

INVITATION TO PEACE


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. Joy, wonder, stress, exhaustion...one feeling that is hard to come by is peace. The first few months are wonderful, but they can also be overwhelming and exhausting. When you reflect on being a parent, sometimes the more difficult aspects of raising a child come to mind. In the midst of all the crazy, we want to help you stay grounded and able to focus on what is truly important. We would like to extend an invitation to you, An Invitation to Peace.

Why?

This time in your child's life will pass by so quickly. You want to be able to look back and know that you were the best parent you could be and that you made the most of the time you had. We want to help you find peace. We will provide you with **three activities that will go through different daily moments that you share with your baby: cuddle time, bath time and time to sleep.** As you hold and cuddle your baby, remember that God does not leave us and you are not alone. Use that time to reflect how we serve a God who calms storms and brings peace. Who hasn't watched a newborn sleep and think "if only I could rest like that?" Become inspired by them and rejoice in the fact that God watches over us. Allow yourself to look past the chaos that can be a daily part of life with a baby and be able to enjoy this stage in their life. These are moments you can't get back and believe it or not you will miss this part one day.

How?

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. The activities below will show you how to find peace in daily activities. We know that every family is different. Peaceful moments for some may be stressful for others. This Birthday Faith Experience will help you to **personalize your peaceful time with your child.**



Activities:

Activity 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.

Isaiah 41:13 says,

For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."

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.



Activity 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. 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, etc. In that moment just when you're finally ready to walk out the door, your baby spits up on you and 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.

Activity 3: Sleep Time

The first year of parenting brings major changes in sleep habits. 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.

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

Psalm 4:8

In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Proverbs 3:24

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

Clearly God's design for sleep is for it to be sweet and restful. So if it comes in 2 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. This is His intent for us and for our children. That sleep would be sweet as we dwell in His safety.

Birthday Faith Experience

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

We looked specifically at three times: cuddle time, bath time, and sleep time. Please take a moment to consider your child and identify the ONE time that is MOST peaceful for you and your baby.

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 one prayer, song, verse, or story that you'll say EVERY time you and your baby are in your identified area of peace**. We've provided a resource page with tons of options for you to consider. Feel free to choose one of these or come up with our own. The intent is for this to be extremely personal.

Once you've identified your time of peace and your one thing to say or 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 room. 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 (structure your own words, but here are general ideas)

- health of child
- protection of child
- that child would know Jesus
- God to guide child
- child to have faith in Jesus
- God would guard their heart and mind
- my 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

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH MY NEWBORN?

Here is a guide to help give you a glimpse of what might be going on inside your baby.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Gross Motor Movement and Coordination:**
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 (walking reflex).
- **Fine Motor:** Holds things briefly before dropping: Folds hand around finger of another person placed in palm of hand, Holds on to ring on cradle gym after hand touches it, Begins to hold onto bottle for entire feeding, Begins to bring toys or their fingers to mouth, Grabs onto own toes.

RELATIONAL/SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

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 a rite of passage 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.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Self-Concept:**
Expresses comfort and discomfort. Uses specific kinds of cries to signal needs (e.g., hunger or wet), is responsive to adult's attempts to comfort (e.g. relaxes when back is gently rubbed) Express feelings. Make responses to express how he feels about what is happening and show awareness of how others are feeling (cries when another child cries, frowns when a caregiver looks sad). Pay attention and 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 (e.g. sucks on hand while going to sleep); look to a familiar person for encouragement when encountering new experiences (e.g. looks at caregiver for a positive nod or encouraging word). Begin to relate to other children. Sit near another child while playing; smile at another child and squeal or fuss when another child approaches.
- **Cooperation:**
Demonstrate awareness of others. Begin to watch other children in the group and show interest in their play; show recognition of familiar people by reaching or smiling. Recognize actions and images of familiar adults. Show recognition when family photographs are displayed at eye level, begin to imitate familiar actions (pretend to talk on phone, pretend to stir).