

# Steve's Story

## Older Version

**Warning:** Steve's story is hard to hear. This story is based on true events and we believe it to be appropriate for families; however, you should preview all materials to make certain that you are comfortable with all the content before sharing them with your audience.

**Suggestion:** If using the Missions Kit for a 5-day VBS or camp, use one story video per day and take time to review the previous day. Use discussion questions and scripture truth to reassure children following each video.

### Part 1

#### Script:

In Spartanburg, South Carolina there was a tiny baby, named Steve, who lived in a small one-bedroom apartment with his mom, dad, and a brother. He spent most of his time in a little portable crib called a pack-n-play in the back corner of the small bedroom.

He was hungry and dirty and very unhappy. No one smiled at him. He couldn't talk or explain that he needed a clean diaper or that he wanted a bottle. Baby Steve was sad and all alone.

There was lots of activity in the house, but it was hard for Baby Steve to get the care he needed. It was loud, and his cries for help didn't get anyone's attention. Feeling hungry became so normal that Baby Steve didn't cry about it anymore. He forgot how to suck a bottle and he stopped growing. His mom or dad would hold him sometimes, but they didn't know what he needed. They didn't realize how sick he was becoming.

Every month women from the Department of Social Services, or DSS, came and looked at Baby Steve and held him. They were so nice to him but always seemed concerned that he wasn't growing. Babies should learn to sit up and try to crawl, smile, and make baby noises, but Steve didn't know how. When the women left, Mom and Dad would argue about taking him to a doctor, but they never did.

One day, Baby Steve went with Mom to take his brother to the doctor because his brother was sick. The doctor helped his brother but then started asking mom lots of questions about Steve - how often he ate, how much he ate, if he was able to hold a bottle, sit up, or crawl, or if he cried when he was hungry... all the answers were no. Steve was 9 months old. He should have been able to do all these things. The doctor knew immediately that something was wrong.

#### Questions to Ask:

What was Steve's home like?

Describe Baby Steve's environment.

Why do you think Steve was unhappy?

Sad, lonely, hungry, dirty.

(Discuss empathy.) It's so important that we are able to look at another person's situation and think about how hard all those emotions can be.

Why do you think Steve couldn't sit up or crawl?

He did not get the healthy milk babies need.

"Well visits", or going to the doctor for a check-up are very important for babies and children. Nurses and doctors help parents understand how children should be growing and learning, called "milestones"

## Reassuring Truth:

God hears our cries and always listens.

"The Lord is near the brokenhearted; He saves those crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18

## Part 2

### Script:

Baby Steve's mom and dad had not taken care of him the way they should. Even the women who came from DSS had not been able to convince them to take better care of Steve. His parents had not fed him enough. When parents can't take care of their children, it is called "neglect." The doctor knew Steve was in danger, so that day changed everything.

Baby Steve left the doctor's office and went straight to the hospital. The doctors made a small owie in his arm to get blood for special tests, so they could find out what was wrong and what nutrients Baby Steve needed to get better and start growing. They went to a special section of the hospital for children. Steve's mom stayed at the hospital with him and was able to spend the night.

When the nurses tried to give him a bottle it felt weird in his mouth and made him very mad. Lots of helpers and nurses spent time with Baby Steve, trying to get him to eat so he could grow and have energy. Because he could not drink out of a bottle, Steve had to get nutrients through a tube in his nose. They gave him a special drink, like baby formula with extra nutrients and calories for babies like Steve, through the tube.

Over the next few days, the nutrients helped him have more energy and start feeling better. His body started growing. Steve stayed at the hospital for 4 weeks and the women from DSS, who came to visit Steve at his house, now spent time with him at the hospital talking with the doctors and nurses and to Steve's mom. One day one of the women told Steve's parents some very upsetting news...

## Questions to Ask:

What is neglect?

When parents are unable to take care of children and meet their needs it is called neglect. Children can experience neglect when there is not enough food to eat, or when parents cannot take care of them. Parents have the responsibility to provide clothing, shelter, protection, supervision, and health care.

What happened at the Hospital?

Some hospitals have a special section only for children. Sometimes doctors have to make a small poke with a needle to collect a little blood in a tube so they can determine what is wrong. If a baby can't eat a thin, soft tube goes through the nose, down the throat, and into the stomach so they get nutrients.

Who helped Steve?

Doctors and nurses work as a team to meet the needs of children. There are other helpers at a hospital called therapists, who focus on speech (being able to use a bottle), fine motor skills (grasping, holding small toys), and large motor skills (sitting up, crawling). Also, the ladies from DSS were very involved during the hospital stay.

## Reassuring Truth:

God is our safe place.

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10

## Part 3

### Script:

One day at the hospital, the women told Steve's parents some very upsetting news and his mom was very sad. She said goodbye to Baby Steve that day. They talked about being in “DSS custody with no unsupervised visits,” but all Steve knew was that he felt all alone. He didn't understand why Mommy wasn't there at night or why she could only visit when the DSS ladies were able to come.

There was a special nurse who made Steve feel calm and peaceful. She came by every day on her lunch break. He wasn't as sad when she was there and they formed a special bond. Her name was Sarah. She spent lots of time talking to Steve, playing with him, and talking to the women making plans about what he needed. He was now in “foster care” and Sarah was going to take care of him for a little while.

Baby Steve was going to have surgery to get a special button in his tummy, called a g-tube, so he could get food every day without having to put the tube in his nose. Since she was a nurse, Sarah was a special foster mom, who could help children with medical needs. She had extra training at the hospital to take care of Steve's g-tube so that he could go to live at her house instead of living

at the hospital. Sarah hooked up a special bag to send the nutrients straight into his stomach through the little button every time he was hungry.

When Steve left the hospital a month later, he moved into his new foster home with Sarah and her family. The whole family loved meeting Steve and were so excited to help him, giving him lots of attention. His new house was different from his first house. At Sarah's, the house was clean and he had a crib and a few toys to play with. But a big day was coming...

## Questions to Ask:

What is foster care?

Explain that children who cannot live with family might go into foster care. They will have a caseworker, who works very hard to find children a foster home and does a lot of paperwork. Foster parents are trained to care for children who have experienced neglect.

Who was Sarah? What did she do?

Sarah was Baby Steve's foster mom. She spent her time with Steve "forming attachment", or creating a bond with Steve. She talked to him, played with him, held him. She had special training to ensure she could take care of Steve's medical needs and feed him after his surgery.

How can we pray for babies and toddlers in foster care?

- Pray for more families to be called and equipped to foster children with medical needs
- Pray for the emotions that young children have, the confusion they experience when they don't understand, and the difficulties they have communicating their big feelings.
- Pray for the churches to provide support and community for the whole family, creating bonds and lasting attachment.

## Reassuring Truth:

God takes care of us.

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress." James 1:27

## Part 4

### Script:

There was a big day coming...It was almost Christmas. Sarah, Steve's new foster mom, needed to make extra plans so that Steve could have a very special Christmas. She called PS I Love You Ministries and asked them for help.

Martha answered the phone at PS I Love You and was so excited to learn that Steve was finally able to leave the hospital. She knew Sarah was busy and did not have time to go shopping. Martha picked out all the items Baby Steve was going to need to get settled in his new home. She packed outfits and extra onesies, blankets and burp cloths, diapers and wipes, and also a diaper bag full of

items he would need. Her favorite item she packed was a special board book Bible for Sarah to read to Steve.

Sarah stopped by PS I Love You the next day, to see Martha and pick up the big bag of items for Steve. After packing the bag in Sarah's car, Martha went back inside, to her desk and started working on a special Christmas surprise for Sarah and Steve. When children are in foster care at Christmas time, it can be extra hard with big emotions! PS I Love You wants to help support children and their families by providing toys and extra clothes, as well as items to make fun family memories, to help make the holiday season a little brighter.

Martha quickly worked on a wishlist of age-appropriate toys that Steve would like and listed his clothing sizes. She made a couple of phone calls and found the perfect sponsor who had been waiting to be matched with a child for Christmas. The sponsor was so excited to go shopping for Steve and came to PS I Love You the next day with a bunch of presents! Martha packed the presents and had a big surprise for Steve.

## Questions to Ask:

What items did PS I Love You provide for Baby Steve?

PS I Love You provides all foster children with clothing, pajamas, shoes, toys, and other necessities for moving into a new foster home. Baby Steve received outfits and extra onesies, blankets and burp cloths, diapers and wipes, and also a diaper bag.

Why do you think Christmas in foster care would be extra hard with big emotions?

Even little babies who have not had a Christmas before are affected by the busyness of the season, and lack of routine. Visits with family, holiday parties, and meeting lots of new people can be very overwhelming for babies. Older children in foster care can have a hard time accepting and managing expectations around the holiday.

Who is "a sponsor" at PS I Love You? What do they do?

A sponsor is a special Christmas shopper, like a secret elf! Every year wonderful volunteers from all over Spartanburg get matched with foster children to help provide an extra special Christmas! Children in foster care fill out a wishlist with 3 big toys and information about the things they like so the shopper can pick out special presents for Christmas.

## Reassuring Truth:

God provides for us.

"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

## Part 5

### Script:

Christmas was an extra special day for Steve! On Christmas morning, he had a huge red Santa bag full of gifts just for him! Sarah even noticed a big smile on Steve's face and grabbed her

camera quickly to take a picture! His smile was a sign that he was aware of his presents, but also that he was getting healthier. They took lots of special family photos that day as Steve enjoyed his very first Christmas.

After one week in his new home, Steve could sit up and he also started trying to crawl. Sarah tried to help him understand how to use a spoon, but Steve did not like it. Two weeks later, he crawled over to a chair and started pulling up just like other babies his age! Other special helpers, called therapists, came every week and helped him. He still had his g-tube and it was helping him grow fast and get stronger!

One month later, he celebrated his first birthday. He still did not like anything in his mouth, but Sarah kept helping him try new things... like ice cream! Eventually, Steve learned to eat baby food on a spoon and how to drink through a straw. One day he surprised everyone by picking up food with his hand to put in his mouth! He was starting to eat like other 1 year-olds.

Baby Steve lived with his special foster family for 1 year, getting big and healthy! He didn't need his G-tube anymore because he could eat just like other toddlers. He had a special surgery to remove the button in his tummy. At all his checkups, doctors and nurses were so happy at how big and strong he had become!

## Questions to Ask:

Has Steve got healthier, what "milestones" did he start meeting?

(Might be helpful to review Day 1)

Steve learned to sit up and crawl, then began pulling up and getting ready to learn to walk. Because he was getting the nutrition and healthy milk he needed, his body was getting big and strong.

Who were the special helpers that came to work with Steve?

In the hospital and in his new home, special helpers called "therapists" worked with Steve to help him learn new things. Foster parents work closely with therapists to help children meet goals.

How did the therapists help Steve?

Steve needed this help to learn to use a spoon (so he could eat baby food), learn to drink out of a straw (so he could drink a sippy cup of juice), and put food in his mouth (like Cheerios!).

## Reassuring Truth:

God strengthens us.

"We are glad whenever we are weak but You are strong." 2 Corinthians 13:9