

Inspirational Meditations for New Mothers

THE  
HAND that  
rocks  
the  
CRADLE

COMPILED BY SHARILYN MARTIN & SUE HOOLEY



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WALNUT CREEK

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# *Dedication*

To the memory of my grandmother,  
*Mary Helmuth Zehr,*  
who left a legacy of love and loyalty,

and to my mother,  
*Ruth Zehr Hertzler,*  
who is still passing it on.  
—SM

To my mother,  
*Martha Kimble Martin,*  
who rocked my cradle with tenderness and love.  
—SH

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*Several of the above writers do not appear in the book because they chose to be  
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# Introduction

**Sue:** The due date for our third child was just around the corner. I had laundered the baby clothes, readied the crib, and packed the suitcase. Now I could relax. But apprehension nagged me as I recalled my previous postpartum struggle—the scrambled schedule, the emotional and physical weariness, and on top of everything, the struggle to maintain my personal devotions. Would I find, as before, that spiritual refreshment seemed especially elusive at a time when I felt I needed it most?

*What I need is a devotional book for moms who have just had a baby,* I thought one night. *Why not compile one?* Sleep fled as I pondered this new idea. A few days later, I shared it with Sharilyn, who was also expecting her third child.

**Sharilyn:** At first I was not convinced that the book market needed another devotional for women, or that devotionals were really down my writing line, or that such a book would really help to fill a mom's spiritual and emotional needs. Then my baby boy was born; and going through the postpartum adjustments all over again made me rethink my earlier opinions.

**Sue:** My son arrived five days after Sharilyn's, and in the following weeks, I couldn't dismiss my idea. Finally I prayed that the Lord would either give clear direction to do it or help me to forget it.

When our baby boys were a few months old, Sharilyn asked me one day, "Remember that devotional book idea? We need a book like that, and I would be interested in helping." I felt that this was my answer, and now I want to thank Sharilyn for her enthusiasm, ideas, and hours of work that helped to make this book what it is.

**Sharilyn:** I'm grateful to Sue for the hours she spent setting up things on the computer and contacting people, and also for the invitation to join this project. It has been a rich experience.

Many of you are familiar with the old saying, “the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world” (William Ross Wallace). This began to echo in my mind and seemed the perfect motto for what we hoped to accomplish. It hints at our purpose for the book: to lift up and strengthen the hands that are “rocking the cradles” today. It explains why: because a mother’s work has far-reaching effects. It points us to the more complete truth that “the hand that rocks the cradle *needs* the Hand that rules the world,” because the significance of our work is the very reason we need Him so much.

And He *does* have the answers! Over and over, I was impressed and excited to discover scripture that just fit a certain devotional, and to read others’ testimonies of God’s faithfulness in so many different situations. God wants to give guidance for life, joy on the journey, and a rich reward at the end. Through these pages, may you hear the encouragement of mothers who have been where you are, and may you feel God’s hand on yours as you gently rock the cradle.

Sue Hooley &  
Sharilyn Martin

# *On becoming a Mother*

✿ Margaret Nyman

I remember that day so clearly—the day I crossed into motherhood.

My first child was born during the early 1970s when the practice of letting either parent hold the child immediately after birth was not considered sanitary or necessary. So our little bundle, shown to us briefly from his perch on the obstetrician's hand, was whisked away to the nursery for a proper bath and a general settling in to the hospital routine. I never thought to ask if I could hold my baby boy or count his fingers and toes.

My husband and I spent the next two hours on the phone announcing our news, after which the new daddy rushed off to work. Finally, I was left alone in my crisp, white bed, replaying the birth in my mind.

Suddenly, I was consumed with an overwhelming desire to hold my child. I rang for the nurse and begged her to bring me my new son. She replied that it would be 15 more minutes before the



nursery schedule would allow a visit with him. Naïve and compliant, I nodded acceptance. After all, what was 15 more minutes after I'd already waited nine long months?

I fluffed my pillow, smoothed the sheet, folded my hands, and looked at the clock. In a few minutes my empty arms would be filled with a baby, *my son*. He would feel my loving touch for the first time and receive his first kiss from me. It was a thrilling thought. By the time I heard the nurse's footsteps, I was shivering with excitement.

"Baby Nyman is here!" she cheerfully announced. She handed over my swaddled baby and left us alone. How good it felt to cradle this sleeping newborn in my arms! How perfectly he fit into the crook of my elbow!

His face was perfect, relaxed, and calm. His little nose was shiny after the bath, and I wondered if he had cried during his first scrubbing. And his mouth—oh, that mouth! It was the mouth of an angel, with full lips and a perfect cupid's bow. I leaned over and kissed him, right on his soft, limp lips. Though his eyes were closed, the nurse said they were blue, like mine. And his hair! For the first time I noticed that our son was a redhead.

I cupped my hand over the crown of his beautiful head and felt its round, silky softness. What was going on inside his mind? Had he suffered during the birth? Did he know his mother was holding him? How I longed to share my thoughts with this boy and have them understood. But there would be time for that.

I unwrapped one tiny hand. As his small fingers closed around my pinky, I marveled at the intricacy of God's handiwork. Each

knuckle was properly in place. Each nail was smooth and perfectly proportioned. There was no dirt on his yet unused fingers. He was all purity and perfection.

I was absolutely in awe! For the first time in my life I knew what it was to be completely overwhelmed.

It was during these unique moments that I first felt like a mother. I would never “become” a mother again; this was my becoming. This most common phenomenon was gently enfolding me.

As I nuzzled my baby, my offspring, my son, the rest of the world faded away. We were alone together in the universe. Motherhood felt comfortable, and in one moment, I had been made a wealthy woman.

Adapted from *Focus on the Family*, May 1994. Used by permission.