

## Bedtime



12. Sleep, delicious sleep . . . where has it gone? Suddenly you are getting up at all hours to feed and comfort a baby. As you stumble around with your eyes half closed in the middle of the night, you are living out the call to nurture your

child. The power of love makes you willing to make the sacrifice. And good news—God is up! God is always available.

Around the table, around the room, around the circle you walk and walk, patting your baby's back. Your repetitive motion works very well with the rhythms of simple hymns or Bible songs. Sing "Jesus Loves Me," "Amazing Grace," and "This Little Light of Mine" to your child (and to yourself).

Whisper prayers for your baby. Hearing your own words will teach you what you believe about God and how you want your baby to know God. As you pace each lap, pray for a different person in your baby's life. It's actually good that you're half asleep, because prayers are about leaning and trusting, not just about the efficiency of our awake times of day.



toddler



prek-k

13. One of the easiest ways to pray with your toddler is to pray happiest-and-saddest prayers together. Each person recalls a happy and sad moment from his day. St. Ignatius actually recommended this way of praying. He called this the Examen prayer, because it's a way to examine God's actions in our lives. At the end of the prayer, you say, "God is with us through happy and sad times. Amen."

Even very young children embrace the practice of happiest-and-saddest prayers. By noting both our highs and lows, we are honoring each day of our lives, rather than just letting them whoosh by. After praying the Examen prayer night after night, you begin to recognize patterns in your life and your child's life of what brings you joy and what challenges or disappoints you. Praying the Examen prayer opens little windows in the soul of your family to share God's ways.



lower



upper

14. The day your child was baptized, the pastor spoke words from Isaiah 11:2 as a blessing: “Sustain *name* with the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 231). Those same words will be repeated on your child's affirmation of baptism (confirmation) day. Help her grow into that blessing by using these words as part of a bedtime ritual. You might lay one or both hands on her head as you speak this blessing.