



Educational Curriculum for Pregnancy Resource Centers

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Dear Partner for Life,

This curriculum is the result of many months of labor and prayer. In the spring of 2014, I saw a need for an educational curriculum for Pregnancy Resource Centers that could be used world-wide to teach women about pregnancy, parenting, Jesus and value of life. I contacted experts in many fields of study, many of whom agreed to write lessons for this purpose. And so, Growing Together was born.

The curriculum is designed in such a way that you, the client advocate, can create a lesson plan that is personalized to fit your client. Together, you and your client can choose the lessons that will benefit her. You will use the lesson material to teach her and then we have provided discussion questions at the end that you can use to help her be sure she understands.

I am praying for you today, that God will use you for His glory and for LIFE.

With Love,

Melissa

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion-to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. Isaiah 61:1-3

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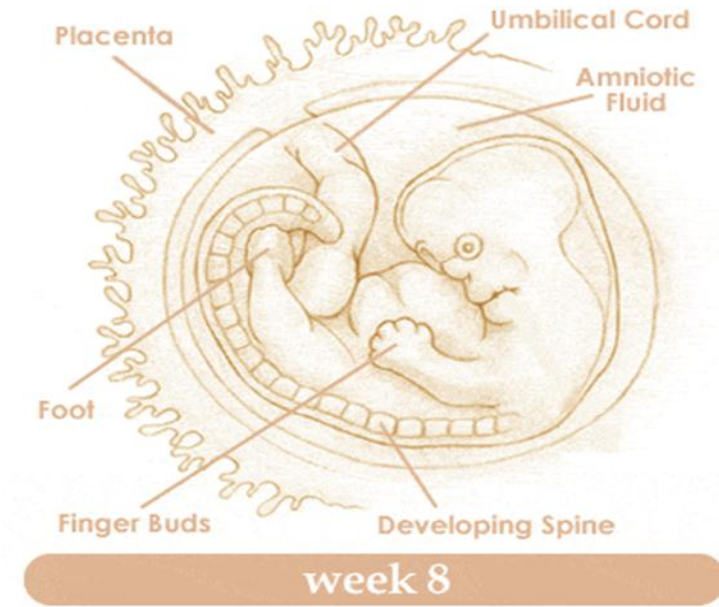
Lesson 5 - Pregnancy - Week 8

Your Baby's Development

Marveling over a baby's tiny fingers and toes is one of the joys of the first day of life. Those fingers and toes are just beginning to form this week, and the arms can even flex at the elbows and wrists. The eyes are becoming more obvious because they've begun to develop pigment (color) in the retina (back of the eye).

Also, the intestines are getting longer and there isn't enough room for them in the baby's abdomen, so they protrude into the umbilical cord until week 12.

By now, the beginnings of the buds that will develop into your baby's genitals have made their appearance, although they've not yet developed enough to reveal whether your baby is a boy or a girl.



Your Body

Pregnancy symptoms such as a missed period, nausea, extreme fatigue, or tight clothes due to the swelling of your uterus have probably prompted you to wonder whether you're pregnant. Once you have confirmation of your pregnancy from a home pregnancy test or blood or urine test at the doctor's office, you should call and schedule your first prenatal visit. Your pregnancy may be monitored by one of several health care professionals, including an obstetrician, nurse practitioner, midwife, or family doctor. If your pregnancy is considered high risk (for example, if you have had multiple miscarriages, are older than 35, or have a history of pregnancy complications), your doctor may want to see you as early as possible and more often during the course of your pregnancy.

Good prenatal care is extremely important for the health and safe delivery of your baby, so be sure to make prenatal appointments a top priority.

Week 8

Your Baby's Development:

What things start to change this week with your baby's fingers and toes?

Arms?

Eyes?

Intestines?

Your Body:

What symptoms of pregnancy are you having?

Why are regular prenatal appointments important?



Lesson 55 - Sleep and Newborns

Newborns don't yet have a sense of day and night. They sleep around the clock, and because their tiny stomachs don't hold enough breast milk or formula to keep them satisfied for long, they wake often to eat — no matter what time of day or night it is.

How Long Will My Newborn Sleep?

A newborn may sleep up to 18 hours a day, waking every couple of hours to feed. Breastfed babies feed often, about 8 to 12 times a day. Bottle-fed babies tend to feed less often, about every 3 to 4 hours or so.

Because the need for food is stronger than the need for sleep at this age, babies who sleep for longer stretches should be awakened to feed. Wake your baby every 3 to 4 hours to eat until he or she shows good weight gain, which usually happens within the first couple of weeks. After that, it's OK to let your baby sleep for longer periods of time.

Babies have different phases of sleep, just like everyone else. There's drowsiness, REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, light sleep, deep sleep, and very deep sleep.

The first months of a baby's life can be the hardest for parents, who might get up many times at night to tend to the baby. Each baby has a different sleep pattern. Many babies start to sleep "through the night" (for 5-6 hours at a time) by 2 months of age, but not every baby does.

How Should Babies Sleep?

During the first weeks of a baby's life, some parents choose to room-share. Room-sharing is when you place your baby's crib, portable crib, or bassinet in your own bedroom instead of in a separate nursery. This allows your baby to be close enough to hear, smell, and sense you. This can help with baby's feeding and sleep habits, and also helps new parents catch a bit more much-needed sleep. But room-sharing may not be for everyone; each family needs to decide what works best for them.

While room-sharing is safe, putting your infant to sleep in bed with you is not. Although many cultures endorse bed-sharing, there is a risk that the baby can suffocate or strangle, and studies have shown that there's a higher incidence of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome) in households where the baby slept in the parents' bed.

Follow these safety precautions with your little one:

Place your baby on his or her back to sleep, not on the stomach or side. The rate of SIDS has gone way down since the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) introduced this recommendation in 1992. Sleeping on the stomach with little-to-no ability to change head positions can block babies' tiny airways and cause them to "rebreath" their own carbon dioxide. In this position, babies also can get overheated (another risk factor for SIDS) and might have their mouths or noses blocked by bedding.

Make sure your crib meets current safety standards. Use a firm crib mattress with a sheet that fits snugly.

Do not put anything else in the crib or bassinet. Items that can touch a baby's face — such as plush toys, pillows, blankets, and bumper pads — also can block breathing.

Watch out for other hazards. Avoid items with cords, ties, or ribbons that can wrap around a baby's neck, and objects with any kind of sharp edge or corner. Look around for things that your baby can touch from a seated or standing position in the crib. Hanging mobiles, wall hangings, pictures, draperies, and window blind cords could be harmful if they are within a baby's reach.

Establishing a bedtime routine (bathing, reading, and singing) will help your baby relax and sleep well. Even though your newborn may be too young to get the signals yet, setting up the bedtime drill now can keep you on track later. And putting your baby in the crib at night teaches your little one that it's the place for sleep.

If your newborn is fussy it's OK to rock, cuddle, and sing as your baby settles down. For the first months of your baby's life, "spoiling" is definitely not a problem. (In fact, newborns who are held or carried during the day tend to have less colic and fussiness.)

It may take a few weeks for your baby's brain to tell the difference between night and day. Unfortunately, there are no tricks to speed this up, but it helps to keep things quiet and calm during middle-of-the-night feedings and diaper changes. Try to keep the lights low and resist the urge to play or talk with your baby. This will reinforce the message that nighttime is for sleeping.

Also, don't try to keep your baby up during the day in the hopes that he or she will sleep better at night. Overly tired infants often have more trouble sleeping at night than those who've had enough sleep during the day.

When to Call the Doctor

While most parents can expect their newborn to sleep or catnap most of the day, the range of what is normal is quite wide. If you have questions about how much (or how little) your baby is sleeping, or your baby seems overly cranky and cannot be easily soothed, talk with your doctor.

If it's hard to wake your baby up from sleep and he or she is not interested in feeding in general, call your doctor immediately for reassurance or further medical advice.

Sleep and Newborns

Newborns don't know the difference between day and night and their stomachs are too small to be satisfied for long. In the beginning a newborn will sleep for how long at one time?

How does this change?

When should a baby sleep?

Consistency will help your baby develop sleep patterns. What are some examples of consistency?

Do not put things in the crib or bassinet that could interfere with the baby's breathing. These things include:

Should your baby be put to sleep on his back or stomach? Why?

In what ways can you reinforce for your baby that nighttime is for sleeping?

Is carrying your baby around with you during the day good for your baby?

Lesson 76 – Following Jesus – Forgiveness

As we discuss this difficult topic of forgiveness, it is important to begin by remembering who we are in Christ. Ephesians 4:24 tells us:

Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

When we forgive, we are like God, because God forgave us even though we were undeserving.

Colossians 3:1-17 is a key passage for us as we seek righteousness and holiness. (Read passage.) Verse 3 instructs us to set our minds on things above, not earthly things. By focusing on God and His love and plan for us, we can begin to forgive others. Philippians 4:13 says:

Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things.

By training our minds to think about excellent and praiseworthy things, we can divert bitter and unforgiving thoughts. Verse 12 instructs us:

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

As we focus on the truth that God dearly loves us, we begin to release unforgiveness in our hearts. This verse is another reminder of our responsibility to put on the new self by clothing ourselves with the character of godliness.

The Challenge

Verse 13 commands us to forgive as the Lord forgave us. We know this is much easier said than done. In fact, it often seems impossible. However, we know that God never commands us to do anything without also giving us the strength to do so.

Let's talk a little about what forgiveness is and is not. Forgiveness IS NOT saying that the offense was okay. It is a decision to forgive in spite of the fact that you were wronged.

Forgiveness IS NOT a feeling. It is a choice to forgive in spite of feelings of anger and hurt.

Forgiveness IS acting like God. It is doing the right thing when someone else has offended and wounded.

Forgiveness IS freeing for you. When you forgive, you will begin to heal and find joy.

The Bible gives us many reasons to forgive. Matthew 6:14-15 says:

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

None of us is innocent. We all need forgiveness.

Unforgiveness makes us vulnerable to Satan and his schemes. Consider 2 Corinthians 2:10-11:

If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven-if there is anything to forgive-I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

When we harbor unforgiveness in our hearts, we are giving Satan an opportunity to trip us up.

A forgiving spirit is a sign that we belong to Christ. I John 2:9-11 says:

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother, lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in darkness: he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

Forgiveness is contrary to human nature. In our flesh, we want revenge. In Christ, we forgive.

How?

We know that forgiveness is God's desire for us. The question is: How do we forgive? How do we forgive people who have hurt us? In our own strength, it is impossible. But we do not have to rely on our own strength; we have access to God's power. Philippians 4:13 says:

I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

This includes forgiving even the most heinous acts.

Prayer

Prayer is also a very powerful tool. Matthew 5: 43-44 teaches:

"You have heard it said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

This is a concrete step we can take on the path to forgiveness. Pray for the one who has hurt you. This does not require feelings of goodwill toward the offender. In obedience to Christ, despite our feelings, we can pray for the ones who have hurt us. In the beginning, the prayers may be very short, "Lord, I pray for _____." As you follow the Lord by praying for your enemy, little by little, He will change your heart.

Trust God

An important aspect of forgiveness is trusting God.

Remember the story of Joseph. His older brothers were jealous of him, so they planned to kill him. Eventually, they decided to sell him into slavery instead. As a child, Joseph was taken from his family and sold as a slave by his older brothers who should have been protecting him. (Genesis 37)

You know the story of how God brought him to a place of being second in command of a mighty nation. Years later, his brothers came to him, unaware of who he was, asking for food to feed the family. Joseph could have taken revenge on them because of his position of power. He could have humiliated and punished them for their crimes. Instead, he graciously and lovingly forgave them. In Genesis 5:20, he tells his brothers:

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Joseph trusted God to work out all situations for good in his life; we can too. (Romans 8:28)

Remember What God has Done for You

As we seek to forgive others, we must remember what God has done for us.

You will have compassion on us: you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19

We are forgiven unconditionally and we must do the same.

Colossians 3:14 commands us to put on love. Love is patient and kind, and keeps no record of wrongs. (I Corinthians 13) When we love, we not self-serving, but always have the other person's best interest at heart. Ephesians 4:29 commands:

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

In verse 32 of the same chapter, the Lord commands us to be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.

As beloved daughters of God, we have no choice but to forgive. As in all things, as we obey, we will be blessed. I Samuel 12:24 admonishes us:

But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you.

As women of God, we are called to fear and serve the Lord with all of our hearts. As we consider His loving kindness and faithfulness to us despite our unworthiness, we can begin to release bitterness and anger and choose to live in love and forgiveness.

Questions to Ponder:

What person in your life is God asking you to forgive?

Are you ready to release your feelings of unforgiveness?

What specific steps will you take as you begin your path to freedom through forgiveness?

Thank God for His forgiveness toward you.