



1ST 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 okay! Our desire through this Milestone Experience is to make this birthday even more memorable by helping you to give your child a birthday blessing that you will write and share with friends and family at your child's first birthday party. A blessing is a powerful tool to show genuine love and commitment and add value to your child's life. The Bible uses the word "blessing" or "bless" almost seven hundred times. You have the incredible privilege as a parent to see your child's natural strengths and cheer your son or daughter toward achieving his or her God given potential. Through this big milestone in your child's life, your friends and family will truly hear your heart's desire for your child, and will know how to partner with you to make sure those dreams become reality.

STEP 1: PREPARE

We want to equip you to maximize this important milestone with your family. First read through this full Milestone Experience Guide so you know what to expect. We have included an opportunity for you to **ENGAGE** with the Bible as you think through who your child is and who you want them to become. This Milestone Experience Guide also provides a time for you to **AFFIRM** your child by writing and sharing a birthday blessing at his or her 1st birthday party. We have included a sample letter in the **AFFIRM** section to guide you. You will want this letter to be one that your child will see and hear over and over again. It may be a fun idea to frame it for his or her bedroom or playroom. We are excited to partner with you in this very special milestone as you share your child's first birthday blessing!

STEP 2: ENGAGE

WHO THEY ARE

You have lived with your little bundle of joy for almost a year, and you have begun to see his or her personality, preferences, habits, and disposition. Authors 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 and gifted your child.

Psalms 139:13-14 beautifully illustrates how intrinsically and uniquely we are made:

*For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK ABOUT YOUR CHILD. WRITE DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS IN A NOTEBOOK OR JOURNAL.

1. How has God uniquely made this little one that He has given you?
2. List a few characteristics/personality traits you already see in your child.
3. In what ways is he or she fearfully and wonderfully made?
4. Take a moment to define your child's "something special."

WHO YOU WANT THEM TO BECOME

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. –Joshua 29:11

“Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter.”

–Francis Chan

It is 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. Our focus should instead 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?”

HERE ARE A FEW QUESTIONS THAT WILL HELP YOU FIGURE OUT AND PUT INTO WORDS WHO YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO BECOME. WRITE DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS IN A NOTEBOOK OR JOURNAL.

1. What are the most important character traits you want your child to develop? (Honest, responsible, kind, giving, respectful, dependable, helpful, etc.)
2. Which two or three character traits that you listed are of the utmost importance to you?
3. Why are these 2-3 character traits you listed most important to you?
4. What's your plan in raising this gift God has entrusted to you?
5. What really matters to you when it comes to the character of your child?

STEP 3: AFFIRM

Through the **ENGAGE** section, you identified the characteristics most important to you and why they are important for your child. Now it's time to put this in written form so that you can share it with the people present at your child's first birthday party. This happens best when it's written as a letter from you to your child. We ask you to share this blessing by reading it out loud with the friends and family present at the birthday party because they will be the ones to help you make this goal possible. They will encourage your child in these characteristics because they will know and believe in them too.

IN THE BIRTHDAY BLESSING LETTER TO YOUR CHILD YOU WILL 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 or keep it inside a baby book or scrapbook. You may even want to buy a picture frame with a mat and write the letter on the mat and include a picture of your child from his or her first birthday inside the frame. Your child will love looking at that picture and reading the letter for years to come.

It would be wonderful to share this birthday blessing at every birthday either out loud or in a quiet moment with just you and your child. Reading it every year on your child's birthday will increase the likelihood that this blessing would become more than just words on a page but also truth nestled deep in the heart of your child.

Lastly, your child's birthday is a very special day for YOU as well. Don't miss the opportunity this year on your baby's first birthday and each one that follows to praise God for the gift of being a parent. Reflect and celebrate in a meaningful way—YOU DID IT! Parenthood is a sacred relationship and a high calling. God is using you!

See the sample blessing as a frame of reference for writing your child's birthday 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.

*Love,
Mom and Dad*