



NEWBORN

The Root Years



HOME
22.6

NEWBORN

A Snapshot of Life

From birth to age 1, infants

- Develop a sense of trust as their needs are met consistently.
- Sense attitudes and expressions of love.
- Show alertness and expressions when talked to.
- Use senses to learn.
- Recognize people.
- Use many complex reflexes (such as holding their heads up, reaching for objects, sitting up, rolling over, crawling, etc.).

Parenting Tip

Pray over your child; use a gentle voice as you talk about Jesus and sing songs. Your children will feel your love for Jesus as you talk, respond to them, and meet their needs.

Parent Dedication

What is Parent Dedication?

Parent dedication is giving a strong spiritual legacy to your children. The Legacy Principle, the Likelihood Principle, and the Lenses Principle are crucial to your child's spiritual growth. In the parent dedication section you'll find tools to help you grow as a parent. **The Legacy Principle** states that the scriptures tell us that what we do today directly influences the multi-generational cycle of family traits, beliefs and actions – for good or bad (Exodus 20:5-6, Psalm 78:5-8). So passing a strong faith to our children begins by having a strong faith ourselves, modeling the gospel in our marriages and in how we relate to those closest to us. Some of us need to break negative cycles that may have started with our own upbringing in order to launch a new and improved legacy for the next generation. **The Likelihood Principle** states that the good news is that in the context of healthy relationships, children tend to embrace the values of their parents. Proverbs 22:6 tells us that when children learn right from wrong at home under the nurturing, loving training of parents, they tend to adopt mom and dad's beliefs. While there are no guarantees because every child has a free will, kids are far more likely to embrace their parent's faith if they enjoy their parent's company! That's a big part of the reason parents are warned not to "provoke your children to wrath" but rather "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Bottom line – a strong relationship with mom and dad is key to a strong Christian faith. **The Lenses Principle** says Jesus taught that our enemy's primary weapon is deception – getting us to believe and live according to lies rather than truth (John 8:44). And when someone is deceived, he or she does not know it! Our children are growing up in a culture that bombards them with lies. An hour or two per week at church is no match for the hundreds of hours spent with media, school, and friends. Nor can it compete with a child's fallen nature that often wants to rebel against what is good, true and beautiful. It is the job of parents to equip children with the corrective "lenses" of truth so they can better navigate the deceptive roads of life.



Read God's Word daily and ask Him to reveal to you His grace and love as you begin laying the spiritual foundation in your child's life. Your children will respond to you as you show them your love for the Lord because modeling daily Scripture reading begins their spiritual journey. Pray Proverbs 22:6 daily, and ask God to hide His word in your heart as you commit to bringing up your child in the way of the Lord. As Psalm 119:11 says, "Your word I have hidden in my heart..."



Parenting Tools: *Trust*

During this first year, your child will develop a sense of trust. The accomplishment of this is highly dependent on the parents meeting their child's needs consistently with God's love. Since trust is a major building block for all relationships, every area of development (physical, social, emotional, and spiritual) is likely to be affected by the trust a child builds during this first year. Listed below are some tools to help you develop a bond of trust with your infant:

Take care of yourself. To care for and nurture your new infant, you must take care of yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually. By praying and reading God's Word, you can manage your stress and learn to be calm when meeting the needs of your infant. It's vital that parents get sleep. When you're exhausted, it's hard to teach children anything, including trust. Even if you're a stay-at-home mom, an occasional date night or a girls' night out can help you be recharged and ready to show your infant all the love and affection he or she needs. Remember to ask God for help in caring for yourself. As Matthew 21:22 says, "And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

Hold, touch, and cuddle your infant. Infants need physical connection. The more you hold your infant and meet his needs, the more secure and independent he will grow to be. Infants can feel the love of Jesus by your gentle touches, hugs, and kisses. When your infant can count on you and trust you to meet his basic need for love, affection, and stimulation, his relationship becomes stronger and he learns to trust you and the world around him. As 1 Corinthians 13:8 reminds us, "Love never fails."

Use gentle words. Tell your children you love them. While infants' comprehension and expression of language is minimal, they do pick up on emotions and feelings that are expressed behind words. A sense of trust is so important for infants' emotional development because it provides them with a supportive foundation from which they can learn and grow. Trust allows an infant to feel safe and secure, promoting curiosity and learning. An infant who does not receive this feeling of trust may be self-conscious or slow to develop in certain areas. Psalm 19:14 reminds us, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight."

Respond to your infant's needs. Understand when your child

needs to be held, talked to, looked at, or needs some quiet alone time. Infants communicate most often by crying. Become familiar with the different types of cries your infant has, and respond quickly when your infant is crying for comfort or food. When responding to your baby, be sure to respond in a warm, understanding way. Make eye contact when you talk, sing, read, and play with your infant. Infants learn to trust by the way you respond to their needs. As you respond to your infant's needs, reflect on Philippians 4:19, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Show enthusiasm. Express happiness and enthusiasm around your infant. No one can be happy all the time, but doing the best you can to be enthusiastic about the milestones your infant is accomplishing can go a long way in showing him that things are good, and you can be counted on to be excited to see him. Expressing enthusiasm is a good way to teach your infant about trust. Psalm 139:14 says, "I will praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

You can see some indicators that what you are doing is creating trust when your infant smiles, coos, maintains eye contact, and is comfortable being cuddled. Provide a stimulating, loving environment, and be sure to hug and hold your infant a lot! Remember, children who develop trust early in life feel good about themselves and have healthy relationships later in life. As Proverbs 3:5 reminds us, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart..."



Trust is the first step in your child's relationship with the Lord. Our children will not be able to become strong men and women of faith unless trust is in their hearts. Trust in the Lord will center their lives on Him. That is why parents should develop trust with their newborn.

Blessing Your Children

How do I bless my children?

There is power in a blessing. The Hebrew word for blessing is used over 640 times in the Old Testament alone. Do you know the very first thing God did after creating us? In Genesis 1:27–28 we read, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them...” We were made for blessing! Based on examples in the Bible, there are five basic elements that make up a biblical blessing:

1. Meaningful Touch Meaningful touch has many beneficial effects. The act of touch is a key to communicating warmth, personal acceptance, and affirmation—even physical health! For anyone who wishes to see the blessing grow and develop in a child, touch is an integral part of the blessing. As Mark 10:13–16 says, “Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.”

2. A Spoken Message Words have an incredible power to build us up or tear us down emotionally. This is particularly true when those words are coming from our parents. Therefore, the blessing hinges on a spoken message. Your child desperately needs to hear a spoken blessing from you. As parents, we must be keenly aware of the power of the spoken word and also be aware of how powerful the absence of spoken words can be. Both people and relationships suffer in the absence of words of blessing, or those spoken words of love, encouragement, and support. Proverbs 16:24

reminds us, “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones...”

3. Expression of High Value To “value” something means to attach great importance to it. This is at the very heart of the concept of blessing. Anytime we bless someone, we are attaching high value to him or her. Our children need to hear that they are someone who has great worth apart from his or her performance. As Ephesians 4:29 reminds us, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

4. Picture of a Special Future Communicating a special future to a child is another important part of giving the blessing. Children are filled with the potential to be all God intends them to be. Picturing a special future for your children can help bring out the best in their lives. It gives them a positive direction to strive toward and surrounds them with hope. When a child feels in his or her heart that the future is hopeful and something to look forward to, it can greatly affect his or her attitude toward life. We can see this very thing in our relationship with the Lord. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “‘For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,’ says the Lord, ‘thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.’”

5. An Active Commitment The first four elements listed above are the building blocks of the blessing, but the mortar that holds them together is an active commitment—the fifth element. This element of the blessing describes the responsibility that goes with the blessing. Parents need to rely on the Lord to give them the strength and staying power to confirm their children’s blessing. You have God’s Word through the Scriptures as a guide, plus the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Words alone cannot communicate the blessing; they need to be backed with a commitment to do everything possible to help the one blessed to be successful. Isaiah 40:31 encourages us, “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

For more information on the biblical blessing, see *The Gift of the Blessing* by Gary Smalley and John Trent, PhD.

Why do we want to bless our children?

Our blessing conveys that we acknowledge God is the loving, sovereign, omniscient Creator. As Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein."

Our blessing invites God's involvement. As we speak blessings, we are prayerfully inviting His intervention in our children's lives. We are petitioning the Lord to insert His power and authority.

Our blessing releases the blessing of God to our children. We are God's ambassadors when we use His words to bless.



What's a Blessing Box?

In Genesis 1:27-28 God's Word says, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them..."

We were all made for blessing! Written words can place unconditional love and acceptance into the heart of a child. One idea for sharing blessings with your children is to have a "blessing box," or a special box where you can store written blessings and encouraging words for your child as they develop.

Several ideas for written blessings include Scripture passages you claim for your child, words of affirmation, descriptions of accomplishments, desires for the future, prayers, or whatever God puts on your heart. Continue to store these blessings in the special box throughout your child's life. Think of what a treasure it will be in your child's adult life to have this blessing box!

Ways to Bless Your Child

Meaningful Touch Appropriate touch conveys in powerful, non-verbal ways our love and affirmation. Infants need our gentle touches, our hugs, and kisses. As you hold and cuddle your infant, affirm God's Word by speaking Scriptures such as, "...love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12) or "...God is love" (1 John 4:8) and singing songs like "Jesus Loves Me" or "Jesus Loves the Little Children."

Daily Blessings of Scripture Pray or speak Scripture over your children daily. Blessing them at night is a wonderful practice because you have the opportunity to close out the day in a positive, precious way. Your infants will go to sleep with the last words they hear being right from the Word of God. But, you may bless your child any time. Some Scriptures you may consider:

- Romans 15:13, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
- Philippians 1:3-5, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."
- 2 Timothy 2:1, "You therefore, my son (or daughter), be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."
- Numbers 6:24-26, "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."

Written Blessing Written words can place unconditional love and acceptance into the heart of a child. Have a "blessing box" where you can place these words of affirmation inside. You can place Scriptures that you claim for your child, write words of affirmation that you desire in his or her life, or prayers for his/her future. God will place the right words in your mind if you only ask, "Let the word of Christ dwell in [me] richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another..." (Colossians 3:16), so your child will "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

A blessing for you as you pour blessings into the precious gift God has given to you:
"And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship," (Exodus 31:3).

Family Time

What is Family Time?

The idea of family worship is both attractive and intimidating. The thought of beginning a new pattern of worship in the home can be overwhelming for those just beginning. This guide includes answers to basic questions that we hope will equip you to lead your family in worship.

What does the Bible say about growing together in Christ as a family?

The importance of the family in discipleship is prominent throughout the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 78:5-7; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15). Husbands are primarily responsible for the spiritual leadership of their wives (Ephesians 5:22-33). Parents, especially fathers, are primarily responsible for the spiritual growth of their children (Ephesians 6:1-3). These are huge responsibilities, but God has promised to provide everything we need to lead our families well, according to His design. As leaders in our home, the critical thing to remember is that God's Word must be written upon our hearts. Our faith in Christ and reliance on His Word should be authentic, tangible, and transparent.

What are the benefits of family worship?

- Family worship brings glory to God. It is a visible reminder for all in the home that God is worthy of our time, attention, and affection.
- Family worship produces joy in the home. Jesus will bring joy to families who worship and grow together. The love of Christ will be more evident in a family where worship is central.
- Family worship effects change in the world. As families read, pray, study, sing, and grow together, they join from their homes in what God is doing across the nations, while influencing each other's lives for generations to come.

What should we do during family worship?

Keep it simple. Consider the following elements as you worship together:

READ—Read a portion of the Bible together. Don't worry if you've already read it in your time alone with God. Reading a chapter a second time will only reinforce what God is teaching you. If children are present and able to read, allow them to do so. Of course, you'll want to explain difficult words and concepts (but don't worry too much if you can't explain everything!).

DISCUSS—After reading the Bible together, work through a simple process of examining what has been read, much like you do in your own time alone with God. Give everyone a chance to discuss the passage and consider how it applies to everyday life. Ideally, you will lead by example and share with your family what you learned in your time alone with God and the difference it has made.

PRAY—Consider praying through the key points of the Bible passage that you have just read and discussed. Ask God to change your hearts, minds, lives, and family accordingly. This specific prayer can lead to a more general time of prayer that uses the letters P-R-A-Y as a guide:

Praise—Worship God for who He is.

Repent—Confess your sin to God and acknowledge your need for Jesus.

Ask—Intercede for particular needs in your life and other's lives.

Yield—Surrender your life to following Jesus wherever He leads you.

Try to include everyone as you pray, even if this is on a rotating basis. Additionally, you may want to keep a prayer journal that enables you to keep track of prayer requests and God's answers to those requests.

SING—Sing or listen to music together as a family. If someone in the family has musical gifts, that person may lead some simple songs. If no one in your family is musical, you can sing along with music from a CD or DVD and discuss what the songs mean.

MEMORIZE—Choose key verses or passages to memorize. You may want to work on a verse or passage for a week or a month. Either way, be sure to work together, taking time to understand what you are memorizing. Periodically, set aside time to review verses over the course of the year.

Frequently Asked Questions About Family Worship

1. What if a father or mother is not a Christian?

The commands regarding family discipleship in the Bible assume believing parents. Of course, this is not always the case. In those instances where the father is not a follower of Christ, the mother will need to take the initiative for leading family worship in a non-offensive and non-threatening way. In the case of a mother not being a follower of Christ, the father should lead with compassion and sensitivity.

2. What about a single parent family?

In this case, the responsibility falls to the single parent. This, along with the many other duties that single parents have, may present a significant challenge. However, God will supply great grace and everything we need to raise and strengthen our children in the faith.

3. What about children?

The dynamic of family worship will vary considerably depending upon the ages of the children involved. The goal for every child in the family is not the same. With young children, focus on the importance of knowing God, respecting the Bible, and worshiping as a family. With older children, dig into Scripture more, ask good questions, and discuss how the Bible relates to life and how a relationship with Christ changes us every day.

4. How do I keep things interesting if the ages of my children vary widely?

Regardless of age, include children in planning, reading, singing, teaching, and praying as much as possible and as much as maturity will allow. Make sure to keep things simple, and don't be afraid to keep it short; listen well, and be aware of what is happening in each child's heart and life.

5. What time of day is best for family worship?

Timing is far less important than consistency. Some families prefer to worship as the day begins. For others, evening may work best. Many families prefer to adjoin family worship to the evening meal since everyone may be present at that time.



Deuteronomy 6:7 says,
"You shall teach [God's words] diligently
to your children, and shall talk of them
when you sit in your house, and when you
walk by the way, and when you lie down,
and when you rise up."

Concentrated time in family worship
can serve as a catalyst and support for
"as you go, as you sit, as you walk"
conversations and applications of God's
Word within our families. Encouraging
and challenging our spouses and children
in Christian faith happens best in the
context of real, everyday life. Family
worship builds consistency into our family
routines and opens up many opportunities
and possibilities within our family
relationships.



A Family Time from Genesis

READ

o Genesis 1:1-2:3

o God is the just and gracious Creator of all things. The heavens and the earth are His (Psalm 89:11). He commands the skies, the wind, and the rain, and they obey Him. In His great power He sustains the stars in the heavens and sets the planets in motion (Heb. 1:3). He paints the flowers by the roadside and displays His artwork in every sunrise. The lazy willow trees, the quiet mountain peaks, the deep canyons and crashing ocean waves all point to a holy, beautiful, all knowing, admirable God.

He is the giver of all life. God made possible the created order that we now enjoy (Genesis 1:24). God formed every living thing—from the domineering lion to the absent-minded jellyfish. It was God's amusing will for the unadorned caterpillar to be refashioned into a free-spirited butterfly. When God created man He revealed Himself 'in' man in even a deeper way. Scripture tells us that God created man, male and female, in His very own image. As the crown of God's craftsmanship, we are marked with the very image of God. When God created man He gave him dominion over all the earth and every living thing that moves on the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). Man is thus set apart from the rest of creation. Also, upon our hearts is written God's moral law (Romans 2:15). As image bearers of the righteous God, we also have a sense of what is righteous.

The Bottom Line: God has revealed something of His character in creation—His power, sovereignty, eternity, and goodness. As His image bearers, we are to mirror Him to all people and subdue the world by the power of the gospel.

Questions:

Think about the six days of creation.

- What does creation teach us about God?
- What are some characteristics of God revealed in His creation?
- In what ways do we bear the image of God?
- How does sin distort the image of God in us?
- What does it mean to bear the image of God?

PRAY

o In our world today, there lives a myriad of over 6 billion people who all have one very important thing in common: we have all fallen short of the glory of God and can only be justified by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:23-24). Jesus tells his disciples, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

o Praise is an act of worship through prayer in which we express our adoration of and love for God. It is rejoicing in who God is and the salvation He gives us through Christ. We recognize the many facets of His character and the work He has done in our lives. It is giving thanks for the blessings He has given us. When we praise God, we give glory, honor and thanks to Him.

Biblical Basis for Praise: Deuteronomy 10:21; 1 Chronicles 16:8-13; Psalm 150; Romans 15:8-11; Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 2:9

Take some time for each of those gathered with you to lift up praises to the Lord.

o Pray for our world.

- Pray for God's will to be accomplished through His church for the sake of the nations
- Lift up the physical and spiritual needs of the lost, the poor and the persecuted
- Ask for God to prepare, equip and send His Church to all nations
- Pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ to have courage to boldly proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth

Source: Operation World by Johnstone and Mandryk

MEMORIZE

o Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions are intended to help parents facilitate God-centered discussions with their children. Parents should prayerfully use these suggestions to help their children discover the truths of God's Word and worship Him together.

Preschool (Birth-Kindergarten)

o Before you begin, gather these items: a rock, plant, glass of water, a picture of an animal and finally, your own preschooler.

o Explain to your preschooler that God created many different things. But only one kind of creature was made in God's own image and likeness: people.

o Tell your preschooler you would like them to pick the object that would best resemble what their father or mother is like. Which object has the most things in common with their parents as to how it looks, moves, eats, speaks, thinks, feels, acts, etc...? Briefly talk about each choice. For example: Is this rock like your Mom or Dad? Do rocks move, eat or think like your parents? Can rocks laugh, cry, pray and sing like we can? Repeat with each object and finally use your preschooler as an example of the last thing. Emphasize that children are most like their parents and most like the images of adults. Children are not adults but they are like adults in many ways. Explain that when God created people He created us in His own image and likeness. This means He created us to be like Him in many ways. We are not God but we are created to be like Him in the way we think, feel, and act so that we can have a very special relationship with Him.

o Ask, "Why did God create us in His image?" God created us in His image for His glory! That means we were created to show the greatness of God. We are to show God's greatness in everything we say, do, think and feel. When God created us in His image He created us in a wonderful way! We are different from all other things created by God. Things such as rocks, plants and animals. We can show God's greatness to others.

Children (Grades 1-5)

o Question: What does it mean that man was created as God's image bearer? What does it mean to be created in the "image" of something?

o Parents, show photographs of yourself to your child(ren). Point out the similarities between your appearance and your children's appearance. Tell your children that because they are yours, there are things that look the same and maybe even personality traits that are the same. Tell your children they may be image bearers of you because of their physical features. However, even having certain features, i.e. hair color, eye color, same shaped mouth, etc. point out that your child is still created uniquely in God's image. That can help us understand what it means to be created in God's

image. You are created like your parents in certain ways but not completely like your parents.

o Parents are physical, therefore their children physically bear the image of their parents. Children don't look exactly like their parents, but they resemble them and can have similar hair color, eye color, same shaped mouth, etc. God is spirit and our spiritual Father, therefore we bear the spiritual image of God. We are not exactly like God spiritually, but we resemble Him.

Students (Grades 6-12)

o This week we're pondering the truth of being created in His image. In what ways are you uniquely and wonderfully made? How are you uniquely spiritually gifted?

o Often teenagers are overwhelmed with the media's attention on the outward appearance.

o What does it mean to be created in the image of God?

o How can you work on the beautification of the inside rather than your outward appearance?

Church Community

What is Church Community?

With so many young people leaving the church after they are under the leadership of their parents, it is important that we teach the necessity of the church. Scripture says that the church is the Bride of Christ and He has given the church these four responsibilities: worship God, connect with others, grow in God's Word, and go tell the world about Christ. It is important that our children understand the heart behind what the church is meant to be and that our children allow Christ to transform their hearts to serve Him through His church.

We go to church to worship our God who has saved each of us and given us a personal relationship with Him. We go to church to come together to celebrate our Heavenly Father by giving Him our worship. Our children should see families living their lives side-by-side, sharing experiences, caring for each other, being open with one another, and praying together. Our children should know that the church is a place where they can grow in their faith and gain the knowledge that will help them grow closer to the Lord and live a more abundant life. In other words, our children should know the church is a place where we can be transformed. Finally, the church leads us to the point where we must open our eyes and our hearts to step out and follow the nudging of the Holy Spirit to reach the world around us.

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Why is it important to bring my infant to church?

From the very beginning of a child's life, it is important that he or she feels the love of Jesus through people who love and care for him or her. Bringing your children to church is the first step in introducing them to God's house where it is so important for them to have a happy experience and feel safe and secure in trusting others. Even as infants, they can feel the love of Jesus through gentle words and loving arms in the teachers who care for them. This is a step in their spiritual growth in the knowledge and grace of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Twice a year, we have a Child Dedication Service where parents come and dedicate their child to God in the presence of the pastor and congregation. These parents are committing to teaching God's Word in their home, being a Christ like example, participating in worship with their child, and raising their child as God instructs in His Word. Even though many parents choose to dedicate their child as an infant, you can dedicate them at any age. Psalm 122:1 says, "I was glad when they said to me, let us go into the house of the Lord."



Discipling As You Go

What is Discipling As You Go?

Deuteronomy 6 is clear in its instructions to parents: constantly, as you live your life, be an example and train your children to follow the Lord. As parents, it is important for us to live a consistent life of faith in front of our children. As things happen in life, we should use those events to train our children, not only in right and wrong, but also in how to make decisions to live the abundant life that Christ has for us. We should model and explain how God's truth should be the standard of how we live our lives. In other words, even from the beginning, we should teach wisdom rather than the facts of "do's and don'ts." Faith is much easier caught than taught. Parents should always help their children see life's decisions through the lenses of our faith.

By your actions and words, you are modeling discipleship in the life of your infant. The tone of your voice, the gentleness of your touch, and the way you caress your infant reflects your love for the Lord. It can be overwhelming when your infant continues to cry and nothing seems to calm him or her. But, when you ask for wisdom and guidance, God will control your emotions. Your infant will feel comfort and security from you, and he or she will be assured of your love. The bond of love you have for the Lord will overflow. As Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."

Parenting Tools: *Crying*

There is one thing for sure, all babies cry. The difficult thing is trying to figure out why they are crying. The fussiness may be because the baby is hungry, has a stomachache, is in an uncomfortable position, or just needs some attention. Usually by the end of the third month, most parents become quite good at understanding their baby's crying language. There may be a different tone or volume level that will clue you in on what they need or want. Sometimes babies cry just for the sake of crying, it is their way of announcing their existence or even to help them release tension.

Should a baby be picked up every time it cries? No, only if their cry is to communicate a need. Investigate and try to explore if a problem needs to be met. Being responsive to your baby's crying will build trust and a sense of security for your child. It is not unusual for a baby to cry itself to sleep for a short amount of time, but do not let them cry it out. (There is a difference between a baby crying to go to sleep and a child throwing a tantrum at bedtime, which will be discussed in later years.) Most babies cry in transition to going to sleep, there is no reason to pick your child up with this type of crying. However, if the crying intensifies or continues for a long period of time, by all means pick up your baby. You may want to go to them and give them soft words and a pat on the back for a few moments to see if that helps. There will be times when you are not sure whether the cry is for you or for another need. Always give your baby the benefit of the doubt. Studies have shown that babies whose parents respond quickly to their cries for attention feel more secure and consequently cry less with the passing of time.

Parenting Tools: *Fathers*

From "New Parent Power!" by John Rosemond

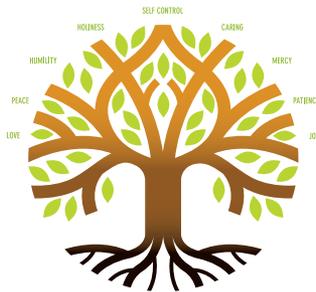
As parents raise their children day-to-day, the involvement of both parents is so important. It takes both mother and father parenting as "one flesh" to fully meet the needs of a newborn. The obsolete notion that mothers can better fulfill their babies' needs has encouraged mothers to feel more responsible for their children than they actually are, while it has caused fathers to feel insignificant and excluded. Without a doubt, there are differences in the ways mothers and fathers interact with their children. Each parent brings a unique set of personality factors into the child-rearing situation, and each contributes invaluable, though differently, to the child's growth and development.

Several studies have shown, for instance, that, with the exception of breast-fed babies, infants show no innate preference for one parent over the other. Other research shows that babies whose fathers are actively involved in their upbringing tend to be more outgoing, less fearful of strangers and new situations, more willing to accept challenges, and generally more assertive. I suspect these findings have less to do with fathers per se than with the fact that it's more stimulating and enriching to have two actively involved parents than just one.

Since males have not generally been brought up to think of themselves in the primary parent role, many fathers feel awkward and inept around their children at first. But a father who chooses to be relatively uninvolved, or whose wife discounts his significance, usually ends up feeling as though he is on the outside looking in at the mother-child relationship. Almost inevitably, this father develops jealousy and resentment toward the child. Often his reaction is to put even more distance between himself and his family by becoming increasingly involved in his occupation.

Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." God's plan is for both parents to be involved in their child's life.

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Fathers, set your eyes on leading your family as the spiritual leader and begin now to develop spiritual fruit in your children.