

Changing Your World
One Diaper
at a **Time** 

Marla Taviano



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**The
Beginning
of Baby**





Baby in the Works

Because you're reading this book, chances are you already have a little one in tow. But we're going to back up just a bit before we talk about actual real-live babies.

Maybe you're pregnant with your first child at this very moment. Congratulations, Mama! But let's back up even further than that.

Every woman's journey to pregnancy is different. And no, I don't mean the trip Mr. Sperm takes to pay the conjugal visit to Ms. Egg. That's pretty standard (with a few exceptions). I'm talking about the weeks, months, and years before the big conception party.

We're going to start our conversation at a time when that little baby of yours is just that—a conversation. An idea in your head.

Let me begin by asking you a question: What's the plan, Stan? Yes, I know your name is probably not Stan. In fact, I can almost guarantee it's not.

But the question is still directed at you. Do you have a plan? A plan for your life? A plan for a family? A plan for your future kids (right down to their hair color and giftedness)?

Maybe your plan goes (or went) a little something like this: Girl meets boy. They fall in love. Get engaged. Married. Get to know one another for a couple years. Look in each other's eyes one day and

“know that it’s time.” Toss the birth control, make passionate love, take a test, share the happy news.

Nine blissful months later...

Now back to our questions. Let me ask you another one. How many things in your life typically go according to plan?

I don’t keep exact records, but it seems to me that very little in my life has panned out exactly as I planned it out.

Take last fall for example. I planned a delightful vacation in the Smoky Mountains for our little family of five. I planned a romantic stay in a cozy cabin with lots of hikes up peaceful trails and brilliant fall foliage.

I did *not* plan for 30-degree weather and 50 mile-per-hour winds at the top of the mountain. Baby and I sat in the van while Daddy and the two older ones froze their buns off and about got blown off a cliff.

I did *not* plan for hours of sitting in our vehicle in stopped traffic with bored, restless children as scads of tourists left their cars running in the middle of the road to photograph a family of black bears.

I did *not* plan for my ten-month-old daughter to vomit in the van all over everything, miles from our cabin, three days in succession.

After ten years of marriage, I planned to be settled in one spot and sitting financially pretty. I did *not* plan to move nine times or throw away money on cars that broke or houses we sold for less than we paid for them.

As a young girl, I had a plan in place for my future family. I would marry at 20, wait a year, have four kids by the time I was 26, and there you go. The perfect plan.

I did *not* plan on trying for eight months to get pregnant with baby number one or trying for almost a year with number three before having a miscarriage.

So how about you, friend? How are your plans coming along?

Maybe the conception of your baby came before your wedding. Not what you had planned.

Or you found out a year into marriage that your husband really

didn't want children at all—and he's not budging. Not what you had planned.

Or maybe you found yourself in tears for the sixteenth month in a row because you still weren't pregnant. Not what you had planned.

Maybe your first pregnancy ended in a devastating miscarriage. Or maybe you're pregnant, but after eight months, you're still reeling from the nausea. Maybe you gave birth to your baby—a little girl—but something is wrong, terribly wrong. Not what you had planned.

Maybe your baby is healthy, but six months later, *you* aren't—not at all. The depression is still hanging over you like a thick, dark cloud. Not what you had planned.

Is God still in control?

I know He is, friend. I know it. God had (and has!) a plan for my life—and for yours! I couldn't always figure out what God was doing—maybe you can't either—but looking back, I see the pieces fitting together. And they've made something beautiful.

Starting a Family

In the olden days, family planning was a no-brainer. You got married, started sleeping together, and if the good Lord willed it, the babies started popping out sooner than later, over and over and over again until the ol' gray mare (you) up and quit.

Nowadays, for better or worse, we put a lot more thought into the whole process. When should we start a family? How should we prepare in the meantime? How many children do we want and can we afford? Which college-prep preschool should they attend?

You'll find that nearly everyone and her sister has an opinion about each one of these things. And they aren't afraid to share, no sir.

The “helpful” parenting advice starts well in advance of the birth of your first child. Shoot, don't be surprised if it starts way before conception. Get used to it.

These people aren't afraid to ask you all manner of personal questions. They simply have no sense of boundaries.

“When you gonna have a baby? Y'all have been married for what,

eight months already? What you waitin' for? You're not gettin' any younger!"

At the other end of the spectrum are the career women who think you're out of your mind to even *consider* having a child until you've climbed the corporate ladder, invested millions in your retirement account, traveled the world, and built your dream home.

The way I look at it, only three people really matter in this huge decision when to start a family—you, your husband, and God. Taking advice from others is fine—even desirable—as long as you're taking it from the right people. People who are wise and godly, who know what they're talking about and have an objective opinion to offer. Not people with a hidden (or obvious) agenda (or people who have grandchildren at stake in your decision).

For some women, the answer is simple. Get married, have sex, get pregnant. Then get pregnant again. And again.

For others, the solution isn't so cut-and-dried. Some women want to work on their marriages for a while before they have babies. Some have a career that means a lot to them. Some just don't feel ready to be mothers. Some are ready but can't get pregnant. There's a lot to think about.

Start a family soon after your honeymoon, and you might find yourself wishing you'd had more time to cement your marriage before baby bulldozed onto the scene. (If baby came on the scene before your marriage, you *really* know what I'm talking about.)

Make the decision to wait five or ten years, and you might find the transition to parenthood to be one never-ending bout with what feels like culture shock and jet lag.

There's no right way to start a family. If you and your husband already know (and agree on) your family plan, go with it. If not, spend time in prayer and lots of honest communication.

The Family Plan (Subject to Change)

Where do we come up with the plans we make? How do we decide how many kids we'd like to have and when we'd like to start having them?

A number of things come into play: your personality, your dreams for a career or ministry, and how you feel about the family you grew up in. Of course, throw your husband's ideas into the mix, and you might find this family-planning thing a bit challenging.

I asked some married women without children to share their plans with me. I was interested to see how many kids they wanted and why.

“Since I'm from a family of eight, I am leaning toward having a larger family, but we'll see how the first one goes.”

“We both came from a family of four kids and aren't sure we want to try to handle that many ourselves. It seems odd that we would only want three when we were both the fourth child in our families, but at this point, we still only want three.”

“I would like four kids. My husband came from a big family and doesn't argue about how many kids I want. He just says we'll see. He's not into planning out his entire future before it even happens like I am.”

“I'd like four to six kids, but he wants two-ish. I came from a family of five kids, and I love having that many siblings.”

“My husband and I are leaving the number of kids completely up to God. We both strongly disagree with birth control, as we believe only God truly knows what's best for us. We're hoping for a bunch of kids.”

“I see myself having three or four kids. My sister and I didn't have any other siblings growing up, and we were lonely. We used to beg our parents to have more kids. At one time my husband said we were going to have thirteen children. Now he says eight.”

“I come from a family of two, so that is a familiar, comfortable number for me. The idea of more than two kids overwhelms me.”

“We envision having four kids. We’ve evolved into this number over time. We both feel God is leading us to adopt internationally, and we’d love to adopt two children so none of our kids is the sole ‘different’ face in the family pictures. So at least two adopted plus two biological makes at least four!”

“We both want a lot of kids. Eight seems good.”

“I’ve always wanted a large family, but my husband comes from a family of eight kids, so he knows that a big family has drawbacks. My mother-in-law has actually been trying to talk me off the big-family ledge, saying that I will not have a life if I have more than four. We’ll probably end up with three. I always go back and forth between a big family and a smaller one because I would like to have a career too.”

“I would like to have at least three—biological and/or adopted. My husband would like to have an even number. He was the oldest of three boys and felt like the younger two always ganged up on him.”

“We would like to have one or two kids someday. I am an only child, and my husband is the youngest of seven in a blended family. I grew up with countless opportunities he did not. So we agree that we only want two kids tops so that we can always provide them with some of life’s pleasures and luxuries.”

“We’re thinking two or three, but we’re going to play it by ear. I think God will let us know how many we should have. If we have three boys, adopting a little girl might be in order. Or if we have little hellions, we might stop at two!”

“I’d like to have three, possibly four kids. I think five (like my parents had) were a bit difficult to handle as we all entered the lovely teen years. I want enough kids so they can enjoy each other and learn to share, but I want to be

able to pay attention to each of them (and have enough money that they don't feel destitute). It's hard enough to pay attention to one kid, so maybe we'll go with three. Or two. Or none."

As I mentioned, I originally wanted four kids. We have three and are perfectly content—unless God should lead us to adopt in the future.

When I was pregnant with my first, I remember telling a wise woman that I wanted four kids just like my mom. "Honey," she said kindly, "four kids today isn't what it was in your mama's day."

Whatever, I thought. Glad I didn't say it out loud.

As a general rule, the number of children women say they want before they have kids is equal to or greater than how many they actually have. Much less common is the woman who increases her ideal family size after the fact. Quite often, we love the idea of having tons of kids. The reality of it is a whole new ball game.

I'm no prophet, but I'm generally pretty good at predicting how many children certain women will be able to handle. When they give me a staggering figure, I smile and say, "Sounds great!" Then I sit back and watch.

Big families are awesome—a true blessing from God—but they take a special kind of mama (and daddy!) and an incredible amount of sacrifice. Like it or not, this *isn't* our mama's day. But that's all I'm going to say about that.

Ready...Set...Go!

So when should you start this family of yours? You should probably be ready for kids on your wedding night. I personally believe that using family planning methods is fine, but God reserves the right to bless your womb in spite of them.

Your choice will depend on your circumstances, your finances, your hubby, your goals, how many children you want, and all that.

I have one sweet friend who says she's too selfish right now to

have kids. (She is *not* selfish, but generous and kind.) She and her husband have been married for six years, and she thinks “you should wait until you can selflessly give up everything you have to love your child. I think people prematurely get baby envy, have kids, and make lousy parents. Hopefully, I’ll feel ready at some point, but currently, I acknowledge that I’m selfish, and I like it just being me and my husband still.”

The bad news is this: Selflessly giving up your life for your child will never be easy. In fact, it will probably only get harder as time goes by.

One woman (married five years) seemed to grasp this concept. “Our goal is to have our debt paid off and have a strong marriage before we have children,” she says. “However, it seems the longer we are married without kids, the more comfortable and content we become, and the harder it will be to transition to the phase of having children.”

Well said. Quite true.

Selflessness just isn’t a whole lot of fun any way you look at it. We like ourselves. And we like doing life our own way. Thankfully, in God’s economy, giving yourself away is the only thing that brings true fulfillment in the end.

So ask God for His wisdom. When your plan meshes with His, you know for a fact you’re on the right route.

But remember, having a plan in place doesn’t guarantee it will come to fruition.

The Waiting Game

When I was young, my Sunday school teacher told me that God answers prayers three ways—yes, no, and wait. I can usually handle yes and no. I’m not so good at wait. But God has taught me many things while delaying the fulfillment of my dreams.

I remember a time when I was desperate for a simple yes, but God’s answer was a four-letter word—w-a-i-t.

Here are some excerpts from my journal nearly a decade ago:

August: “I wish with all my heart that I were pregnant. I can’t remember ever wanting something as much as I want a baby right now. *God, bless my womb and give us a baby!*”

September: “I want a baby. I cannot imagine how incredibly unreal and amazing it will feel when I find out I’m pregnant. Yikes! We want a baby!”

October: “Today’s my birthday. Happy birthday to me. It would be a lot happier if I had a little baby growing inside of me. Oh, I want a baby!”

November: “I never completely give up hope until I have at least two negative pregnancy tests. I think God is making me wait so I will appreciate His precious gift even more.”

December: “I can’t believe this year is almost over. I want so badly to get pregnant!”

January: “This is our sixth month of trying for a baby. I really wish I could get pregnant! I know God’s timing is best, but it doesn’t make me want a baby any less. I went through a rough time over New Year’s. It seems like everyone is pregnant but me.”

February: “I’m crying because I want a baby. Seven months is a long time to keep getting your hopes up and then having them dashed to little bits. *God, I know You have many things to teach me through this. I know it will all make sense to me someday. Help me not to miss out on Your blessings because I’m feeling sorry for myself.*”

March: “I want to have a baby so badly. *Lord, please, please, please let me get pregnant this month! I don’t know what I’ll do if I don’t. Well, I know what I’ll do. I’ll trust You and try, try again. It’s just so hard. I want a baby!*”

We started trying in August, and I got pregnant in March. I’m

so thankful I kept a record of my thoughts and feelings during those eight months. Looking back, God's hand in my life was so evident.

After I had given birth to my first baby, I had a friend who was trying to get pregnant. After just one month, she gave me a sob story about how depressed she felt, how devastated she was that she didn't get pregnant right away.

I hope the look on my face didn't betray the feelings in my heart at that moment. I felt like smacking her.

"Are you kidding me?" I wanted to scream. "*One month?* Are you for stinking *real?* You tried for *one month*, and you're acting like your life is over? Give me a break!"

And then I realized how small and insignificant my eight-month wait must have seemed to another friend who had been trying for a year and a half without a positive pregnancy test. Or my friend who tried for five years and then adopted. Or my friend who recently learned that her husband is physically unable to father a child. And on and on the list goes.

Looking back, the two times it took me months and months to conceive seem like drops in the bucket. And they were. But at the time, I experienced very real disappointment and pain. And I learned lessons I never would have learned otherwise.

Waiting for a baby was one of the most trying experiences in my life. It nearly consumed me at times. But God knew what He was doing. If patience is a virtue, I was hopelessly un-virtuous.

Eventually, I learned to give complete control of my life over to God. I couldn't do a single thing to make my dreams come true. I had to acknowledge that I was nothing without Him.

Thanks, Hannah!

During those months, God spoke to me through the Bible story of Hannah—a woman who longed for a baby but couldn't get pregnant. I was struck by the number of other big Bible names—Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Elizabeth—who were barren for a time before God opened their wombs.

This infertility theme runs throughout the pages of Scripture. God is not a cruel dictator who withholds our desires from us out of spite. He is a loving Father who knows that learning to patiently wait will ultimately strengthen our character and make us more like Him.

I journaled a prayer to God just a couple weeks before I got pregnant, not knowing, of course, that He was just about ready to fill my ever-lovin' uterus with an eensy-teensy babe.

Devotions at school yesterday morning were about Hannah crying out to You to bless her womb and give her a baby. I know what she's going through, Lord. (Except that I'm my husband's only wife.)

I read her story again today when I woke up. I know—I'm a glutton for punishment. I just love reading about her misery and crying out to You because that's what I'm feeling right now.

The hard part is this—her story has a happy ending. I don't know yet if mine will. God, I want to promise You all sorts of things. Like, just give me a baby, and I'll name him Samuel (Samantha if it's a girl) and send him to the temple once he's weaned.

It's easy for me to say. It might be harder to actually do. I know one thing—I'm having a hard time giving You my baby right now. I should put this whole baby thing in Your hands and say, "Your will be done, Father."

Yet I keep clinging to my dreams. I'm not willing to give them up.

God, please help me surrender this to You. I'm hoping once I do, You'll give it all right back to me. But there's always the possibility that You won't. Help me trust that You truly know what's best for me even though I can't imagine that being anything but a baby.

I wonder how long Hannah struggled with infertility. It says

she longed for a child year after year. Give me the strength to wait as long as You need me to.

Me, Myself, and I

TTC (Trying To Conceive) time can turn into such a selfish thing so quickly. It did for me anyway. I became consumed with myself—my body, my cycle, my desires, my disappointment.

Meeting my husband's sexual and emotional needs was difficult. So was being excited for friends and relatives who were getting pregnant. I had a hard time pursuing my relationship with God when He wasn't giving me what I wanted.

Yet God, in His goodness, didn't give up on me.

He showed me ways to unselfishly love my husband instead of just using him for his sperm. (You can read about that in chapter 13 of my book *Is That All He Thinks About?* I do hate to repeat myself!)

God also exposed my jealousy for what it was. Here's another prayer from my journal:

Lord, I looked up the words "jealousy" and "envy" today to see what the difference is between the two.

I am ashamed to admit that I am feeling jealous, which, apparently, is much worse than feeling envious. Envy is where you want something that someone else has. If you both had it, you'd be okay with that. Jealousy says, "I want it, and I don't want you to have it."

Someone I know is pregnant. I don't want her to be pregnant. I want to be pregnant. I happen to know that she wasn't even trying.

I am seething with jealousy. Lord, this emotion inside of me is so alive that it scares me. I can feel it eating away at the inside of my soul. Am I really such a terrible person that I would have such nasty feelings in my heart?

Evidently so.

It's unfair, and I'm angry. I'm the one who should have a baby in my belly, not her!

I don't know how You're going to strip these sinful feelings of jealousy away, but I need You to do it. I can't give it up to You right now. I need You to force it away from me.

You have shown me what a rotten, sinful heart I have. Help me to love this person, Lord. True love does not choose jealousy.

Please give me a second chance.

And God helped me see that life isn't all about me getting what I want. More important things are at stake.

As I looked back on my life, I realized I'd been pretty spoiled. I didn't eat off of silver platters, but kind of.

No, we weren't rich growing up, but I've never lacked for anything. If I needed something, I got it. And if I wanted something bad enough, I did extra chores and saved up money until I could afford it. In school, if I wanted good grades, I got them. If I wanted a boyfriend, I got one.

Then all that changed. I wanted a baby. And I couldn't have it.

Is that the point? I asked the Lord. *Are You trying to show me what life is like when I don't get everything I want? Are You trying to teach me a lesson I could never learn if I was never denied anything?*

The denial hurt, but it was growing me. It built up a layer of perseverance and character in my soul that never existed before. It sliced through that veneer of self-confidence, ripped it to shreds, and put a coating of God-reliance in its place.

I was a better person for the waiting.

Keep the Eraser Handy

I remember being in high school and wanting things in my life to work out in a certain way. I clung to Proverbs 16:3: "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed."

I had my plans all laid out. I simply told God, *I commit this to*

You, and expected Him to honor part B of the verse—“your plans will succeed.”

My theology was obviously a bit skewed. Committing something to the Lord is somewhat more complicated than stating what you want and tacking a Bible phrase at the end of it for good measure.

In retrospect, I'm so glad I didn't actually get some of the things I asked God for and “committed” to Him.

Funny how I skimmed right over some of the verses around Proverbs 16:3. Like verse 1—“To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the LORD comes the reply of the tongue.”

And verse 9—“In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.”

Planning your life is a noble thing as long as you do it in pencil and not with a Sharpie. And get the biggest pink eraser you can find, hand it to God, and say, “You reserve the right to change this plan however You see fit. And I promise not to throw fits when eraser shavings start falling all over the place.”

Could It Be?

On a lighter note, in all those months of trying to get pregnant, I became the queen of imaginary symptoms. I read too much, plain and simple. I had chapter 1 of *The Girlfriend's Guide to Pregnancy* practically memorized before I even got knocked up.

Every month—same. I micro-analyzed every single thing that happened in my body from ovulation to when my period was supposed to start. I tried my hardest to make each bodily function or reaction fit into my list of early pregnancy symptoms.

Something would smell funny in the fridge. Sensitivity to odors is a pregnancy symptom. Maybe I'm pregnant! (Or it could be the onions on the leftover pizza.)

I'd feel really drowsy in the middle of the day. I just wanted to take a nap. Fatigue—another pregnancy symptom! (Of course, I went to bed at 2:00 a.m. the past two nights and started my day as a teacher a mere four hours later. That might explain the tiredness.)

I'd been peeing a lot lately. Frequent urination! Pregnant women pee constantly! (Yeah, and so do women who have been drinking 64 ounces of water a day to clear up their skin. So much for that.)

I'd feel a little crampy. Phantom menstrual cramps—another symptom! (Of course, they could be *real* menstrual cramps. Yep, that's what they are.)

Why couldn't I just take a hint? Not pregnant! Not pregnant! Not pregnant! Most of those symptoms weren't going to come until after I'd missed a period anyway. And I hadn't missed any!

Who was I kidding? I was only driving myself insane!

And Then...

And then it happened. I got pregnant. Pregnant!

My last period had started at the beginning of March. We were preparing to make a move for Gabe's job and were scoping out apartments in our new town. According to my brilliant calculations, we would be in a hotel room during the best two days to try. How perfect!

Except that Gabe was sick the first night and had dislocated his shoulder the next. No cigar. (No sex either.)

Our last week in our old apartment was filled with late nights of packing and not much sex. (Okay, none.)

On our first night in our new apartment (much, much too late in my cycle to make a baby, according to my ingenious estimations), we celebrated our move with some lovin'. And let me tell you, it was the first time in a long time we had made love just for the heck of it. It was quite a night.

I expected to start my period April fourth or fifth. When I didn't, I took a test on the seventh. It was negative. I was bummed, but not surprised. You can't expect to get pregnant if you don't have sex when you're ovulating, eh? And I had been sick for a week with the flu and a sinus infection. That would explain the delay in my period.

So on April 11, I'd been well for four days and still hadn't started. At first, I was just mad. "I wish I would start already! How am I going to know when I can try again if I don't start my period?"

Then the unthinkable occurred to me. What if I had miscalculated my cycle (no!) and taken the test too soon? What if I took another test, just in case?

I talked to Gabe and he suggested waiting at least two days so I wouldn't waste a test. This hobby of mine was getting expensive.

I agreed to wait. Then as soon as he left for work that morning, I went (peed on a stick) behind his back.

Three minutes later, I took a peek. Negative. Just like all the others. Disappointed again. I literally had the test in my hand, suspended over the trash can, milliseconds away from letting it drop, when...wait! The light bounced off the test window at just the right angle, and I noticed what looked like a really faint line. My overeager eyes were just playing tricks, right?

I brought it close to my face (gross, I know). There was a *line*. A faint, faint, faint line. And the directions said that even if the line is really light, you're probably pregnant. I just stared and stared at that line, wondering if I was imagining it. And somehow, it seemed to be getting darker.

It was definitely there. A line! But, the directions also said that if you wait too long to read the test, something that *looks* like a line could start to appear. Aaaahhh!!!

I ended up taking three pregnancy tests. All of them showed a line, but each line was really faint. So I looked up a doctor in the phone book and scheduled an appointment. She gave me a urine test and told me it was positive, "but the line is very faint" (ya think?), so she wanted me to have a blood test too.

The lab technician told me the blood test results would take two days. Are you kidding me? But the kind lady at the checkout counter told me in hushed tones that I'd probably know by the following day.

At 9:40 the next morning, I got a phone call.

"May I speak to Marla Taviano?"

"That's me."

"Well, we have the results of your bloodwork."

"And...?"

“And you are.”

Breathe. Breathe. “I’m what?”

“You’re pregnant.”

“I’m pregnant?”

“You’re pregnant!”

“Woooooohooo! Thank you so much!”

I dropped to my knees, thanked the Lord, called Gabe at work, and jumped around the house like a lunatic until I collapsed on the couch in exhaustion.

Sharing the Happy News

I know lots of people wait at least three months before they share their news. I honestly don’t know how they do it. Notoriously bad secret keepers, Gabe and I didn’t have a prayer. We waited all of three days.

We were heading to Gabe’s parents’ house for the weekend. His grandparents were celebrating their fiftieth anniversary. Our plan was to tell his parents Friday night and the rest of his family on Saturday. We’d tell my parents at the anniversary party on Sunday.

Our Friday night plan was ingenious. Rock (Gabe’s dad) had hooked up our washer and dryer for us when we moved into our new apartment three weeks before. He had been concerned that it might leak. It hadn’t, but we worked it into our plan.

Gabe and I loaded up a garbage bag of “dirty laundry,” which actually consisted of clean towels, socks, and baby clothes. When Rock got home from work at 11:30 p.m., we would bring in the clothes, look all frustrated, and say, “Can we do our laundry here? Our washer is leaking all over the place.”

Gabe would begin “sorting” the laundry, they’d see the baby clothes, and...you get the picture.

Well, we were still visiting at Gabe’s grandma’s house when his dad got off work. As we sat talking in the living room, Rock asked me, “So, how is your washer working? Has it leaked at all?”

Oh dear. This was not part of the plan! I rolled my eyes and shrugged. “We’ll talk about it later,” I said.

“What happened?” Rock asked, concerned. “It’s leaking, isn’t it?”

“We can talk about it when we get home,” I said. “Don’t worry about it.”

We left for Gabe’s parents’ house soon afterward. In the car, I told Gabe about my conversation with his dad. We laughed.

We pulled in, and Gabe lugged in the bag of laundry. “Is it okay if we do some laundry here?” he asked. He started pulling clothes out of the bag.

“Don’t you guys have a washer?” his brother asked.

His mom pulled me into the laundry room and wanted me to show her exactly what had gone wrong. I didn’t want to miss Gabe pulling out the baby clothes, so I made up something about some hose or pipe and rushed back out to Gabe and Rock.

Gabe was holding up a onesie. My stomach was full of butterflies. “Why are you washing these *now*?” Gabe asked me, according to plan.

“Because I didn’t want to wait until December,” I replied.

No one got it. They all just stood there.

Finally, Gabe’s brother asked, “Are you *pregnant*?”

“No,” Gabe’s dad said.

I smiled.

“*Are you?*” his dad asked as his mom ran out from the laundry room.

We nodded. Everybody hugged. And brushed away happy tears.

We couldn’t wait to tell the rest of Gabe’s family. The following evening, we were all sitting around the living room at his grandparents’ house eating ice cream. Talk had turned to our upcoming family vacation in North Carolina that summer.

Gabe cleared his throat and asked for everyone’s attention. “We have a question for all of you,” he began. “Would it be okay if we brought a guest to Ocean Isle this summer?”

I enjoyed watching the strange and puzzled looks all around the room. No one seemed too thrilled with the idea, but I could tell no one wanted to say anything.

“We thought there would be room with Lori and Jenny,” Gabe said. Lori and Jenny were sisters who would be sharing a room in our condo.

Gabe’s grandma piped up, “If you want to bring a friend, he can sleep in *your* bed!” She pointed at Gabe and me.

I stood up and put my hands on my belly. “Don’t worry,” I said, smiling. “We’ll keep her right in here the whole time.”

More hearty congrats and hugs.

The next day was the big fiftieth bash. I was getting nervous waiting for my parents to arrive. If my plan was going to work, it was imperative that I catch them before they came inside. Gabe came out too. And his dad, who wanted to watch the action from behind some bushes like a little kid.

When they pulled up to the hotel, I ran out to their car and motioned for them to park next to ours. They were prepared for this. I had told them a few days before that I had a box of things to return to them.

Mom and Dad got out of their car, we hugged, and Gabe brought over the box. I began pulling items out one by one to “make sure everything is really yours.”

“Is this Bethany’s jacket?” Check. “Is this Dad’s video on Japan?” Check. “Is this...Is this...Is this...?” Check. Check. And check.

Then I pulled out a kids’ book and read the title, “I’m Glad I’m Your Grandpa.”

“Never seen it before,” my mom said.

I tried not to laugh, as I turned to Dad. “I’m glad I’m your *grandpa*?” I repeat. “You’re not a grandpa. You won’t be a grandpa until *December*.”

After a second or two, it sunk in. Mom squealed. Dad beamed. Everybody hugged. Rock climbed out of the bushes and joined in.

Tears came to my eyes as I silently thanked God for His bountiful blessings. The next eight months were going to be full of love and excitement.