

Dear Jack,

Today is your first birthday.

A year ago today, August 12th, 2008, your mom and I spent the late afternoon getting her classroom ready for school. Your due date was several weeks later, but I think your mom had a sneaking suspicion that you might show up early, and she wanted to get her classroom ready before the first day of school. When we left, I remember her saying, "now if I'm not here the first day, I feel OK."

When we got home, around 5:00 p.m., she said, "I kinda feel funny."

Not three hours later, I got to see you for the first time.

When I first saw you, I remember how surprised I was by how much you looked like your sister. As babies, the two of you were almost identical. We even got a few pictures in which you are sleeping the same way. From the beginning, I could hardly tell the difference. You were a beautiful baby boy, and, I will always treasure the memory of those first few minutes of your life as the nurses cleaned you up and I got the chance to hold you for the very first time.

Your first year has been amazing, and your mother and I have so much enjoyed watching you grow. On this first birthday, you're still just crawling though you can stand up for a few seconds before you decide that crawling seems a little safer than taking off walking. I expect in a few weeks that will change... and then I bet we spend the rest of our lives trying to keep up with you.

So far, you and your sister get along great. I know that won't last forever, but she thinks you are the coolest thing in the world right now. I can already see you watching her, trying to do what she does, and laughing all the time at the silly things she does to make you smile. She thinks you are a pretty great brother, and as soon as you wake up in the morning, I can see you looking around for your big sister.

In just the last month, you've started greeting me with a big smile and a laugh when I get home from work. Before I can set down my bag, I can hear you crawling towards me and lifting up your hands begging me to pick you up. It's the absolute best gift I get when I get home everyday.

We've also figured out that you are quite the daredevil. You've spent a ton of your first summer in the pool with Mommy and Daddy and you already love putting your face in the water. It's funny to watch because you have a look of great surprise every time you do it, but within 10-15 seconds, you are doing it again! You like climbing on everything, and you don't seem to be scared to try anything! Luckily, you seem to have a pretty hard head. You've taken quite a few tumbles already!

Your first word was 'mama,' and as of right now, you will also say 'Daddy' occasionally, 'Anna,' and 'ball.' Those may be the only words you know, but you're an expert at making noise. You also

love it when one of us joins you in your commotion. Your sister does this better than anyone, and loves to drive your mother crazy with all the noise.

Did I mention that this first year has been amazing?

Early this morning, on this first year anniversary of your birth, I want you to know that I spent some time in the sanctuary at our church. I prayed for you son... for your future... and for the dreams that I know God has for your life. I prayed that I would be the kind of father who would help you achieve those dreams, and live out the plans and purposes that God has for you in your life. You don't understand that yet, and you probably won't for many years, but I want you to know that I will continue to pray this prayer all the days of my life.

And this morning, during that time, I felt like God said something very special to me. It was a reminder that I've been given the great honor of being your Dad. I said thank you for that, and I asked God to give me the wisdom to treasure every moment of life we get to share.

Today, our journey has just begun, but I want you to know how much I already love you and how honored I feel to be your Dad.

Happy Birthday Son!