



# The Holding Stage

If you're caring for a child between the ages of 0-4, you are in the *Holding Stage*—a foundational season of connection, trust-building, and love. In this stage, you literally hold your child—but you also *hold* the child's developing sense of identity, safety, and value. Your consistent love reflects God's character and forms a bridge for your child to one day understand who God is.

**"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."**

**Luke 2:52**

## Tips for Caregivers

- Make eye contact often—your child learns love and safety through your gaze.
- Use repetition—familiar words and routines make children feel secure.
- Tell stories in a calm, joyful tone; your voice is your child's first and favorite sound.
- Be consistent. Small, steady rhythms matter more than perfect moments.
- Adapt the story to your unique journey—birth, adoption, fostering, or guardianship.

## Growth Model



### Plant

Every interaction (touch, word, play) is a seed that shapes your child's world.



### Root

Your child feels safe, seen, and secure with you.



### Growth

Repetition and routines with your child reinforce learning and connection.



### Fruit

Your child responds with trust, joy, and contentment.

# Activity: Tell Me a Story

## STEP 1 (The Why)

Storytelling helps your children feel safe, seen, and loved. When you tell the story of the moment you met your child, you're not just sharing memories—you're shaping identity. Your voice, your eyes, and your presence communicate belonging long before your children can understand the words. These simple moments teach them: *I am loved. I have a place. I am part of a bigger story.* And as they grow, those truths become the foundation for understanding God's love—the greatest story of all.

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## STEP 2 (Activity Directions)

- 1 **Tell your child the story of how you came to know and love him/her—your hopes, prayers, and first moments together. Repeating the story again and again helps your child feel cherished and rooted in your family's story.**
    - Where were you?
    - What did you feel?
    - What did you pray or hope for?
    - What did you notice first?
  - 2 **Make eye contact.**
    - Smile, pause, and let your tone convey warmth and joy.
  - 3 **Repeat often.**
    - Children love hearing the same story—it builds safety and security.
  - 4 **Help make the story his or her own.**
    - The story of how you became a family is sacred and powerful. Help your child internalize the story and understand the love and joy his/her presence brought when he/she joined your family.
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## Encouragement

Your storytelling plants deep roots of security and love. These sacred, simple moments shape your children's identities, showing them who they are and how deeply they are loved—by you and by God.