

# Splash! Parent Pages

## Let's Pretend

by Dr. Diane Hymans

Have you been offered tea in an empty cup recently? As your child turns two, he will engage in more forms of pretend play—a sign of developing cognitive abilities. Pretend play is understood to be a language for young children. It is sometimes called *symbolic play* because, like language, a child uses one object to symbolize or represent another—a necessary step in language development. When we speak or write, we use words to represent, or symbolize, objects or ideas. This means that we can talk and think about things even when they are not physically present.

Play functions this way for young children. Their ability to use words grows rapidly but is still relatively limited. Play gives them an expanded language to explore the meaning of the experiences and ideas they encounter even though they don't yet possess the vocabulary to talk about them. In contrast to adults, who often work out their understanding of new ideas in conversation with others, young children quite literally play out new ideas.

How can parents support this process? By giving children play space and materials, and then staying out of their way. When your child invites you into his play, follow his lead instead of directing. As he plays out his experiences, you may feel he is getting some things “wrong.” That’s just fine. Play is a kind of mental trial and error for children.

*Pretend play is a language for young children.*

Many developmental psychologists believe that pretend play helps to initiate children into the way of life of their communities, including the church. Pretend play is one way children build mental structures that carry the communal patterns that shape their lives. You may observe your child playing baptism or Eucharist. In their play, children both imitate and transform the events of their lives in order to understand them more fully. Join in the fun with them!

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## One Parent's Perspective

*The policy in our family was that the child who could ask politely, in a complete sentence, to have her diaper changed was ready for some accountability on the potty.*





## God's World, My World

Read through Genesis 2:4b-23 and think about which elements of the Bible story would make good magnet figures. Draw pictures of people, a tree or two, and some of the animals, or cut out magazine or coloring book pictures and glue them to cardboard. Add texture with fake fur, feathers, leaves, and other touchable items. Attach each to a small piece of flexible magnetic strip you

### Genesis 2:4b-23

can purchase at the hardware store. Spread the figures in a globe-like circle on your refrigerator at your child's level. Carry them with you on a cookie sheet for play as you travel. Use a children's Bible to retell this favorite story of young children, with your child adding the people, trees, and animals as you mention them in the story.



*Time spent together in Christian*



## Play Dough Creations

As you share the Bible story of creation with your child, emphasize that after creating our beautiful world, God's greatest joy came in creating people. Find ways to remind your child each day that she is uniquely created by God, and you love her just the way she is.

For your family devotion time, purchase or make a batch of play dough, and play with the dough together, making people, animals, and other things God created. Use simple rollers and other kitchen utensils to help you create. Here is a simple play dough recipe you can make with your child:

Mix together 4 cups (1 L) of flour, 1 cup (240 ml) of salt, and 1½ cups (360 ml) of warm water tinted with food coloring in a large bowl. Knead for about 10 minutes, or until well mixed. When done playing with the dough, keep it fresh in an airtight container in the refrigerator.



## A Joyful Prayer

A prayer can be joyfully expressed and expanded upon using music and dancing! Explain to your child that God's love makes you happy, and invite him to celebrate with you. Sing a joyful, God-centered song and dance around together in celebration of God's love. Alternatives to singing include playing music from a tape or CD and creating a rhythm by clapping, snapping, or patting your thighs. After your musical celebration, model folding your hands, bowing your head, and closing your eyes as you pray in the traditional manner, "Thank you, God, for loving us. We love you, too! Amen"



## One Big Family

In a world that segregates people by ages, time spent together in Christian fellowship during worship is an amazing thing! Because children are naturally inquisitive, they want to know what is going on around them. And toddlers rarely hesitate during worship to ask their questions or make their comments! Prepare your child ahead of time with explanations of what will take place, and involve her as much as possible in the worship experience. Not only will your child benefit, but those around you will experience what Jesus meant when he said that children reflect God's kingdom. Volunteer to be a greeter at the church door with your child and watch the smiles!

fellowship during worship is an amazing thing!



## Family Placemats

Make every mealtime special by having your child help you make placemats for the table. Cut pieces of poster board to 12" x 18" (30 cm x 45 cm). Your child can draw a family member on each placemat, or glue on a picture of each person. Print each person's name in large letters at the bottom of the placemat. Vary this idea by having each person trace his or her handprints on the placemat. Help your child trace around a dinner plate, cup, napkin, and silverware on the backside of the placemat, for added use. Laminate the placemats with clear adhesive paper. Let your child choose which side of the placemat to use during meals.

Bearable Twos by John Bush



## I Can Be Anything!

Pretending to be someone or something else is fun! Use clothing, scarves, hats, and costumes left over from Halloweens-gone-by to play dress-up. Pretend to be different people, characters, or animals together. Invite your child to be as creative as possible, imagining who and what you will be, where you will go, and what you will do there. Pretending to go to the store or the beach, imagining that you are animals in the zoo or the woods, or pretending to be a favorite character from a book you enjoy reading together is a great starting point for young creativity!



## God Made Me

One way to begin each music time is to play "Won't You Come and Sit with Me?" (Track 1) on the *Singable Sunday Tunes* CD. Use the song as a cue to let your child know it is your special music time together and a time to praise God.

God is so good to us! We are part of God's creation and we are loved by God. Sing along with "God Is So Good," Track 2 on the *Singable Sunday Tunes* CD. Together, name the ways God cares for and loves us. Name people who are special in your lives. In subsequent sessions make up new verses to name these special people. Point to a picture of the person as you sing the new verse. Examples include: God made my dad, God made my mom, God made my nana, and so forth.

Gather in front of a mirror. Dance to the song and watch your wonderful bodies move in praise to God.



## Family Kin-nections: Becoming Friends

*Brothers and sisters play a major role in toddlers' lives. Because your children share the same adults and environments, they may feel the need to compete for affection and attention. Doing things together such as sharing family meals, attending worship, or reading books encourages siblings to enjoy each other's company.*

Words Around  
the World

**Play** is a child's work. Say it in another language!

**Spanish:** juego [WHEY-go]

**German:** spiel [shpeel]

**Russian:** Buhf [EEGRA]

**Norwegian:** spill [shpill]

**Italian:** gioco [jee-OH-co]



## God Created

by Mark Francisco  
Bozzuti-Jones  
(Jui Ishida, illustrator)

Lush colors, vivid illustrations, and melodic words—what a wonderful way to share about God's wondrous creation. After reading the final words of this story, affirm that your child is a loved child of God. **Look for this book and other titles at [www.augsburgfortress.org/store](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/store).**

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# 25 Months

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