

# Splash! Parent Pages

## The Electronic Babysitter

by Dr. David Walsh

Good babysitters are treasures worth their weight in gold. Parents want to be able to know their children will be safe and well cared for. In addition, parents know how impressionable young minds are, so they search for babysitters who will pay attention to their children, enjoy being with them, communicate well with little ones, and model good behavior. Parents have been known to keep the names of good babysitters secret—even from their closest friends.

With the Information Age a new babysitter arrived on the scene. This one is always available and is able to keep kids occupied for hours on end. The convenience features are tremendous—no phone calls, no advance scheduling, no transportation needed. To top it off, this new babysitter doesn't even charge! Of course, the babysitter I'm talking about is the television set. Unfortunately television doesn't match up very well with the criteria for a good babysitter.

Here are some tips in using the electronic babysitter.

- Use TV as a babysitter sparingly. While no one can fault the parent who turns the kids over to TV in a crunch, don't make it a regular thing. Viewing patterns get set at an early age.
- Watch what your kids watch. Make sure the program is age appropriate.
- Make sure your children have plenty of alternative activities so TV doesn't become the default option.

*Pay as much attention to the electronic babysitter as a live one.*

It would be nice if we could turn our kids over to television without worrying that they're going to pick up all kinds of things that aren't good for them. Unfortunately, we can't. We have to pay as much attention to an electronic babysitter as we do a live one.

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## One Parent's Perspective

*We noticed that whenever the video camera came out, our child was suddenly quiet. Now we use a voice activated tape recorder, which has documented first words, prayers, and singing.*





## Gift Baby

**Genesis  
21:1-7**

Abraham and Sarah were childless and long past child-bearing age. Surprise! God gave them a child in their old age and their new family was as unique as your family. Use this story to assure your little one that God has placed her in a family like no other. Pretend to rock a baby each time you read the word *baby*.

Abraham and Sarah wanted a *baby*.

God waited a long time, then God gave them a *baby* boy.

Abraham named the *baby* Isaac.

Sarah laughed with joy when she held her *baby*.

Isaac, the *baby*, was God's gift to Sarah and Abraham.

(*Child's name*), you are God's gift to our family!



*A prayer can be joyfully*



## A Joyful Prayer

A prayer can be joyfully expressed using music and dancing! Explain to your child that God's love makes you happy, and invite her to celebrate that happiness with you. Sing a joyful, God-centered song, and dance around together in cheerful celebration of God's love. If you prefer not to sing, play music from a tape or CD or create a rhythm by clapping, snapping, or patting your thighs. After celebrating, model folding your hands, bowing your head, and closing your eyes as you pray in a traditional way, "Thank you, God, for loving us. We love you, too! Amen"



## Laughing for Joy

For your family devotion time, read the story of Isaac's birth from a Bible storybook, and talk about how much Abraham and Sarah wanted to have a baby. When Sarah learned she and Abraham would have a baby, she was so surprised and glad that she laughed and laughed. Their baby was born, and they named him Isaac, which means *laughter*.

Babies are so special! What do you enjoy most about your little toddler? What are some of his cute antics? What does your child purposefully do to get a laugh? Remember these times when baby is feeling and acting cranky. Laughing together helps people develop a sense of being loved and belonging—gifts God wants all children (and adults!) to have.

Play with your toddler using a baby doll to cuddle, "feed," and put to bed. Finish with this bedtime prayer: "Thank you, God, for babies and especially for (*toddler's name*). Amen"



## Sensing Worship

Help your toddler explore your church's worship space through all five senses. After the service, walk to the front to smell flowers and extinguished candles. Carefully touch them. Respectfully touch other objects from time to time, such as the Bible, pulpit, and altar. If the organist is there, ask to see the instrument and touch a key or pedal to hear the sound. Ask the organist to play a few soft and loud chords, and a familiar song such as "Jesus Loves Me." Let the treasures of your church's worship space and your child's curiosity level guide your ongoing exploration.

# expressed using music and dancing!



## Read a Bible Story

One way to have a less wiggly story time is to read while your child is eating. (Sometimes it helps little ones learn how to sit relatively still and listen to a story if they're eating slices of banana and cheese while they're being read to!) Get a good children's Bible or one of the many children's books that retells a Bible story in a vivid and imaginative way and read it during breakfast. You might also read a story during dinner's dessert time or during an after-nap snack. Make sure your little one can see the pictures, and enjoy the beginnings of a new family tradition!



Onesies by John Bush



## Puppets

Children of all ages love puppets. They can tell stories, ask questions, sing songs, and tickle. Finger puppets and hand puppets are both great fun, and there are many kinds available in the toy and book stores. But a sock on a parent's hand that talks/sings/dances while folding laundry is a hoot as well! Give the puppets goofy voices. Sing silly songs. Have the puppets play with toys with your child or play hide-and-seek. Puppets can be a great diversion for a squirmy traveler. They can help teach good manners and behavior. But most of all, they're just lots and lots of fun!



## From the Songwriter

### Hermanson Makes Birth of Isaac Come Alive

What defines a great song? "A great song needs to be simple," says John Hermanson, composer of "Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac." "A dash of melancholy is also helpful—a song that has happiness on its surface and darkness, or 'real-lifeness,' just beneath, can be powerful to people of all ages."

Hermanson's song is simple, built on a refrain of laughter, but that laughter subtly shifts in meaning as the Bible story plays out. "I love the image of Sarah and Abraham laughing when they hear the news that they will finally bear a child, and then laughing with joy when he is born and the promise is fulfilled." Hermanson adds: "I chose the birth of Isaac because it's a story that always fascinated me as a child. Also, my first-born son is named Isak—so I'm biased."

**Laugh along to "Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac" by John Hermanson. It's Track 3 on the Totally Toddler Tunes CD.**



## Family Kin-nections: Photo Fun

*Ask grandparents to share photos of themselves as babies and young children. Encourage them to include and tell about events in their faith life, such as baptism and confirmation, and special occasions like Christmas and Easter. If grandparents are far away, ask them to send a photo album with captions describing each event.*



## First Words

Try saying these words for **laugh**—how would you spell the sound of your child's laughter?

**Danish:** latter [LAH-tuh]

**Italian:** riso [REE-soh]

**French:** rire [REE-reh]

**German:** lachen [LAH-ken]

**Spanish:** risa [REE-sah]



## Animal Babies

by **Dandi Daley Mackall**  
(Jill Newton, illustrator)

This book offers a wonderful way for young children to learn that animal families live and play and love, just like their own families! Enjoy the surprise on the last page. **Look for this book and other titles at [www.augsburgfortress.org/store](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/store).**

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# 15 Months

Parent Pages **Splash!** Birth to Three Faith Formation