

Hymns for a Kid's Heart: Reflections and Skits

Why is this book essential . . . to everyone? It's simple. Usable. Resourceful!

Everyone in church work needs solid, worthwhile material in their "back pocket."

Hymns are as basic as the food chart. We *need* them as a part of our everyday lives.

The writers of these classics wrote in artistic language we can personally express to our Savior.

Why are these hymns called classics? Because they have lasted throughout many years.

Why can't we just sing the fast fun songs? Because when you're older, you'll still be singing these same songs, sung in many churches today.

Can this collection be fun easy and useful? And how!

Who can use this . . . and how? Let's brainstorm . . .

Children's choir directors.
Children's pastors.
Sunday school coordinators.
Schools (Christian and public)--curriculum music teachers, chapel service leaders, etc.
Homeschools.
Small groups.
Drama teams.
Parents.
Devotional leaders.
Adult choir directors.
Worship leaders--hymn of the month?
Sing-a-long Sunday night services.
Wednesday night activities.

ACTIVITIES:

Hymn and M's Game: When the child can sing to the director (or assistant) all the verses of the selected hymn, he or she receives a small pack of M&M's as a reward.

Stump the Parents: (You'd be surprised how long we parents have sung these hymns and have not known the history or meaning of all the words.) The parents could have a chance to prepare, but it's more fun if the kids spring it on them, and the parents give the children a quarter (or some other reward) for every word from the hymn that stumps them. A learning experience for everyone!

Musical Skits: Four skits are provided below. Or write your own. The kids could present a mini-musical or participate in the service one hymn at a time.

Power Point: Use words and pictures as background while the congregation is singing.

Artwork: Challenge children to draw a picture for a phrase in the hymn. Display this while singing the hymn. Or make a book and give it to the kids as a keepsake. "This Is My Father's World" is a delightful hymn to draw.

Children's Sermon: Kids (and adults) will be held captive if you explain the hymn in their terms before actually singing the hymn in the worship service.

Parents: The listening tape, sung by children, is a charming piece to keep in the car. Remember to use it as a teaching tool.

Integrating Ages: Allow the children to sing with the adult choir back and forth with the verses. Maybe allow the adults to help with the skits.

Sunday School: Use the music to strengthen the lesson of the day.

Signing: Teach the kids to sign these hymns. Remember, motions to the words will assist in memorization and make the hymns more interesting. Keep it simple. Sign one or two key words to a phrase. Even a select one or few could sing each verse, and all on the chorus. Why not teach the congregation too? Especially focus on a key word (for example, "holy," "Trinity," "God," etc.).

Devotionals: These stories make great applications for children, and the music is "built in."

Evangelism/Missions/Visiting the Sick/Nursing Homes: Similar to caroling, these hymns are an inspiration to all ages who hear them, especially when sung by children to an older generation. Have the audience sing with the kids!

It is rewarding when these children learn the hymns and can be heard singing them. That's when we know these hymns are engraved on their little hearts and minds. These truths will live with them forever. They have digested them.

These children will never forget these hymns, and they will forever sing God's Word from the heart . . . with ownership and understanding. Now, that's worthwhile!

Who needs this book? We all do!

Here are four sample skits:

Skit #1: "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"

(a mom, son, bonnet for mom, pillow, blanket, book, pencil)
(Charles is snoring loudly, then groans)

Mom: Charles! Charles! Time to get up! Here it is already 5:00 A.M! Where *has* the morning gone! (looks at watch and looks up) Sorry about that. Of course we had no watches in 1715. You and your (looks at audience, holding her back) *eighteen* brothers and sisters are to meet me on the porch in five minutes, so we can sing from the glorious Psalms before breakfast, just like we do every morning the good Lord has made! I just love having you all home for school and using the Bible as our textbook. I can't wait to hear what lovely poems you'll write today. (pats him) God has blessed you with a special gift, Charles. (pulls off covers) Now get on up and use it! (Charles gets up and follows Mom stage left)

Narrator 1: And Charles *did* use his gift. He wrote poems while he was walking, traveling on a stagecoach, even on horseback.

Narrator 2: He grew up writing and telling everyone about God. Charles Wesley wrote over six thousand hymns. Think about it! That's almost one a day for seventeen years! (Charles walks back through with pen and paper in hand, shakes hand from writer's cramp, wipes brow as Narrator 2 says,) Whew!

Narrator 1: His songs were easy to learn, and everyone loved them because he put music to the words people *wanted* to say to God.

Narrator 2: The way he could say things was amazing -- twisting words around, saying things in a way nobody had ever thought of. For instance, what if you had a thousand tongues! (kids hold their heads back, say "Ah," and wiggle their tongues)

Child 1: My teacher says I can't control the one I have!

Narrator 2 (giggles): I'm with ya. But just think, if we did have all those tongues, a thousand of them, and we used them for praising God, we could really raise the roof, couldn't we?

(Kids mime like they're raising the roof)

Narrator 2: Anyway . . .

Child 2: (interrupts Narrator 2) Uhh, how does someone your age know about raising the roof?

Narrator 2:: Watch it, sister! I get around. Moving on . . . Charles wrote the great hymn "Jesus, the Name That Charms Our Fears." You know, if someone "charms" our fears, they'd just take them right away, help us forget them! And that's just what happens when you talk to Jesus. Try it sometime! I guarantee you'll feel better! Hey, Charles! (he is still writing) Come join us . . . you deserve a break.

All: After writing six thousand hymns! (Kids gather around Narrator 2. Charles nods and comes.)

Narrator 2: Could I tell you a story?

(Music starts)

Narrator 2: (over intro.) Lynn and Jonathan, would you get us started?

(They begin to sing "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing")

(During instrumental verse)

Narrator 1 (reads slowly): My mouth is filled with Your praise and with Your splendor all the day. O sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things.

Narrator 2: Father in Heaven, if we had a thousand tongues they would all say, "We love You, Jesus." Today help us listen to Your voice and use our mouths and our one tongue to honor you. Amen.

Skit #2: "This Is My Father's World"

(four children, preferably three of them guys, one of whom plays Maltbie, a Bible, a piece of paper, and a pencil)

Narrator: Maltbie Davenport Babcock. It's just fun to say that. In fact, let's all say it together! (audience joins in) Maltbie Davenport Babcock.

Hey, I know what, let's play a game. Yeessssss, all of us. Every time I say Maltbie, I want you to repeat after me. Let's try it. Maltbie. (Maltbie). Awww come on, you can do better than that. Work with me, people.

Maltbie.(Maltbie) Hmmm. BRING IN THE REINFORCEMENTS! (two kids run in with two posters, put them up every time the congregation says "Maltbie") Let's try it again, louder this time. Maltbie. (Maltbie)

Very good! Now, on with our story. Maltbie.(Maltbie) was a strong swimmer . . . (two persons to the side mime swimming) . . . a fine baseball pitcher (two mime baseball; a pitcher could even pitch a softball out into the audience) . . . and Maltbie (Maltbie) was kind to others. (child playing Maltbie pats someone on the head) He stood up to bullies (a bully pretends to hit the person who was patted on the head) and had strong, strong muscles. (three take a bodybuilder stance) He had strong, REALLY STRONG muscles. (they assume an exaggerated stance, groan, turn red in the face) Maltbie (Maltbie) loved to sing.

Maltbie (loudly): "laaaaaaaa!"

Narrator: And Maltbie (Maltbie) even led the boys choir and orchestra at school. ("Hallelujah Chorus" kids sing as Maltbie conducts, holding on to "jah" until Maltbie cuts them off)

After he grew up, he became a minister. (He now has a Bible in hand as if preaching) People loved to hear him speak the truth about God. (The other three fold arms toward Maltbie and nod, as if listening intently)

Maltbie (with finger pointed high): In the beginning . . .

Narrator: The beauty in God's creation, the sights and sounds always filled his heart. (Maltbie turns around and mimes this, holding out his arms; others duck). And one day he put pen to paper. Hmmm HE PUT PEN TO PAPER.

Bully: (pretends to forget to give him his paper and pen) Sorry, sorry, sorry!

Narrator: Then he wrote the hymn, "This Is My Father's World." So today, when you leave this place, listen (all three put hand to ear) and look (hand to eyebrows) for sounds and sights that show God's creativity, then share the outside and inside joy with others. Just like Maltbie (Maltbie). Come on, folks, let's end with a bang! Just like Maltbie. (Maltbie) (Narrator gives thumbs up to audience)

Sing "This Is My Father's World"

Reader 1: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!
Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into His presence with
singing.

Reader 2: Father in heaven, everywhere I look there is
something beautiful that You have made. I want to sing and speak
of Your majesty. That's when I'm happiest on the outside and the
inside. Amen.

Skit #3: "O God, Our Help in Ages Past"

(father and son; two hats--a youngster's and an adult's)

Narrator: Let me start by telling you that a four-year-old is not too young to memorize poetry. The boy who grew up to write one of the grandest hymns in all of England memorized many poems when he was very young. He learned Latin when he was only four . . .

Isaac: *E pluris unim.*

Narrator: . . . so he could memorize poems in another language. He knew five different languages by the time he was thirteen years old. Isaac Watts was the boy who loved poems.

There was something very wonderful inside Isaac's young mind. He would play with words and talk by making rhymes all the time. Have you ever heard someone say, "You're a poet and don't know it"? Well, that's exactly what Isaac was like as a boy.

Once, during family prayer time, Isaac opened his eyes and saw a mouse run up a curtain to the fireplace mantel. He couldn't help himself from blurting out,

Isaac: (with an accent) A mouse for want of better stairs, ran up a rope to say his prayers.

Narrator: His father scolded him for interrupting the devotional time and told him to please stop making so many rhymes. Thinking that he was going to get a spanking, (Isaac covers his rear end with his hands), poor little Isaac turned to his father and said,

Isaac: O father, do some pity take, and I will no more verses make.

Narrator: Perhaps by making his father smile at the poem (father smiles), Isaac was spared the punishment. (Isaac looks relieved)

One day, after church, Isaac and his father were talking about the music in the service. Isaac said,

Isaac: God is so exciting, but our music in church is soooo boring.

Narrator: His father told him,

Father: If you don't like the hymns we sing at church, give us something better, young man!

Narrator: Even though Isaac was only fifteen years old, he decided to do just that. He knew the Bible very well and had memorized many verses from the Psalms. It was fun for Isaac to put the words of the Psalms into music for worship that could be sung with joy. When the people at church heard Isaac's hymns, they were delighted. He kept writing hymns for all occasions. One of the songs Isaac wrote was "Joy to the World" (a woman sings these words), which you probably sing every Christmas.

People were so pleased with the hymns Isaac wrote that they said he must have had angels telling him what to write. They

pictured Isaac sitting at his writing table with the angels whispering songs in his ear. The next time you sit down, listen! Maybe you'll hear the whisper of a song in your ear.

Reader, would you say our verse and prayer?

Reader: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10).

Reader: Father in heaven, You are an exciting God. I can be full of joy because of You. Thank you for whispering songs in my ear and into my heart. I want to sing and be happy. I may even be a poet and not know it! Amen.

SING "O God, Our Help in Ages Past."

Skit #4: "Holy, Holy, Holy"

(two adults, one child, two bonnets, an old-looking book)
Scene begins with Reginald pacing around with a book in his hand, reading intensely.

Actor 1: He loves books.

Actor 2: Who loves books?

Actor 1: Reginald Heber. He always has a book in his hand. My mom says reading makes you smart. I guess that's why he is the smartest student in our school. (Reginald accidentally bumps into narrators, says a polite "sorry")

Actor 2: Smart but ... *painful*. (rubs arm; they giggle)

Actor 1: I mean it. When Reginald's not reading poetry, he's reading the Bible, and Reginald has a really serious, strong love for God. He's also an awesome storyteller.

Actor 2: Have you ever heard his stories and poems?

Actor 1: Oh yeah. We hang out by the swings at recess just to hear him tell stories. He can even read them and make the words jump right off the pages. It's amazing.

Both: HMMMMMMM. (touch finger to lip) I wonder if he'll keep it up.

(kids freeze until narrator talks)

Narrator 1: Well, he did keep it up. As a young man, Reginald won a very special poetry contest! And here's my favorite part. His mom went to congratulate Reginald on the award and found him on his knees, thanking God for giving him the poem. Among many other songs, he wrote "Holy, Holy, Holy." How many of you have heard that song? (kids/audience raise hands) Many call it the world's greatest hymn.

Narrator 2: Reginald Heber wanted to use the purest and most excellent words when talking about God. So he used the actual words the angels sing when they worship God in heaven. Hey, guys! There are two funny words in this hymn. Who knows what in the world or (as if hinting) what out of this world cherubim and seraphim are?

Child (thoughtfully): Well, my mom says I have a face like a cherub.

Narrator 2: I agree with your mom, and that's very close to the answer because they are angels! Pssst. (nods to kids to come to her; kids gather around, leaning toward her, and she softens her voice, like she's going to tell a secret) You know, Isaiah 6:2 tells us the seraphim angels are said to have three sets of wings--one to cover their faces, one to cover their feet, and one with which to fly. (Kids reply "Whoa!") Pretty cool, huh? My prayer is that every time you hear this song, you'll picture yourself standing before the throne of God, praising Him, just like the angels do! Now, let's all read this verse together.

(Narrator 1 leads entire audience) "And one called to one another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy' is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isaiah 6:3)

Narrator 2: Let's pray. O Lord. You are perfect and holy. Thank You for Jesus. We want to be like Him. Help us to be wise and to have a grateful heart. We won't forget to thank You when You send good ideas our way! Amen.

Narrator 1 (to audience): Well, we couldn't let you leave today without giving you the chance to sing with us. Perhaps this is your favorite hymn, it is so beautifully written -- "Holy, Holy, Holy!" We'd love for you to join us on the fourth verse.

(Sing "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY"; before verse 4 narrator 1 says: "Let's stand and sing--sing like the angels sing!" (turn up volume on tape on verse 4)