



Birth and Babies

Keeper'sBook™ series focuses on specific topics relevant to *Keepers at Home* readers. Our goal is to bring together talented writers who have passion for the subject and readers whose lives will be blessed by the information presented in each Keeper'sBook™.

Nothing in *Birth and Babies* Keeper'sBook™ is intended to diagnose or treat any disease. We encourage all our readers to seek competent medical professionals with medical questions.

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Motherhood

MIRIAM WENGERD

God designed a woman to be a mother. The sacredness of this calling begins to dawn on us with the birth of our first child. At the moment of conception God places a living soul inside of us. The human mind staggers at the magnitude of this miracle. It never ceases to amaze me that the King of the universe (knowing the limits of poor weak dust) puts the care of a living soul into the hands of mortals. God forbid that we should take this great privilege lightly.

I long to see women embrace this holy calling. I love to hear mothers talking in a favorable way about pregnancy, birthing, and nursing. Having carried nine babies, I know it's a lot of hard work. It involves lots of interrupted nights, pain, tears, and many new learning experiences. The day you hold your new baby in your arms, you enter a vast field in which you will labor for the rest of your life. In this field you will experience delights you never knew existed! There is no feeling like the joy of a mother caring for a precious little child. When our children were babies, I loved to smell their breath—it was so sweet. A baby's skin is incredibly soft, their eyes so innocent and trusting. They love you because you are their mother. They don't care how you look, they just love you.

This pure, sweet love has a tremendous enabling power. It causes us mothers to make enormous sacrifices without batting an eye. Regardless what it takes to care for them, we'll do it. Why? We want to make them safe and secure. In order to do this we feed them, bath them, change their diapers, wrap them in blankets, rock them, cuddle them, sing to them. We do everything in our power to make them comfortable. I encourage young moms to realize that these everyday acts of love forge a deep and lasting tie. They are our way of proving our love.

Some people regard a child's tendency to cling to its mother as negative, but I don't. When a child prefers its mother above all others it is just saying "Mom has successfully persuaded me that she can be trusted. Her hours of one-on-one care have convinced me to love her above all others." This allegiance is precious. It provides a lot of protection for a child, acting as a safeguard.

As children get older their capacity to learn increases. So do your opportunities to learn about life! An orderly life is a great benefit to children. A regular time to get up, mealtimes together, teaching life skills, training and disciplining, family devotions, and regular chores, duties, and responsibilities are all important parts of raising up children who are trained to be helpful.

When children pass 12 and 13 years of age they enter a time when they learn very rapidly. They need expanding opportunities to broaden their range of skills. During these years their personality reveals itself. They need some coaching as they begin to face the difficulties and perplexities of adult life. We need to show them our love by taking time to talk, by listening to what they have to say, by caring about their feelings. If we have developed strong ties through their younger years, it will help us a lot when we hit rough spots during these years when they are transitioning from a child to an adult.

As a mom, let's be the first to say we are sorry when things come up and feelings are hurt. We need to show our children how to be peacemakers by our own loving, kind example. We need to remember, they can't be expected to know at 18 what we are just learning at 45. God is patient with us—let's be patient with them.

Letting go once they are ready to get married is a learning curve. When a mother has been responsible for a child

for 20 years it feels strange when her child moves out of the home. It is a wise son or daughter who will appreciate the unselfish love and care of a mother, and treat her with respect and still seek and accept her advice once he or she is married.

Dear mothers, let us get a vision of the glory and splendor of the work that is given to us! When we receive a precious new baby into our arms, we have an opportunity that is unequalled in the human experience. We are personally responsible for the training and development of this little one's life. We do well to remember that we cannot give our child something we do not possess. If we are selfish, we can't teach them to be generous. If we are stubborn and self-willed we can't make them yielding. If we are proud, we can't teach them humility. The mother's life flows into the child's life. When a little baby is held in a mother's arms, is loved, nursed, held close to her heart, for days, weeks, months, and years, it is no mere fancy to say that the mother's life has passed into the child's soul. It is a holy work to shape a living soul. Take up your sacred burden reverently. Make sure that your heart is pure and your life sweet and clean.

History is full of illustrations of the power of a mother's influence. It either brightens or darkens a child's life. Thou-

sands have been kept from drifting away by the precious memories of a tender, loving mother's love. Or if they have drifted away, been drawn back by Mother's prayers.

Even after our children leave home, we still seek to bless them. We long to help them as much as possible. We pray for them constantly—it is a work that continues on. When God entrusts us with the care of a living soul we receive a sacred charge that we do not lay down until we pass out of this world. If we neglect our duty, it will not change the fact that God will hold us responsible.

As mothers we need to seek God's guidance daily for the task at hand. He is able to help us make the best decisions for our children's lives. He will show us when to discipline, when to be firm, when to be flexible, how to handle the many details of a mother's daily life without losing sight of our goal—to take our little babies and train them to be strong men and women who labor diligently in the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Some things in life occur often, but childhood with its many opportunities comes only once. Our children pass through our home only one time. Come on, mothers! Let's redeem this precious time and make the best use of this golden opportunity. ❀

WITH CHILD S. Z. G.

What depths of mystery lie therein,
The common words, "with child,"
They speak of many a hidden thing,
A being undefined.

A miracle in silence wrought,
A marvel all unknown,
A little spark within the dark,
Cared for by God alone.

It speaks of silent sufferings,
A path of care and pain,
Of patience and of sacrifice,
A giving, thus to gain.

A new awakened tenderness,
A duty new, yet old,
The tear-stained joys of motherhood
Beginning to unfold.

A deep conviction felt within—
Although on earthly sod,
This little life of mystery,
It must be given to God.

The Time of Life

Your Baby's Development

Day 1: One out of 200,000,000 sperm succeeds in penetrating your egg cell. At that moment, a unique individual is formed. Although smaller than a grain of sugar, your baby's gender, eye color, hair color, and facial characteristics, such as dimples and a chin cleft are already determined.

Day 17: Blood vessels begin to form.

Day 18-20: The brain, spinal cord, and nervous system foundation begins.

Day 21: The heart begins to beat at about 70 times per minute.

Day 22: Your baby's eyes begin to develop and its ears are in the early stages of development.

Day 26: Your baby's lungs begin to form.

Day 28-32: Tiny arm and leg buds make their appearance. Your baby's face also makes its first appearance, as well as the beginnings of a mouth and nose. Its tongue starts to take shape. Your baby is ¼" long.

Day 36: Your baby's eyes develop their first color in the retina.

Day 40: Your baby makes its first reflex movement.

Day 41: Its fingers begin to form. A few days later, so will your baby's toes.

Day 42: Nerve connections that lead to a sense of smell develop. Its brain divides into three sections. One for hearing, one for sight, and one to experience emotion and understand language.

Day 44: Eyelids begin to form, facial muscles develop, and buds of milk teeth appear. Internal organs are present, but in the early stages of development. Almost 100% of its muscles are present, each with its own nerve supply.

Day 52: Your baby is 1" tall! It begins spontaneous movement. In the next few weeks, it will hiccup, frown, squint, furrow its brow, purse its lips, turn its head, touch its face, stretch, yawn, suck, and move its arms and legs.

Day 56: Well-proportioned and about the size of a thumb, your baby now has every organ present. The liver and kidneys function and the heart beats steadily. Its skull, elbows, and knees are forming and the skeleton of the arms,

legs, and spine begin to stiffen because bone cells are being added.

Day 63: Your baby can now close its eyelids and hands. Genitalia become visible. The thyroid gland turns on.

Day 70: Its fingerprints begin a seven-week formation. Fingernails start to develop. Its eyelids fuse together to protect its delicate eyes (until the seventh month). And the connections between your baby's nerves and muscles continue to develop, having tripled since day 63!

Day 77: Vocal chords and taste buds now form. Your baby "practices" breathing in preparation for its first breath after birth. It can urinate. And its stomach muscles can contract. Your baby can now make complex facial expressions, and yes, it can smile!

Day 84: Fine hair begins to grow on its upper lip, chin, and eyebrows. It can swallow and will respond to skin stimulation.

Day 91: Your baby is about 4" tall and weighs about three ounces. Although it's quite active, you may not feel a thing yet.

Day 105: Nerve cells are produced at a higher level and will continue to do so for the next four weeks.

Day 126: Your baby can suck its thumb, turn somersaults, and has a firm grip. Its nostrils and toenails are now visible. It begins its sleeping habits.

Day 140: Your baby can experience pain.

Day 154: Your baby is 7" tall and weighs about fourteen ounces. You may feel the baby hiccup, kick, turn, and maybe even identify a bulge as an elbow or its head. Each side of its brain now has a billion nerve cells!

Day 182: The baby now sleeps and wakes, finds its comfort zone for sleep and will stretch upon waking. In another week, it will be able to hear.

Day 210: To prepare to see the outside world, your baby's eyelids begin to reopen. Its eyelashes have become well developed.

Day 238: Your baby's skin becomes pink and smooth. Its pupils can respond to light. Its fingernails reach to the tip of its finger. It is getting cramped in your womb.

Day 264-270: Your baby triggers labor! 🍼



FAITH SOMMERS

My Big Babies

“It’s a boy! Guess what he weighs!” I was laughing as I told my sister about the birth of our second child.

“Well, your daughter weighed seven and one-half pounds, so your son probably weighs around eight and one-half pounds,” my sister replied.

“Remember that she was three weeks early, and are you sitting? This big-little boy weighs all of ten pounds and eight ounces!”

We chuckled together. After all, our father weighed twelve pounds at birth! The doctor wanted to give him a lunch box and send him to school. We knew that we were hereditarily disposed to having big babies.

I wasn’t proud of my son’s weight, but I was thankful that I was able to naturally, safely give birth to such a large baby. God had made me in a wonderful way, my husband and I agreed.

But the responses of my friends surprised me. One asked if I wasn’t embarrassed. No, should I be? Another said it was horrifying, another laughed and laughed, as though it was most amusing.

I was bewildered. Was a big baby a cause for shame?

When one friend gave birth to a seven-pound baby sometime later, another kept saying, “Look how big your baby is beside him!” I just cuddled my son, and said, “He feels just right to me.”

Time went on, and comments continued. I struggled for a while, and avoided the subject of birth weight as much as possible.

We were in another state for a few years, and I was expecting our third child. “I wonder what I can do to keep this baby from weighing ten pounds,” I told my friend Leslie.

“Why would that matter?” she asked practically.

I shared with her the conflicting comments of friends and how I wasn’t sure if I was strong enough to handle

more of the same. “I feel blamed, like I should surely be able to change the baby’s weight,” I admitted.

Leslie shook her head. “Listen to my side of it. When Sarah was born, I was shocked to find out she weighed barely six pounds. The midwife weighed her three times! I felt guilty. Had I not eaten properly?”

“Then the midwife said, ‘She appears to be perfectly healthy. Maybe she is just a small person.’”

Leslie and I shared a laugh as we looked at our two children. Sarah *was* little! Though ten months older than my son, she was much smaller. My son, on the other hand, was always big for his age. (Growing up, he was a head taller than most of his friends, and today, at thirteen, he is as big as his daddy.)

Leslie went on to tell me that she would have loved to have big, chunky babies. “I think we all must accept the way God made us and our babies, and not fret. As long as we are eating well, gaining properly, and keeping fit, I think God will take care of our babies.”

That conversation did much to soothe my spirits. I did try the diet in *What to Eat When You’re Expecting*, and our third child weighed nine pounds.

The midwife thought I had gestational diabetes even though the glucose tolerance test was usually negative. So with the next one, I watched carbohydrates the entire nine months. I gained fourteen pounds and my son weighed nine and one-half pounds!

With the last two we had a group of midwives. They were concerned at the size of the baby and “didn’t I think I was carrying twins?” No, it’s just a big baby!

I tested my sugar levels four times a day, and yes, I did have gestational diabetes. After meeting with the dietitian, I scrupulously calculated the amount of food I consumed, and was actually eating more carbohydrates but with protein to keep the sugar levels stable. Daily, I walked over

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ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY

DIANNA OVERHOLT

I'm ordinary. I have one head, two arms, two legs, two eyes, two ears, one nose, and one waist that threatens to become two.

My days are ordinary, filled with ordinary objects. An afghan, a Bible, coffee, a toaster, crumbs, warm soapsuds, burp cloths, broom handles, Kleenex, cracked plates, celery sticks, dandelions, clock hands, cotton socks, and a rocking chair.

Ordinary: of no special quality or interest; commonplace. Ordinary days, ordinary ways. Most of us are ordinary. There's nothing wrong with that! But sometimes life as a wife and mother feels—well, a little *too* ordinary.

Days blur together in much of a sameness. We move from the bed to the sink to the washing machine to the crib and back to the sink to the washing machine and to the crib.

Warm little bodies, totally dependent, cling to us on all sides. We dispense hankies and blankies, wishing someone would care for us, wiping away our tears, tucking us in for a nap. We wonder if we're just another woman in a sea of mother faces, a woman totally too ordinary, of no special quality or interest.

When that happens, it's time to listen to our teachers.

We mothers have the best teachers in the universe. Wisely bald and smiling with toothless gums, they educate us from the very beginning, as we wrap them and rock them and nourish their lives.

You may be holding one of your teachers right now. I've had five. What do my babies teach me? They reveal the very heart of God. I gaze into the little round face so close to mine, breathe in the sweet scent of a wrinkled neck, and listen.

There is no one like me in the whole world, Mother. I was uniquely designed by the Lord, the Creator of all. No one has my face, my mind, or my heart. I am not ordinary; I am one-of-a-kind. And so are you, Mother. You are not faceless, or lost in the crowd. God lovingly formed you. You are of His special quality and interest.

Baby speaks to me about helplessness and dependency.

Look at me, Mother, unable to do anything for myself! If I roll off the sofa, I can't pick myself up. If I'm hungry, I can't get my own milk. If a mosquito buzzes in my face, I can't brush it away. I'm helpless! Is this cause for depression and despair? No! Here I am, cradled by your loving arms. You understand my dependency on you. You want to meet my needs. I trust you to pick me up, to feed me, to protect me. I am secure in your love.

I weep at the sheer trust perspective. *Look at me, Lord, unable to do anything for myself. I fall, and fail to rise. My soul hungers for bread that I cannot supply. The enemy torments me, and I can't seem to resist. I'm helpless! Should I give in to depression and despair? No! Here I am, cradled by Your loving arms. You understand my dependency on You. You want to meet my needs. I trust You to pick me up, to feed me, and to protect me from evil. I am secure in Your love.*