Take Heart!

At no other time in your child's young life have you been faced with a set of decisions that so clearly affect your child's social, emotional, and spiritual development. How you guide, how you establish limits, and how you maintain predictability and consistency affect the budding ideas your child develops about such things as God's love and forgiveness, your love for your child, your child's worth as a child of God (often called self-esteem), and your child's ability to develop friendships and bonds beyond the family. What a tall order!

Let's take a look at what we might call the Eden model. (You probably remember that place—the garden of our first parents.) God gave Adam and Eve a big, beautiful garden, full of wonderful things to do, to see, to eat—a whole garden full of yes—and a great big no in the middle (one tree they were to avoid). You know the story. God told them what would happen if they disobeyed, and He followed through. He banished them from the garden. But He also communicated His forever love. He promised, and later sent, Jesus to die in their, and our, place. What a great example! Be an Eden parent. Ask God to enable you to give your child forever love, especially during times of discipline.

Helpful Things . . .

Concordia Publishing House has a great resource you may want to use called Little Visits for Toddlers by Mary Manz Simon. This book of family devotions will help families with very young children conduct child-size devotions. Use it for worship, for devotions and meditation, or for personal reading.

Concordia Publishing House offers a rich selection of books for children and families. There are many wonderful devotion books for children and parents. Concordia has an extensive list of children's Bible story books suitable for your young toddler. Visit www.cph.org today.

Continue to look in your church library for other resources.
Your Child Grows!

One year is an exciting milestone for a new baby. Of course, you’re planning to celebrate your child’s birthday. But plan also to mark the milestone of his or her baptismal birthday. Say special prayers. Send thank-you notes to grandparents and godparents for their prayers and support during this first year. Have a special family worship with the baptismal candle your baby received at Baptism. Have a dinner with special Christian friends. Find something that helps you thank God for the new life your child has in Jesus.

Remember that prayer is an important part of your child’s life with Jesus. Pray with your child at meals and bedtimes. Consider other times of the day when you and your child can enjoy spontaneous prayer with your Lord. As your baby becomes a walker and a toddler, you may often need to limit this to ten seconds, but those on the fly moments are important to grasp and use. Find time. Take time. Make time! Also—maybe while you’re putting your child to bed—remember to pray for her. Ask God to enable her to remain His child.

Keep books of short prayers nearby for bedtime use. Your child will embrace the words of these prayers you regularly share; he will keep them close to his heart; they will be an integral part of his life with Jesus. Also, repeat frequently the prayers you want to embed in your child’s memory for a lifetime, such as the Lord’s Prayer, Luther’s Morning and Evening Prayers, your family’s table grace, and so on. Though your little one won’t be able to pray these words with you right now, they will be written on his or her heart and will be at the ready for a lifetime.

Dialogue for Dads

One year old! Can you imagine it? Once, you couldn’t imagine life without your baby. Now, you can hardly imagine life without your baby. And just as you get used to having this baby, she is no longer a baby. Maybe he has already begun to walk. Or maybe crawling is still a challenge. (Who says there’s a typical one-year-old?)

Your job, Dad, is to walk alongside your new- or almost-walker and show him or her God’s way. Deuteronomy 6 gives us a great picture of what God has in mind here. Picture Moses talking to the people of Israel just minutes after coming down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments. He urges the people (and us) to teach them to their children as they sit in the house, walk by the way, lie down, get up, or in other words, all the time. Your new walker (or almost-walker) needs to see your walk with God in order to see just how to do it. Remember that in Deuteronomy, Moses was assuming that Dad would take the lead in making sure the teaching would get done. So, take the lead, Dad. Walk beside your toddler even as your Heavenly Father walks with you.

To keep your own walk firm, pray regularly, study God’s Word for your own sake as well as the sake of your family, worship, and go to the Lord’s Table, receiving often His Body and Blood for the forgiveness of your sins and the strengthening of your soul. God will bless you.

Messages for Moms

Do you marvel in the mundane everyday things? As you change your baby’s diaper, do you thank God that diapers exist? As you wash your baby’s hands, do you marvel in the tiny, one-of-a-kind fingerprints? As you rush to get ready for your baby’s regular checkup, do you appreciate this opportunity? Two generations ago, well-baby checks didn’t even exist. What an exciting time and place to be alive!

At the same time, we live in a frightening time and place. We see no signs that violent crimes are decreasing. AIDS, cancer, and heart disease continue to be threats. Our environment is being depleted and destroyed. The moral fabric of an entire nation is at grave risk. This is not a very welcoming scene for your child to inherit.

But sunrise and sunshine still exist, and keep going predictably. Seasons and sunsets tell us that God’s clock never stops ticking. God still promises salvation and support to each of us. He who sent His only Son to suffer and die for our sin will certainly take care of your child (Romans 8:32). What a precious promise! God is in charge. He cares about the mundane details of our everyday lives. He knows and is in control.

God will continually bless and strengthen you as you study His Word, pray, worship, and attend Holy Communion faithfully. God’s Word and Sacraments give forgiveness, life, and salvation to you now and forever.