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Summary:

Do you have a baby, or is a baby about to enter your life? Do you want to be better prepared for parenthood? Are you looking for practical advice to help you raise a bright and happy baby? Do you want to establish a deep and lasting bond with the child God has given you? You can start today! Keys to Baby opens the door to that world of wonder and mystery that Baby lives in. Discover the amazing person your baby is and can become through love, understanding and guidance.

Chapter 1: Babies Are Out of This World

Trailing clouds of glory...

Baby does not start from "zero." He begins somewhere within the mystery and workings of God in the spiritual realm. Baby's spirit is then joined to the physical within you. Realizing this enriches your experience of the miracle of giving birth and parenting. Greet your child upon his inception into this world as you would an angel sent from God--a special angel who will be your friend for eternity because you are his parent. Looking at your child in this way gives you an extra measure of respect and consideration for this new person that you are helping to introduce to life.

A baby is a living soul, formed through the union of a spirit created by God with the physical elements of your body. Finding himself "housed" in a body must be quite a new experience for a baby. That babies are more spiritual than physical when they are born is a fact noted throughout literature and history. As William Wordsworth put it so beautifully:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.

Science has its explanations for how children come into being, but when you first hold your baby and look into those little eyes, you know that you are holding a miracle. You are looking at one of the great mysteries of the universe; a glimpse of Heaven and the creative power of God. There in your arms is tangible proof of the love God has for you, for He has chosen you to parent a new soul.

Sophisticated, worldly-wise,
I searched for God and found Him not;
Until one day, the world forgot,
I found Him in my baby's eyes.

-- Mary Afton Thacker

Baby can seem like an accident--but never is!

God is using you dear mothers to create an immortal soul. God has done it, but He's also using you to do it. You're the tool, creating something that is going to last forever. It's the biggest miracle since the creation of the world: Every time a woman has a baby there's another immortal soul that is going to live forever. What a miracle!

It's very mysterious how the Lord orders His creation and plans it and decides on who should have babies and who should not, but we know that He does not make any mistakes about making babies. God ordained you to give birth if He gave you a baby. God is the Creator of human souls. God is the Creator of pregnancy. We are merely the human instruments that God uses.

I don't believe that any human being, any human spirit, is created without the touch of the divine, the touch of the hand of God! I believe that when God decides He's going to have another soul in existence in this universe, He makes that definite decision and He creates that soul and endows it with the spirit; that it is a direct creation of God, ordained of the Spirit of God. --*D.B.B.*

The Word of God teaches that God actually plans for children, even when we haven't.

Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made ... My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret... Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them (Psalm 139:13-16, KJV).

God, His angels, and the saints in Heaven actively communicate with the spirits of children even for some time after they are born. Beautiful realizations such as these help nurture in us a reverence for life and a healthy respect for our children. They are not just "ours," they also belong to God. Jesus even cautioned His disciples:

Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in Heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in Heaven (Matthew 18:10).

Each of us is special to God, and each has a unique purpose for being here. This world is a place of learning through which we all must pass on our journey home to God. Your baby, too, has a special purpose in life. Why else would such an innocent little one leave Heaven on such a perilous journey unless life is very important? As parents, our job is to help each new arrival to this world get settled and safely started on their journey through life.

Faith for a child--"all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23)

One of the qualities a parent needs most is faith--faith that God has chosen them for the job, and faith to believe that their child comes into life with a mission, an unknown as yet but very good and compelling reason for them to be born. We should live that belief for every child, and especially our own.

Children need someone who believes in them, and as a parent, that is one of your most important jobs. Do not underestimate the power of a believing parent. That special confidence and hope that a parent has in a child has often been the beacon needed to guide many to great accomplishments for God and others. Faith in a child's unseen future, faith in their calling to some good and noble cause in life, ignites hope and gives them an abiding inner confidence that will carry them through many rough places. A parent's faith stimulates a child to reach beyond the small world of his or her own self, and to search for what it is that they are to become. This isn't to advocate pushy parenting--parents placing too much importance on achievement, or forcing their children to "succeed"--but rather having a deep abiding faith that given lots of love and the proper guidance, children will be all that God intends them to be.

The Father of all fathers cares for His child

Most parents greet their new baby with pure joy. However, if you feel unprepared or incapable as a parent, or if you

child enters this world physically or mentally challenged, baby's arrival may greatly test your faith. Perhaps it's hard for you to view this baby as a gift from God, or you question His timing. Your circumstances may be difficult, or those around you may not be giving you the support you need. Still, if you are able to pull back a little from your immediate situation and consider things from the perspective of history, then you might realize that God seems to do His greatest work in situations we consider impossible. Consider the mother of Moses, who defied the king's commandment that all Hebrew baby boys be killed at birth, and later acted as a nursemaid slave while the king's daughter raised Moses as her own. Or consider Jesus Himself who was born in a stable. His parents had to flee the country to escape the jealous rage of a mad king determined to find and kill this baby boy. Your baby is created by God, and God will help you be a loving parent and find a way to care for your little one no matter what your circumstances.

When keeping Baby is in question

Most children will at some time in life present a great test of faith for their parents. Sometimes that test comes even before they are born. God's Word encourages you to make the choice for parenthood. The bottom line is that you are not alone; you are in a parenting partnership with God. Children are given by God, the Father of life, and they are not bad gifts, they are not punishments--they are signs of His great love and confidence that together with Him, you can make it. So, if you are a besieged parent-to-be, you must resist the lie that this new life is not important. Your child is not a mistake or a bad thing. Even if you "know you made a mistake," God never makes a mistake. He knows what He is doing. The creation of a child is His doing, and every life is important and precious to Him. You must believe that God cares. He cares for you and your child, and He wants to help you and provide for you as you learn to trust and lean on Him. The more difficult your situation seems, the greater reason there is to believe that God has something very special in store for you and your little one, if you will just hang on and trust Him. Life can be a stormy experience sometimes, and your faith as a parent, as a provider, and as a source of love for these little ones will be tested. You will need a lot of inner strength to meet the many demands that will be placed on you. For many, parenting has at some time or another seemed impossible, or just too much to handle. It is often hard to reach out and help someone else when we feel so in need of help ourselves--but it is in giving that we receive, and it is in believing that we see the answer.

So even if you don't initially feel great love for your expected baby, even if you feel like rejecting God's gift, if you will ask God to give you a loving, receiving heart and the faith you need for parenting, He will. Any situation can be turned around with the help of God and love. God's love and your love, can work miracles. Believe it! "Ask, and it will be given to you." (Matthew 7:7) Take it by faith; just believe it because God said so. God gave the child, and He will help you take care of him. Where He guides, He provides. He will meet your needs if you keep calling on Him in your time of trouble. No matter how difficult the situation may appear, if you choose to fight for your child, God will fight for you and someday you'll see that this was God's great blessing in disguise.

If your child is physically or mentally challenged

Every little child who comes into the world is precious to the Lord. He loves each one, but they also need your love, encouragement, and prayer. They need you to have faith in them, to believe that God has sent them to you, because He knows they need the wellspring of love you have to give. Though times will be difficult and your heart will ache to see the challenges facing your little one, remember that no seeming lack is so great that it cannot be bridged by a parents' love, faith and encouragement. Believe in these little ones. Believe that God has them in the palm of His hand. Their path may be different than that which you had dreamed of or planned for them, but God's plan is greater than yours is. The beautifying of your little one in His love and His Spirit, and your own spiritual deepening as you look to God for understanding and strength, are of far greater value than a perfect body or mind. These innocent little ones are very precious in His eyes. He will never leave or forsake them. And they, through their simplicity and sufferings, will come to know Him and trust Him in a very special way, and so gain the greatest peace and happiness of all. Keep looking to God and trusting in Him, and He will indeed be with you, holding your hand, comforting and encouraging you.

Babies are forever--a touch of Heaven

Each baby is the first and only one of its kind: a special someone who has entered your life, someone who has something important to do, someone who by faith will live on into eternity with you. Having a child can be the beginning of a relationship and blessing that will last beyond the boundaries of this present life. Even if you have ups and downs now, if you love God, ultimately you will live in peace and harmony with all of God's children of faith in God's eternal Kingdom of Love to come. Children are a touch of that Kingdom of Heaven,

the beauty, the innocence, the simple love. Turn their hearts towards God and they will become a great blessing from God. Turn them from God and they will be a source of sorrow.

Chapter 2: Preparing for Baby

Preparations of the heart

Parenting can be difficult and all parents need a lot of help from God. It may be that you feel hesitant about having a baby, but it is important to do all you can to accept and welcome the child, even if you don't feel like it in the beginning. One major step in receiving a child is to prepare your own heart by asking God to help you tackle and untangle any major concerns you may have. Parenting is often more about faith than feelings, and God is always there to help lift you above your insecurities, added worries, personal problems, and frustrations.

He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you (Isaiah 30:19).

And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear (Isaiah 65:24).

Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation (Psalm 91:14-16).

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1).

Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).

Learn to look up, to look beyond circumstances and find peace in the midst of your storm, that special place of quiet and calm. Draw close to God through His Son Jesus, just as you would a dear friend who is walking you through a problem, holding your hand, talking to you, comforting you, encouraging you. Jesus will be there for you, by your side, to get you all the way through to the birth of your child--and beyond.

Among the many things that you can do to prepare yourself for a new baby, nothing will help more than getting God's perspective. At the end of this booklet you will find a selection of key Bible verses, categorized under seven main topics. These Scriptures will encourage and help prepare you for parenting by increasing your faith concerning your child, your role as parent, and the wonderful future that awaits you as you grow together in God. Parenthood takes a lot of faith, and your faith will be strengthened and increased by reading and reflecting on the Word of God. (For a much larger selection of topically arranged Bible verses on a wide variety of subjects relating to everyday life, order the two-volume *Discovering Truth* series, also from Aurora Production.)

Bodywork--Mother's physical preparations

There are many physical preparations a mother-to-be should make: eating the proper foods, getting proper exercise and rest. You will be Baby's supply house, and he will draw his every physical need from you, from what you eat. Please try to take good care of yourself and do not abuse your body or do anything that might damage your child's delicate cell development. This may require some sacrifices on your part, especially if you have some harmful habits that could hurt your developing child. Have your friends help you, and hang on to the best Helper of all, Jesus. It takes prayer, faith, and much common sense to be a good mommy for the new baby.

If you are a very active person, you may have to learn to slow down. If you're sedentary, you may have to get more exercise. You may have to cut down on caffeine, and cut out alcohol, smoking, and any potentially harmful drugs. Check with your doctor before taking any prescription medication, and carefully study the warnings on any over-the-counter drugs before taking them. Giving another person the gift of life is giving them the best of yourself, but the end result--a strong, healthy child--is well worth any sacrifice you may make.

Pregnancy is the beginning of a personal course in learning how to give of yourself for someone else. To enter this world, children require that someone make a sacrifice for them, but with such sacrifices God is well pleased. As you

give your love and your life for another, you become more like God. God gives us much of Himself so that we might live and grow and be happy and healthy in Him. Learning to love and to give to your baby can be one of the greatest lessons of your life.

Pregnancy means never being alone

As you carry your baby within and become conscious of your baby, your baby is becoming conscious of you. There is a special link between a mother and her baby. You are not only linked physically, but you are linked emotionally and spiritually. Baby is soon even able to sense how you are feeling. Knowing that you are being monitored around the clock by a small life that is forming inside of you should help you want to do your best. That new little person, that small spirit within, is counting on you, trusting in you, as they enter the physical realm. In spite of many attitudes and teachings to the contrary, your child is not just becoming someone, but already is someone--a unique spiritual being, formed by God, the Father of spirits (Hebrews 12:9). In a very real sense, Baby is an existent being in the spirit even before his or her physical body is perfected. The spirit of a baby already has the pattern of his or her character-to-be, the imprint of a unique personality created in the world of the spirit by the hand of God.

You can impart a spirit of faith and calm to your unborn child by having a peaceful, trusting attitude yourself. Learn to take a few moments to relax, rest and create a peaceful environment; play soothing music for Baby as you look up to your own heavenly Father and find peace. Babies in the womb can hear and enjoy not only the sound of your heartbeat and the other gentle reassuring sounds of your body at work, but as they grow and develop within your womb they can also hear and distinguish between external sounds such as music, your voice, and the voices of others.

Baby can sense if you are tense or relaxed. As a mother-to-be, try to remember every once in a while to stop and let the confusion of the day pass by. Take a little time to comfort your unborn child whenever you rest and relax. Talk to your baby, pat her, make her feel at home, warm and loved. She is going to be yours for life. The special bond of love between you can begin long before your baby is born. Even as your baby is forming, you should appeal to your child's senses. You just have to believe that it's making a difference, because you may not get any special response or particular feedback other than the normal movements when Baby is awake and active.

It is wise to learn early not to speak disparagingly or think disparaging thoughts about your unborn child. Try not to say or think anything you wouldn't say to an older child face to face, for while she might not actually hear or understand the words you say, she might very well "feel" your intent in the spirit.

Getting help from a friend

You should try to find a friend who can be with you during this time, someone who can help you, someone you can trust and pour your heart out to. Your friend may be your husband or partner, or someone else you are close to, or even another mother or someone else you have recently met. Sometimes you may have to explain to your friend or loved one things that seem obvious to you, but that may not be so obvious to them. No matter how much a friend wants to help, it's difficult for them to do so if they don't understand how you feel. So communicate; take time for one another. Set aside time to get to know and understand each other.

But even if there is no one around to be your friend and companion, remember that God is always there and listening.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'
(Isaiah 58:9).

Adjusting to being pregnant

Pregnancy is a time of testing. Your emotions go out of whack as hormones change your body chemistry. So many things surround your preparation for giving birth, but you arrive at that moment one step at a time, one day at a time. Don't try to take on too much at once. Do what you can, but don't overdo. There are hundreds of activities you are able to do, lots that you want to do or think you need to do, but now it is time to focus on what you need to do to prepare for having the baby.

During this time you are no longer "your own," but you belong to someone who is counting on you for his or her very life. You have to learn many new things. You may have to learn to not climb up on stools or take other risks, to not overwork, to not act on that sudden impulse, such as trying to move heavy furniture around by yourself. You will have to learn to control your behavior, take care of yourself, and be willing to let others help you. This can be very humbling if you are the independent type. It's hard to ask others to help you. Sometimes it is a little difficult to let certain things slide a bit. Maybe you will not be able to get the laundry done just as quickly as before--all nicely folded and put away--or whatever you are accustomed to doing in your domestic life or your work. But the pace of your life will have to change to accommodate your condition, and your greatest daily accomplishment will be to

look after your baby-to-be. Rest assured that God sees every extra care you take for the baby's sake, every little sacrifice, and He will reward.

Help your husband understand

As your pregnancy develops, your needs will change and you will need to communicate this to your husband or partner. You are involved in the creative miracle of life, where a whole new person is being formed within you. Some of what is going on you can sense, but most of what is happening is not so evident. During this time you will have to have patience with your husband or partner and others who are not so directly involved as you, who may not always understand what you are going through. Sometimes you will think your husband is just not tuned in to reality. He may sometimes act like he doesn't even realize you are pregnant and that life is becoming very different, even difficult, for you. You are being marched along into motherhood, and it is natural to assume that some similar process is preparing him for fatherhood. But your reality and his reality at this point in time are different. You are pregnant; he isn't. He has feelings about it, but they are often more detached or different from yours.

It is very easy to get caught up in your little world when your emotions are stormy. If you find yourself getting upset and frustrated about hubby's lack of sensitivity, rather than confuse him with an outburst of mixed emotions, talk to him and try to help him understand how you feel and what you are going through. Try to explain your needs and frustrations. Spell things out as simply as you can. If you can't seem to get the point across very well, pray and ask the Lord to help you both.

Your husband probably needs your reassurance, too, at this time: your affection, your love, your presence, and knowing he is special to you. Your kind words and sweet touches will mean a lot to him. He is very likely to be a little nervous too, and not sure what he can do to help you or the situation, particularly if it's your first child. The prospect of becoming a dad takes faith as well. He may be feeling his responsibility in different ways, such as concern for the finances or the extra burdens that he has to bear. He may feel a little "lost" or unsure of his place in this new relationship you will have with Baby. He knows he is going to lose some of your precious times together for Baby's sake.

Dads may get more protective during this time. Actually, he probably likes being your "protector" when you are pregnant. Feel free to call upon his paternal instinct to help more and to pamper you a bit. You'll need it. Learn to enjoy this time of extra sheltering and nurturing, but take care of him too. You can still usually enjoy some wonderful, loving times together, and intimate sex.

Gearing up for delivery

Some couples want to experience the birth of their child together, some don't. Do your best to work this out before the time comes. Prayerfully consider, and discuss these details with your partner, and if possible, communicate in advance with the doctor who will be attending your delivery, get to know him or her, and share your delivery expectations and desires. Prepare as best you can, but be open to last-minute changes.

Most important of all, as you commit this approaching time to the Lord in prayer, He will give you the peace and assurance that it is all in His hands. Holding on to some of the Lord's promises from the Bible will give you something strong and sure to base your faith on. Two Bible verses which you may find encouraging are:

Isaiah 40:29,31 He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.

Isaiah 41:10 Be not dismayed ... I will strengthen you.

Several more related verses are included in "Scriptures About Babies" at the end of this booklet.

The moment of birth is the culmination and completion of this great physical orchestration of your body. For nine months Baby has increasingly taken over your body and your life, and now he is ready to launch out on his own. The discomfort, inconvenience, morning sickness, all of the body and shape changes, all the time of not being able to comfortably roll over and lie on your tummy, all of the time of constantly feeling "inhabited" is about to end. Your many questions about Baby's health, sex and appearance, are all about to be answered.

Deliverance

A natural delivery in a warm, friendly, secure environment is generally best for Mother and Baby, possibly a home delivery with a doctor or midwife in attendance, or one in a private clinic. Some hospitals also provide a relaxed and peaceful atmosphere and allow loved ones to be with you. Babies born in hospitals that take a more institutional and less natural approach are more likely to have a more traumatic introduction to life. Some people think that the short sharp shock "welcome to the harsh realities of life" approach to birth is good for a child. Well, life certainly does

have its challenges, its ups and downs and its harsh realities, but there is much that we can do to make that the exception rather than the rule.

From the moment of birth, your little baby is making quite an adjustment. She is moving from the quiet, dark and softly cushioned world of your womb to the outside world of many noises and lights, where she will be handled and constantly experience many things. You can make this change less drastic by your loving tenderness and understanding in even the smallest of details.

If you are able to have a home delivery, it's good to remember that unless it is otherwise necessary, dim or natural lighting is better for the newborn baby's sensitive eyes than harsh, bright artificial light. And gentle handling is preferable as she is being born, as well as during the time she is being cleaned and dressed.

Bonding with Baby

When Baby is born, he needs to feel your warm comforting touch and presence. This first feeling of security is very important for Mommy and Baby. Many people put the baby to the breast as soon as he is born. This begins the bonding process. From birth, your tender touch, your smile, and your loving words will begin to weave a bond between you. This forms the basis of communication, and is vital to your child's development.

Accepting Fatherhood

Once a woman has had a baby, she is a mother, and the primary responsibility for feeding, clothing and protecting the baby is hers. Thankfully God promises to "gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:11) as the new mother gradually discovers the weight of the responsibility involved in caring for her child.

The bond of fatherhood, however, can develop along slightly different lines depending on the circumstances. As a father you may be less physically involved with baby's daily care than your wife, even feeling at times more like a spectator than a participant. Learning to love and accept this new baby might even seem more of a personal decision you make more than a daily physical fact of life, and your fatherly bonding may need help and nurturing. You may need to try to take more time off from work or other activities where possible so you can be at home more to strengthen your relationship with your wife and the new baby.

Just as we depend on our Father in Heaven, and need to know that He loves us and is always there for us, so each child benefits from the presence of a father who loves and cares for him, who bears responsibility for him, who is prepared to go the extra mile to help him and lead him. God is willing and wanting to help you be the father that is needed as you look to Him for His guidance and take steps to provide a loving home, a place of acceptance, care, and security. Through your words and actions show your child a sample of what God's love and patience and encouragement is like.

Of course, God is ultimately the child's true and everlasting Father who will never fail him. And in the times when there is no one to fill the role of a physical father--either because the father is temporarily gone, or in the case of single mothers--God will care for His own. He will be close by the mother's side and by the child's side, and hold each in His arms.

Chapter 3: Baby Learning and Fun

The atmosphere surrounding your newborn baby need not be perfect or overly protective. She can adapt easily to the normal activities of your life, providing you take care to introduce them gradually. For instance, immediately after birth and for the next few days, it is best to keep noise, abrupt changes, and visitors to a minimum. Then little by little, more activity can enter into Baby's days.

Making contact

One of the first duties parents have is to help Baby get in contact with her senses. You need to help her learn to use and understand her senses to get information. Touch is one of the first sensations Baby recognizes, even more than sight or sound; touch transmits the first impressions of life to Baby. Babies must be touched or they will not thrive. Whether it be nursing Mommy, feeling the warmth and reassurance from her body, or being held close by Daddy, touch is extremely important.

The next things they tune into are sounds. Babies like sounds. They have already learned to listen in the womb, so give them sounds. They love to hear your gentle voice. The sound of your voice is comforting for them, as they've heard it in the womb for several months and are familiar with it. Babies need to be talked to. They need to know you are there. They are learning to use their senses. They are beginning to learn about communication--starting with what happens when they cry. Crying is their first attempt at expressing themselves and communicating: "Help! Help me! I need you. This is a very strange place. This is a very new experience for me--in fact this is my very first experience with anything. Help me through it." Whether hungry, or wet, or lonely, crying is a universal communicator.

Keep walking, talking and rocking

You may have heard it said that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Looking at the condition of the world today, you wonder if perhaps those hands were not always there as they should have been and when they were needed. Someone was not rocking, nor talking to and teaching and praying for and watching out for Baby as they should. True, the people you admire most in life may or may not have had wonderful parents and a great childhood, but you can be confident that each one who has grown to become a blessing to others received a touch of God's love at sometime in their life. Someone somewhere, perhaps at a time when it was most needed, reached out to them with a hug, a warm word of encouragement, a kind smile, a little present, an explanation that helped them view life in a better light. You can be that special someone for your baby. All you need to do is be there for them and you will make a difference for life.

The Loveliest Flower

The soul of a child is the loveliest flower
That grows in the garden of God.
Its climb is from weakness to knowledge and power,
To the sky from the clay and the clod.
To beauty and sweetness it grows under care,
Neglected, 'tis ragged and wild.
'Tis a plant that is tender, but wondrously rare,
The sweet, wistful soul of a child.
Be tender, O gardener, and give it its share
Of moisture, of warmth, and of light;
And let it not lack for the painstaking care,
To protect it from frost and from blight.
A glad day will come when its bloom shall unfold,
It will seem that an angel has smiled;
Reflecting a beauty and sweetness untold
In the sensitive soul of a child.

-- Author unknown

Soul food for Baby

Babies enjoy spiritual feedings as well as physical feedings. They love to drink in the spiritual nourishment they feel when you are happy, full of praise, singing joyful songs to God, or just praying out loud. Talk to your baby about Jesus often. Tell Baby how much you love Jesus and how much He loves you and Baby. Let Baby know in many different ways how important Jesus is in your life. Baby doesn't need a big talk or sermon, just a sweet sample of your devotion while she is nursing, or while you are changing her diaper. Sing her little songs about Jesus and His love, or tell her simple Bible verses or inspiring sayings, like "Jesus loves you!" or "Jesus is our good shepherd!", or adapt them for Baby, "Jesus loves the little babies, all the babies of the world." Put up a nice picture of Jesus where she will see it frequently, perhaps by her bed, and talk to her about Jesus as you look at or show her the picture. Lead and teach your baby to love and believe in Jesus by your own daily sample of love and devotion.

You can explain God to your children as soon as they understand what a mother and a father are--people who love them and take care of them, who brought them into this world. Then you can explain that there is a great Father who, although they cannot see Him, is everywhere. He is the Spirit of love, He is love. In fact even before your children can talk, you can lead them to the Lord all the time by your example and your love, by telling them about Jesus! --*D.B.B.*

Building Baby's Brain Power

Baby immediately begins gathering great amounts of information about this new world he has entered. Scientists tell us that brain cells, especially in very young children, change and develop complicated neural patterns and interconnections in direct response to sensory stimulation and body movement. Providing your baby or young child with a variety of sense or muscle-exploring opportunities not only stimulates brain development, but also lays a good foundation for a more alert, happy and thriving child. Babies who are deprived of opportunities to explore, feel, touch, and learn in a safe, nurturing environment do not progress as quickly. Just as their physical bodies must have proper foods, liquids, exercise, rest, shelter, and be kept clean, so their developing brain seeks "feeding" through their five senses: touch, taste, smell, sight and sound.

As parents, you can help Baby immediately begin to discover things. You can say the words for objects and experiences as they appear or occur within Baby's environment: "This is warm. This is cold. This is smooth, this is rough. Oh, what a noisy dog! Listen to him barking." Let Baby touch, see, taste, hear and smell all sorts of things. Let Baby hear music and a variety of sounds, look at colors and shapes, and touch various materials. Hold Baby up to see things like an aquarium to watch the fish swimming. Explain the world to him. Daddy can take Baby's little hand up to the stubble of his beard and say, "This is rough." Do all you can to help get his senses in contact with the physical world, so he can start to figure it all out. It is a whole new world for him!

Many of a child's intellectual capacities are determined by the experiences he has had by the time he is five or six. So don't lose any time; give him all the experiences you can. You can even teach your baby to read and learn other "difficult" things at an early age. Expose your child to as rich a vocabulary as you can. Don't be afraid to use or tell him the correct word for something, even if you didn't learn it until a much later age. Babies don't understand that some things are difficult. Little children have a special gift for learning. They may not get it all, but every experience is a learning experience for babies. It's easier for children to learn multiple languages before they're about eight; after that it becomes increasingly difficult.

Learning is a natural occupation for babies, and most of a baby's learning comes through play. Remember to use love and encouragement rather than pressure and negative demands. Reinforce good behavior with love and interest. You teach by what you do, you teach by what you don't do, but you especially teach by how you react to what your baby does.

Practical things you can do to stimulate your baby's brain development:

- **You can do a lot to help your baby "connect" with her body.** You can massage Baby gently, moving her limbs, touching her toes to different parts of her body. Watch the expression of wonder and delight as Baby discovers her toes touching her mouth, or touching her hands to her feet. It must be quite an experience for Baby in those first moments when she discovers that her toes are a part of her, and if she sticks them in her mouth she has two feelings at once. She must experience somewhat the same wonder and puzzlement that a puppy seems to have when chasing his tail. It is a great discovery: "Hey, I am touching something that feels like me. I am touching something that I can feel being touched."
- **Try to appeal to all of your baby's senses.** Present Baby with different things to see, smell, hear, and touch. Present examples of contrasting things: smooth and rough, dry and wet, warm and cold. Paste different pictures, shapes, and colors on cards for your baby to look at. Where possible, try to involve more than one sense. For example, let Baby feel the apple as well as see it, and try to sample it while you talk to him about the shape, color and aroma of the apple.
Many approaches to education focus on learning through the senses. You learn concepts and abstract ideas by first feeling and experiencing things in the physical--the weight, the size, the color, the texture, and the smell. Music, of course, is very stimulating and an ability that can be developed very early. Choose good music with clear notes or voices.
- **Give tiny babies every chance to watch what is going on.** Prop them up in the corner of the room so that they can see everything. Baby learns by being there, by being around people, seeing things, doing things, having to react and interact with the environment. Try not to leave Baby in his crib too long once he is awake. Baby backpacks allow you to carry Baby around with you while you do simple chores, shopping, gardening, and going for walks. The bounce of your body, your conversation with someone, and the ever changing sights and sounds and smells that you pass by all help stimulate Baby's brain.
- **Help Baby learn while you carry her in your arms.** For example, you can show her how to turn on and off the light switch as you go in and out of rooms. Take her hand at first, and use it to flip the switch while you tell the baby what she is doing and help her realize that she is controlling the light by her actions. Of course once baby starts reaching out for things while you are holding her, you will have to be mindful that she does not accidentally touch something dangerous or pull something down.
While she is in your arms, be sure to let her inspect all the safe items of interest, like pictures, cupboards, drawers and shelves that she has not been able to see or touch from the floor. Handling something she has previously only seen gives it a whole new dimension in Baby's mind.
Looking out an open window is always fun, but as in all new experiences, watch out for the child's safety. Hold Baby tightly, as a sudden move could cause the child to fall forward out of your arms. When carrying

a baby and she drops something, rather than picking it up for her, you could sometimes lower the baby to pick up the lost item, while encouraging her to pick it up for herself.

- **Let Baby explore.** For babies and young children, movement is learning, and some of the best learning takes place when children are allowed to touch and taste and experience for themselves. Don't expect your little one to sit down and be quiet all the time. Sitting passively is not the best for brain development, and does little for physical and social development. No matter how captivating television and videos are, a child's brain and body will still hunger for other exciting physical and sensory input and experience. Periods of passive learning must be balanced with more activity.
- **Eye movement exercises are good for Baby.** How well babies see will affect many other areas of their development. Play with colorful objects back and forth in their line of sight. Rolling balls, swinging pendulums, appealing mobiles all help stimulate Baby's visual skills.
- **Stimulate Baby to react to you in some way.** Talking to him whenever you are with him is very good. Encourage him to give a response, a hand movement, a laugh or coo or babble. Don't be afraid to depart from the usual "baby talk" and just say some interesting words about the day, or talk about him or yourself, or repeat some simple rhymes or phonetic sounds. Babies become fascinated with all sorts of things, and are constantly learning things when you don't even realize they are learning. They will slap their hands on the table to feel the sensation on their palms and hear the noise it makes, and to see your reaction. These daily new experiences become a whole world of discovery.
- **Involve Baby in a variety of safe activities.** Finding ways to involve your baby in an interactive activity takes patience and creativity on your part, but the payoff is well worth the effort. A generation of television addicts may claim that much learning can take place during times of passive observation, but science and common sense tell us that active participation makes for better quality learning.
- **Encourage Baby's language development.** Children recognize and understand words and sentences even before they can talk, so it is good to not get into a habit of just talking baby talk. If you have other children, encourage them to speak clearly, as though the baby is able to understand normal speech. Since babies of only a few months old are beginning to understand speech, it is very important that you become mindful of what you say about Baby in her presence. Babies listen to every word, believe it or not, and all too often their developing self-image and self-esteem can be greatly affected by what you say and how you say it. Don't be fooled into thinking a child doesn't understand speech because they don't talk, and don't assume that your baby automatically turns off when you turn to talk to some other person. It is often their own well-kept secret, but they are recording and reacting to everything they hear.
- **Bath-time is a wonderful experience** because bathing totally covers Baby's body with feeling--the water, the splashing, hearing the sounds, the sensations of being wet and washed. Baby can have a lot of fun in the bath! Give him a cleaned up plastic bottle with the bottom removed so he can watch the water run out of the holes. A little boat or some other small, colorful floating toys are fun. Caution: Never leave a small child alone in water, even for a few seconds! A small child can drown in only an inch or two of water.
- **Babies need exercise for all their limbs.** Developing simple muscle skills plays an important part in the development of your baby's coordination. Use every opportunity to exercise, massage and move her arms and legs.

Making your home a safe place for Baby

It's fun to grow up with a baby, being there when he learns something new. Look around at your home environment and try to see it through your baby's eyes. Consider what accidents could be caused by dangerous items being left where Baby could pull on them, push them, or put them in his mouth. Be sure your home is baby-safe, especially once Baby becomes more mobile:

- Remove or "baby proof" furniture with sharp edges and corners. Pad any sharp corners that remain.
- Remove anything breakable from a surface that is less than one meter from the floor.
- Make sure there are no electric wires trailing across the floor, and that other cords, like those on Venetian blinds, are out of Baby's reach.

- Remove dangling tablecloths that Baby can pull, thus emptying the contents of the table onto his little head.
- Cover electrical sockets within Baby's reach.
- Make sure that stair and balcony banisters supports are too narrow for a small child to fit their head through.
- Make sure that all cupboard doors are closed firmly and that the handles are out of Baby's reach; if they aren't, lock them or seal up with masking tape.
- Dangerous household cleaning agents and other like articles should be put out of reach.
- Put sturdy gates at the entrance to stairs leading to the second floor and basement. Block the entrance to the kitchen, too.
- Be aware of what Baby is up to at all times even though you have baby proofed the rooms he is in.

When Baby arrives, it is time to consider whether your pet, if you have one, is safe for Baby. Your pet may need some extra attention and reassurance when Baby comes, as animals can sometimes get jealous and nasty, which they may not show when you are around. Your pet may not be as thrilled as you are about Baby--especially if they were used to being the center of your attention. Pregnant women and tiny babies also should avoid close contact with cats because they are known to harbor a parasite that can cause serious problems (toxoplasmosis) in unborn and newly born babies.

Baby care is a family affair

If you have other children, they too need help to understand and appreciate and learn to welcome Baby. Teaching Baby can be a team effort. As you have more children, it will be harder for you to pour a lot of individual attention into the youngest one, but older children can also help teach Baby. Keeping everyone who is involved in a household happy about Baby can involve a lot of work for Mom and Dad. It takes time to understand and explain things to the other children, but that is part of growing into parenthood. Caring for each other, caring for Baby, and caring for the other children is what transforms a couple into a family, and individuals into parents!

Parents are a child's first teachers, and children in turn teach parents. Parents help their children master the essential skills of life: walking, talking, and getting along with others. Parents have the great joy of hearing their child's first laugh, watching their response to a tickle, seeing their first smiles, hearing their first words, clapping for their first steps. Parenthood is rich in rewarding, daily blessings.

Baby toys

Nothing stimulates brain development like hands-on experience.

A good toy should be attractive to the child's sense of sight and touch (a handy size, with interesting shape and feel), and provoke her to use her hands in some activity with it. If possible, it should challenge her or should have some problem to solve, usually requiring physical coordination. Toys that merely passively entertain are of the lowest level of learning value, even if they talk or have flashing lights. The toy should set some goal and encourage exact choices or movements by the child. It should not be too cluttered with features, but allow the child to concentrate on a few things at a time. The toy could contrast certain qualities, or if possible, have graduations of size, color, sound, speed, touch, or whatever. Peg-and-hammer toys, nesting cups or barrels, stacking blocks, shape boxes (boxes with objects of various shapes that fit through corresponding holes), are all examples of such toys. Good toys should also be child-size, sturdy, safe, and easy to clean.

Baby's mouth is one of the most sensitive parts of her body, and everything she finds will be put into it to taste and feel. Make sure everything Baby puts in her mouth is clean and safe. Inspect baby toys closely. Look for problem areas such as small parts that may break off and choke Baby. Keep out of baby's reach all toys that could possibly be small enough, or have parts small enough, to be swallowed. Avoid objects that might be colored with lead-based or other toxic paint. Avoid teething rings or other baby toys that are filled with liquids which could contain bacteria or toxins that could leak. Avoid toys that make sharp or very loud noises, as they may damage the child's hearing.

Remove any strings or wires that Baby could get tangled in and strangle. Avoid dolls or animals with button eyes or noses that could be pulled off and swallowed, wooden blocks or boxes that could splinter, sharp objects, flammable toys or clothes, etc. Your older children's toys may be safe enough for them, but very dangerous for your baby or toddler, so teach your older ones to keep them out of the little one's reach. A good general rule to follow when choosing objects for the baby to play with is not to give her anything that is smaller than her fist.

Warning: Items that are dangerous for babies to play because they may suffocate baby include: deflated beach balls, balloon pieces, plastic bags, wrappings of toys, cellophane, etc.

Rather than spend money on toys that present little challenge or have little teaching value, try to invest in equipment such as hanging mobiles (or make your own), a music box, exercise pillow, bouncing swing, realistic posters and books--items that will not only stimulate Baby, but can be passed on to others once Baby has learned all she can from them. Simple wooden toys and stacking toys are often enjoyable for Baby. Satisfy her curiosity for handling

new and different objects by giving her safe household items to play with, such as a whisk, plastic cups, and bowls, wooden spoons. You can make a simple toy box from a sturdy cardboard box, possibly covering it with some colorful cloth or contact paper.

Chapter 4: Baby Development and Activities

The items in the following section suggest ways you can have interaction and communicate with Baby while encouraging his development. Many of these activities you are naturally doing--such as rocking and singing to him. Consider trying other activities that you might not have thought of, such as changing Baby's position to stimulate the use of different muscles, or copying his soft sounds during your "conversations," or moving Baby's arms in motions to songs, poems, or verses.

When interacting with Baby, the feelings you express are more important than the exact words you use. The baby is reading your voice tones, facial expressions, and touch. The most important message you can send is that you love him and enjoy being with him!

Remember that there is no other baby quite like yours, and no other parent or caretaker quite like you! Each baby is an individual who will progress at his own rate and in his own style. No two babies grow at exactly the same rate, so some of these activities may be too easy for your baby and some too difficult. Tailor the following suggestions to suit the unique little person that your baby is. When you let Baby set the pace of an activity he enjoys and is ready for, you'll both have fun!

NEWBORN TO SIX WEEKS

A newborn baby spends most of her time lying down, so make her surroundings as interesting and attractive as possible. Put interesting pictures, posters or colorful collages on the wall, or tucked into the side of the crib (securely, so they can't fall over on Baby). Add a little music with a CD, tapes, wind-up musical toys, or wind chimes.

Sing to Baby as you hold her close to you. Communicate with her by looking into her eyes while talking with her in a friendly voice. If you're reading something that is suitable for Baby to hear, read out loud to her while nursing or while she's in your arms. Keep the atmosphere cheerful by playing happy children's song tapes* throughout the day. (*Children's music tapes with happy, meaningful songs are available from Aurora Production. Titles include "Sweet Dreams Tonight" and "Be So Happy".)

You can make simple mobiles, and change them every few days. Use drinking straws, bright cloth or paper shapes, pipe cleaners, felt shapes, cookie cutters that will tinkle when shaken, aluminum foil, small stuffed animals or toys, etc. Be sure your mobile is put together securely, so there is no chance of pieces of it falling into the baby's crib. Babies are often attracted to bright lights, so you may find your baby staring at bare light bulbs. Be careful that lights are not so bright that they will hurt her eyes--and keep the lamps and their cords well out of Baby's reach. Babies like to see what's going on, so even at a very young age they will appreciate being propped up in an infant seat or with pillows so they can be a part of the action. A bouncy chair gives the baby a good view of the room, as well as a little activity as you bounce her gently. Be sure the baby is safely strapped into her infant seat or bouncy chair, and if you place her on a table, bed, or sofa, make sure she is in the middle and securely set. Do not leave her unattended.

You should provide opportunities for Baby to move her arms and legs freely, and give her time for stretching and wriggling.

Do not leave your infant alone in a room with other small children or pets, as they may accidentally harm her. Cats should be kept away from your sleeping baby, as cats love warmth and may curl up by Baby and get too close to her face.

If your baby is sleeping in the next room, check on her often. Be sure the covers are tucked in and all is well. Check that the room has good ventilation. Take care that there is nothing close to Baby's face, such as the sheet, blanket, pillow, stuffed toy, tissues, plastic, or anything else (including a mattress that is too soft), that might restrict her breathing or allow a build up of carbon dioxide around her face while asleep. There shouldn't be any thin plastic (like plastic bags) at all in the baby's bed or within reach.

There are various suspected causes of crib deaths, including shock from immunization shots. It is wise to closely monitor very young sleeping babies, especially if they are having trouble breathing or have recently been inoculated. Some feel that it is best to place Baby on her side for sleeping, rather than on her back or face down.

SIX WEEKS TO THREE MONTHS

By six weeks your baby will be becoming much more aware of things around him, and will want to be a part of everything. Move him from room to room with you. Try having him near you in a baby carrier (or "sling") when he's awake and you're working, so you can touch, "talk" to, and smile at each other. Let Baby know he's loved by being generous with gentle hugs and kisses.

Give Baby time for stretching and wriggling and exercises. Diaper-changing time is a good time to begin baby exercises, massaging and gently moving his little limbs.

Sing songs about Jesus to your baby. Talk about Jesus and put up a picture of Jesus near Baby's bed or changing table. Talk about the picture or tell him little stories or poems while you are changing his diaper. You can even begin helping Baby to learn Bible verse excerpts or helpful short sayings by singing and quoting short verses or sayings to him throughout the day. At the end of this booklet is a listing of "Baby and Toddler Verses and Quotes." These are also available on illustrated color posters from Aurora Production, or you can create your own. You can decorate Baby's room with them, or put them up in the kitchen, or wherever Baby spends time. Starting at about three months, you can teach Baby a verse every week from the "Baby and Toddler Verses and Quotes" posters. Just keep cheerfully quoting the verses daily to Baby, and as soon as he can talk, he'll participate. Don't underestimate how much input a baby can take in. It will be a while before you get much feedback, but he is listening, absorbing and learning.

Colorful, realistic pictures, and a big mirror on the wall (securely attached or out of his reach) will give him different things to look at. He will probably still be interested in mobiles at this age, but will also want to be handling more things. You can make a "cradle gym" by fastening various toys and shapes to a length of elastic and attaching it across his crib so he can look at it and bat at it with his hands and feet while lying on his back. Again, make sure that Baby cannot get tangled up in it or pull off parts that could be dangerous.

As your baby develops, he will have more control over the movements of his head, arms, and legs.

The rattle game

When the baby is lying on his back on a safe flat surface such as his cot or a blanket, stand behind him so that he can't see you. Hold the rattle above his head and shake it gently until he looks at it. When you are certain that he has seen the rattle, move it slowly back and forth in different patterns, slowly enough that he can focus on it. When he has followed the rattle for a while, change the direction, continuing to move it slowly and smoothly.

You can also move the rattle slowly out of his sight. When he tries to follow the sound, reward him for his efforts by moving it back within his eyesight. Encourage him also by saying, "See the rattle! Good!"

When your baby is on his stomach, encourage him to look up. Then dangle the rattle in front of his face and slowly lift it up. This will make him lift his head up to follow it. You can show him how to push on his arms to raise his head and shoulders. Always reward him with praise after he does something.

On some occasions, encourage Baby to reach out for the rattle, reinforcing the visual experience with a physical one. Hold the rattle out of the baby's reach and shake it until he sees it. Then slowly move it towards the baby so he can reach out and grasp it. When the baby grabs the rattle, praise him cheerfully and excitedly. Let him enjoy it for a few moments and then repeat the exercise.

At this age, the baby's eyes are able to focus quite well, and he can hear a variety of sounds. Slowly he becomes more and more aware of his physical boundaries--where he ends, and where the world begins.

THREE MONTHS TO SIX MONTHS

Once Baby has begun to master the basics of hand and eye coordination, you can expand her range of activities. She can begin to enjoy more refined and intricate activities and experiences.

Hide-and-peek

Try a simple hide-and-peek game: With your baby sitting on your lap, place her favorite toy on the table. Partly cover it with a colorful cloth. Encourage the baby to find the toy by removing the cloth herself. Make the activity fun and encouraging.

Exploring

Try to think of new and creative ways to stimulate Baby to explore and manipulate the things around her. Explore with her all the wonders of inside things, outside things, things that roll and make noises, things that are soft and fuzzy, things liquid and things solid, things warm and things cool. Always clearly explain and describe everything to her, just as you would an older child.

Toy retrieving

Two simple games you might try are: 1) Put some of her favorite toys in a container and have her take them out. Always praise her when she accomplishes each new task. 2) Tie a couple of toys onto brightly colored yarn. Put them on the table and show her what happens when you pull the string. Encourage her to pull the toy towards her. Then let her play with the toy.

Don't tease or frustrate her, and only do these kinds of games when she seems to show interest. Do not leave strings on toys in or around Baby's crib or playpen, or let her play with the strings unattended.

Imitating

At this stage, most babies love to imitate others. If you shake your head, they'll shake theirs; if you speak or make sounds, they'll try to imitate your mouth movements and even some of the sounds they hear. They also love to mimic you if you recite and act out little rhymes and jingles with actions.

Songs and Stories

Continue to teach Baby about God, by singing songs, acting out verses and stories, and showing pictures of Jesus. Tell stories from the New Testament using Bible story picture books or flannelgraphs,* songs, rhymes and action. (*Bible flannelgraphs are available in many Christian bookstores. They are felt-backed pictures of story figures, which can be placed on a "flannelboard" or piece of soft fabric to which they will adhere. They provide a versatile and fun way of presenting stories to babies and young children.)

Vocabulary and sight reading

Talk a lot to Baby, introduce new vocabulary daily, for example, "outside words" such as: tree, grass, dog, road. Go around and let her touch some of the things you are talking about. You can start introducing large-print, red words for sight reading, e.g., "Mommy," "Daddy," Baby's own name, "Jesus," "bottle," etc. (Choose words she is familiar with hearing throughout the day.)

Music and videos

Baby will enjoy listening to happy children's song tapes, and sometimes watching suitable, edifying children's music videos, like the Kiddie Viddie series. (Available from Aurora Production.) However, limit Baby's time in front of the video screen, as she will learn much more and make more progress if she does things involving physical movement, playing with things she can feel and handle.

Action

Baby will also enjoy more active exercises, like bouncing up and down in a "jolly jumper" (a seat attached to a long spring or thick rubber cord and securely hung from a ceiling hook or clamped to the top of a door frame). Your baby may enjoy a baby swing where she can watch you as she swings back and forth. A young baby will often fall asleep in a swing, but be sure to take her out when she does, and place her in her bed. Some poorly designed swing seats can restrict blood circulation to Baby's legs.

Dangers

Baby walkers, for all their leg stimulation benefits, have now been banned in many places because of the number of very serious accidents that babies have suffered when they "walked" into dangerous places, or tipped their walker forward, or tumbled down stairs. If you use one, be sure that it is stable, well made, and that Baby is in a safe environment and constantly supervised while in the walker.

Many babies fall from changing tables by rolling over when their parents least expect them too. Often such accidents happen before the parents realize their babies have learned to roll over. But once babies begin to become mobile, it happens very quickly. Be prepared! Many changing tables have restraining straps that keep Baby from rolling off the table. If yours doesn't have one, you can make your own safety strap using a belt or a cloth luggage strap.

SIX TO SEVEN MONTHS

At this age your baby will be awake for longer periods of time, and will be content to play by himself for short periods. But he will also want Mommy or someone in sight while he plays. This is a good time to play suitable music. (Parents and caregivers are advised to not use headphones when caring for babies, as you need to be able to listen and look in on Baby as you work.) Give Baby a variety of objects to amuse him--baby-safe household objects, as well as squeeze toys, soft toys, etc. The six to seven-month-old baby likes toys that also make interesting noises, such as pot lids, metal cups, and so forth. (Of course, nothing with a sharp edge, or that could come apart, or that you don't want him sucking on.)

Baby will want to see all that is going on, so he may enjoy being in a highchair playing with toys. At this age Baby will start dropping things to see what happens to them. To save yourself bending and retrieving these toys, simply tie them to the high chair using a short string or shoelace. (Just be sure to keep the strings short enough so there is no danger of Baby strangling or choking on it when you aren't looking.) This way dropping the toys and then pulling the string to get them back will fascinate your baby. This method is also good if you are on an outing with the baby, as you can tie the toys to the side of the pram or stroller. However, be warned that allowing Baby to drop things from his high chair may result in him also tossing his food and eating utensils onto the floor. Baby is a little too young to understand that one activity is allowed and the other--identical in his mind to the first--is not.

Songs and prayers

You should continue to sing Baby songs about God. At this age, you can also teach him how to fold his little hands and pray! Saying the same one or two-line prayer before each type of activity helps Baby to learn it--e.g., "God bless and keep us safe!" or "Thank You, Jesus, for this food!"

Bible figures

You can familiarize Baby with individual flannelgraph pieces, such as baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, a shepherd, sheep, angel, donkey, manger, adult Jesus, etc. Flannelgraph pieces also make ideal pictures for use in making mobiles and are helpful in teaching sight reading words. (Familiarize the child with the person or thing depicted by the flannelgraph piece, then show him the associated word card which you have made.)

Please and thank you

This is a good age to start teaching Baby to say "please" by clapping his hands and "thank you" by nodding his head or saying thank you (which will probably come out as "ta-ta.") Even though he probably won't yet be able to clap or say "ta-ta" on his own, it's good to begin teaching the concept. For example, you could take his hands and clap for him while saying "Please!" and then, "Good boy!--Now you can have the toy!"

The body game

Take time to play the "body game" with your baby. Start by moving his arm in a playful way, while saying, "This is [Baby's name] arm." Continue to do this with the other parts of his body, naming all the different body parts and making a game of it. This will help to develop his body awareness.

Advanced hide-and-seek

For a more challenging version of hide-and-seek, place a toy where Baby can see it, then hide the toy from view by placing a piece of cardboard in front of it. When he tries to get the toy, he will probably knock down the piece of cardboard, which is fine. Show him how he can also lift the cardboard to get the toy. With each game, be sure to ask him, "Where has the toy gone?" or, "Can you find the toy?" and "There it is! You found it! Good!--Let's try it again! " Let Baby play with the toy for awhile once he has found it.

String toy games

You can also do a variation of the string and toy game. Have three pieces of different colored yarn, but this time only tie a toy on to the end of one of them. Place them in front of the baby and ask him to pull the one with the toy on it. This will take quite a bit of practice as he learns that only one of the pieces of yarn brings the toy. When he pulls the yarn with the toy on it, praise him and let him play with the toy. Caution: Never leave these in the playpen or crib or where Baby might get tangled in the cord or wrap it around his neck.

Helping Baby learn to crawl

There are many ways to encourage and help Baby to learn to crawl, including setting him on his tummy on a firm tubular pillow or soft beach ball and rocking him back and forth, supporting him with your hands. This will teach him to react to falling forward and improve his sense of balance. Removing Baby's restricting diapers and clothes and laying down a clean sheet for him to lie on can stimulate a baby to make more body movements. To get him started, you can place him on his tummy with an object just out of his reach, which you can encourage him to reach for. Pushing your hands against the bottom of his feet will also encourage him to propel himself forward with a kicking motion. You can also help him learn to crawl by supporting most of his body weight (wrap a towel around his middle and lift), while he uses his arms and legs to practice crawling.

Books

You can begin reading to Baby from picture books at a very early age, as soon as he can sit up. Choose a time to

read books with your baby when he is not engrossed in other play. Make it a special time with Mommy or Daddy or friends. Use simple language and short sentences, and give him plenty of variety in books. He may already be saying words. Encourage him in his efforts to repeat sounds and words.

SEVEN TO TEN MONTHS

Baby will want to try to get around the house, if she's crawling, and will play on her own sometimes. So give her chances to learn and develop control of her arms and legs by providing safe, clean places for her to crawl and play. To make bedtime easier on her and yourself, establish a set bedtime routine of quiet activities. Sing to Baby or look at picture books together, to help her unwind from the day. She may do fine with bedtime now, but as she gets older and develops into more of an independent thinker, you may find she has ideas of her own when it comes to bedtime. So an established bedtime routine--such as pajamas on, a little snack, story time on Mommy's bed, into bed, putting a soft children's music tape on when in bed--will help her more easily accept that it's bedtime.

Bible flannelgraphs

You probably won't be able to actually teach Baby using flannelgraphs or a similar aid until she is toddler age. Children younger than 18 months usually can't be expected to sit still and watch. Still, you can familiarize Baby with the characters and figures of Bible flannelgraphs and tell her the stories in a very simple but exciting way. You'll have to imitate different voices and really put a lot of action in it to keep her interest! Even then you'll find that you can usually only continue for a very short time, because her attention span isn't very long.

Kitchen safety

Your baby will be starting to crawl and get around more in these months. Be watchful where you let her explore, and make sure all is safe. It's very dangerous for a little child to play in the kitchen, because when you're preparing meals, you are preoccupied, plus you may be handling heavy or hot dishes, which could fall or spill. Avoid situations where accidents might happen. When you have a little child on the floor of a kitchen, you are creating a situation where an accident could easily happen. Putting Baby in a baby seat on the table is also dangerous at this age. If you must have the baby with you in the kitchen, strap her in a highchair out of the way, where things cannot fall or be spilled on her, and where she can't reach any dangerous objects. Give her some safe kitchen utensils to play with, such as a plastic or wooden spoon or spatula, plastic cup, funnel, etc.

Building blocks

Your baby will be able to handle smaller objects now, so, to increase this skill, place two toy blocks in front of her while you're both sitting on the floor. Show her how she can put one on top of the other. Let her do it. Then add a third block so she can build a simple three-block tower. At first the blocks won't be directly one on top of the other, but with practice she will be able to do this. A variation of this is to show her how you can place two or three blocks in a line on the floor and push them around. If she pushes on the third one in the right direction, the first two move also. She may enjoy watching this happen, and gradually she'll be able to build and keep the blocks in a line while pushing them. Add more blocks as she masters these skills.

Ball Rolling

As your baby learns to crawl, she will love to move around and pick up objects that interest her. Roll a tennis ball and ask Baby to get it and give it back to you. Many babies love to play this game. You will probably tire of it before she does!

Books

When your baby is not so active, perhaps just before bed or nap, cuddle her close while you read to her. At this age, realistic, colorful picture books with simple language are best, or you can tell her the story in your own words. She will now be starting to associate people and things with names. Remember to talk to your baby a lot and encourage her to try to repeat sounds.

Stairs

Steps and stairs are dangerous places for young children. Safety gates should be securely in place at top and bottom. But stairs also are a fact of life, and children need to be taught how to use them safely. Crawling up a set of stairs under close supervision is a great accomplishment and good exercise for babies on the move.

One father tried the following: "When our daughter climbed the stairs she was so thrilled, but then I let her see that she also had to learn to crawl down! She cried a little and wanted to be carried, but instead I showed her move by move, how to go down backwards. I did the same with anything she climbed onto."

Try not to be too reluctant to let a child learn something new as long as your close supervision will help her avoid the danger. If you teach your baby to do even potentially dangerous things carefully and properly, through the experience and under your supervision, she will be better equipped to recognize the danger and avoid accidents than if you never let her near anything dangerous.

TEN MONTHS TO ONE YEAR

By now your baby may be starting to pull himself up and walk. He will be a very busy little fellow, and will need a variety of things and toys to keep him happy, challenged and content. He probably will be able to follow simple commands and wave bye-bye, fetch things (which they love to do), and participate more in the games you play with him.

Parents could well apply the Scripture "He [the child] must increase but you [the parent] must decrease!" (John 3:30). Try not to rob a child of experiences he can do for himself just because you are in a hurry. Older children often rush in and open Baby's present for him because he is going too slow for their liking, but the older children should be taught to let Baby learn how to do things himself, rather than taking over. If Baby is frustrated about something he is trying to do, show him how it can be done and let him try again, if he wants to. Encourage him that he can do it by himself. Patience and persistence are qualities that can be cultivated simply by helping children learn how to work through their challenges.

When babies start to walk, they often lose weight, eat more and need more sleep. For them, walking (even if they still hold onto the furniture or your hand) is hard work! Therefore, let them sleep as long as they want, and don't wake them from their sleep, or they may get over-tired, run down, and more susceptible to sickness.

Make up a story

You can help increase Baby's concentration by telling him simple, short stories about objects at hand, such as a favorite toy that you can look at together.

A cardboard playhouse

Big cardboard boxes from the grocery store or home appliance shop are fun for Baby. Cut out the ends of two or three boxes. Turn them over and line them up and he has a tunnel. Or, throw a blanket over a small table to make a fun playhouse or tent, and a good place to play peek-a-boo. Children love their own little house, and may like to bring their toys inside it and play for a while.

Teaching Baby to read

At this age you can begin a consistent sight-reading program, especially if you've been talking to him a lot and teaching him many new words over the past months. Neatly printed word cards can be shown to him throughout the day. Place the word card "Mommy" by a picture of Mommy; the word "ball" next to a ball; the word "truck" on one of his toy trucks. Say the word to the child and point to the object, then ask him to point to the word as you say it. He may not be able to say the word yet, but he is beginning to associate the word card with the object. In a couple of days, place a new word card on a different object, and say the word. You will be surprised how quickly he will be able to point out these different words when you ask him to show you the one you indicate. Always make it fun, and change the words often enough so he does not get bored. (The most common mistake parents make is going too slow.) You could also put the words he knows in a book with hand-drawn or cut-out pictures so you can sit and read "his word book" together.

In the can

Get a small container such as an empty coffee can with a clear plastic lid. Make a large rectangular slot in the lid. The container's lid should be able to be easily taken off by the child so he can open it to get at its contents. He will probably not be able to screw or unscrew a container top. Select or make from cardboard suitable objects or shapes, and have him watch you drop these into the can through the slot. Let him help you take off the lid, then empty the can. Then say, "Now you fill it. See if you can get these to go in." He may need help at first until he can do it by himself.

Stacking toys

If you can, obtain plastic stacking toys, which also fit into each other (nesting toys). They can be used to build

towers or to fit into each other. Start by using only three of very different sizes and building a pyramid. Sit on the floor next to Baby and place the three objects one on top of the other, telling him what you are doing. Encourage him to try, "Here, now you do it." Don't insist that he try to stack them in order, for instance with the biggest on the bottom. Let him try it any way he wants. Another time, you can reverse the game and have him fit the stacking cups into each other. You don't have to tell him when the objects don't fit--he can see it. This kind of game is self-correcting. When the smallest cup is placed inside the biggest, he discovers he can't put the middle-sized cup in place. Help him see what's happening, "Oops, it won't go, something's blocking it. Try again."

More games and toys

You can hide some safe-to-play-with object, like a cup or measuring spoons, in a cooking pot. When Baby lifts the lid, he will be surprised to find it. Hammer and peg toys are good for this age. If your baby has started to walk, he will probably like to have toys that he can pull along with him. He may be happy with almost anything on the end of a string: empty thread or twine spools, pine cones, small boxes, etc. To make a train that he can pull, fasten several small boxes together and attach a string. To make a caterpillar, use spools of thread of different colors. Or, make a worm with hair rollers, fastened end to end.

Yard play

In your yard or at a park, your soon-to-be toddler will enjoy outdoor play with you. Crawling in the grass is a new experience, and it's nice and soft to fall on if he's just learning to walk. Play is learning for a baby--so help him see a butterfly or a bee at work, or watch the birds fly, or see squirrels gathering food. Learning to follow a moving object with their eyes is good for babies.

Chapter 5: On Following Instructions

Carrying out instructions

Encourage your child to carry out simple instructions. For example, if a child is able to take something from a shelf, she is also able to learn how to put it back or at least try. Don't abruptly rush in and in one swoop undo all that the child has done. If time permits, help the child learn how to "fix" or clean up her own messes and mistakes. Pulling the paper off of a toilet roll might be a fun experience for her, but not so fun for you, and it is good to involve her in fixing the problem. You could not expect a small child to wrap all the toilet paper back on the roll, but she could help you pick it up and put it in a box.

When your "no" really means no!

Sometimes you must be firm and not allow Baby to do something. Children have to learn that they can't just act on impulse. They are surrounded by dangers. Cars can run over them if they wander out into the street; they must not lean out of windows, stick things into electric outlets, or go near swimming pools or streams without supervision. Teach them about what things they must never put in their mouths or drink. You must do what you can to make it very difficult for an accident to happen in your home by supervising your little ones at all times. Your job is to teach your children "the ropes," and that begins as soon as Baby is mobile.

Show children exactly what is dangerous and explain to them--even act out if you must--what could happen to them. For example, help them understand the danger of reaching up and grabbing a pot handle of something cooking on the stove--or better yet, teach them that they're not allowed in the kitchen, or near the stove. You can designate a "safe kitchen" area where your little one can be when you are cooking and need to supervise him. Use chairs or the kitchen table to separate the area, or mark the floor with colored tape to teach him that he should not go beyond that line. Be sure to give him plenty of safe toys to play with so you don't have to be concerned that he'll get into anything dangerous. You can have the older children know that it is their job to "police" Baby and any visiting children concerning the "danger zones" in your home.

If you ignore some activity that is wrong or dangerous, or if you do not react firmly, they will assume that what they are doing is okay. If you tell them to stop, but then let them continue, that means that what you say isn't very important, or what you say the first few times doesn't really count. Their curiosity, of course, will lead them more and more to see what does matter to you. They'll try to find out when you do mean what you say or when they can safely assume that obeying isn't really important and they can ignore you. That can have disastrous and even life-threatening results if they try something that could seriously harm them when you aren't looking.

Chapter 6: Quotes about Babies

A baby in a house is a wellspring of pleasure, a messenger of peace and love, a resting-place for innocence on Earth, a link between angels and men. --*Martin Tupper*

* * *

The question mark and promise and wild possibility that exist in each newborn infant remind us of that which is godlike in us--godlike in reason, in apprehension, and in vision. There are magic and mystery in that frail bundle of flesh. He has genius in his tiny head. He can grow and he can learn. The beauty of the world is in his face; he sleeps with the innocence of snow; and his brave little flower of a fist will grow to hold the plow, drive the ships, heal the sick, sway the multitudes, and perhaps even point the way to a happy new world. --*Author unknown*

* * *

A perfect example of minority rule is a baby in the house.

* * *

People who say they sleep like a baby undoubtedly don't have one.

* * *

With the young mother busy elsewhere in the house, the father had undertaken the task of feeding little Becky in her highchair. The sloppy procedure went along about as expected, and after various starts, half-starts and accidents, he finally called out to his wife, "Becky just finished the strained prunes, but I think she wants some more. Should I give her a second coat?"

* * *

A child is not only a gift of God, it is also a work of God--God's work for you. With God's help, it is your responsibility to try to see that child through this world and into the next--to bring up that child in the ways of the Lord. When you're taking care of that child, you're molding a little life and helping God's Kingdom to come on Earth as it is in Heaven.

What makes a mother wonderful? That self-sacrificial spirit that causes her to sacrifice her own time and strength and sometimes even her health for the sake of her child. What makes a father wonderful? That willingness to sacrifice himself to care for the mother and the child. --*D.B.B.*

Chapter 7: Scriptures about Babies

Babies are blessings from God

Genesis 49:25 God ... will bless you with blessings of ... the womb.

Psalms 127:3 Children are a heritage of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is His reward.

Psalms 113:9 He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. (KJV)

Psalms 127:4,5 As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. (KJV)

Psalms 128:1,3 Blessed is every one who fears the Lord. Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine.

Proverbs 17:6 Children's children are the crown of old men.

People do their part, but conception and a new life is still God's doing

Genesis 4:1 Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. (KJV)

Genesis 25:21 Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Genesis 30:22,23 Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. And she conceived and bore a son.

1 Samuel 1:27 For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him.

1 Samuel 1:19,20 And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord. (KJV)

Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him, Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son.

God knows, loves and cares for a baby in the womb

Job 33:4 The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. (KJV)

Psalms 22:10 From my mother's womb you have been my God.

Psalms 71:6 By You I have been upheld from birth; you are He who took me out of my mother's womb.

Psalm 139:13, 14, 16 Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb ... I am fearfully and wonderfully made. ... In Thy book all my members were written ... when as yet there was none of them. (KJV)
Jeremiah 1:5 Before I [God] formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you.
Isaiah 40:11 He will ... gently lead those who are with young.
Isaiah 44:24a Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: I am the Lord, who makes all things.
Isaiah 49:1 The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the [womb] hath He made mention of my name. (KJV)
Acts 17:25b He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

God promises to take care of the baby of those that love Him

Psalm 37:25 I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.
Proverbs 11:21b The seed of the righteous shall be delivered. (KJV)
Isaiah 65:23b They are the seed of the blessed, and their offspring with them. (KJV)
Psalm 25:12,13 What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the Earth. (KJV)
Psalm 102:28 The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You.
Proverbs 14:26 In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.

Childbirth promises to claim during labor

Isaiah 40:29,31 He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.
Isaiah 41:10 Be not dismayed ... I will strengthen you.
Isaiah 65:23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed.
Psalm 71:6 You are He who took me out of my mother's womb.
Dan.6:16b Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.
John 16:21 A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.
Hebrews 11:11 Through faith Sara ... was delivered of a child ... because she judged Him faithful who had promised. (KJV)
1 Timothy 2:15 She will be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity [love].

God cares for your baby and will help you

Matthew 18:10 Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I [Jesus] say to you that in Heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in Heaven.
Psalm 22:9b You made me trust while on my mother's breasts.
Hebrews 2:13 I will put my trust in Him ... I and the children whom God has given me.

Love and teach Baby about God

Psalm 78:6,7 Declare [God's commandments] to [your] children: that they may set their hope in God.
Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.
Ephesians 6:4b Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.
Mark 10:14 Jesus ... said to them, Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.

Chapter 8: Baby/Toddler Verses and Quotes

(Most of these are adapted from or based on Bible verses.)

All things were made by God.
Angels watch over me.
Ask and you will receive.
Be a friend.
Be a good example.
Be a happy helper.
Be faithful.
Be kind.

Be patient.
Be so happy.
Be thankful.
Everybody needs love.
God is love.
God loves a cheerful giver.
God's Word is truth.
Jesus answers prayer.
Jesus bless Mommy and Daddy.
Jesus heals me.
Jesus is always with me.
Jesus lives in my heart.
Jesus loves me.
Jesus loves praise.
Jesus loves the little children.
Jesus takes care of me.
Jesus talks to me.
Jesus, come into my heart.
Jesus, You're tops!
Keep clean and tidy.
Love never fails.
Love one another.
Praise is the victory.
Praise no matter what's happening.
Pray always.
Prayer is powerful!
Say please and thank you.
Thank You Jesus for everything!
The Lord is my Shepherd.
The right thing is to obey.
Trust and obey!
We have a happy God!

Chapter 9: A New Life!

There's nothing quite as wonderful as bringing a new life into this world. A baby fills our lives with a special joy, a special hope. Birth marks the entrance to life.

An old man once came to see Jesus in the secret of night so that he would not be seen. He was a religious leader of the people, but all his learning had not brought him the joy and happiness he sought. He had a question for Jesus. He wanted to know how he might find eternal life. Jesus answered him simply that in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven he needed to be born again. This puzzled the old man. "How can I become a baby in my mother's womb and be born again, for I am an old man?" Jesus assured him that the birth He spoke of was a spiritual one; it was a rebirth of his soul by the infilling of God's own Spirit. (See John 3:1-8.)

Just as we must be born to enter this life, so each of us must also be born anew to enter the Kingdom of God, that spiritual world of eternity and happiness that awaits us beyond this life.

So the celebration of a birth is a good time to reflect on our own spiritual rebirth and growth. If you would be born again and enter the great and wonderful Kingdom of God, then you must become as a little child and in faith receive Jesus as your Savior by asking Him into your heart. Let His Spirit transform you and transport you into His glorious Kingdom that you might become His son or His daughter forever. All you have to do is pray a simple prayer like the following:

Dear Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God and that You died for me. I need Your love to cleanse me from my mistakes and wrongdoing. I now open the door of my heart and I ask You to please come into my life and give me Your free gift of eternal life. Amen.

