

Growing in Love:

Garden of Charity

Family Devotional

Charity
and is kind; charity
vaunteth not itself, is
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.

Charity never faileth.

1 Corinthians

13:4-8

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Introduction

We all love our families and friends, but it can be easy to act unloving. Our kids squabble over the silliest minutia. I find it all too easy to become impatient with my kids when they have the audacity to need attention when I am doing something as important as working, as necessary as making dinner, or, worst of all, during what I like to think of (or thought of before motherhood) as the self-evident and unalienable right as sleeping. It is all too easy to think the worst of people or expect the worst out of the situation, rather than believing and hoping the best.

None of us can love perfectly. Only God can because God is love and because we are not God. However, we can choose to be intentional about allowing God to work in us to love more.

This short book is our way of studying true Agape love as a family. This book covers the *Charity Chapter* (First Corinthians 13:4–8a). It examines one or more attributes of true love in each section. Each day, the same passage is covered, but one or more aspects are highlighted.

How to Use This Book

This book is divided into seven sections each with a scripture reading, thoughts on true love, discussion questions, and suggested hymns and activities. We tried to include a variety of levels for the questions and activities so that this book would be applicable for a wide range of ages. Easier questions and activities are marked with a rosebud, and more challenging ones are marked with a rose in full bloom. We designed each section to be for an individual day, but, of course, you can go as fast or as slow as you like.

Also, you can use as much or as little of the book as you want, whatever draws your heart toward true love and God. And if all you use is the scripture references as a jumping off point to read out of your own Bible and have your own reflection or discussion, that is great too. After all, only the Word is infallible, and we are far from it.

Thank you for taking time to read these words and desiring to cultivate true love in your life.

Printable Resources

We have also included a variety of printable resources to go along with this short book. You can use these to complete some of the activities if you like.

- There are flower and heart printables with the attributes of true love on them. You can cut these out and hang them on branches to make a *True love bouquet*, glue them to Popsicle sticks, and place in pots to make a *True love garden*, or just use them for coloring. For very young kids, you may want to forgo the other activities and just let them color the hearts and/or flowers each day.

- There are also decorative printables that you could use to decorate your home for the holiday if you wish.
- If you wish to try to memorize this passage, displaying one of the decorative printables can serve as a memory prompt as well.
- Half-page or quarter-page printables can also be used as greeting cards.

However you choose to use this book, we hope it will be a blessing to you and those around you.

Day 1: Love Is Patient, Kind, Not Easily Angered

1 Corinthians 13:4–8

⁴Charity **suffereth long**, and is **kind**; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ⁵Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is **not easily provoked**, thinketh no evil; ⁶Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; ⁷Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. ⁸Charity never faileth.

charity:

ἀγάπη | ah-GA-pay |

“love, i.e., affection or benevolence”

suffereth long:

μακροθυμῶ | ma-kroh-thoo-MEE |

“to be long-spirited, i.e., (objectively) forbearing or (subjectively) patient”

kind:

χρηστεύεται | hray-STEY-eh-teh |

“to show oneself useful, i.e., act benevolently”

not easily provoked:

οὐ παροξύνεται | oo pa-roh-KSOO-neh-teh |

“to not (figuratively) exasperate”

First, we learn that charity is long suffering, both objectively forbearing and subjectively patient. Agape love does not go out of its way to stir up trouble and is patient when others wrong it.

Love is not easily provoked. Children often pick at each other and fight over miniscule things. Even adults can all too easily become irritated over matters that are actually unimportant. But mature love can overlook irritations and petty differences. It does not get angry easily or unnecessarily.

Charity goes a step beyond this by being kind to others as well. Agape love seeks out opportunities to be benevolent, good to others, to bless them. It is more than just not doing others harm, but it is actually seeking to do others good.

It is easy to say that we need to be patient and kind, but to put these attributes into action takes practice and intentionality, and most importantly a lot of help from the Holy Spirit.

Questions:



Today we learned that love is _____, _____, and _____.
What does it mean to be long suffering?



What are some ways you can personally put these attributes of love into action?

Suggested Activities:



Draw a picture (or write a note) to show kindness to someone or to thank them for showing loving kindness to you.



Today try to demonstrate patience, kindness, and not being easily angered to those around you.



Write a letter to someone who has demonstrated long suffering, kindness, and/or not being easily provoked to you. Thank them for loving you and being a great example of love in action to others.

O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus

(Samuel Francis, 1875)

*Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Vast, unmeasured, boundless free;
Rolling as a mighty ocean
In its fullness over me.
Underneath me, all around me,
Is the current of Thy love;
Leading onward, leading homeward,
To my glorious rest above.*

*O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Spread His praise from shore to shore
How He loveth, ever loveth,
Changeth never, nevermore;
How He watches o'er His loved ones,
Died to call them all His own;
How for them He intercedeth,
Watcheth over them from the throne.*

*O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Love of every love the best;
'Tis an ocean vast of blessing,
'Tis a haven sweet of rest,
O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
'Tis a Heav'n of Heav'ns to me;
And it lifts me up to glory,
For it lifts me up to Thee.*

About the Authors

Nathan and Anna Rugg are currently living in China, learning Mandarin, and chasing their three active boys.

They are the founders of [Greenfield Education](#), helping ordinary kids achieve their extraordinary potential.

Anna writes about their crazy/blessed life, cooking, DIY projects, and homeschooling adventures at www.TheDoItYourselfMom.com.

For questions or comments, email anna@thedoityourselfmom.com.

Thanks for reading!

