

## BIRTHDAY BLESSING

Welcome to the world of having a toddler! It's time to start planning your baby's first birthday celebration. These days' birthdays are getting bigger and bigger. Parents go above and beyond to make parties memorable. But what if we add a new aspect to it? Let's make it even more special.


### Why?

Have you thought about the kind of person you want your child to be? Sometimes it's hard to think that far ahead. However, as parents it is up to us to fight for the heart of our child. There are many factors that will all compete for importance as your child grows up. A lot of these will be very strong and some will be out of your control. It is never too early to plant the seeds, so to speak. After all, we are the first example they see.

### How?

We will be giving you **three activities**. These will be your party planner this year. We won't be picking out the cake but we will help you give them **a birthday to remember!** The activities will help you to see who they are and who you want them to be. You have already seen glimpses into their little personalities. These are the attributes that God has given them. He has created them to be precious and unique. This process will help you to focus your parenting on helping them to be that person.

Once you have figured these things out, we will **help you write a statement that you can share at their first birthday... their Birthday Blessing**. This will be a letter from you to your child. First birthdays are definitely a cause for a party. Our hope is that through this process, you can continue to celebrate your child for who they are and who they will be.



## Activities:

### Activity 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, and 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.

**Psalm 139:1-14** beautifully illustrates how intrinsically and uniquely we are made:

- 1 *Lord, you have searched me and known me!*
- 2 *You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.*
- 3 *You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.*
- 4 *Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.*
- 5 *You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.*
- 6 *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.*
- 7 *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?*
- 8 *If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!*
- 9 *If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*
- 10 *even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.*
- 11 *If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,"*
- 12 *even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.*
- 13 *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*
- 14 *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

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."

### Activity 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 activity 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 **Psalms 139:1-14**, 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?

### Activity 3: Choosing to focus.

The bottom line is that we can want lots of things for our children. During this activity we want you to narrow your focus. During the second activity you answered a few questions that helped spur your thinking towards WHO you want your child to become. Get that list out and let's 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., 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 activity 2 and **pick 2-3 character traits that are of utmost importance** to you to use as your focus for the birthday blessing.

**Joshua 29:11** says, *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

God has a specific plan for your child. What's your plan in raising this gift God has entrusted to you? By picking out 2-3 characteristics and indicating why those are important, you give 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 1st 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?"


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-Francis Chan**

## Birthday Blessing

Your child's first birthday will be a once in a lifetime moment. It will be the first, 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 activities 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 so that you can share it with the people present at your child's 1st birthday party. 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 by making it into something that can be referenced throughout your baby's childhood. Frame it and **keep it visible**. Put it inside a baby book/scrapbook. It would be great to share this birthday blessing at every birthday. Even reading it every year on your child's birthday with the immediate family would increase the likelihood that this blessing would become more than just words in your child's life, but actual reality. See the sample birthday blessing as a frame of reference for writing your child's birthday blessing.

### ***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



## WHAT'S GOING ON WITH MY 1-YEAR-OLD?

Here is a guide to help give you a glimpse of what might be going on inside your one-year-old.

### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

#### **Gross Motor Movement and Coordination:**

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 pages of a book and points to pictures while being read to.

### SPIRITUAL/RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We need to be intentional in training, teaching and disciplining. None of these things happen naturally and it takes extra through and effort to incorporate them into our days.

Just like parents have to be intentional about our relationship with Jesus, we also have to be intentional about teaching 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.

### EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT•

#### **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 doesn't get own 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 the room, ask for help to dress up like mom or dad, take care of "baby."

Begin to engage in social play with other children and interact with another child for 1-2 minutes.