

He Prepares a Table

I love a beautifully set table, one that invites you in and, when you arrive, holds you tenderly while bidding you to open up and breathe. There's something so lovely and intentional about preparing a table for people you hold dear, considering who'll gather around it and what might make each person feel welcomed and known. You pull out another chair and set another plate, light candles, gather flowers for the middle, and maybe even reach for the dishes you save for special occasions. There's love in all that preparation, isn't there? Before anyone ever arrives, you've already been thinking about them, making room for them and preparing a place where they belong.

Maybe that's part of why a table can also be one of the places where absence feels especially present. Tables are meant for gathering, and when someone we love is missing, we know exactly where they'd fit around that table. We can look around at every person who's there, grateful for each one of them, and still feel the weight of the one who isn't with us.



I know there are so many places you once imagined your baby would fill, and the family table is one of them. You may have pictured a highchair pulled close to yours, little hands reaching for something yummy as you taught them to thank God first, a birthday candle waiting to be blown out, and eventually a growing child simply pulling up a chair beside you. You imagined years around that table, didn't you? Weeknight dinners and holiday celebrations, homework spread out beside half-eaten snacks, laughter and conversation, game nights, favorite meals requested again and again, and all the little things you'd learn about your child simply because you got to live life with them around that table. Your baby would've had a place there.



Of course, the table is only one of the many places you imagined your baby would be. There may have already been a crib waiting, tiny clothes folded into drawers, a car seat ready to bring them home, or a name you'd begun saying as naturally as your own. You may have wondered whose eyes they'd have, what their personality would be like, or which sibling they'd resemble most. Maybe you pictured them with their grandparents, at church with you on Sunday mornings, being pushed in a stroller, or simply tucked against your chest as you snuggled together on the couch.

Or your loss may have come so early that there wasn't anything tangible to put away afterward. There may not have been a nursery or a car seat, pictures to hold, or even a name you'd chosen yet, but you'd still begun making room. You'd begun dreaming and hoping and loving, because from the moment

you knew your baby existed, your life included them. And then, somehow, you were asked to keep living that life without them.

I wish I could sit across the table from you today and ask you about your baby. I'd want to hear their name, if you gave them one, and the story of how you chose it. I'd want to know what you remember, who you imagined they might become, and what you find yourself missing most right now. I'd want to hear the things you don't get asked about very often, because there's such a gift in someone asking about our babies and then staying long enough to really hear the answer. So, before we go any further, let's make a little room for that here.

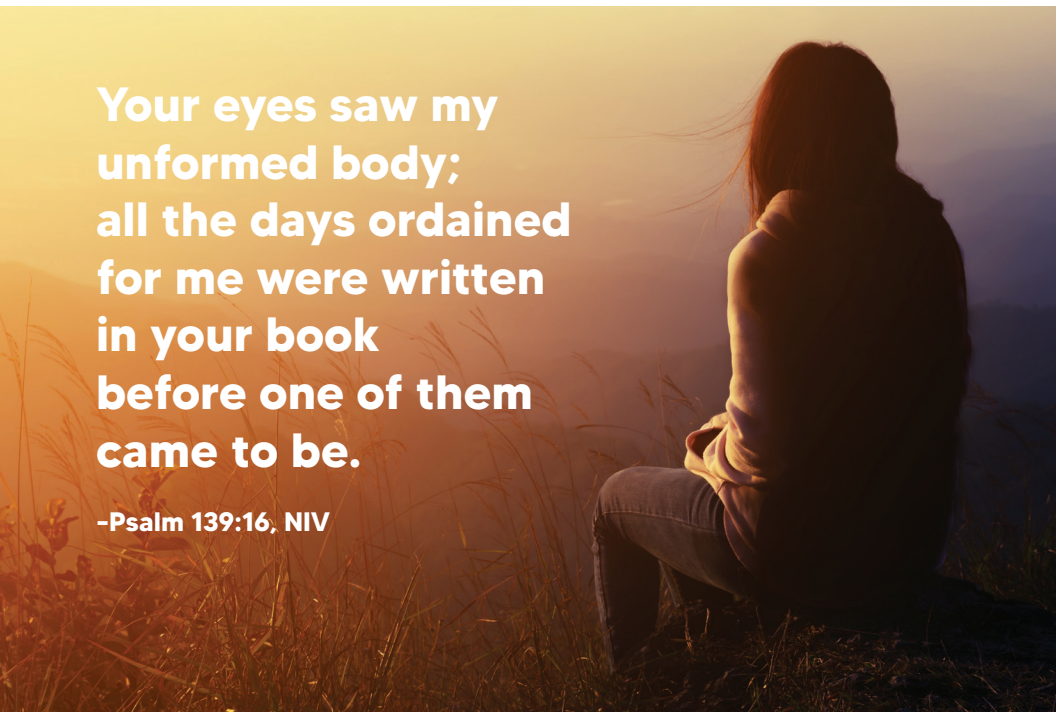
My Hope Baby's name is:

If you didn't name your baby, that's okay. Your baby is not nameless to the Lord. You can write a nickname you used during pregnancy, or simply write "Baby" and your last name.

What moments in your baby's life did you most look forward to sharing with them?

Where does your baby's absence feel especially heavy right now?

Your baby may not be physically here, but they still have a place in your family. That place looks painfully different from the one you'd been preparing for them, but death doesn't erase the love you have for your child because they are a part of you. Saying their name, keeping their photo on your bedside table, placing a candle on your dinner table in their memory, visiting their gravesite, tending the flowers in a garden you planted for them, or simply wondering who they'd be today are all ways you acknowledge that this baby belongs to your family and that their life matters. And even when much of your baby's life was hidden from the people around you, not one moment of it was hidden from the Lord.

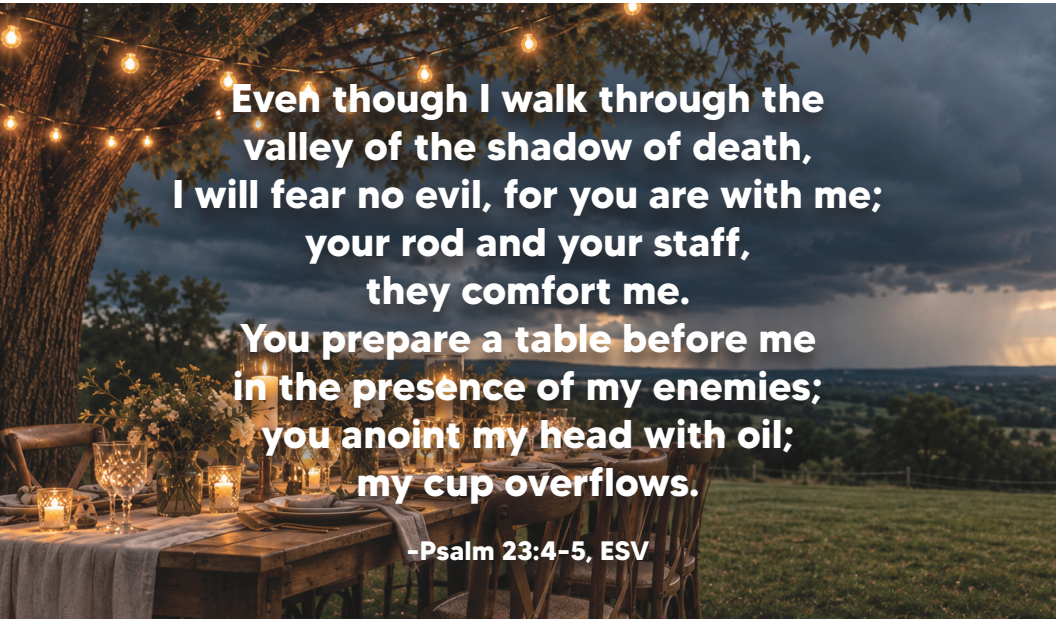
A person with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored hoodie and jeans, is sitting on a grassy hill. They are facing away from the camera, looking out over a vast, hazy landscape under a warm, golden sunset sky. The person's hair is blowing in the wind. The overall mood is contemplative and peaceful.

**Your eyes saw my
unformed body;
all the days ordained
for me were written
in your book
before one of them
came to be.**

-Psalm 139:16, NIV

Before anyone else knew your baby existed, the Lord did. He saw the life growing inside of you, He knew every one of your baby's days, and He wasn't distant from the love and hope already growing in your heart, too. Your baby's life may have been brief, and it may have been known by only a few people here, but your baby has always been fully seen and fully known by God.

The same God who saw your baby before anyone else knew they existed sees you now, too, Hope Mom. He sees the place you were preparing for your baby and the emptiness you're carrying because they aren't here to fill it. And as I've sat with this picture of making room for someone we love, preparing for their presence, and then feeling the ache of their absence, I've found myself returning to a familiar passage in Psalm 23. I hope it will be a comfort to you. David writes,



**Even though I walk through the
valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.**

**You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.**

-Psalm 23:4-5, ESV

I've read those words many times, but as I've thought about what it means to prepare a place for someone we love, I've found myself lingering over the word prepare. We know what it is to think ahead, to make room, and to anticipate someone's presence before they arrive. And here in Psalm 23, the Shepherd who has made David lie down in green pastures, led him beside still waters, and restored his soul is also **the One who walks with him through the valley of the shadow of death and prepares a table for him there** ([Psalm 23:2-5](#)).

What strikes me is where He prepares it. David is still walking through the valley, his enemies are near, and his life includes things he probably wouldn't have chosen for himself, and it's right there, while the darkness and danger are real and surrounding him, that God prepares a table and provides for him.

God's provision can be really hard to see in grief, can't it? Especially when we prayed that He would protect our baby and our baby still died. We look at our empty arms and wonder how a God who loves us could possibly be caring for us here. How can this be provision? How can we call ourselves protected when the very thing we begged God to protect us from happened? It can leave us feeling exposed and unprotected. Our cups certainly don't feel as though they're overflowing.

But Psalm 23 is honest about the valley, and I'm grateful. It calls it "the valley of the shadow of death," and nowhere in Scripture does God ask us to pretend that death is less terrible than it is. Death came into God's good creation through sin ([Romans 5:12](#)), and Scripture calls it "the last enemy to be destroyed" ([1 Corinthians 15:26](#)). When we hate what death has done to our families and wish with everything in us that our babies were here, we are grieving something God Himself calls an enemy, and there's comfort to be found in knowing that our grief over death isn't at odds with the heart of our Father.

Scripture also tells us that we don't grieve as those who have no hope ([1 Thessalonians 4:13](#)). When Paul penned these words, he wasn't telling grieving believers not to grieve or asking them to hurt less. He was reminding them that grief isn't all there is, because Jesus entered into death Himself, rose victorious over it, and promised that one day death will be swallowed up forever ([1 Corinthians 15:54-57](#)).

And so, while David is still walking through the valley, with the darkness and everything he fears still surrounding him, he tells us what brings him comfort, and that is,

You are with me.

-Psalm 23:4, ESV

I don't want to move too quickly past those words. In my own grief, I spent so much time wishing God would change what had happened that it was sometimes hard to see how He was caring for me in the middle of it. His presence didn't take away my longing for a different story, but He met me in the one I was living, and He's stayed with me through all these years without without my Hope Baby, Paige.



And He's with you, too. The Shepherd doesn't stand at the edge of the valley and expect His hurting sheep to find their own way out. He walks beside you there, close enough to guide you with His staff, protect you with His rod, and bring comfort simply by being near. And somehow, in a place you never would've chosen for yourself, while the valley is still dark and the enemy is still near, He prepares a table and makes room for you to come close.

When you think about what you need from the Lord in this season of grief, what comes to mind?

How might the truth that He is with you bring comfort in that place?

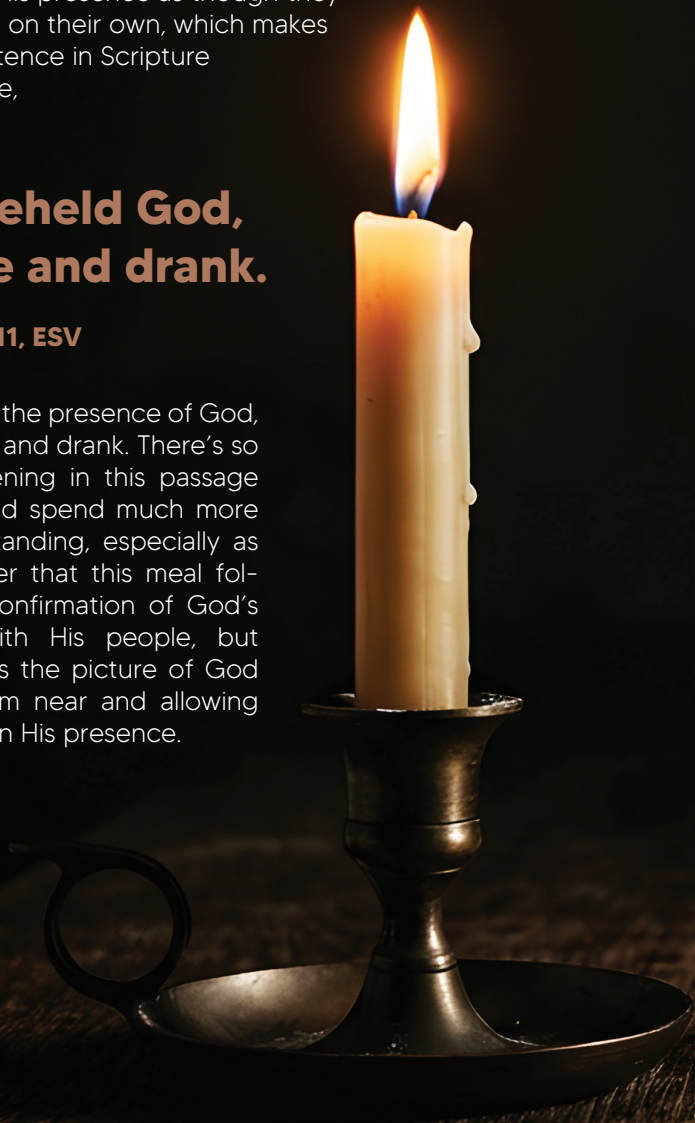
The more I've sat with the picture of God preparing a table in the valley for David, the more I've begun to notice how often tables and meals appear throughout Scripture, and how often God uses them to show His people that they're welcome near Him, cared for by Him, and included among those who belong to Him.

In [Exodus 24](#), after God establishes His covenant with Israel, He invites Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of Israel's elders up the mountain. God is holy, and sinful people don't simply wander into His presence as though they belong there on their own, which makes this next sentence in Scripture so remarkable,

They beheld God, and ate and drank.

-Exodus 24:11, ESV

They were in the presence of God, and they ate and drank. There's so much happening in this passage that we could spend much more time understanding, especially as we remember that this meal followed the confirmation of God's covenant with His people, but what I love is the picture of God bringing them near and allowing them to eat in His presence.



And then Jesus comes, and meals seem to be everywhere in His ministry. He eats with tax collectors and others the religious leaders had rejected ([Luke 5:29-32](#)), He feeds people who are hungry ([Mark 6:34-44](#)), He sits down at tables with His friends, and He tells stories about feasts, invitations, and who is welcome in the kingdom of God. On the night before He dies, He even breaks bread with His disciples and gives them a meal His people will continue sharing in remembrance of Him after He is gone, reminding us that the only reason any of us has a place at God's table is because Jesus gave His body and poured out His blood for us ([Luke 22:19-20](#)).

There's also a breakfast Jesus prepared on the shore in John 21 that is important for us, too. After Jesus' resurrection, Peter and some of the other disciples went fishing. They spent the whole night catching nothing, and then, early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, though they didn't recognize Him at first. When Peter finally realized it was Jesus, he jumped into the water and made his way toward Him. And when Peter reached the shore, Jesus had already made breakfast.

**When they got out on land,
they saw a charcoal fire in place,
with fish laid out on it, and bread.**

-John 21:9, ESV



And a few verses later, Jesus says,

Come and have breakfast.

—John 21:12, ESV

That detail makes me love Jesus even more than I already do, because Peter is coming toward Him after denying three times that he even knew Him, and surely there was so much between them that still needed to be said, right? But Jesus already knew all of it. He knew what Peter had done, He knew the weight Peter was carrying as he jumped into the water and made his way toward Him, and what Peter found waiting when he reached the shore was Jesus beside a charcoal fire, with bread and fish already prepared.

John mentions a charcoal fire only one other time in his Gospel, and it was beside that fire that Peter denied Jesus ([John 18:18, 25-27](#)). And now Peter is standing beside another charcoal fire, looking into the face of the Savior he denied, but Jesus hasn't prepared a place of humiliation for him. He's prepared breakfast.

Now, this meal doesn't mean Jesus ignores Peter's sin or pretends his denial didn't matter. It mattered a lot, and Jesus speaks honestly with Peter in the conversation that follows, asking him three times, "Do you love me?" and then entrusting him again with the work of caring for His people ([John 21:15-19](#)). But Peter's failure and sin haven't made Jesus turn away or be unwilling to receive him. Before the questions are even asked, and before Peter is restored and reminded that there's still work for him to do for the kingdom, Jesus has already made room for him to come near.

And as I think about our grief and the ways we sometimes pull away from the Lord, hide our faces, struggle to pray or worship, feel angry with Him, or wonder whether He is still good, I can't help but see all of it in light of the mercy Jesus showed Peter on that shore beside the charcoal fire. Grief itself isn't a sin, and neither are your tears, honest questions, or longing for your baby, but suffering can stir up so much inside of us, and in our pain, we can sometimes respond in ways that are sinful. There may be things we don't understand, things we're ashamed to admit, and things we need to confess, but Jesus already knows all of it, and still, He invites us to come near, just as He invited Peter.



Peter's story isn't ours, and grief isn't something we need to repent of, but the Jesus who waited for Peter on that shore is the same Jesus we come to now. Peter came out of the water carrying the weight of what he had done, and Jesus didn't ask him to sort through it alone before welcoming him. He fed Peter, drew him near, and then spoke honestly and tenderly with him about what needed to be addressed.

Hope Mom, you can come to Jesus while your grief is still tangled and your questions are still unanswered. You don't have to wait until you understand what God is doing, until your prayers sound more faithful, or until you're no longer disappointed with the story He's allowed. You can come honestly, trusting that He won't humiliate you for what you bring into His presence and that there's room at His table for you. In time, He may tenderly correct what isn't true, reveal what needs to be addressed, and teach you to trust Him in places you still don't understand. But you don't have to sort through any of it alone before you come to Him.

What are you carrying today that you need to bring honestly before Jesus?

After seeing the way Jesus received Peter, how do you feel about coming to Him with these things?



And, Hope Mom, that breakfast Jesus prepared for Peter isn't the last meal Scripture sets before us. Near the end of the Bible, Revelation 19 tells us about the marriage supper of the Lamb, a great feast where God's people will be gathered with Christ. And then, just a little later, we're given another picture of what is still to come,

**And I heard a loud voice
from the throne saying,
'Behold, the dwelling place of God
is with man.
He will dwell with them,
and they will be his people,
and God himself will be
with them as their God.
He will wipe away
every tear from their eyes,
and death shall be no more,
neither shall there be mourning,
nor crying, nor pain anymore,
for the former things have passed away.'**

-Revelation 21:3-4, ESV

Sometimes I need to sit with these words for a while because they're telling us that the thing that came into our families and took someone we love will not always exist. **Thank you, God, that one day death will be no more!** After losing my baby, I needed to know that my faith offered me more than a way to survive her absence. I needed to know what was actually true about her, where she was, what Jesus had accomplished through His death and resurrection, and whether the separation that felt so permanent to me really was permanent. I needed to know whether I could actually hope to see her again, and I believe Scripture gives us every reason to say, "Yes, our babies are safe with Christ."

The Bible doesn't give us one single sentence that says, "Every baby who dies goes to heaven," but it does give us a clear picture of God's heart toward children and His perfect justice and mercy. When David's infant son died, David said, "I will go to him, but he will not return to me" ([2 Samuel 12:23](#)). Jesus welcomed little children to Himself and told His disciples not to hinder them, "for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" ([Mark 10:14](#)). And we know that the Judge of all the earth will always do what is right ([Genesis 18:25](#)).

Our babies may not have lived long enough to knowingly sin, but like every one of us, they were still in need of a Savior. They're safe with Him because the grace and saving work of Christ are sufficient for them. This means my baby isn't alive only in my memories. I'll always remember her, say her name, celebrate her birthday, and make sure my living children know about their sister, but my remembering isn't what keeps her alive. She's alive because Jesus is alive, and your baby is, too.

But I never want to tell you that your baby is with Jesus and that you can hope to see them again without also telling you where that hope comes from. We don't receive the promise of eternal life with Christ simply because we've buried a baby. Grief doesn't make us holy, and it can't save us. Our hope is Jesus. We're sinners who can't make our own way back to a holy God, so Jesus came for us. He lived the sinless life we never could, died on the cross in our place, and rose from the grave. Salvation has never been something we could earn. It is the undeserved grace of God, freely given to us through Christ. Scripture says,

**If you confess
with your mouth
that Jesus is Lord
and believe in your
heart that God raised
him from the dead,
you will be saved.**

-Romans 10:9, ESV



So when I tell you that I hope to see my baby again, I don't mean *hope* the way we sometimes use that word, as though I'm wishing deeply for something to be true. Biblical hope has something solid underneath it. It rests on Jesus, on what He has already done through His death and resurrection, and on everything He has promised He will still do. My hope that my baby is with Jesus rests in Him, and my hope for my own eternity does, too.

If you know Christ, this hope is yours, too. And if you don't know Him, or you aren't sure, I don't want you to leave these pages believing heaven is promised to us simply because we're grieving mothers. Jesus is the way to the Father. He's the One who saves, and eternal life is found in Him. Hope Mom, do you know Him? If you aren't sure, I hope you'll talk with someone who can open the Bible with you and help you understand what it means to place your faith in Jesus.



And it's with this hope in Christ that we light our candles tonight. If you choose to participate in the Wave of Light, whether you gather your family around your table or light your candle on your own, your candle bears witness to the truth that your baby lived and is deeply loved. There's a place at your family's table where your baby's absence is felt because your baby belongs to your family. There will be holidays, birthdays, and weeknight dinners when you look around and know someone is missing, and we don't need to rush ourselves past that pain. It's okay to be sad. Of course you miss them. You had already begun preparing a place in your heart and at your table for them.



But I hope you'll remember that the empty place at your table isn't the whole story. Scripture gives us another table to look toward, where all who belong to Christ will be gathered with Him. Our babies will be part of the joy we're waiting for, and I can hardly imagine the joy of seeing my baby again. But she isn't what makes heaven heaven. Jesus is. He's the One who made our babies, the One who holds them now, and the One who defeated their greatest enemy and ours.

As you remember your baby tonight, what are you longing for Jesus to make right?

What can you thank Him for as you wait for that day?





Sweet Hope Mom, I know you once imagined years with your baby gathered around your family's table, and it hurts so much that they aren't here in the way you dreamed they would be. But that isn't the end of their story, and if your faith is in Jesus, it isn't the end of yours either.

So tonight, as you light your candle and say your baby's name, you don't have to look away from the place where their absence is felt. You can grieve that they aren't here and still have hope that death will not have the final word. God is preparing a table that death cannot empty, and one day, all who belong to Christ will be gathered with Him where death will never separate us again.

Until then, we remember our babies, we carry the ache of loving them from here, and we keep looking to Jesus.

You are SO loved,

Jennie



WALK WITH US

Whoever you are, and whatever your story – it is valuable to us. Your child is precious, and we mourn and hope with you. It would be an honor to know and serve you.



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