

Beginnings and Endings: The Human Life Cycle

Materials:

Seven photographic images, laminated:

- Newborn
 - Crawling baby
 - Person feeding baby
 - Walking baby
 - Footprints of newborn / preschooler
 - Child missing tooth
 - Skinned knee
 - Person feeding elder
 - Elder and baby
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We've talked about how frogs and butterflies grow. Today, let's talk about how people grow.

How old are you? **"Hold up your fingers."** You are three or four or five or six. You aren't two anymore.

When you were two, you were shorter. **"Hold up your arm to how tall you think you were when you were two."** If you came to Unity Church when you were two, you weren't old enough to come to Spirit Play class yet. You probably went to the nursery and played with fun baby toys. Now you're big enough for Spirit Play, and here we are together!

When you were two, you didn't know all the words you know now. **"What's a word that you just learned that you didn't know when you were two?"**

When you were two, you didn't have all your teeth yet. They were still growing into your mouth. **"You can feel around in your mouth – do you feel your very back big teeth?"** Feel the teeth for chomping and chewing? You didn't have those teeth when you were two. Now you probably have all 20 of your teeth.

Why is this happening? Why are you taller? Why do you know more words? Why do you have more teeth? Because you're growing up!

A long time ago, you were a tiny baby, just born. You were very small and a little bit floppy. You didn't have any teeth! *[Hold up the photo of the newborn.]* Newborn babies aren't very strong. They can't do anything for themselves. Parents have to feed babies and change babies' diapers and keep babies safe and warm because babies need care. *[Show picture of baby eating.]*

You didn't stay a baby forever, did you? You kept growing. In your first year, you grew faster than you ever will for the rest of your life. *[Hold up the photo of the crawling baby.]* You learned how to crawl. Then you learned how to stand up. Then, with help, you learned how to walk. *[Hold up the photo of the walking toddler].* We called you a toddler, because you toddled around with short, wobbly baby steps. Now you know how to run!

What's going to happen next? How do people grow up? Do we change like frogs? Did you used to have a tail? Nope! Do we change like butterflies? Are you going to make a chrysalis? People grow up differently from plants and frogs and butterflies. The ways in which people grow up are amazing!

When you are 6 or 7, you'll need your grown-up teeth more than your baby teeth. Your baby teeth will get looser and looser as your permanent teeth grow in. Your teeth will fall out. *[Hold up picture of child with missing tooth.]* Everybody's teeth start to fall out when we're 6 or 7 – it's a normal part of growing up. We don't have to try to grow our permanent teeth – it just happens when it's time. That's a miracle.

You keep needing bigger clothes and shoes, too! You are growing taller and your feet are getting bigger. Someday, your favorite shirt or your favorite shoes are going to be JUST TOO SMALL for your growing body. *[Show picture of baby feet and bigger kid feet.]*

What makes us grow? Good food! Healthful food! **“Who can name a food that is healthful for our bodies?”** We need all these different foods to grow up strong and healthy. At church, we remember to feel thankful for the food we have to eat. Some children in our world don't get enough healthful food and their bodies can't get strong and healthy. At church, we close our eyes sometimes and think of these children and we send them prayers and loving wishes. **Let's do that now.** *[Close eyes and create a silent space for prayer – about count of 5].* At church, we also help by sharing our money so that every child can grow up healthy and strong.

Will you always keep on growing? No. The cells in your body know exactly how tall you will get someday, as long as you keep eating healthfully. One day, you will be as tall as you are going to get. Your feet will be as big as they are going to get. Your body will say, “That's JUST RIGHT. Stop growing now.”

Some parts of you keep on growing even after you grow up. **“Can you think of parts of your body that keep growing?”** Your hair keeps growing. Unless you want long, long, long hair, you'll have to get haircuts once in a while. Same with your fingernails and your toenails.

One of the greatest blessings about being human and alive is that we can grow new skin and make new blood when we get hurt. *[Show picture of skinned knee.]* **Who here has skinned their knee like the child in this picture?** When some of our skin gets damaged, our body grows new layers of skin right where we need it. When we hurt ourselves, the blood dries into a scab. The scab falls off and you can see fresh new pink skin underneath. Do you have to tell your body how to make the new skin? No. The miracle is that our bodies just know how, without our having to try to heal.

Can people heal all the time? No, we can't. Sometimes, bodies can get so very sick that they can't heal. When we get very old, old like grandmas and grandpas, our bodies have a harder time healing. If very old people fall, sometimes they can't heal the broken bones or the hurt skin. All people who live a long time get old. Our bodies change and after eighty or ninety years, our bodies are usually tired. We're not strong when we're very old, just like we were not strong when we were babies. *[Show photo of woman feeding elder.]* Younger people need to take good care of very old people, helping them to eat and stay safe and warm.

One day, each human body becomes very old or perhaps very sick and it stops being alive. We call this dying. We don't know exactly what dying is like, but we trust that it is part of life and we believe that life is good. We know that even as wonderful, beautiful people in the world are dying, more wonderful and beautiful people are being born. *[Show photo of elderly man and baby.]* Together, we are human beings, and our lives are an amazing circle of beginnings and endings.

Wondering Together

- **I wonder what part of the story you liked the best?**
- **I wonder what part is most important?**
- **I wonder where you are in the story?**
- **I wonder if there is any part of the story that we can leave out and still have all the story we need?**