John 13:34–35

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

REFLECT

John gives us a short chain of logic. God is love. He demonstrated that love by sending His Son — Himself, in flesh — to be the propitiation for our sins. And because He loved us first, we are now obligated, in the best sense of the word, to love one another the same way.

Jesus told His disciples the world would not know them as His followers by their doctrine alone, or by how loudly they could declare it. The world would know by their love for one another — a love measured against His own: “as I have loved you.” That is patient love when someone disappoints you, forgiving love when someone wrongs you, and sacrificial love when loving someone costs you something.

Context: John 13 takes place in the upper room, just before Jesus washes the disciples' feet and shortly before His arrest. The “new commandment” is new not because love itself was unknown in the Old Testament, but because the standard — “as I have loved you” — had never been set that high before.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

Is there someone in your church family, your home, or your workplace that you have been loving with conditions instead of agape? What would it look like to remove the conditions?

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples” — if someone watched how you loved people this past week, what would they conclude about your relationship with Jesus?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Reach out to the person you wrote about above — a call, a text, or a face-to-face conversation — and take one step toward loving them the way Christ has loved you.

PRAY

Father, You loved me first, and that settles my obligation to love others. Show me where I have been keeping score instead of giving freely. Let my love for the people around me be the evidence that I belong to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY FIVE

A Biblical Picture of Fatherly Love

READ**Luke 15:20**

“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

Luke 15:22–24

“But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”

REFLECT

Picture the scene. A son had taken his inheritance, left his father's house, and wasted everything in reckless living. He had every reason to expect rejection. He had rehearsed a confession, hoping only to be received back as a servant. But notice what happens before he ever reaches the door.

- The father saw him “yet a great way off” — he had been watching, waiting, hoping, looking down that road every day his son was gone.
- The father had compassion — his heart moved toward his son before a single word of apology was spoken.
- The father ran — in that culture, a dignified older man did not run in public; he had to lift his robes and expose his legs to do it. He abandoned his dignity for his son.
- The father fell on his neck and kissed him — full embrace, full forgiveness, before the son even finished his confession.
- The father restored him fully and immediately — robe, ring, shoes, and a feast. No groveling required. No probation.

Context: *The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 was told by Jesus to religious leaders who grumbled that He welcomed sinners. The father in the story represents the heart of God toward anyone who returns to Him — not reluctant, not slow, but running.*

Every detail of this story is a window into the heart of our Father, Jesus Christ. He has been watching the road for every prodigal. He is not waiting to punish you when you come home — He is already running toward you.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

Have you ever pictured God as reluctant to forgive you, or slow to welcome you back? How does this story correct that picture?

Is there an area of your life where you have been “a great way off” from the Father? What would it look like to come home today?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Whatever distance you named above, take one concrete step today to close it — a prayer of return, a phone call to make peace, a habit to lay down at the altar.

PRAY

Father, thank You for watching the road for me and running to meet me before I even finished my confession. I receive Your full and immediate welcome — not as a servant, but as a son or daughter. Help me now to run with that same love toward the people You have placed in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Closing Word

Agape is not a feeling you wait for. It is a decision, empowered by the Spirit of God living inside you. As you close this study, carry this with you: you have a Father in Jesus Christ who loved you before you loved Him, who ran to you while you were still a great way off, and who laid down His own life so you could be brought home. Let that love overflow from you to everyone around you.

— Pastor Andrew Chung-Ying • Life Church of New Jersey —