

ROB & STEPHANIE GREEN



TYING THEIR SHOES

A CHRIST-CENTERED APPROACH
TO PREPARING FOR PARENTING

“Rob and Stephanie have written a book on the preparation and process of early parenthood that balances out the biblical and practical eminently well. With practical advice flowing out of their biblical convictions, they neither prescribe nor mandate, but offer sage advice for a time in life when most couples desperately need it. This will now replace diapers as my go-to gift for newly expectant parents!”

Jonathan Holmes, Pastor of Counseling, Parkside Church;
executive director, Fieldstone Counseling

“As a friend, I’ve had the privilege of watching the Greens’ children thrive under their care. I’ve also seen the impact of their first book, *Tying the Knot*, as we use it to prepare couples in our church for marriage. This new volume is filled with the same kind of wisdom, grace, and focus on Christ that characterized their first book, so I expect to see God use this just as greatly for his glory.”

Brad Bigney, Pastor of Grace Fellowship; ACBC certified counselor; conference speaker; author of *Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols*

“*Tying Their Shoes*, by Rob and Stephanie Green, offers exactly what the subtitle suggests. It is a Christ-centered approach to preparing for parenting. Don’t take that subtitle promise lightly. Some books on parenting provide a broad, Christ-centered approach, but they never address the nitty-gritty details of real-life parenting. Other parenting books talk about a ton of details, but you wonder where the gospel makes a foundational impact. In *Tying Their Shoes*, Rob and Stephanie provide that rare balance: a parenting book that relates gospel reality to daily reality. *Tying Their Shoes* will be my go-to book to recommend to young parents, just as *Tying the Knot* has been the number one book I recommend to engaged couples.”

Bob Kellemen, Vice President and Academic Dean,
Faith Bible Seminary; author of *Raising Kids in the Way of Grace*

“I find this book to be very helpful for couples who really want to get it right as it relates to parenting from a biblical perspective with the right heart attitude. Rob has a unique way of doing exegesis and exposition so that it connects to the heart of individuals and the issues that need to be addressed. The stories and illustrations are heartfelt and very insightful. This book will help a lot of families.”

Nicolas Ellen, Senior Professor of Biblical Counseling, the College of Biblical Studies; senior pastor, Community of Faith Bible Church

“What a book! Rob and Stephanie engagingly apply God’s Word to the minute details of pregnancy, labor and delivery, raising babies, marital adjustments, and more. My wife, Lauren, and I commend it as a gospel-driven, hope-giving, refreshingly transparent (we loved their humble admissions of failure), and surprisingly practical biblical guide for every expectant or new parent—and all of us who love them (and are looking for gift ideas).”

Robert D. Jones, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; author of *Pursuing Peace* and *Uprooting Anger*

“I would have loved to read this book with my wife prior to the birth of our first child. It’s full of practical and wise advice from a godly couple.”

Andy Naselli, Associate Professor of New Testament and Theology, Bethlehem College & Seminary; elder, Bethlehem Baptist Church

Tying Their Shoes

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to Preparing for Parenting

Rob and Stephanie Green



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Acknowledgments

THE SUCCESS OF *Tying the Knot* has been a pleasant surprise. So far, God has used it in the lives of mentors, pastors, and those preparing for marriage. We (Rob and Stephanie Green) are very thankful. As we continue to minister to young couples in our church, we are reminded of one resource we longed to have years ago—something that would help us prepare for parenting.

We are thankful for this opportunity to bring the Scripture to bear in a practical way for those who are expecting. We are also thankful to New Growth Press for their work and the expertise that helped produce this work.

When we told one friend about the possibility of writing a book called *Tying Their Shoes*, he suggested that we have an entire series through the stages of life where the final book would be called *Tying Up Loose Ends*. We still laugh about that.

This book will have a similar style to *Tying the Knot*. Stephanie and I hope that our use of Scripture is thoughtful, wise, and exegetically sound. We also hope that we have made that truth easy to understand, winsome, and practical.

We are deeply grateful for our young couples' Adult Bible Fellowship at Faith Church. You have helped us think more carefully about the contents of this book. We have loved serving with you in the ministry of our church and thank you for allowing us to be part of your lives.

Introduction

CONGRATULATIONS! IF YOU are reading this book, you are likely expecting the arrival of a baby into your home very soon. We (Rob and Stephanie Green) are so happy for you. Psalm 127 says, “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. . . . Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!” (3, 5a). As parents, we know that human life is the greatest of all the stewardship opportunities the Lord gives. Every human life is precious because every human is made in the image of God.

We have the joy of parenting three children.¹ Our oldest child is in college. In a short time he will be on his own. Who knows, maybe our family will grow as a result of his marriage in the near future. It is hard to believe that we are old enough to have a college-aged child. While we still pretend that we are young and strong, we are watching God grow the next generation before our eyes. With each passing year, we see a little less of our generation and a little more of theirs. We rejoice as we watch him, and those like him, fulfill God’s plan for their lives. Having an adult child for the first time also means that we are actively learning how to be parents to an adult who is transitioning out of our home.

1. We knew about a fourth pregnancy, but we never had the privilege of meeting that child. The birth announcement is still in our garage. After seventeen years it is not in a prominent place, but we cannot bring ourselves to discard it.

Our middle child is in high school. He is active in athletics and with friends. It has been a joy in this season of life to exercise together—even if he lifts more weight than Rob. Our middle son is trying to determine what the Lord wants him to do with his life. This means we are actively discipling a teenager. We have to be intentional with our time because it passes much too quickly.

Our youngest child is entering middle school. Our youngest is also our only daughter, and our days include lots of hugs and butterfly kisses. We love watching her care for her dolls. Her innocence is a true delight. Her smile is still that of a little girl, and her giggles make us laugh after she has gone to bed.

Our children have been a great source of joy, encouragement, growth, and occasionally frustration. Each season of parenting is a great privilege and a high calling from the Lord. Since God makes all people in his image, they are precious in his sight. They are, of course, precious in their parents' sight as well.

Parenting children is a great joy, but parenting is not easy. The transition between a home without children to a home with a child is significant. In fact, it is earthshaking. Two people who are used to caring for themselves bring home a little baby who requires constant care. It is hard to put that experience into words. It is a joyful, terrifying, exciting, and intimidating experience.

As we began our journey we looked for resources that would help Stephanie through the pregnancy and prepare her for labor and delivery. Because Stephanie was a registered nurse, she enjoyed learning what was happening to our baby and her body as she progressed toward delivery. Even though she had been in the delivery room as a nursing student, she was interested to read what she should expect as the patient (medical professionals sometimes make the worst patients). I (Rob) was not equally excited about the medical side. However, we both wanted to know a little about caring for a baby. After all, ready or not, we were going to have a child in our home in a few months.

We found resources that advised us regarding sleep habits for both parents and babies, when it would be wise to call a doctor (new parents can be a bit dramatic, even if they were not previously), and the value of regular teaching. These concepts and resources were helpful, but not sufficient.

What we needed to prepare for this transition from the two of us to the three of us was something far more than a guide to pregnancy and a plan to survive infancy (although both were helpful). *We needed to understand how God's grace was going to help us every step of the way. We needed to see God's grace in the days when everything was going according to plan. And we needed to see God's grace when the day was crashing.*

We think this is a good place for you to pause and thank God for the grace he has given to allow your family to grow. (If God's grace sounds new or unusual, appendix B explains the gospel of Jesus Christ and how you can experience the grace of his wonderful salvation.)

Some of you were able to be get pregnant easily. Count this pregnancy as a gift of grace from the Lord. Others of you experienced God's grace while you waited for this day. Praise him for sustaining you through the months when you were not expecting. Now, praise him for the blessing of pregnancy. Praise him that today is the day you can finally read a book about preparing for parenting. Or maybe you are seeing God pour out his grace as you add to your family through adoption. Today is a great day, and we encourage you to praise the Lord for his marvelous grace.

In our case, pregnancy did not come easy. The grace that sustained us during the days of infertility and that brought us a pregnancy was the same grace we would need to steward our bundles of joy. We needed God's grace and the truths of the gospel to penetrate our deepest thoughts, fears, hopes, and expectations. We needed the hope of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ not only for eternity with the Lord, but also for those moments when our

three-week-old would not stop crying. We needed to know how two people with the ability to care for themselves could rely on God's grace to steward this new human life. We wanted to thrive and not just survive.

We had no delusions of grandeur. We knew that parenting would not be easy. We knew that there would be ups and downs and turns in all directions. But what we needed to know was how Jesus Christ and our relationship with him could influence every one of those little moments. We needed to know how Jesus could help us in the good moments—and in the challenging moments.

We needed to have confidence that the Lord was great, powerful, and able. He can make all grace abound to us in order for us to handle the events of each day in a Christlike way. We needed God to be our rock, fortress, and strong deliverer.

Admittedly, we struggled, and we continue to struggle, with knowing how to best respond when we are concerned about something, how to give truth and grace along with consequences that reflect God's wisdom, or how to discern the difference between immaturity and high-handed rebellion. But we also know that we have a God who delights in providing mercy and grace for our time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

We invite you, new parents, on a journey with us. What is written on these pages is something we have lived (in the sense that we welcomed our first child into our home twenty-one years ago) and are living right now as we continue to walk the journey of parenting. This is not esoteric knowledge. It is our prayer that the following pages will show you ways to apply God's truth in your daily life as new parents.

While certain chapters emphasize the husband's or wife's role, we have worked together on all the chapters so that they relate to both husbands and wives. We want to show that God's Word is so wonderful that it speaks to all of us.

We hope that this book serves as the continual pointer to Jesus Christ. We hope that you will enjoy this resource, and we especially hope that God will use his Word, his Spirit, and his people to help you love him, rely on him, and see him as your source of strength in the midst of constant change. We hope that by the time you have finished reading the book, you are so thankful for God's grace that you are ready to enjoy your upcoming parenting journey.

Chapter 1

Identity in Christ and Parenting

THE WORDS *MOM* and *dad* are powerful words. Parents have the opportunity and privilege to care for a child. While babies will not be able to say “mama” or “dada” for a while yet, it will not be long before they look at their mom or dad differently than they look at others. Even before children can say the words, they will communicate the special place their parents have in their heart and life. Sometimes the communication will come in the form of a smile, in the desire to be held, or even in an abrupt end to crying.

As children grow, the words *mom* and *dad* will be audible, and will be a constant reminder that God gave parents a special earthly joy—the joy of being a parent. This is a reason to rejoice. It is a special privilege. As celebration, we encourage parents to take photographs, to write in a journal, or to keep specific traditions.

In the society in which Jesus lived, children were sometimes viewed as a liability and often viewed as a lower member of society. In spite of this cultural norm, Jesus uses children as positive illustrations of faith. He encourages children to come to him and tells adults to come to him as a child does.

In our society, parents sometimes make children the center of their lives. It is possible to be intoxicated by the charms of a new little one and forget some of the more foundational elements of the

Christian life. Parents may view themselves as servants to their children, designed to respond to each request. In other words, parents sometimes find their identity in their child. The word *mom* or *dad* becomes more than a privilege—it becomes an identity, even THE identity.

We encourage new parents not to find their first identity in their children. Being a parent is a wonderful gift, an incredible stewardship, and a source of joy. However, being a parent does not change one's core identity or the source of their inner strength, or the place of stability in their life. Only Jesus Christ can provide those elements.

Therefore, in this chapter we want to expand the ideas of identity, strength, and stability and show how the gospel shapes them. The gospel prepares parents to love their child without allowing their child to change their core identity.

Identity

Our identity is how we think about ourselves. We could give many answers to the question, who are you? We could speak about our vocation. Rob can say that he is a pastor. Stephanie can say she is a registered nurse. Those statements of identity are true. They also explain how we spend a significant amount of our time. But even more than that, our vocation tells another something about how we believe God has gifted us and led us at this stage of our life. We both believed that God led us into our vocation. However, as important as our vocation is in terms of how we spend our time or energy, our vocation does not define us.

In a conversation about identity, we could speak about our family. There are many wonderful truths about our family. We are married. Praise God that in 2018, we celebrated twenty-five years of marriage. Since Stephanie and I have spent twenty-five years together, we are different people than we were when we married. Our union has brought about changes in how we function and

how we handle relationships. Marriage has refined our character. We could also speak about each of our children. Our children have enriched our lives, and the identity of parents describes a bit about who we are. Like vocational identities, family identities are significant, and they explain some facts about who we are.

When we think about identity, we could even speak of certain loyalties. Indiana has been our home for the last eighteen years. But those who know us well know that we are fans of Ohio State. We both grew up in Columbus, Ohio. Rob's parents went to Ohio State when Rob was a child. He remembers playing on the oval, walking around campus, and eating ice cream at the Baskin-Robbins on High Street. Rob was a member of the rowing team and graduated from Ohio State. Rob likes to say, "I left my blood, sweat, tears, and my parents' money at Ohio State." Even though we live in Purdue University's backyard, we are Buckeyes. Admittedly, Rob's identity as an Ohio State fan is not as important as his vocation or his family, but it is still part of who he is.

As valuable and important as vocational, family, or other loyalties might be, these identities are not large enough to encompass who we are, and they are not sufficient to carry us through the challenges and trials of life. Our vocational identities could change (and they have in our past); the company we are employed by could downsize or even close. Thus, vocations are not stable enough to help us please God and navigate life successfully. Our family identities could also change (some people have experienced unexpected deaths or unwanted divorce). Those who wrap their identities primarily in their family are crushed when these events occur. And our allegiances can disappoint us. I remember when Ohio State lost to Michigan nine out of ten years. The game always happened around Thanksgiving! We either needed to play better or move the time of year when the game was played. Do you see the danger? If our core identity is our vocation, our family, or an allegiance, we could be very disappointed and discouraged should it fail.

These identities are not stable enough or strong enough to support new parents in the midst of trials, difficulties, or fears for the future. Parents need something much better, much stronger, and much more stable. Parents who follow Jesus Christ have it. The Bible explains that believers have a wonderful, strong, and sufficient identity for all that a believer will experience.

Identity in Christ deserves an entire book, but this chapter will concentrate on five answers to the question, who are you in Christ?

1. *You are a child of God.* Paul writes, “In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:4b–6).

Ephesians 1:3–11 is a prayer of thanksgiving for the contribution that the Father, Son, and Spirit make in salvation. It is an encouraging passage that demonstrates the great love of God in drawing his people to himself. Notice the words and phrases like *love*, *purpose of his will*, and *blessed*. God does not draw people to himself by dragging them against their will. He does not force anyone to become his child.

Instead, God draws people with his love and kindness. It was through the kind intention of his will that he chose his children. God desires to call individuals to himself. God showed his love through the death of Jesus on the cross, so his children would come willingly and happily to his loving arms.

In the days when parenting feels like a blessing, remember that you are a child of the King. And in the days when you feel inadequate or the pain of your own limitations, you can still remember that you are a child of the King. Knowing that you belong to God because of his kind intention will help you as a new parent to prepare for the highs and lows of parenting.

2. *You are redeemed.* Paul writes, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished on us” (Ephesians 1:7–8a).

To be redeemed means being paid for or rescued. Since that redemption required the blood of Jesus, it is the wrath of God that had to be appeased. Sin not only separates people from a close relationship with the Father, it also places them in debt to his wrath. That is why the Bible says that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Sin earns death.

It is encouraging to remember that when Jesus died on the cross, he made a way for the debt caused by sin to be paid. The debt of God’s wrath is not something that people can pay—so Jesus paid instead.

This grace was lavished upon those who turn to Jesus. To *lavish* means to pour out in abundance. God’s grace is a lavish gift. Most people can tell the difference between gifts that are given in abundance and gifts that are given to appease. One focuses upon the minimum, and the other focuses upon the maximum. I think the concept of doing just enough to get by is easy to understand. A husband, forgetting an important date on the calendar, drives to the store to buy the obligatory card and gift. But his wife probably knows, and he certainly knows, that he is scrambling. Stephanie used to work Christmas Eve at a retail store when she was in high school, and she saw a number of desperate husbands scrambling to avoid a Christmas without gifts. They were doing just enough to get by. When one gives in abundance, the person invests time, energy, thought, and sacrifice. The Lord lavished his grace on his grace upon his people.

Jesus Christ’s death resulted in redemption for all who trust in him.

3. *You are forgiven.* Ephesians 1:7 also emphasizes the forgiveness from sin that Jesus secured. The ideas of adoption, redemption, and forgiveness are very close in meaning. They are like looking at

the doctrine of salvation from slightly different perspectives. When a woman receives her engagement ring, she often looks at it to enjoy the beauty presented by each angle. The light reflects a little differently and the vibrancy of the colors change, but it is still the same ring. The gospel is best appreciated when one sees it from many perspectives. It is easy to go about the day not thinking too deeply about forgiveness. However, the more people think about the forgiveness that God has given them, the more they are able to live for him.

Because of God's forgiveness, guilt over something you did or did not do does not have to cripple you. Instead, believers live in the state of God's forgiveness. When they sin, Christians need to acknowledge it and ask the Lord for forgiveness—and they will receive it. New parents might struggle with guilt over perceived bad choices. Remembering God's forgiveness will help them keep their feet firmly planted in Christ so that they can properly respond to the next moment.

God's forgiveness also reminds believers that they are free to forgive others. During pregnancy, spouses may respond to each other in unkind or unthoughtful ways. Husbands might think their wives are orchestrating some emotional roller coaster to make their lives challenging. Wives might act like their husbands should meet all their demands for ice cream, tacos, extra pillows, quiet music, loud music, or other desires. In those moments, spouses can speak harshly to each other. One spouse might ask for forgiveness. Knowing that God forgives and that believers live in a state of forgiveness allows them to forgive others and to meet each moment with a fresh attitude.

4. *You are promised an inheritance.* Paul continues, describing how believers “were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13b–14).

Hope comes from help that is available today, and the blessings that will come in the future. A believer in Christ is never without

hope. A believer can feel like there is no hope when they forget who they are in Christ. When they remember that God has promised an inheritance and the guarantee for that inheritance is the Holy Spirit, there is hope. The Lord did not base the inheritance on human wisdom or works. Instead, God makes and guarantees that promise.

5. *You have been made alive.* Paul explains reconciliation between God and man in Ephesians 2, saying, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. . . . But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:1–2a, 4–5).

In order for people to be reconciled to God, they have to be made alive. People need God to breathe spiritual life into them.

Dear friends, caring for a new baby and raising a child in the teaching and discipline of the Lord is not easy. It is joyful, but difficult. There are days before the child is born when you might feel inadequate. There are days you might wonder whether you are ready. After the baby is born, you may wonder whether you are doing everything right. There will be moments when you are unsure. It is even possible that you might react in surprisingly hurtful ways in moments of frustration.

Finding your identity in Christ will help you rest in the glorious gospel. It will help you thank the Lord for his adoption, redemption, forgiveness, inheritance, and regeneration. It will help you to pray knowing that you need the Lord and his help for every step of your journey. Finding your identity in Christ will encourage you to ask questions like the following: Am I doing my very best for Jesus by his grace? Am I living out my identity in Christ in this moment? Am I acting on what Jesus has already told me or am I trying to prove my worth? When you are confident that you are free in Christ, then you can rest in him, trust in him, and rely on him in all the little moments of life.

We hope it is clear that while the identity of being mom or dad is a true delight and privilege, it is not stable or strong enough to sustain you through the blessings or the challenges of raising a child. New parents need Jesus for their stability and significance.

You might wonder whether reflecting on our identity in Christ provides the answer to what we should do in a specific situation. While it may not give us a textbook set of answers, it will put us in the right mind-set to be a humble servant before the Lord, seeking his guidance and help.

Knowledge and Power

Ephesians 1—3 helps believers understand their identity in Christ so that they are in the best position to live out the commands of Ephesians 4—6. Paul repeatedly prays during his discussion of identity. Ephesians 1:3–14 is a prayer of thanksgiving; Ephesians 1:15–23 is a prayer for knowledge; Ephesians 3:1, 14–21 is a prayer for power. In the first three chapters, outside of the greeting, only Ephesians 2 and Ephesians 3:2–13 are not prayers.

When Paul outlines what believers need to do (Ephesians 4—6), he emphasizes a lot of praying (Ephesians 1—3). Believers know how to function by living dependently on the Lord through prayer. While this book is written primarily for married couples who are welcoming their first child into the home, the following truths will be revisited many, many, many times throughout the parenting life. Here are a few requests from Ephesians 1—3 that believers should be praying today.

1. Knowledge about God

Paul prays “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him” (Ephesians 1:17).

Knowing more about God helps people understand his greatness. His sovereignty comforts believers because they know he is in control. God's presence comforts Christians because they are never alone. His ability to heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead reminds Christians of their ultimate hope. God ensures that temptations are not more than believers can handle with his help (1 Corinthians 10:13). The more believers learn that God is characterized by covenant love, grace, and compassion, the more they are reminded that God cares for them and provides what they need most. Knowledge of God breeds confidence to do what he has commanded.

2. Self-Knowledge

Paul continues his prayer, "having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18).

Believers also need help thinking about themselves properly. It is so easy to either think too much of oneself (I am awesome!) or to think too little (I am horrible!). Paul's prayer request is for believers to know how God actually sees them. I (Rob) will speak for myself. I need God's help to see myself the way God sees me. Left to my own devices, I am tempted to think of myself according to the moment. If today is good, I am good; if today is not good, neither am I. Thankfully, the Lord allows me to reflect on how he sees me.

3. Knowledge of God's Power Working

Paul concludes this prayer saying, "and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:19–20).

The power that works in the life of a Christian is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him at the Father's

right hand. Of all the powers seen in the world, the power to raise someone from the dead is the strongest. Nonetheless, Christians can forget this power. They can look at specific circumstances and assume that things will not change. They can despair when they do not see God working in the way they want him to. Remembering Christ's resurrection power gives believers hope.

Understanding more about God, how he sees us, and his power, leads us to request his power. In Ephesians 3, Paul outlines two ways that God's power can change the lives of believers.

First, Paul prays asking that "he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:16b–17a).

This is a request that God's power would result in spiritual growth. Imagine purchasing a new home. Even in a custom-build, the house will not have all the personal touches that make it a home. Over time, homeowners add paint colors, decorations, bed coverings, dishes, and pictures. Even the minor dings in the walls make it feel like home. Since our boys are older now, play wrestling normally ends in damaged or broken things. There is a small dent in our oven from one such match, and two doors are bent ever so slightly inward. Those things, while needing to be repaired if we move, are reminders that we are home. On occasion the sight of one such ding results in a comment like, "Dad, do you remember when your face hit those doors and bent them?" "Yes, son, I remember." As believers grow and mature, Christ makes his home continually more comfortable in their hearts.

Parents need Christ to dwell in their hearts. Anger often tempts parents. Fatigue can lead to complaining, especially after a long night. The difficulty of Sunday mornings may tempt some parents to abandon Christian community. As believers grow, they will be able to see these situations differently and respond differently because Christ is granting them inner strength each day.

Secondly, Paul prays for the power to understand the love of God, asking “that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17b–19).

Believers are rooted and grounded in God’s love. However, there is far more to comprehend. Because God’s love is limitless, Christians never stop learning. Others can help. Spouses can talk about God’s love together. Active participation in a local church can help too.

When parents lean on Christ’s power, the conversations spouses have with each other will be more gospel centered. When parents rely on the knowledge of God, they will be in the right position to make wise decisions. They can provide quality care for their child and for one another. No book can tell parents exactly what is happening when their child is crying in the middle of the night, but we know that as parents rely on the Lord’s power working in them, the decisions at two o’clock in the morning about how to respond to their child will be more thoughtful.

Stability

The gospel of Jesus Christ provides stability. Believers know what the Lord has done for them, and they know that knowledge and power are accessible to them. These truths provide a stable foundation. Life can feel chaotic, but when believers control their heart and mind by reflecting on the gospel, then they know they have help. As the psalmist explained, “From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber” (Psalm 121:1b–3). That is a great promise at two o’clock in the morning when it seems like everyone else is sleeping.

Change brings instability. Instability brings fear. It can be scary to be pregnant, to have a child, to be a parent. There are many unknowns, but the Lord Jesus who died for his people, who intercedes for them, who gave them his Holy Spirit, will not abandon you in parenthood. The Lord Jesus will always be a rock, a fortress, a strong tower, and a great deliverer. When you reflect on your identity, the accessibility of knowledge and power, and the security Christ brings by being with you, you will be in the best position to respond to what the Lord allows in your life.

Exercises

1. Complete the following sentence with the ten words that you believe best fit: I am _____. Then, look for a passage of Scripture that would support your statement (For example, I am forgiven [Ephesians 1:7]).
2. Pray with your spouse three times this week. Ask that God would help you understand more fully who he is, who you are, and the depth of his power, and that this would fill you with confidence and peace as you await this big life change.
3. Pray with your spouse three times this week, and ask that you would notice God exercising his power in your life. Ask him to grow you and make you more like Christ. Ask him to help you understand aspects of his love that you have never seen before.
4. Since this chapter is a foundation for all that comes later, discuss weekly as a couple your identity statements, the things God is teaching you, and the ways you are seeing God's power displayed in your life. Consider posting a couple passages of Scripture in the nursery so you can easily refer to these truths.