ADULTS SAVING KIDS
Founded by Alvin Erickson

Lesson 2

Loving Our Children

Helping Children Experience Love and Develop a Secure Sense of Worth

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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Love Is Something Children Experience

In our first lesson, we explored Paul's description of love and considered how it applies to relationships between adults. Now, let's turn those same words toward our relationships with our children.

Children learn what love means long before they can define it, absorbing it through everyday experiences. They notice how we speak to them, how we respond to their mistakes, how we celebrate their accomplishments, and how we treat them when we are disappointed or frustrated. While parents naturally love their children deeply, loving someone doesn't automatically mean we always express that love in ways they can recognize. Paul's words invite us to consider not only how deeply we love our children, but how we demonstrate that love in everyday life.

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What Does Love Look Like in Parenting?

Paul's Description of Love	Application to Parenting
Love is patient	Children need repetition, practice, and time to mature.
Love is kind	Correction should preserve the child's dignity.
It does not envy or boast	Children are not trophies for parents to display or compare with others.
It is not proud	Parents can acknowledge mistakes and apologize.
It does not dishonor others	We correct behavior without humiliating the child.
It is not self-seeking	Parenting is about the child's welfare, not satisfying the parent's ego.
It is not easily angered	Parents can learn to regulate their emotions before responding.
It keeps no record of wrongs	Past mistakes should not become permanent labels held over a child's head.
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth	Love includes honesty, accountability, and appropriate consequences.
It always protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres	Parents protect their children, nurture trust, encourage growth, and don't give up on them.

Of course, love does not mean allowing children to do whatever they please. Boundaries, correction, and appropriate consequences are vital parts of responsible parenting—but the *way* we teach and correct matters deeply.

Love Is Present Even in Difficult Moments

Young children often experience intense emotions they simply do not yet know how to manage, and a tantrum can quickly become overwhelming for both child and parent. One of the most practical ways to demonstrate love during those chaotic moments is simply to remain present.

I certainly didn't have all the answers when my children were small, but I learned a great deal from observing other parents, reading, and figuring things out through trial and error. For example, when one of my children was having an intense tantrum, I learned a helpful lesson from another parent: instead of trying to stop the storm immediately, I could move nearby objects out of the way to keep my child safe, then remain nearby while those overwhelming feelings began to settle. Once my child was calm, I could move closer, offer comfort, and be together without needing to lecture, argue, or demand that the feelings stop instantly. My child needed a safe place and the reassurance of my presence.

This approach illustrates several characteristics of love that Paul describes: patience, kindness, protection, and perseverance. A young child may not yet have the vocabulary to explain what

they are feeling inside, but they can begin to absorb a vital internal message through these experiences:

> *"Even when I am having a terrible time managing myself, I am still loved. My worth has not changed."*

Once the child is calm, parents can help them understand their emotions and learn better ways to express them. During moments of overwhelming emotion, love is often best demonstrated by providing a safe, steady presence before attempting to teach. Children do not have to be at their best to be worthy of our love, and a child can make a mistake or do something wrong without becoming a bad or worthless person. They need to know that a parent's love isn't something they must continually earn through good behavior, high achievements, or pleasing others—even though love and accountability still belong together.

Over time, consistent experiences of respectful, dependable love help children build a secure sense of their own worth. Our ultimate hope isn't that children will never question whether they are worthy of love; they will inevitably encounter rejection, criticism, or difficult relationships out in the world. Rather, we want them to grow up with such a strong foundation of love and belonging that when those questions do arise, they already carry a deeply rooted answer.

Questions for Reflection

1. If my child learned what love looks like primarily by watching how I treat them, what would they believe love is? Consider how your child experiences your love during ordinary moments as well as difficult ones.
2. Which characteristic of love in 1 Corinthians 13 is most challenging for me to practice with my children? Is it patience, kindness, humility, managing anger, forgiveness, or something else?

THIS WEEK

Put It Into Practice

This week, consider how you respond when your child is overwhelmed. Can you offer a calm, reassuring presence before expecting them to listen, reason, or learn?

Then choose one characteristic of love from 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 to practice intentionally with your child.

- **Patience:** When your child struggles with something you've already explained, pause and consider whether they need more instruction or practice.
- **Kindness:** When correcting behavior, choose words that address the problem without attacking the child's character.
- **Humility:** If you respond unfairly, acknowledge it and apologize.
- **Not keeping a record of wrongs:** Give your child an opportunity to demonstrate improvement without repeatedly reminding them of earlier failures.
- **Perseverance:** When progress is slow, look for small signs of growth and encourage continued effort.

At the end of the week, ask yourself: *What did I notice about my child's response? Did anything change in the way I approached our relationship?*

Growing Together in Love

As we discussed in Lesson 1, the characteristics Paul describes are qualities we may spend a lifetime learning to practice. Parents are still growing, too. We will sometimes become impatient, say something unkind, or respond in ways we later regret. When that happens, we have an opportunity to acknowledge our mistakes, seek forgiveness, and demonstrate how love continues to grow through practice.

This is part of our ongoing Christian journey of sanctification—learning, through God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit, to love others more faithfully. We do not have to be perfect parents to demonstrate what it means to keep growing in love.

LOOKING AHEAD

A Thought to Carry Forward

Children learn that they are loved not only because we tell them so, but because of how we treat them—especially when they make mistakes. In our next lesson, we will explore how the words and attitudes of parents can help shape a child's understanding of their own worth.