

Carolyn Nystrom • Illustrated by Sandra Speidel

Before I Was Born

Designed for Parents to Read with Children Ages 5 to 8



NAV PRESS®

BRINGING TRUTH TO LIFE

Sample from *Before I Was Born* / ISBN 9781600060144

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THE GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEX SERIES

Parents, God gave you your sexuality as a precious gift. God gave your children sexuality as well. If handled responsibly, God's gift of sexuality to your child will be a source of blessing and delight.

How can parents help make this happen?

Many forces will push your children to make bad choices about sex. From their earliest years, children are bombarded by destructive, false messages about the nature of sexual intimacy. These messages come through music, television, the Internet, discussions with their friends, school sex-education programs, and so forth. The result? Distressing rates of sexual experimentation, teen pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted disease, divorce, and devastated lives.

We believe that God means for Christian parents to be the primary sex educators of their children. First messages are the most powerful; why wait until your child hears the wrong thing and then try to correct the misunderstanding? Sexuality is a beautiful gift; why not present it to children the way God intended? Why not establish yourself as the trusted expert to whom your children can turn to find out God's truth about sexuality?

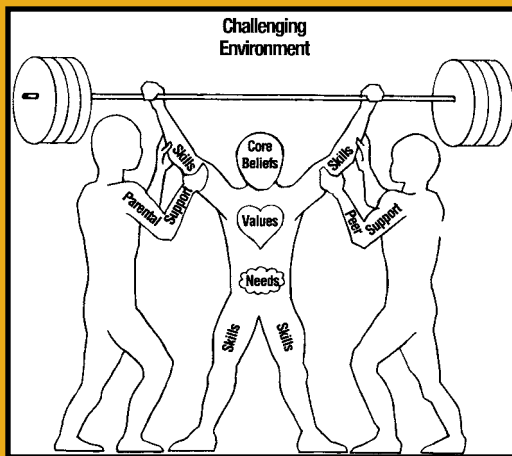
The *GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEX* series helps parents shape their children's character, particularly in the area of sexuality. Sex education in the family is less about giving biological information and more about shaping your child's moral character.

How young people handle sexuality in the teen years and beyond is a result of the following five key areas of development. The earlier we start helping children see themselves—including their sexuality—as God does, the stronger they will be as they enter the turbulent teenage years.

- **Needs:** Young people starved for love are more likely to seek having their needs met through sexual experimentation than kids who know they are loved. Strengthening your children's sexual character starts with fostering close parent-child relationships, assisting the development of healthy friendships, and building hope for a meaningful future of personal significance.
- **Values:** Do we teach children to value purity and obedience to God? Or do we let kids learn from the world about immediate pleasure, looking "cool," and fitting in?

- **Beliefs:** Our young people know the core biological facts, but do they also understand how God Himself looks at sex and where sexuality fits into what it means to be a godly man or woman?
- **Skills:** Are we giving our children the abilities to resist peer pressure, stand up for what is right, build meaningful friendships, and form loving relationships as adults?
- **Supports:** Are we helping children grow in the right direction by keeping our relationships with them strong and loving? Are we helping them plug into a vibrant faith community that encourages them to grow and stay close to Jesus?

GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEX is a series of books you can read with your children at ages three to five, five to eight, eight to eleven, and eleven to fourteen. The parents'



resource manual, *How and When to Tell Your Kids About Sex: A Lifelong Approach to Shaping Your Child's Sexual Character*, offers a comprehensive understanding of what parents can do to shape their children's sexual character. We don't avoid the hardest subjects, such as sexual abuse or homosexuality. Our goals are to:

- help you understand your role in shaping your children's views, attitudes, and beliefs about sexuality;
- establish God's view of sexuality;
- discuss how to explain and defend the traditional Christian view of sexual morality in these modern times;
- explore how you can most powerfully influence your child to live a life of sexual chastity; and
- equip you to provide your child with the strengths necessary to stand by their commitments to traditional Christian morality.

As we've taught and written about the principles for godly, parent-directed sex education in the Christian home, we've heard from parents over and over again, "I think you are right that I should have such conversations, but I don't think I can talk to my children that way. I wish there were something we could read with our children to get us started in discussing these matters."

The children's books in this series are designed to meet that need. They are not meant to provide all the

information kids need but rather to be starting points for Christian parents to discuss sexuality with their children in a manner appropriate to each age. They provide an anchor point for discussions, a jump start to get discussions going. They put the words in your mouths and put the issues out on the table. Don't simply hand these books to your kids to read, because our whole point is to empower you as the parent to shape your children's sexual character. The books are meant to guide the conversations with your children that will deepen your impact on them in the area of sexuality.

Why start early? Because if you as the parent are not teaching your kids about sexuality, they are learning distorted lessons about it from television, the Internet, and playground conversations. If you stand silent on sex while the rest of the world is abuzz about it, kids come to the conclusion that you cannot help them in this key area. If you start now in teaching godly, truthful, tactful, and appropriate lessons about sexuality, your children will trust you more and see you as a mother or father who tells the truth!

Book One (Ages Three to Five)

The Story of Me

Our most important task with the young child is to lay a spiritual foundation for the child's understanding of sexuality. God loves the human body (and the whole human person) and called it "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Children must see not only their bodies but also their sexual organs as gifts from God.

Young children can begin to develop a wondrous appreciation for God's splendid gift of sexuality by understanding some of the basics of human reproduction, so in this book we discuss the growth of a child inside a mother's body and the birth process. Young children begin to develop a trust for God's Law and to see God as a Lawgiver who has the best interests of His people at heart. God is the giver of good gifts! Finally, we want children to see families as God's intended framework for the nurture and love of children. If you are reading with an adopted child, you'll have an opportunity to talk about how God sometimes creates families that way. We hope you will find *The Story of Me* a wonderful starting point for discussing sexuality with your young child.

Book Two (Ages Five to Eight)

Before I Was Born (by Carolyn Nystrom)

Before I Was Born again emphasizes the creational goodness of our bodies, our existence as men and women, and our sexual organs. This book introduces new topics as well, including the growth and change as boys and girls become men and women and a tactful but direct explanation of sexual intercourse between a husband and wife.

If you are reading with an adopted child, use this opportunity to explain that not every couple will have children. If a baby doesn't grow in the mother's womb, the couple might look for a baby or older child to adopt.

The birth mother knows that the husband and wife will love their adopted child. This is another way God makes families.

Book Three (Ages Eight to Eleven)

What's the Big Deal? Why God Cares About Sex

This book does three things. First, it reinforces the messages of our first two children's books: the basics of sexual intercourse and the fundamental goodness of our sexuality. Second, it continues the task of deliberately building your child's understanding of why God intends sexual intercourse to be reserved for marriage. Third, it helps you begin the process of "inoculating" your child against the negative moral messages of the world. In *How and When to Tell Your Kids About Sex*, we argue that Christian parents should *not* try to completely shelter their children from the destructive moral messages of the world. Children who grow up in environments where they are never exposed to germs grow up with depleted and ineffectual immune systems for resisting disease. When we shelter them too much, we leave them naive and vulnerable, and we risk communicating that the negative messages of the world are so powerful that Christians cannot even talk about them.

But nor should we just let our kids be inundated with the destructive messages of the world. The principle of inoculation suggests that we should deliberately expose kids to the contrary moral messages they will hear from the world. It should be in *our homes* that our kids first

learn that many people in our world do not believe in reserving sex for marriage, and this should also be where they get their first understanding of such problems as teenage pregnancy, AIDS, and homosexuality. But they should be exposed to these realities for a vital purpose: to build their defenses against these terrible problems of our culture.

Book Four (Ages Eleven to Fourteen)

Facing the Facts: The Truth About Sex and You

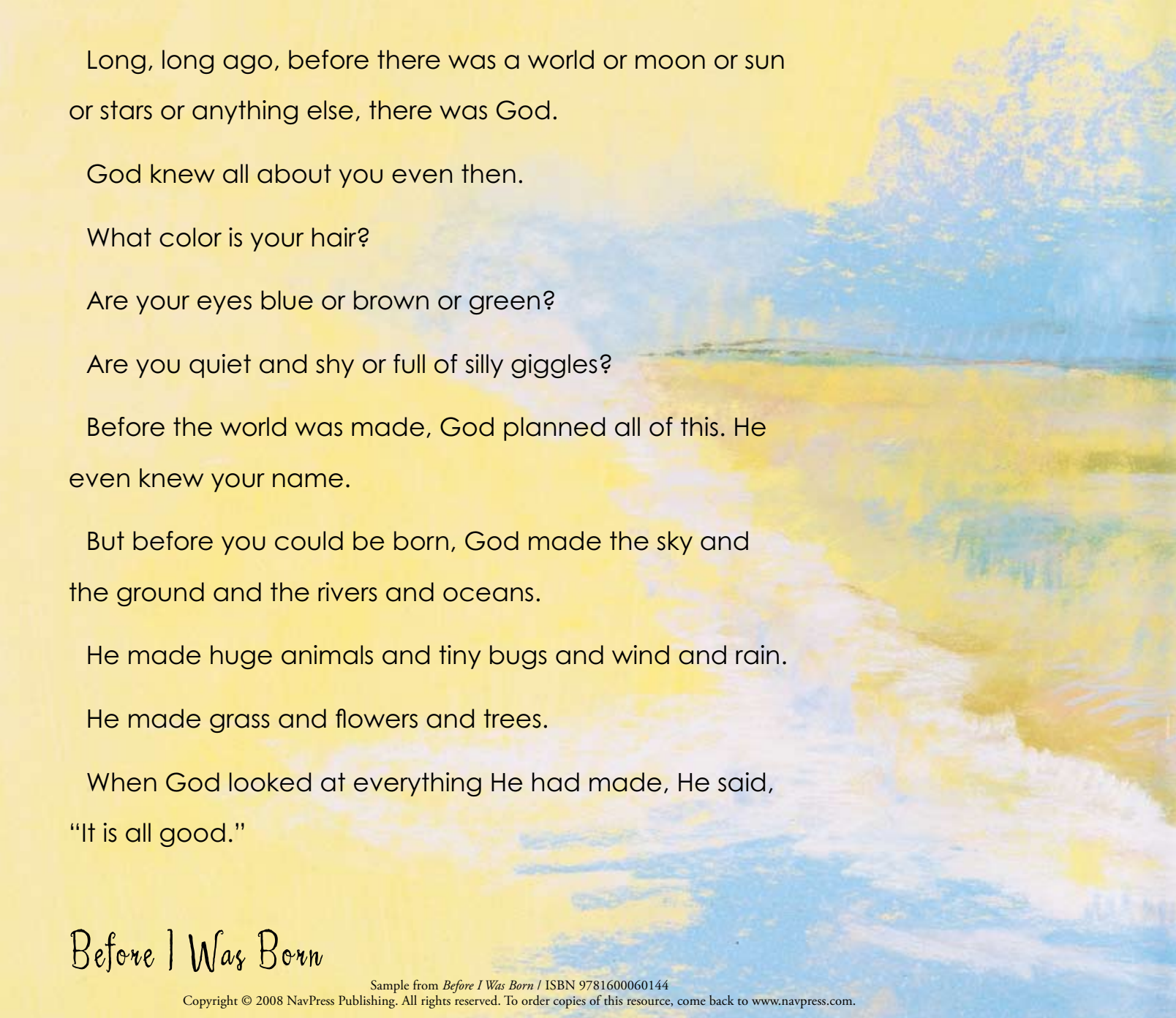
Facing the Facts: The Truth About Sex and You builds upon all that has come before in the three previous books but will further prepare your child for puberty. Your child is now old enough for more detailed information about the changes his or her body is about to go through and about the adult body that is soon to be presented as a gift from God. Your child also needs to be reminded about God's view of sexuality, about His loving and beautiful intentions for how this gift should be used. The distorted ways in which our world views sex must be clearly labeled, and our children must be prepared to face views and beliefs contrary to those we are teaching them at home. We attempt to do all this while also talking about the many confusing feelings of puberty and early adolescence. Your child can read this book independently; we encourage you to read it as well and then talk about it together.

All of these books were written as if dialogue were an ongoing reality between mother, father, and children in

the home. Yet in some homes, only one parent is willing to talk about sex. Some parents shoulder the responsibility of parenting alone due to separation, divorce, or death. Grandparents may be raising their grandkids. We've tried to be sensitive to adoptive families and families who do not fit the "traditional nuclear family" mold, but we cannot anticipate or respond to all the unique needs of families. Use these books with creativity and thought to meet the needs of your situation.

We have also chosen not to add endnotes with documentation to the children's books. If a specific statement from these books interests you or your child ("Is it really true that almost a million teenagers get pregnant every year?"), you can likely find an endnote directing you to more information in our parents' guidebook, *How and When to Tell Your Kids About Sex*.

We hope these books will be valuable tools in raising a new generation of faithful Christian young people who will have healthy, positive, accepting attitudes about their own sexuality; who will live confident, chaste lives as faithful witnesses to the work of Christ in their lives while they are single; and who will then live fulfilled, loving, rewarding lives as spouses, should they choose to marry.



Long, long ago, before there was a world or moon or sun
or stars or anything else, there was God.

God knew all about you even then.

What color is your hair?

Are your eyes blue or brown or green?

Are you quiet and shy or full of silly giggles?

Before the world was made, God planned all of this. He
even knew your name.

But before you could be born, God made the sky and
the ground and the rivers and oceans.

He made huge animals and tiny bugs and wind and rain.

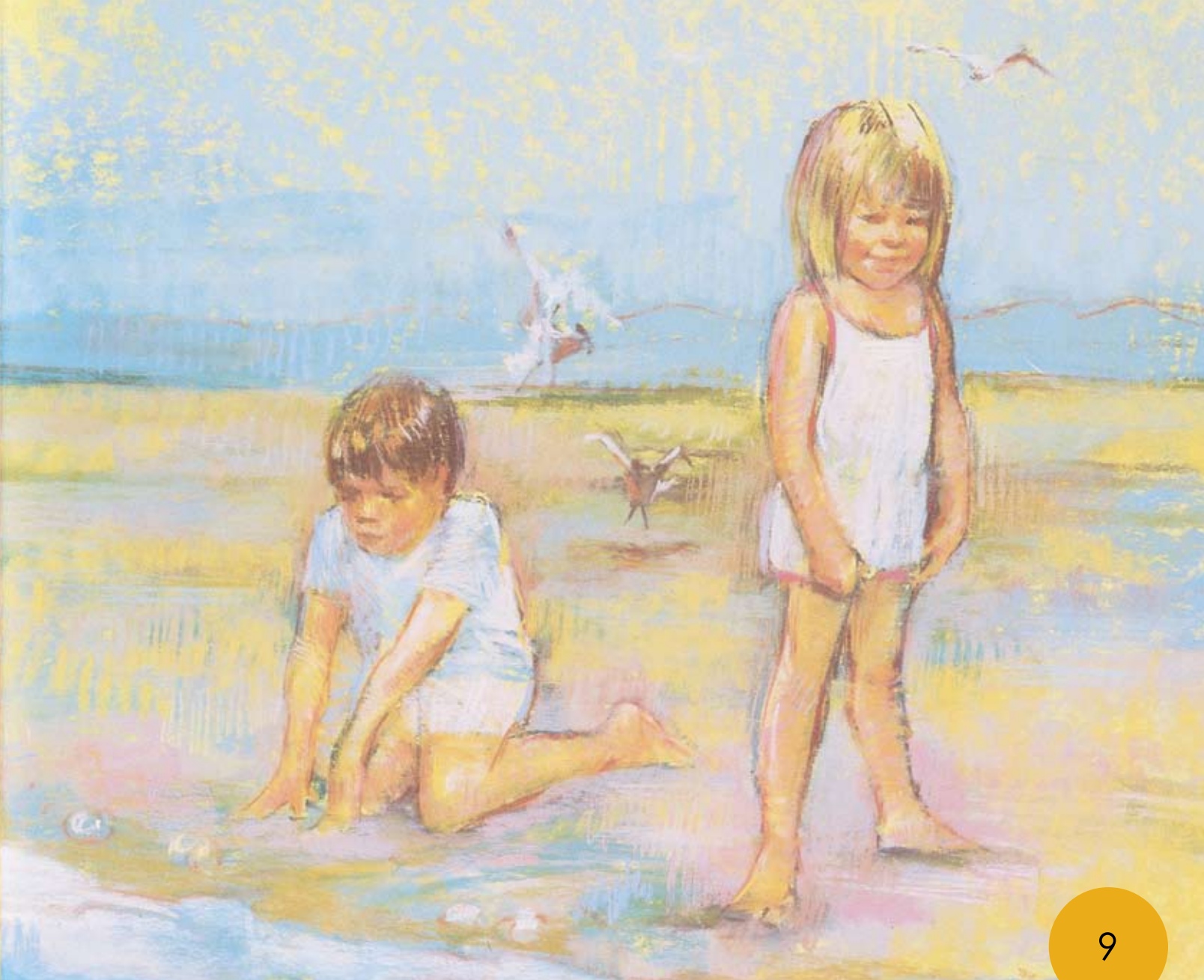
He made grass and flowers and trees.

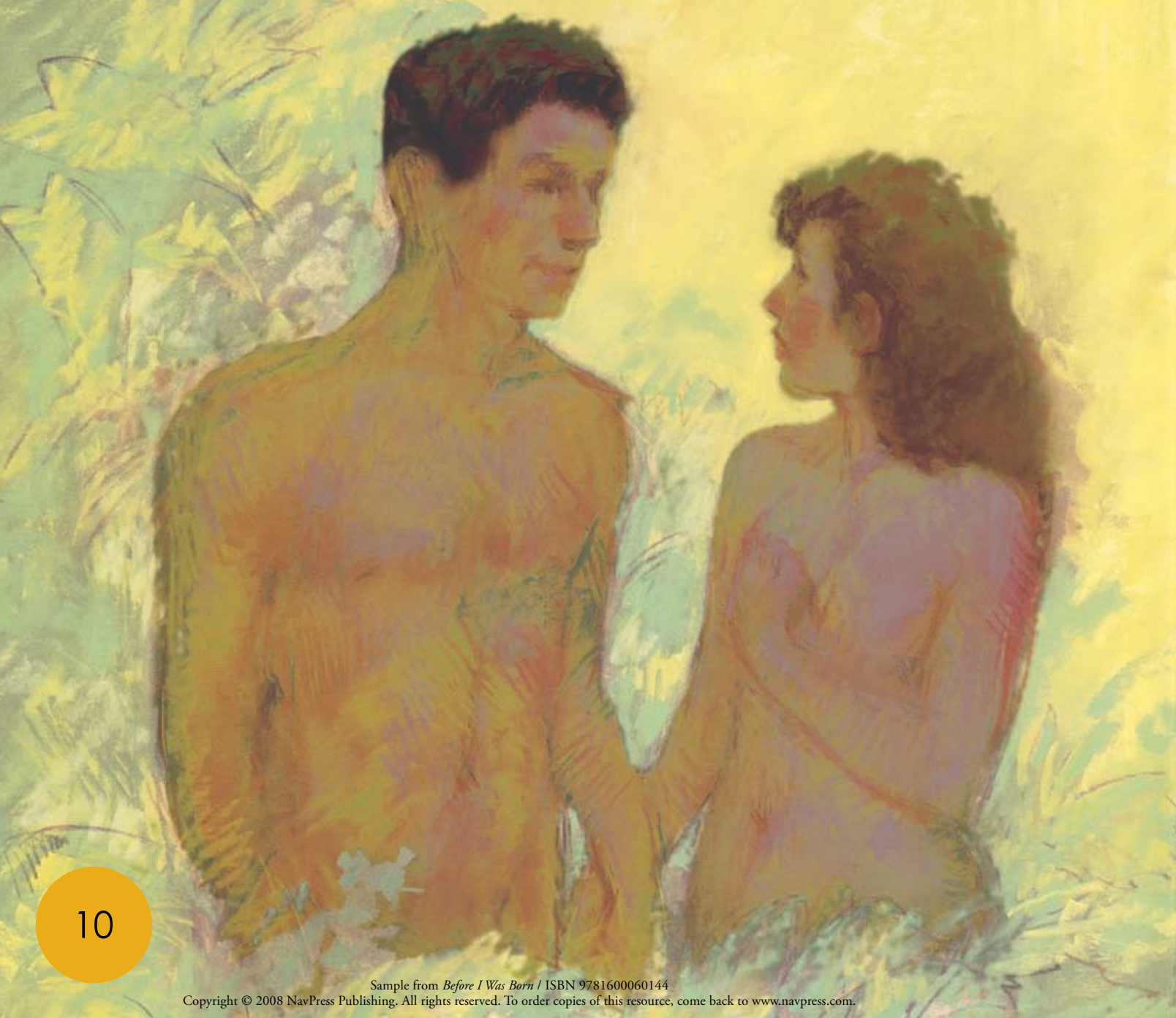
When God looked at everything He had made, He said,
“It is all good.”

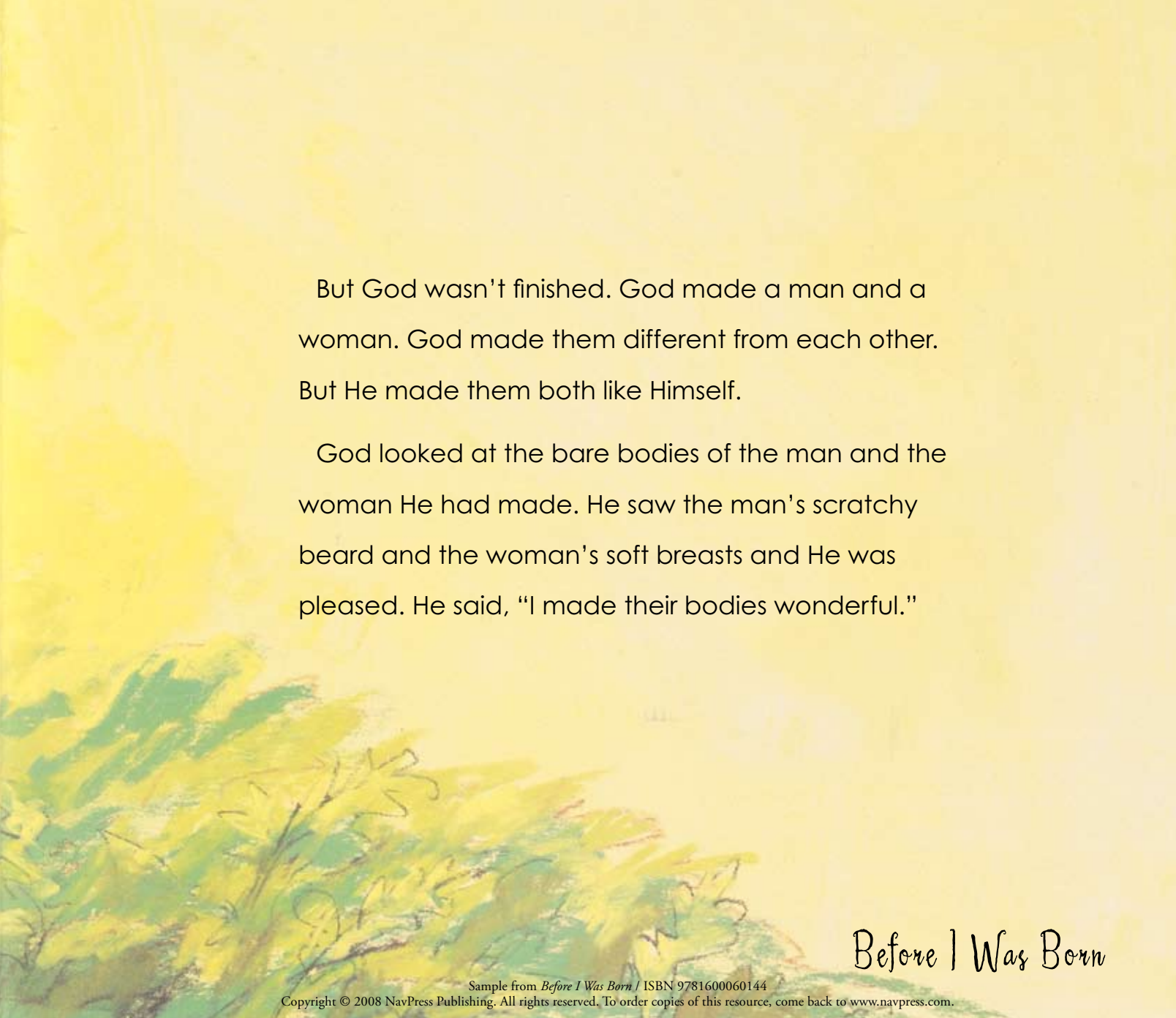
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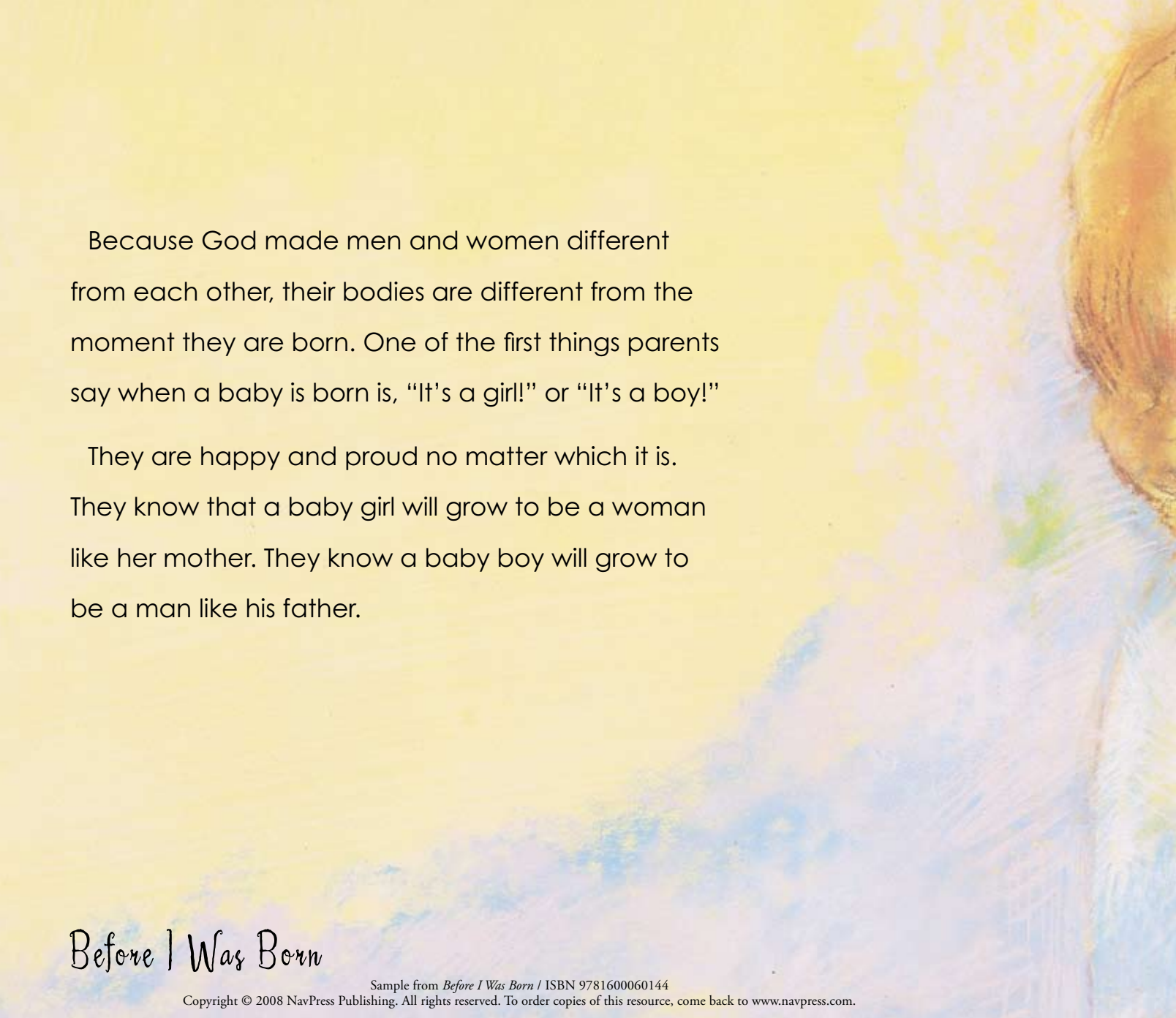




But God wasn't finished. God made a man and a woman. God made them different from each other. But He made them both like Himself.

God looked at the bare bodies of the man and the woman He had made. He saw the man's scratchy beard and the woman's soft breasts and He was pleased. He said, "I made their bodies wonderful."

Before I Was Born



Because God made men and women different from each other, their bodies are different from the moment they are born. One of the first things parents say when a baby is born is, “It’s a girl!” or “It’s a boy!”

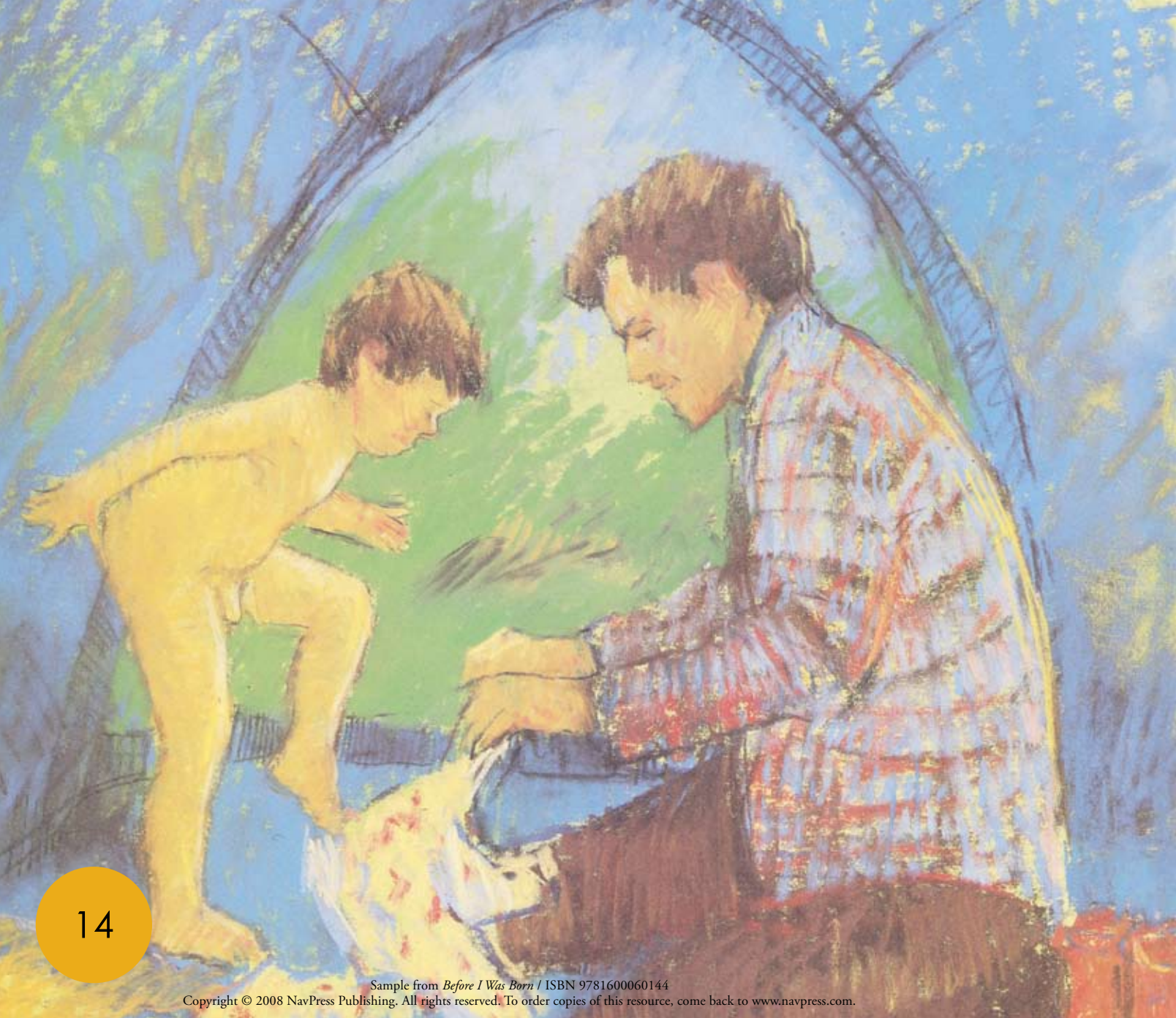
They are happy and proud no matter which it is. They know that a baby girl will grow to be a woman like her mother. They know a baby boy will grow to be a man like his father.

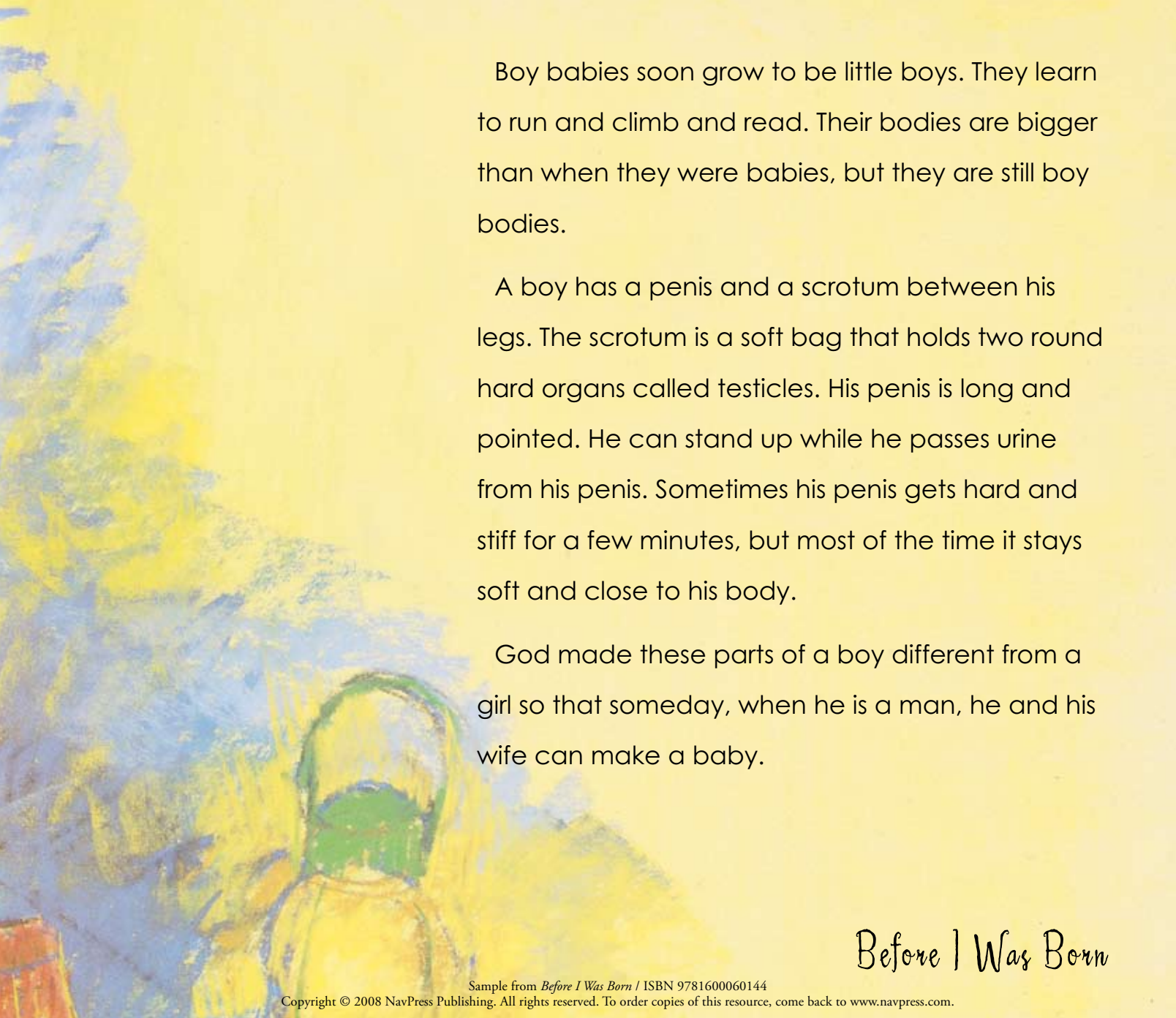
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Boy babies soon grow to be little boys. They learn to run and climb and read. Their bodies are bigger than when they were babies, but they are still boy bodies.

A boy has a penis and a scrotum between his legs. The scrotum is a soft bag that holds two round hard organs called testicles. His penis is long and pointed. He can stand up while he passes urine from his penis. Sometimes his penis gets hard and stiff for a few minutes, but most of the time it stays soft and close to his body.

God made these parts of a boy different from a girl so that someday, when he is a man, he and his wife can make a baby.

Before I Was Born

Girl babies grow too. They learn to run and climb and read.

A girl has three openings close together between her legs. From the one in front she passes urine, but she sits down to do this.

From the one in back, she passes bowel movements, just like a boy does.

The opening in the middle is called the vagina. It is a narrow tunnel that leads up to her womb. The womb is a special place inside her body that God gives only to girls. When a girl is ready to become a mother, a baby can grow inside her womb.

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