



The Holding Stage

If you're caring for a child between the ages of 0–4, you are in the **Holding Stage**—a foundational season of connection, trust-building, and love. In this stage, you literally hold your child—but you also hold his or her developing sense of identity, safety, and value. Your consistent love reflects God's character and forms a bridge for your child to one day understand who God is.

Every hug, prayer, word, and smile tills the soil of your child's heart. Though it may not be visible yet, deep roots are forming—roots of trust, love, and faith that will last a lifetime. Your presence, patience, and joy are forming the foundation of a Spirit-led life for your child.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Galatians 5:22–23

Tips for Caregivers

- Help your child build conversation skills by using short, simple words that he or she can begin to imitate and recognize in everyday routines.
- Celebrate small moments of growth with smiles, hugs, or simple prayers of gratitude.
- Model patience and gentleness; your calm responses teach emotional regulation and trust.
- Keep daily moments playful. Joyful learning creates strong emotional bonds and helps your child feel secure in your love.

Growth Model



Plant

Every interaction—your voice, your touch, your attention—plants seeds of love and connection.



Root

As your child feels secure in your presence, he or she starts responding to your guidance.



Growth

Through repetition and routine, your child learns to connect words, feelings, and actions.



Fruit

As trust and understanding grow, your child begins showing joy, gentleness, and patience on his or her own.

Activity: Fruit of the Spirit (Part 1)

STEP 1 (The Why)

Toddlers learn through imitation, touch, and repetition. By connecting everyday actions and emotions to the Fruit of the Spirit, you help your child understand godly character in a tangible way. Through simple, playful moments, your child begins to see that joy, patience, and gentleness are gifts from God that grow as we follow Him. These interactions not only build language and emotional awareness but also nurture faith that takes root early and lasts a lifetime.

STEP 2 (Activity Directions)

Help toddlers connect everyday emotions and actions to godly character through hands-on, joyful play.

1 Familiarize through Play

- Use a laminated fruit chart or sensory fruit toys.
- Name colors, shapes, and textures together.

2 Connect Traits to Fruits

- Choose 2–3 traits to start with.

◆ Examples: ○ Joy = Orange ○ Patience = Strawberry ○ Gentleness = Grape

3 Practice in Daily Moments

- “That was an orange moment—we were joyful!”
- “This is a strawberry time—let’s practice waiting.”
- “You were gentle like a grape with the baby—thank you.”

4 Celebrate the Sweetness

- Remind your child that these character traits are gifts from God’s Spirit.
- Celebrate even small steps with affirmation, hugs, and prayer.

Encouragement

Your child is learning by watching and imitating you. Every time you model joy, patience, or kindness, you’re showing your child what God’s love looks like in action. Keep it simple, keep it playful, and keep pointing back to God as the source of every good fruit. With time, these early seeds will grow into a faith that bears lasting fruit.