



Fall 2024

Dear Families,

Raising children in the faith doesn't happen just at church, but at home and in everyday life. As parents, you have the unique role to walk alongside your children every day and teach them about Jesus. In order to help promote and encourage faith development at home, I have included several resources for you to use in your homes:

- Family Devotions
 - Gospel Project for Kids
 - Lifetree Kids
- Smart Moves for Little Ones
 - Storytime
- Family Traditions
 - Mealtime
- Stages of Development by CPH

“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 11:18-19).

Blessings,

Jen Roettjer, DCE

Director of Youth and Discipleship





[FAMILY DEVOTIONS]

LEARN

Gospel Project for Kids
Watch short 3-4 minute
videos of familiar Bible
stories.

Search for Gospel Project for
Kids on YouTube.

SHARE

Highs and Lows from the day
What are you thankful for today?

PRAY
Confess
Honor
Ask
Thanks

MUSIC

Lifetree Kids
Search for Artist on Spotify Music.
Visit Lifetree Kids channel on YouTube for music videos.



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[SMART MOVES FOR LITTLE ONES]

STORY TIME

Thoughts to Consider

Reading to your children is a treasured time as you snuggle up with your child and read a story together. Stories have the power to convey messages that we can easily relate to. What a great way to begin to introduce the power of God's love and his stories found in the Bible with your little ones.

Children's Bibles

Children's Bibles are the basis for little ones to learn about the most familiar Bible stories. Here are several Children's Bibles that contain a wide selection of Bible stories for you to read again and again with your little ones.

The Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd-Jones

A favorite among children's Bibles. Each individual story is connected to one other, as the Bible tells the bigger story that Jesus came to save us. Even though the reading level is geared toward lower elementary children, the stories are fun and memorable for younger children.

The Beginner's Bible by Zonderkidz

My First Bible by Leena Lane

Both of these Bibles provide a solid selection of Bible stories. The stories are kept short and simple for little ones, while containing many colorful pictures.

The Early Reader's Bible by V. Gilbert Beers

This Bible is designed to help young children to learn to read, so the stories are easily understandable. In addition to each story, you will find several devotional questions and how you might apply the story to your life.



[FAMILY TRADITIONS]

MEALTIME

Thoughts to Consider

Eating meals together as a family is a great time to connect with family members as you share not only a meal but conversation and time together. As a daily activity, this is a great time to incorporate a fun activity every once in a while or establish regular rituals that you do together as a family.

Mealtime Activities

- Theme Night – Pick a specific food, theme, or night of the week. Consider ideas such as Taco Tuesday, Pizza Friday, Saturday Morning Pancakes, Luau Night, Fondue Night, or Foods from Around the World.
- Opening Day – Whether it's the first day of school or opening day for your little league baseball team, choose your food typical for that time of year or event.
- Colors of the Year – Change the tablecloth or napkins to match the time of year or even the liturgical church year.
- Disco Dishes – Choose a genre of music to listen to while washing the dishes.
- Honored Guest – Pick someone whom you would not normally visit with, invite them into your home for a meal, and treat them as an honored guest.
- Virtual Picnic – Schedule a video chat with long-distance family member or friend during a meal to eat together.
- Make a Meal for Others – Once you make the meal, deliver the food and enjoy the meal with them.
- Table Talk Questions – Use the questions included in this packet to facilitate conversations. Make sure each person has a chance to respond.
- Highs and Lows for the Day – Share with one another the best and worst part of your day.

Infants & Toddlers

“Children learn to trust and love God at an early age.”

LINDSEY HAYES



God does precious work through children. The bonds that are built between infants and toddlers and their caregivers are incredibly strong and a beautiful gift from God. In infancy, a child really only knows how to receive love and service. And yet, by simply existing—and even though they need help with nearly everything—an infant brings great joy to those around her and is a person through whom God works to strengthen the faith of parents and caregivers in her life.

As infants grow into toddlers, they soak up everything they can about the world around them, including a love for their parents and for God, their Creator. Toddlers learn to serve and love as they worship God, hear Bible stories, speak simple prayers, and take part in tasks around their home. This time of life is also unique because infants and toddlers grow at the fastest rate they will ever experience. Establishing relationships of love and trust now will lay the foundation for guiding a child in the years to follow, including important conversations about life as a child of God.

A Day in the Life

Audrey is seventeen months old and is already fulfilling the vocation of big sister. She gives her little sister, Grace, kisses, brings her pacifiers and blankets, and practices saying her name over and over. Although she gets jealous and impatient when Mom can't pick her up or get what she needs right away, Audrey is learning, through consistent guidance, what it means to love another person. Both Audrey and Grace go to worship each

week and hear God's Word. They hear Bible stories throughout the day and at bedtime. They sing Bible songs at church and with babysitters. Grace hears prayers, and Audrey practices praying with folded hands. Although neither Audrey nor Grace can fully understand what they are hearing, the foundation is being laid for further learning as they grow. The language of faith is being instilled early on, and God is already doing great work in their lives.

Benchmarks

For an infant or toddler, everything is new and therefore exciting! Their sense of awe and wonder is contagious as they discover what it feels like to laugh, tumble, learn, and communicate. As faith is woven into their conversations and activities, infants and toddlers are able to learn about and love our great God too.

Social

From just a few months of age, children act as little copycats. As infants, they imitate facial expressions and movements. As they grow into toddlers, they begin imitating more complex movements and sounds that become words. This imitation is a form of social play, as it involves interaction with others.

Spiritual

The early years are about establishing relationships of trust and love. Children learn to trust and love God at this age too. Where God's Word is spoken, it's always at work, even in the littlest of children. They hear that Word through Bible story books and weekly worship. Toddlers imitate praying hands in addition to other basic gestures they are learning.

Physical

The number of physical milestones that a child meets in the first few years is incredible. From discovering their fingers to developing the ability to sit, crawl, walk, climb, and run, children in this stage are discovering how to use the body God has given them.

Emotional

This is a time when very little people are feeling and learning to manage very big emotions. Infants express the basics of joy or distress. Toddlers, however, experience frustration as well as possible shyness or fear in addition to the contagious joy, laughter, and wonder they feel.

Intellectual

Babies are born with curiosity. They have a whole world to explore and experience! Infants start by recognizing familiar objects, and then explore by holding, shaking, and manipulating. Toddlers continue to learn and sharpen problem-solving skills as they sort shapes and build with blocks. They can also point to body parts and follow simple directions.

Faith Questions

WHO IS GOD?



Infants and toddlers can learn that God created everything and made it good because God is good. Toddlers can repeat that Jesus is God and that Jesus loves them. Show God's love by taking care of them, loving them, praying, and reading God's Word together. Remind them that God loves the whole world and that He made each of us in our own special way.

“Young ones have a unique vocation of needing to be cared for.”

WHO AM I? WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?



Infants and toddlers are created and beloved children of God with a special responsibility to love and receive love from other people. Toddlers can understand that neighbors are all the people around them in the world. When a neighbor needs something, God says that toddlers get to help and love those people.

WHERE IS GOD? HOW DO I INTERACT WITH HIM?



Toddlers learn that God is present everywhere: both in heaven and here on earth with them. They can talk to God through their prayers and listen to Him when a parent or loved one reads the Bible to them. Toddlers can recognize God's promise to be with them when they witness a Baptism or when they receive a blessing during Holy Communion.

HOW DOES GOD WORK THROUGH THE CHURCH?



When parents bring their infants and toddlers to worship, God works through the Word, songs, and other believers to strengthen faith. Infants and toddlers study everything they see, so parents act as examples and model godly living. Family and friends serve by offering childcare, teaching Sunday School, feeding, snuggling, and loving the children in their care.

WHAT HAS GOD DONE FOR US?



Infants and toddlers can identify that bad things happen in the world because of sin. They also learn that God saved His people by sending His Son, Jesus, to die on a cross and come back to life. Share with toddlers and infants that God sent Jesus to the cross to save the whole world and all the people in it because God is good and God is love.

HOW DOES GOD WORK THROUGH PEOPLE?



Young ones have a unique vocation of needing to be cared for, and therefore provide opportunities for parents to practice sacrificial love as they care for their children. As infants and toddlers share their joy in response, that is God at work through them. Toddlers learn to fulfill the vocation of being in a family by helping, loving, and listening.

Activities

MAKE MUSIC A HABIT

Music is an effective way for children to learn both concepts and language. Sing songs at bedtime or as a distraction when a child is upset. Play music from a device or just use your voice. It doesn't matter how your voice sounds when you're a beloved caretaker of the child. Add some dancing or simple instruments too!

TELL YOUR CHILD STORIES

Read stories from a children's Bible. Retell stories in your own words using an animated voice. Tell personal stories that highlight God's goodness in your life. Infants may be soothed by listening to your voice as you read a long book. Toddlers may want to move through a book faster than you can read all of the words. That's okay! You're still instilling God's Word in your child.

BRING GOD INTO EVERYDAY QUESTIONS

As toddlers begin to communicate with simple words, it becomes natural to play games that involve pointing or simple answers, such as "What does a cow say?" or "Show me your nose." They also love to point out and name familiar objects. Incorporate faith into these games with phrases such as "God made the cows! What does a cow say?" Or point out the shape of a cross or pictures of Jesus.

ESTABLISH PRAYER ROUTINES

Mealtime provides a great opportunity for bonding, teaching, and even language development for infants and toddlers. Use meals and snacks as a time to practice saying prayers and enjoying God's gift of food. (And when your toddler refuses to eat anything you offer, pray for patience, wisdom, and strength to raise your increasingly independent child.)

About the Author

Lindsey Hayes is a DCE currently serving as a preschool teacher in Indiana. She loves helping people pass on faith in Jesus to the next generation and is thankful for the work of the Holy Spirit who actually makes it happen.

Early Childhood



“Little ones are children of God.”

BETH SCHULTZ

The youngest children feel loved and cared for by watching a parent’s face and actions and by hearing her voice. They gain understanding of what care looks like, even though they do not have words for it. Around age two or three, children start to gain confidence that they will be okay, even if they can’t see Mom and Dad. They can learn and explore.

As this confidence begins to develop, life becomes rich with teachable moments! The three-year-old will test the boundaries of his or her independence but also begin participating in genuine relationships with family. The four-year-old will explore in interactive play with peers to practice skills seen at home. The five-year-old begins to internalize understanding more and starts to ask more complex questions. A preschooler’s mind is connecting areas of learning at an incredible rate. In all of these ages, children need visual and tangible examples to gain meaning.

A Day in the Life

Emmie can fully trust God to care for her family. However, it is difficult for Emmie to understand that God doesn’t do things exactly as she wants Him to. Teachers can help Emmie’s faith grow by pointing her back to trusting God in these moments. She loves to sing and praise God through music. Oftentimes, she may not fully understand the meaning of all the words, but she is putting to memory God’s promises for times when life is challenging as she

grows. Emmie is learning how to love others and think selflessly. She knows that taking turns and sharing is good but hard, especially during fun activities. She knows that Jesus loves her and has little fear sharing that news with people she knows. Emmie needs to hear about God’s grace and forgiveness, as her understanding is often limited to “good” and “bad.”

Benchmarks

Small children experience lots of growth and development in a short timeframe. They are learning how to interact with others and who God is and how much He loves them—just as certainly as they experience physical growth in their tiny bodies. They begin to identify positive and negative feelings, and their brains are constantly digesting all the information they take in.

Social

From ages two to four, children will continue to engage in parallel play: a child will play beside another with no concern for how that other child is thinking, feeling, or experiencing his play. From ages three to five, children bridge into cooperative play, where they can each be part of one activity, such as playing “house.”

Spiritual

Young children trust that God cares for them through the way they have seen parents and care providers take care of them, love them, and read Bible stories to them. Children’s understanding of God is closely related to their experiences with adults.

Emotional

Children do not inherently understand the reason their body tenses up when someone takes the toy they want. Grown-ups can help them to identify, name, and learn what to do with feelings of irritation or frustration. Children only recognize good and bad feelings; they need help navigating the complicated emotional forest.

Physical

Children are all at various stages of gross-motor and fine-motor abilities. Once their core muscles have been given practice and have built strength, children will run, jump, climb, and sit with proficiency. After these skills are acquired, children will begin to focus on their coloring, writing, building, creating, and other fine-motor skills.

Intellectual

Children are absorbing more information through play than we can perceive during these years. In play, they see and experience many things, processing and learning along the way. Concrete examples filtered through play help children to build an understanding of their world.

Faith Questions

WHO IS GOD?



God loves young children very much, even though they can't see Him. He gives them everything that they need. He knows His children and hears their prayers.

“God uses moms and dads and families to take care of small children.”

WHO AM I? WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?



Little ones are children of God. Their neighbors can include their immediate and extended family, other children at preschool or the playground, and the community helpers they see each day.

WHERE IS GOD? HOW DO I INTERACT WITH HIM?



God is with little ones always: at school, at home, and even when they sleep. They can pray to Him any-time, anywhere, and know that God hears their prayers. They also interact with God during family devotions, at church, and in Sunday School.

HOW DOES GOD WORK THROUGH THE CHURCH?



God uses the pastor to help preschoolers study God's Word. He reminds them that they are children of God through Baptism, and he even baptizes some of these children. Little ones can praise and worship God together, and they hear His promises at church and in Sunday School. They can serve Him by sharing with others.

WHAT HAS GOD DONE FOR US?



God loves His littlest ones and forgives them when they hurt others. He washed away the hurt they cause when He died on the cross and rose again three days later. Preschoolers will be with God forever in heaven one day because of Jesus' saving work for each of them.

HOW DOES GOD WORK THROUGH PEOPLE?



God uses moms and dads and families to take care of small children. Children can help caregivers by sharing toys with siblings or being patient when they ask Mom or Dad for a snack or something to drink. God uses community helpers to care for little ones through their jobs too.

Activities

SING PRAISE SONGS

“Jesus Loves Me” (LSB 588) and “I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb” (LSB 740) are two simple songs that will stay in the minds and hearts of children. Explain how Jesus loves and cares for them. As they grow, the words will take on more and more meaning.

CREATE A PRAYER BOARD

Set a special place in your home to post prayer requests and prayer pictures at any time. God knows what our words mean, even if we can’t write. Parents can write thoughts, and children can draw what they want to talk to God about. At family prayer time, lift these things up in prayer.

SERVE GOD IN VOCATION

When children pick up their things or hand a younger sibling a toy to make him happy, they are serving in their vocation. For further learning, read *How Can I Help?* by Mary J. Moerbe and Gene Veith together to introduce the concept of vocation.

TEACH FORGIVENESS

Spray shaving cream and drip food dye into the bathtub. Children can draw, mix, and play in the cream and have fun getting messy! Tell your child that making a mess can be easy, but sometimes we need help cleaning up. As you help your child get clean, explain that our sin is a bigger mess than we can ever clean up. Jesus is the one who washes away our sins.

About the Author

Beth Schultz is a preschool teacher at Bethany Lutheran Church and School in Naperville, Illinois. Since beginning teaching in 2012, she has loved working with all age groups—middle school and youth group theater, teaching primary grades and VBS sessions, and preschool activities. She loves sharing different experiences with her students to expand their knowledge (like keeping reptiles in the classroom). Most of all, she is blessed to share the message of Christ with children and their families every single day through school and her opportunities to write through CPH.