

AN INVITATION

TO PEACE

NEWBORN YEAR

Crossroads Families
A ministry of Crossroads Church

Congratulations! Your long wait is over, and you are now a parent! The last nine months have been full of planning and getting ready for the new addition to your family. You read the books, bought the supplies and got the nursery all prepared for your sweet bundle of joy. You had precious images in your head of your little angel and how wonderful and magical life would be...and then you came home from the hospital.

Now your head is swimming: Why are they crying? Why won't they eat? When will they sleep? When will I sleep? Why did they let us bring this baby home anyway? We don't know what we are doing?!

Whether this is your first baby or your fifth, it is a shock to your system and to everyday life as you know it. Being a parent is hard, period. Being a parent of a newborn is incredibly hard. You begin to experience many different emotions, good and bad. Joy, wonder, stress, and guilt, plague your emotions, but one feeling that seems hard to come by is peace. I know what you are thinking. "Peace? What is that? I haven't slept in two days and my brain has stopped working!" Peaceful and crying baby don't usually go in the same sentence, right?

We get it. It is hard to see past the moment you are in right now. The first few months are wonderful, but they can also be overwhelming and exhausting. In the midst of all the crazy, we want to help you stay grounded and be able to focus on what is truly important.

This year's Family Experience is called "An Invitation to Peace."

We will provide three Kick-starter ideas to help you find peace in the small moments. They will have questions and encouragement for you to think about for this first

Family Experience. These are 3 natural occurrences within the day of a baby, which provide the opportunity to be intentional about seeking God's peace. These Kick-starter ideas include cuddle time, bath time, and sleep time. For example, if your baby likes to cuddle, take some time in one of those moments to focus on the fact that God does not leave you, and you are not alone. If bedtime is the least stressful time of day for your child, take some time to reflect on the fact that God never sleeps. He is always watching over you and your little one.

Peaceful occasions with a newborn...sound too good to be true? It's not; you just have to find the moments that work for you, and your baby. We don't want you to miss out on what can be sweet instances for you and your child to experience life together. You know your child better than anyone, and chances are, not all of these occasions would you necessarily classify as "peaceful." However, we are willing to bet at least one of these routines during the day gives you pause to breathe and reflect. This is your Family Experience for the Baby year. Focus on Peace. You will find ideas that expound upon this in our Parent Guide. Personalize your peaceful time with your child by finding the most peaceful routine during your child's day, and be intentional about remembering God, His love for you, and His great love for this little one. In this you will find peace.

An Invitation to Peace

Anyone who's experienced bringing a newborn home from the hospital knows at some point you ask yourself, **“What am I supposed to do with this child on my own?”** Maybe you've read every book imaginable on parenting a newborn, maybe you are just naturally gifted to soothe a baby, but no matter where you are on the continuum, we all have moments of stress with a newborn.

We want to help you identify a time of peace with your newborn and create a daily rhythm for that time that includes a prayer, song, story, or scripture.

Kickstarter 1: Cuddle Time

We all have those special moments of cuddle time with our baby. For some parents feeding time is incredibly peaceful, for others it's extremely difficult. Maybe you're a proponent of rocking your baby to sleep, maybe you have strict beliefs and believe rocking a child to sleep is wrong. If you're a first time parent you may enjoy a daily nap with your newborn, and that's your true rest during your 24 hour day.

We all create habits or rhythms with our children. Think through the natural times when you're cuddling with your newborn. What are those times? Is it rocking, feeding, nursing, napping?

Formulate in your mind what that time of peace looks like for you and your newborn.

“For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.”

ISAIAH 41:13

This is such a beautiful picture of how God holds our hand. As a parent we think of how sweet it is to touch a newborn's hand, to feel the vulnerability and reliance that this little creation has. This child needs us. They can't care for themselves and meet their own needs. It's up to us to make sure they grow. It's the same with us and God. We can't be the people God has called us to be on our own. We can't be the best parent for our child in our own power. He holds our hand. He is our help.

What a great verse to help us know that as parents we're not alone. If you haven't experienced yet a time when you felt helpless as a parent, a time when you just didn't know what to do, eventually you will. In those moments, realize that God holds your hand. He is present to guide and help you. As you cuddle your newborn during a recognized peaceful time, hold his or her hand. Whisper to them, just as God has to you, that you hold their hand, they can fear not, because you're the one who'll help them.

Kickstarter 2: Bath Time

Is your child old enough yet to enjoy bath time? There's nothing sweeter than the smell of a newly washed baby. When you think of snuggling that fresh squishy baby you can almost smell the fragrance "newborn." Bathing a child can be a precious moment that we can capitalize on as a parent. It's something we have to do, and lots of children enjoy it, so why not be more intentional with bath time.

Thinking about bath time brings about the story of Jesus calming the storm. You may remember Mark 4:35-41 well, but Jesus is clearly exhausted as he tells the disciples to get in a boat and head to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. As he snoozes, a huge storm comes upon them, one that clearly terrified the disciples. They do what any manly man would do, run like babies and ask why he isn't doing something about this crazy storm. Jesus responds by telling the storm to stop, and it does.

Take a moment to read Mark 4:35-41. Jesus brings peace in the midst of chaos. Do you ever feel like parenting a newborn can be chaotic? Ever tried getting somewhere on time, being pressed for time, knowing you need to feed the baby, pack the diaper bag, have extra clothes? In that moment just when you're FINALLY ready to walk out the door, your baby spits up on you. Now you have to change. Needless to say, YOU'RE LATE!

Parenting a newborn can feel chaotic at times. But there are also times of sweet peacefulness. Bath time can be one of those times. A time to splash in the water, inhale the scent of baby, and thank God for times of peace that help us be a better parent in times of chaos.

Kickstarter 3: Sleep Time

The first year of parenting brings major changes in sleep habits. From the beginning with a newborn, when everyone is operating from sleep in 2 hour spurts all the way to an older baby who's sleeping 8 hours straight, the amount of sleep we get during the first year of a baby's life can be less than desired. No matter how much sleep you're getting, or not getting, there's something beautifully peaceful about watching a baby sleep.

For some parents getting to the baby sleeping part is hard work. You tiptoe to lay them down, attempting to let your baby gracefully roll from your arms to the mattress. You know if you do it seamlessly enough and hold your breath at the same time, maybe they'll stay asleep!!

The Bible has some beautiful words that articulate the peacefulness that accompanies sleep.

"In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety."

PSALM 4:8

"When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet."

PROVERBS 3:24

Clearly, God's design for sleep is for it to be sweet and restful. So if it comes in two hour spurts, or you're at a point where you can get almost 8 hours straight, know God created sleep as a way for us to truly rest. It is God's intent for us and our children to have sweet sleep as we dwell in His safety.

Invitation to Peace Family Experience

Now that you've gone through the 3 kickstarters I hope you have identified some peaceful times that you have with your baby. Every family is different, so we'll all land on different times within our daily rhythm that are peaceful.

The next step, once you've identified your specific time of peace is to choose a story, Bible verse, song, or prayer that you'll repeat every time you and your baby are in that time of peace. For example, I loved rocking my babies to sleep. I was scared as a first time parent, so as I rocked my eldest to sleep, I'd pray, "God, help her to grow into the person you've created her to be. Help me not get in the way." As crazy as that sounds, it's what I needed, to remember that God has a purpose and plan for my daughter regardless of my ability as a parent.

We want you to choose 1 prayer, or 1 song, or 1 verse, or 1 story that you'll say EVERY time you and your baby are in your identified area of peace.

We've provided resources with tons of options for you to consider. Feel free to choose one of these or come up with your own. The intent is for this to be extremely personal!

Once you've identified your time of peace and your 1 thing to say, sing during that time of peace. It would be great to have that verse, prayer, song, or story, written out and framed to hang in your baby's nursery. You could print it on card stock or handwrite it. Use your imagination for making it a nice piece of art for your nursery.

Build these words into your identified peaceful time. Say or sing them EVERY time so that the words become an intentional part of your family's rhythm. Remember that Jesus says to us, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they'll be called children of God."

RESOURCE LIST

SONGS

- Rock A Bye Baby
- Hush Little Baby
- Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star
- You are My Sunshine
- Jesus Loves Me
- Amazing Grace
- Silent Night
- This Little Light of Mine (insert child's name)
- Itsy, Bitsy Spider

STORIES/BOOKS

- Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown
- The Runaway Bunny by Margaret Wise Brown
- Counting Kisses by Karen Katz
- Goodnight Little Bear by Patsy Scarry
- Kitten's First Full Moon by Kevin Henkes
- Love You Forever by Robert Munsch
- Goldilocks and the 3 Bears
- Little Red Hen
- The Gingerbread Man
- Three Little Pigs
- Corduroy by Don Freeman
- Guess How Much I Love You by Sam McBratney

PRAYERS - GENERAL IDEAS FOR PRAYERS

- Health of child
- Protection of child
- That child would know Jesus
- God to guide child to have faith in Jesus
- God would guard their heart and mind
- Child will honor God
- Gratitude for being a parent
- God to guide me as I teach my child about Him

VERSES

- Psalm 127:3
- Proverbs 22:6
- Psalm 139:14
- Isaiah 44:24
- Jeremiah 1:5
- Luke 2:52

Physical

Gross Motor: Gains control of head and body, Easily turns head from side to side while lying on stomach, Raises head and chest when lying on stomach, Pushes down on legs when feet are placed on a firm surface.

Fine Motor: Holds things briefly before dropping: Folds hand around finger of another person, holds on to ring on cradle gym, holds bottle, brings toys or their fingers to mouth, grabs toes.

Social and Emotional

Self Concept: Expresses comfort and discomfort. Uses specific kinds of cries to signal needs, responsive to attempts to comfort. Make responses to express how he feels and shows awareness others feelings, responds to name and images of self. Pay attention to own reflection in mirror and respond to hearing name called.

Self Control: Demonstrate some ability to self-regulate. Stop crying upon seeing a familiar person; may be able to calm self; look to a familiar person for encouragement when encountering new experiences. Begins to relate to other children. Sits near another child while playing. Smiles at another child. Squeals or fusses when another child approaches.

Cooperation: Demonstrates awareness of others; Watch other children and shows interest in their play; show recognition of familiar people by reaching or smiling. Show recognition when family photographs are displayed at eye level, begin to imitate familiar actions (pretend to talk on phone, pretend to stir).

Relational Spiritual

The beginning of life is an intense experience for both mother and baby and sets the foundation for future interactions. Pregnancy and childbirth can be considered Baby Developmental Guide an initiation that involves the process of transitioning from being childless to becoming a mother. For many parents giving your little one back to God is a major deal. By giving your children back to God you are making a promise to the Lord to do everything within your power to raise your child in a godly way, prayerfully until he or she can make a decision on his or her own to follow God. Parents who make this vow of commitment are instructed to raise their child in the ways of God, and not according to their own ways. Some of the responsibilities include teaching and training the child in God's Word, demonstrating an example of godliness, disciplining according to God's ways, and praying earnestly for the child.

Our hope is that during the past year, you and your baby have shared many special moments and developed a great bond.

In order to encourage other new parents we would love to hear about the story, Bible verse, song, or prayer that you choose to share with your child daily and how that experience helped to bond the two of you.

Feel free to send us an email, make a video, or send us a copy of your story, Bible verse, song, or prayer so that we can better encourage other new parents. Thank you for taking this journey with us and we pray that God continues to work in your life and the life of your baby.

SEND RESPONSES TO:

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