ADULTS SAVING KIDS
Founded by Alvin Erickson

Lesson 1

Love Begins at Home

Building Loving Relationships Between Adults

The Series at a Glance

Here is a quick snapshot of the entire series:

1	**Love Begins at Home**	Establishing a foundation through loving adult relationships, sharing a personal family experience, and helping children understand that home is a safe place to bring difficult problems.
2	**Loving Our Children**	Applying 1 Corinthians 13 to parenting, staying present during difficult moments like tantrums, and learning alongside other parents.
3	**Helping Children Know Their Worth**	Separating behavior from identity, the jam jar example, and the reflection on grandmotherhood.
4	**Correcting Behavior Without Condemning the Child**	Viewing discipline as teaching, the math/reading/counting analogy, and modeling humility through parental apologies.
5	**Problems as Opportunities for Growth**	The block tower illustration, knowing when to coach versus when to intervene for protection, and releasing worries to God in prayer.
6	**Building a Relationship That Can Handle the Truth**	Building the bridge of trust before a crisis, the “no questions asked” ride home promise, and handling disclosures with care.
7	**Teaching Children to Think Downstream**	Anticipating consequences, navigating peer pressure versus manipulation, and practicing decisions before moments of emotion.
8	**Developing Convictions and Protecting Boundaries**	Transitioning from parental rules to personal convictions, practicing simple boundary phrases, and protecting personal dignity.
9	**Looking Beyond Ourselves**	Developing gratitude through the Golden List, finding joy, practicing wise compassion, and offering specific prayers for those who cause harm while maintaining healthy boundaries.

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INTRODUCTION

Why This Matters So Much to Me

My determination to raise children who could come to me with difficult problems grew out of a painful experience in my own family. My sister Deb had a compassionate heart and wanted to help someone, but she became drawn into a situation that was far beyond what she was equipped to handle. She was manipulated, and ultimately she was raped.

She did not turn to our parents for help. Instead, she carried what had happened without the protection and guidance our family might have been able to provide. The consequences snowballed, and much of what she had experienced did not come to light until years later. What happened to Deb was not her fault, but her experience taught me something I would never forget: a young person can find themselves in a situation far beyond their ability to manage, and fear, shame, or secrecy can prevent them from seeking the help they desperately need.

When I became a mother, I was determined that my children would know they could come to me, no matter how serious or embarrassing a situation might be. I certainly didn't have all the answers from the start; like every parent, I learned a great deal along the way from parenting books, the wisdom of other mothers and fathers, and trial and error.

Years later, that determination was tested. When one of my children was fifteen, someone confided a very serious personal problem and asked that it be kept secret. My child cared about this person and wanted to help, but the problem was far too great for a fifteen-year-old to carry. Eventually, my child decided to break the secrecy and come to me. I was deeply grateful. I contacted the other person's mother and explained that it was inappropriate to place such a burden on a teenager, as this was a problem that needed to be handled by adults.

What concerned me was that my child was being placed in the role of a counselor while also navigating a developing personal relationship. Those were two very different responsibilities, and neither the seriousness of the problem nor the expectation of secrecy was appropriate for a fifteen-year-old.

My child had learned something I desperately wished Deb had been able to experience: when a problem becomes too big to handle, you can turn to your family for help and you don't have to carry it alone. We cannot prevent every difficult or dangerous situation our children may encounter, but we can work to make sure they never feel they must face those situations alone. We can teach them to be compassionate without becoming responsible for solving everyone else's problems, and we can teach them that some secrets should not be kept.

Most importantly, we can assure them, repeatedly and through our actions:

> *"Whatever has happened, come to me. We will sort it out together. You don't have to handle it alone."*

That conviction became one of the foundational pillars of how I raised my children, and it remains central to why I believe so deeply in the mission of Adults Saving Kids.

LESSON 1

Love Begins at Home

Building Loving Relationships Between Adults

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 13:4–7

4 *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;*

5 *does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;*

6 *does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;*

7 *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

NKJV

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Why Begin Here?

Before we begin teaching children about their worth, identity, boundaries, and relationships, we need to consider the relationships they observe at home. Children learn about love not only from what adults tell them, but also from how adults treat one another.

When two people become parents, they enter new territory together. They may discover differences in expectations, parenting styles, responsibilities, and ways of handling stress. Even loving relationships require patience, understanding, and intentional effort. The way parents respond to disagreements, disappointments, mistakes, and everyday frustrations provides children with practical examples of how relationships actually work.

The apostle Paul gives us a practical description of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. Although these verses are frequently read at weddings, Paul was actually teaching Christians how to treat one another day to day, and his words offer a valuable guide for relationships within the home.

What Does Love Look Like Between Adults?

Paul's Description of Love	Application to Adult Relationships
Love is patient	We allow one another time to learn, grow, and make mistakes.
Love is kind	We speak and act with consideration, even when frustrated.
It does not envy or boast	We celebrate one another's strengths and accomplishments rather than compete.
It is not proud	We acknowledge when we are wrong and are willing to apologize.
It does not dishonor others	We treat one another with respect, including during disagreements.
It is not self-seeking	We consider each other's needs rather than insisting on always having our own way.
It is not easily angered	We learn to manage our emotions rather than allowing anger to control our responses.
It keeps no record of wrongs	We work toward forgiveness rather than repeatedly using past mistakes against one another.
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth	We value honesty, integrity, and accountability in our relationships.
It always protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres	We seek one another's well-being, build trust, encourage growth, and work through difficulties together.

These characteristics describe love as something we practice, not merely something we feel. They do not require us to ignore harmful behavior, excuse dishonesty, or remain in unsafe relationships; true love always includes truth, appropriate boundaries, and protection.

Children Are Watching

Children learn about relationships by observing how adults treat one another, especially during disagreements. They notice our words, tone of voice, attitudes, and reactions when things don't go as planned.

Consider an ordinary disagreement between parents. Perhaps one parent forgets an important responsibility and the other becomes frustrated. The child may witness criticism, blame, or an angry exchange. Alternatively, the child may see the adults discussing the problem respectfully, acknowledging mistakes, and working toward a solution.

Children will not always see adults respond perfectly. None of us do. But they can learn something equally important: healthy relationships are not built on perfection. They are strengthened when people take responsibility for their behavior, apologize when necessary, and make an effort to repair the relationship.

Repairing Relationships Takes Practice

Putting these principles into practice is not always easy. When we are angry, hurt, tired, or convinced we are right, patience and kindness can be especially difficult. Even loving adults sometimes say things they regret. Learning to recognize those moments and respond differently takes humility, self-control, and practice.

Sometimes repairing a relationship begins with a few simple words.

When This Happens	Try Saying This
You're getting angry.	"I'm getting upset. I need a little time before we continue."
You've said something hurtful.	"That came out wrong. Let me try again."
You disagree strongly.	"I still see this differently, but I want to understand your thinking."
You recognize your mistake.	"I shouldn't have spoken to you that way. I'm sorry."
You're both still upset.	"We haven't solved this, but let's come back to it when we're calmer."

Repairing a relationship does not always mean resolving the disagreement. We can have different opinions while continuing to treat one another with love and respect.

When children see adults acknowledge mistakes, apologize sincerely, and make an effort to do better, they learn that disagreements do not have to destroy relationships. They also learn an important distinction: **making a mistake does not make someone a bad person, but taking responsibility for our behavior is part of growing in love.**

These principles apply not only to parents but also to other adults who share responsibility for raising children. What matters is that children have opportunities to observe respectful, caring relationships, including how adults work through difficulties.

Questions for Reflection

1. If our children learned what love looks like by watching how we treat each other, what would they believe love is? Think about the words, attitudes, and behaviors they regularly observe.
2. Which characteristic of love in 1 Corinthians 13 is most challenging for me to practice in my adult relationships? Consider why that particular characteristic is difficult and what you might do differently.

THIS WEEK

Put It Into Practice

Choose one characteristic of love from 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 and intentionally practice it in an important adult relationship this week:

- If you choose **patience**, make a conscious effort to listen without interrupting or becoming irritated.
- If you choose **kindness**, express appreciation for something the other person does.
- If you choose **humility**, acknowledge a mistake and offer a sincere apology.
- If you choose **not keeping a record of wrongs**, avoid bringing up an old grievance simply to win a disagreement.

At the end of the week, ask yourself: *Did practicing this characteristic change anything about how I approached the relationship?*

Growing in Love: A Lifelong Journey

Paul's description of love gives us a standard that none of us will practice perfectly. Patience, kindness, humility, forgiveness, and selflessness are qualities we may spend a lifetime developing. In Christian teaching, this lifelong process of spiritual growth is called sanctification—the quiet work of the Holy Spirit in gradually shaping our hearts, attitudes, and actions to become more like Christ.

We will sometimes fall short. But each day brings new opportunities to recognize where we need to grow, seek God's help, and practice loving others more faithfully. Consider returning to this lesson regularly, because a characteristic of love that comes easily today may challenge us tomorrow, and one we struggle with now may, through grace and practice, become a strength. The goal is not to love perfectly today, but to keep growing in our ability to love as Christ has loved us.

LOOKING AHEAD

A Thought to Carry Forward

Our children are learning what love looks like long before they are old enough to understand a formal lesson about love. The relationships they observe help shape their expectations of how people should treat one another. In our next lesson, we will take these same verses from 1 Corinthians 13 and apply them directly to the relationship between parents and children, because the love we demonstrate toward one another is the foundation upon which we begin teaching our children how to love—and how they deserve to be treated.