

BIRTHDAY

BLESSING

ONE YEAR OLD

Crossroads Families
A ministry of Crossroads Church

Happy Birthday! How is it possible that a year has gone by already? Welcome to the world of having a toddler! Time to start planning your baby's first birthday celebration. These days, it seems like birthdays are getting bigger and bigger. Parents go above and beyond to make parties memorable. Balloons? Check. Magic show? Done. Inflatable jumping booth? Got it.

Don't get me wrong...I love a great birthday party, but what if this year we add a new aspect to it. Let's make it even more special. Have you thought about the kind of person you want your child to be? I know, sometimes it's hard to think that far ahead. They are just babies! However, it is never too early to focus on the internal workings of our children rather than just the external. What would it look like if we took some time to figure out what we wish for our children emotionally, spiritually and in their relationships?

Let us help you plan part of the party this year. We won't be picking out the cake, but we will help you to give them a birthday to remember. This year's Family Experience is called "The Birthday Blessing." We will begin by giving you 3 Kick-starters that will help you build a foundation for discussion. These Kick-starters are expounded upon in our Kick-starter Guide; they will have questions for you to think about before you begin the Family Experience.

The first Kick-starter question is, "Who has God naturally made my child to be?" It isn't too early to see glimpses of their little personalities. The key here is to discover what is already an attribute of theirs, and pray that God would continue to encourage that in their lives. For example, is your child curious? If so, pray and ask the Lord to develop that curiosity into a passionate love to know Him and His people. The second Kick-

starter focuses on the question, "What do I want for my child's future?" Don't focus so much on what you want your child to do; that decision is ultimately up to them. We still want them to be an individual. However, it is our job as parents to help form their character. Think on the character traits you want your child to possess. The Third Kickstarter focuses on choosing one or two of the characteristics you come up with to include in a prayer for your child. Once you have finished the Kick-starters you are ready to begin the Family Experience Ceremony. The details concerning this experience will be found in your Parent Guide. This will be a letter from you to your child. There is so much strength in spoken words, and we want your words to have a lasting effect. As you begin to write this blessing, focus on the personality God has already created in your child, the character traits you pray your child develops, and the people who will pray with you over this vision God has given you.

This isn't something that stops as soon as you read it for their birthday. Keep it where they can see it and later read it for themselves. You are creating a blueprint of sorts, to help guide you, as well as them. They will see that they are special, and that they are their own person. They will know that you love them so much, and you also cherish what makes them who they are. That will be a birthday gift that they will never want to return.

Birthday Blessing

One of the biggest memories of our children is their 1st birthday. **We remember the smushed cake on the face, the tearing of presents, and the belly laughs of a child who knows they're the center of attention.** What if we took the time to make this day even more special by extending a birthday blessing for our child? This birthday blessing will be one that you'll share at your child's 1st birthday with friends and family present, so they can truly hear your heart's desire for your child and can partner with you to make sure those dreams become reality.

Kickstarter 1: WHO they are

You've lived with your little bundle of joy for a few months now, and you've begun to see his/her personality, the preferences, the habits, the disposition. You're beginning to see WHO they really are. John and Stasi Eldredge state simply, "Every little boy needs to know he has what it takes. Every little girl needs to know you delight in her." Even though every child has the same basic need, God has uniquely created your child.

¹ You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. ² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴ Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. ⁵ You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. ⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you

are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. ¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

PSALM 139:1-14

Take a moment to think about your child. This little one that God has given to you, how has God made him/her unique? List a few characteristics/personality traits you already see in your child. In what ways is he/she fearfully and wonderfully made? Take a moment to define your child's "something special."

Kickstarter 2: WHO you want them to become

It's so easy as a parent to get caught up in the discipline part of parenting, emphasizing what we want our children to DO and not DO, when instead our focus should be on WHO we want them to be! The difference moves from focusing on performance to character. The basic question we want to ask is not, "What do I want them to do," but, "Who do I want them to become?"

This kickstarter is designed to be a simple think tank, to move through a few questions that will help you figure out/ put words to WHO you want your child to become. Go ahead and reread Psalm 139:1-4, then take some time to think through and answer the following questions:

1. What were some character traits you struggled with as a child/teen?
2. Why were those a struggle?
3. What character traits came easy to you growing up?
4. What are the most important character traits I want my child to develop?
5. What makes each character trait you listed important to you?

Kickstarter 3: Choosing to FOCUS

The bottom line is that we can want LOTS of things for our children. During this kickstarter, we want you to narrow your focus. During the 2nd kickstarter you answered a few questions that helped spur your thinking towards WHO you want your child to become. Get that list out and lets process it to narrow the focus.

We need to define the target. If we say we want our child to be honest, loving, considerate, compassionate, humble, a leader, etc. and blah, blah, blah, the target is wide and moving. We want to create an easily identified target so that we know EXACTLY what to aim for. So look at the list from Kickstarter 2 and pick 2 to 3 character traits that are of utmost importance to you to use as your focus for the birthday blessing.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

PSALM 4:8

God has a specific plan for your child. What's your plan in raising this gift God has entrusted to you? By picking out two to three characteristics and indicating why those are important, you get your parenting focus. If it's vital to you that your child is honest, you'll take lying very seriously. You'll use the planning guide to help you write out the birthday blessing that will be shared during your child's first birthday party.

Francis Chan says, "Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter." What really matters to you when it comes to the character of your child?

Birthday Blessing Family Experience

Your child's first birthday will be a once in a lifetime moment. It will be the 1st, and maybe only, time your child is covered head to toe with cake, and it's OK. In fact, it's endearing, and we're upset if they don't smear it all over. Our desire is to make this birthday even more memorable by sharing a birthday blessing you'll write and share with friends and family at your child's first birthday party.

To write the birthday blessing you've done 3 Kickstarters which have helped with processing what's truly most important to you in raising your little one. You've identified the characteristics most important to you and why they're important.

Now it's time to put this in written form. This happens best when it's written as a letter from you to your child, a letter telling him/her those characteristics you value most, why they're important, and how you plan to instill them in your child. We ask you to share this with the friends and family present at the birthday because they'll be the ones to help you make this goal possible. They'll encourage your child in these characteristics because they'll know them too.

In the birthday blessing letter to your child, you'll include:

- 2-3 characteristics that you want to develop in your child
- Why those characteristics are important
- How you plan to parent in order to teach these characteristics

Capitalize on this moment and make it something that can be referenced throughout your baby's childhood. Frame it and keep it visible or put it inside a baby book/ scrapbook. Share this birthday blessing at every birthday, even reading it every year on your child's birthday because it would increase the likelihood that this blessing would become more than just words in your child's life, but actual reality.

SAMPLE BLESSING:

Dear Sam,

We are so grateful for God's gift of you to us. This first year, we have noticed how much of an independent spirit you are. You are able to keep yourself preoccupied playing because of the amazingly creative personality God has instilled in you.

Our greatest desire is for you to grow to be someone who displays the love of Jesus. As you grow, you'll come into contact with tons of people, all of which have been uniquely created by God. We want you to see them the way God does. As your parents, we will try our best to model this for you.

We also want you to live a life full of adventure. We want you to be a risk taker. We definitely already see this in you, and although it can be a little scary at times, we know God can use this character trait He's put in you. We want you to live life full throttle, making the most of every moment. We'll try not to inhibit this risk taking characteristic too much.

We love you and are grateful that we've already seen sparks of creativity, risk taking, and compassion in you. We'll do our best to help you become the person God has created you to be and not just the person we want you to be.

- Mom and Dad

Physical

Gross Motor: Moves from place to place: Walks more often than crawling; squats to pick up object on floor and returns to standing with little difficulty. Moves smoothly from sitting to standing, climbs and turns around to sit in chair.

Fine Motor: Uses hands alone and in coordination with eyes: Fits two cups together, one inside the other, turns the pages of a book and points to pictures while being read to.

Social and Emotional

Self Concept: Shows preferences, likes and dislikes.

Self Control: Begin to test social boundaries. Experience feelings of power and pride; test limits and expectations to find out who is in charge (uses “no” often, gets upset when he doesn’t get his way, and has trouble sharing”).

Cooperation: May interact with another child for a short period of time. Reach out to touch another child; may push child who interferes with his play, may offer toy to another child; imitate other children; play side by side with peers with adult supervision, and demonstrate give and take.

- Enjoy imitating the actions of adults. Carry a purse around room; ask for help to dress up like mom or dad; take care of “baby”.
- Begin to engage in social play with other children. Interact with another child for 1 or 2 minutes.

Relational Spiritual

I’ve learned in my (short one year) experience as a mother, that I have to be intentional in training, teaching, and disciplining my son. None of these things happen naturally and it takes extra thought and effort on my part to incorporate them into our days.

Just like parents have to be intentional about our relationship with Jesus, you also have to be intentional about teaching your children about Jesus, and it’s never too early to start! At this stage in your child’s life, the biggest task as a parent is to disciple your children as followers of Christ.

Our hope is that during the past year, you have shared the birthday blessing with your child and others so that as your child continues to grow those blessings become their reality.

In order to encourage other parents, we would love to hear about or see your birthday blessing letter and how that letter has shaped your relationship.

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 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 child.

SEND RESPONSES TO:

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