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## What Can Your Baby Show You About God?



*A baby will make love stronger, days shorter, nights longer, bank-roll smaller, home happier, clothes shabbier, the past forgotten, and the future worth living for.*

*Anon*

Pregnancy and babies are all-consuming. Lots of women wonder, “Where am I in all of this?” We can also ask, “Where is God in all of this?” because it’s easy to lose sight of God, too. A good place to start is to look at what your baby can show you about God, and when we do that, we might find ourselves as well. As this mother says:

In nothing else is the essence of God more evident than in a child.

*Vicki, mother of 4- and 6-year-old daughters*

### 4 AM Madonna

If you are reading this book because you are pregnant, then you are probably getting up several times a night to go to the bathroom. If you are a new mother, you’ll be up in the night with your baby. Think of yourself as a 4 AM madonna! Your baby is a child of God—a wonderful, if demanding, gift.

The picture on the front cover of this book is by artist Antonia Rolls. It shows Mary at 4 AM, halo and all, looking exhausted as she jiggles the baby Jesus, in a blue striped sleeper, on her knee. She has bags under her eyes, looks about to cry, and she’s brewed a pot of tea to keep her going. The baby is wide awake, perky, and ready to play. Mary’s traditional blue gown is decorated with little crosses—the baby Jesus is, at 4 AM, the cross she has to bear. She is the one

who is making the self sacrifices—lots of them, all over! Despite her wrung-out face, her halo shines brightly.

We are all used to seeing more traditional pictures of the Madonna and Child—all serene and divine—and especially at Christmas we're used to thinking about what messages the baby Jesus holds. I think this painting is great. It's a very human picture, and very real. When I asked a group of new mothers what they had found most challenging about life with a new baby, one said very frankly, "Coping when wiped out!" This picture shows Mary doing just that. When we have our own babies, we are confronted with the nitty gritty of real life, and also with a miracle. So, let's look at what your baby can show you. Jesus can show us what it's like to be human. Your baby can show you something about what God is like:

Something of God  
Comes into the world  
With every child that is born.  
There is here with the newborn child  
A divine spark, a light within.<sup>1</sup>

*Rufus M. Jones*

The thoughts that follow are insights about God which were strengthened and developed during my pregnancy—yours may be different. Mine have their roots in my Quaker tradition, but Christians of all denominations will have all sorts of insights. It's important to explore your own, and maybe these ideas can help. Following from the thoughts below I offer some exercises for prayer or reflection as a way of exploring your own experiences. Pregnancy and having a new baby is a time when everything seems to change. By reviewing each day we can start to see God at work.

Maybe you have a faith already. Many of us start with an image of God that has been formed over many years. Sometimes this image comes from our own experience, but often we rely on taught ideas, without realizing it until our lives change and we start to question our assumptions. If this rings true for you, then perhaps you might find it helpful to start to think about well-known words used to describe God, such as father. How does becoming a parent give you new insight into God as a father?

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Maybe you don't have a faith background. Having a baby might for the first time bring new and unexpectedly powerful insights and even a changed sense of meaning:

I'm not religious but I think I am quite spiritual. Having Hannah has taught me a much greater sense of empathy with other parents and a genuine belief in the importance of the everyday and the smaller things in life. I now take things slower and enjoy them more. It is an amazing feeling rediscovering things through a child's eyes.

*Emma, eight months pregnant and mother  
of a 1-year-old daughter*

And:

I did not have a faith before I had a baby, now I think I might. It is a profoundly moving thing to have a child and when you look at them, it's hard not to think they were "sent by God" in some sense.

*Hannah, mother of an 8-month-old daughter  
and a 2½-year-old daughter*

See if the ideas below set off your own thoughts, then have a go at the activities that follow—it may not be easy to find some free time, but, who knows, 4 AM might be a good time to reflect!

### **God as Creator**

A tiny baby makes you very aware of God's creation and I found myself marveling at their tiny fingers and toes! It's amazing how each baby is very different and that made me appreciate the uniqueness.

*Jane, mother of an 8-year-old daughter  
and a 5-year-old son*

As Christians, we may have a strong belief in God as Creator, however that may be understood in today's world. It is a poetic image that unfolds for different people in different ways. It conveys something of the power of God and our dependence on him,