

Chapter 1: Are We Ready for This?

It was 2:00 a.m., and the baby's temperature spiked 102 degrees. Danielle and I were exhausted. We had not gotten much sleep for over a week because we were getting up around 5:00 a.m. every day. Now, this eight-month-old baby boy—who had been sleeping in our large, walk-in master bedroom closet—was awake with a fever. At first, I thought that he awoke because he was afraid, not knowing where he was. He had been with us for only a few days. We knew that he had endured some physical injuries, but we did not know everything he had experienced his short life. He was sleeping in our master bedroom closet because some out-of-town guests were staying at our house and needed both of our spare bedrooms. I wondered if being in this small room reminded him of something bad that had happened to him.

Standing in the dark and blinking my eyes, I tried to wake up while I held the precious little boy. He was screaming. I was sure that he was waking up our houseguests. Danielle took his temperature again. It was still 102. We stood in the midst of his screams trying to discuss what we should do. We had never had children of our own, so we were not confident in our ability to take care of a baby, especially a sick one!

Danielle decided to call the pediatrician's after-hours number. The nurse recommended giving him ibuprofen and checking his temperature again in the morning. What a classic response! "Take two ibuprofen, and call me in the morning." I felt like a first-time, overly cautious parent you hear pediatric nurses talk about. I probably was overly concerned about this new baby in my life. But didn't she understand that not only were we first-time parents, but also this child was not even *ours*? He finally went to sleep. In the morning when he woke up, his temperature was pretty much gone, so we thought that we were out of the woods. But we were going to have another sleepless night.

That day was uncharacteristically busy. We spent some time with our out-of-town guests before they did some sightseeing. Then I took some other friends to the airport, leaving Danielle home with the baby. To make matters even more interesting, her car was in the shop, so she did not have any transportation. But it seemed that the baby was doing better—or so we thought.

After his morning nap, he woke up with a 104-degree temperature. Thankfully, Danielle had already made a doctor's appointment just in case the baby did not get better. Danielle was close to panic mode by this point. She controlled her emotions as she called her sister-in-law, a pediatric nurse, to get more input. Danielle's sister-in-law recommended putting the baby in a bathtub with cool water in an attempt to bring down his temperature. She also suggested giving him some Pedialite to keep him hydrated. Since Danielle did not have a car, she called a friend to see if she could pick up the Pedialite and drop it by. Danielle also called the baby's pediatrician's office again. The baby became listless and would not drink anything. Danielle understandably became very concerned.

After twenty-plus years of marriage and after not ever having our own children, we had decided to get involved in foster care. It took us over a year to get our certification for foster care. Then we turned down a few placements. Now we finally had a child placed with us, and he was getting extremely sick. We received more than thirty hours of training, but we did not feel anywhere close to being qualified to handle *this*.

Eventually, Danielle brought down his temperature. I finally made it back home, and we went straight to the doctor's office. The poor little guy had an ear infection. No wonder he felt so bad! We were glad that he was not seriously sick, but we had another long night before us. His fever spiked a couple more times, so we were up several times throughout the night to monitor his temperature. We gave him medication every few hours to keep the fever down. He felt better after a couple of days.

I had felt confident that we made the right decision to foster children. We were excited to have this little guy in our home. But, that night—along with the first couple of weeks—were quite a jolt to my routine! In spite of my resolve and excitement, I could not help but wonder if we were

ready for this journey.

