

What is one thing you will always remember about the first time your child was laid in your arms?

Crib Notes by John Bush



# Splash! Parent Pages



## YOUR DEVELOPING CHILD

### *Always and in All Ways*

Your new baby has come into the bright and beautiful world where you have been waiting to welcome, hold, feed, comfort, guide, and love them. Whether you experienced a home birth, delivered in a hospital or birthing center, or first met your infant through the adoption process, your life has already changed in major ways because of this little one.

By now you've probably seen the graphs, tables, and charts that describe the developmental milestones in the first months of life. These milestones are usually described in terms of physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. All these types of development are helpful to know about. But thinking of them as distinct areas with separate milestones isn't quite accurate.

Simply put, babies don't compartmentalize how they experience and learn about the world. Development in one area can shape or be shaped by development in others. For example, physical growth can influence cognitive development. Emotional advances pave the way for changes in social interactions. What a wonderful reminder that babies are always growing, always learning, always experiencing the world around them—growth that you can guide and shape with the environment you provide!

## GROWING IN FAITH

### *Going Gaga for Baby*

Falling in love. Some parents report it happening in the moments as they first held their little one in their arms. Others confess that it took them days or even weeks to warm up to the strange little creature who completely rearranged their lives. Both are completely normal! Either way, it's a fierce and overwhelming experience when it happens, a love that practically bowls you over with the desire to protect and nurture your precious baby.

Hold on to that feeling! It may provide you with your first opportunity to begin teaching your little one about God. No, your little one isn't ready for theology lessons, and it will be a while before they'll be able to understand Bible stories or think concretely about faith. But it's not too early for your child to experience God's love. God's fathomless love is difficult even for adults to understand, but many of us begin to grasp it by thinking of God as a loving parent and of ourselves as God's children. As a new parent, you now have an opportunity to give your child a glimpse of the way God loves them. Every feeding, every lullaby, every cuddle, and even every diaper change lays a foundation for the way your child will understand God's presence, God's comfort, and God's love and care in their life.

Don't put too much pressure on yourself, though—God's love may be perfect, but no human parent is. Just focus on enjoying these early days with your baby, love them fiercely, and find peace in the knowledge that God cares for your child with a love that meets and even surpasses yours.

**O LORD, you have searched me**

**and known me.**

**—Psalm 139:1**

KNOW





So God created humankind in his image,  
in the image of God  
he created them. . .  
—Genesis 1:27

PLAY



## SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

The best plaything for your brand-new baby is YOU! Your little one is most comfortable swaddled in a blanket and held in your arms about 8-10 inches from your face. They will spend their waking moments memorizing your facial features, noticing contrasts like facial hair and glasses, and paying close attention to the parts of your face that move. Tell your baby about yourself, your family, your home, and your day-to-day life. You can use a speaking style that experts call “parentese,” with a slower pace, exaggerated vowels, and more ups and downs in your tone. This blessed time begins a lifetime of conversation between you and your new child.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS



## A GRAND START

Encourage grandparents (or other beloved elders in this role) to establish one activity that your little one can anticipate doing each time they enjoy a visit together. Perhaps they will snuggle together in the rocking chair or pay a visit to a favorite ceramic frog in the garden. This activity will create a connection shared only between grandparent and grandchild that can provide the basis for many conversations and adventures to come.

MEALTIME



## FIRST MEALTIME CHATS

Mealtime with a newborn occurs frequently during the course of a day—and night! In contrast to feeding time with toddlers, this is a one-to-one exchange. While feedings can be used as a time for the caregiver to quietly regroup, they are also an opportunity for tender conversation. As your baby eats, massage or touch them as you say, “God gave (*child’s name*) five little toes on this little foot.” Or, “I see (*child’s name*) two brown eyes. Thank you, God, for (*child’s name*) two brown eyes.” Naming your child as one of God’s precious children introduces God into your child’s life.

PRAY



## PRAYING FOR YOUR BABY

What a miraculous event the birth of a baby is! Seeing each little finger and toe causes one to pause in wonder at God’s creative genius. Along with awe, this little baby may generate feelings of overwhelming responsibility in you. God invites you to share these feelings and concerns through prayer. Throughout these first days, watch for opportunities to praise God for first smiles, to seek patience during sleepless nights, and to give thanks for the relatives and friends whose love surrounds and supports you. Every day you can ask God to bless you and your baby.

WORSHIP



## WELCOME TO WORSHIP

Another thing to add to your to-do list as a parent is to plan for the first time you’ll attend worship with your newborn. Make sure that they have been fed, changed, and are not too warm or too cold. Pack a well-stocked diaper bag with everything you might need. Don’t forget a cuddly blanket! Holding your new baby close during a church service is a wonderful way to introduce your child to its rituals and rhythms, although they may sleep soundly through worship if it coincides with nap times.

BIBLE



## GOD CREATES

Genesis 1:1—2:4a

During these first weeks you’re together, read the creation story to your baby from a children’s Bible, or retell the story in your own words. You are living the awesome story of God’s creation as you spend your days (and nights!) getting to know your baby. This Bible story tells us that God created all manner of living things: plants, insects, birds, fish, and land animals. Then God made humans. God blessed all these living things with the ability to procreate. It is miraculous to think that from two separate cells came this infinitely complex and complete infant. As you hold and feed your little one, remember that God created human beings in God’s image—and blessed them. Here in your arms is one of those blessings!