

UNDERSTANDING TODAY'S

**Preschoolers**

*Developing Tomorrow's Leaders Today*

Morlee Maynard  
and  
Jerry Aldridge

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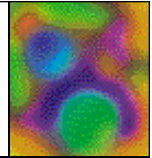
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## Introduction

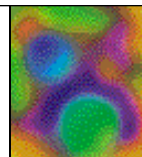
Have you ever sat on the floor of your preschool room at church just to watch and listen to the boys and girls as they enjoy their activities? As a parent, have you sat back and enjoyed watching and listening to your preschooler(s)? If so, you are well aware of how they differ from one another as well as how they are similar. If not, you are encouraged to do so during your next session or stop now and go enjoy your children.

God has truly blessed you with the opportunity to teach and/or parent today's preschoolers. You have the timeless opportunity to influence the leaders of tomorrow as you guide your boys and girls during these important years. In fact, the preschoolers in your group or home today will take Jesus Christ to a world you will never know. God is using everything you are doing with them to guide each one of your preschoolers to lay spiritual foundations that will last their lifetimes. Upon these spiritual foundations they will let God minister through them to their world.

Why should you take the time to watch and listen to your boys and girls? They are sending you messages and signals that help you understand the way God made them. God created each one of them in His image and to glorify Him. The more you understand them, the more you understand their Creator. In this sense, teaching and parenting preschoolers is an act of worship that is pleasing to God.

In addition, God is teaching you how to teach and parent your preschoolers. He has given you these children as gifts with the promise to guide you to be the best parent and/or teacher. That is what this book is about. It is designed to be a tool for both parents and teachers in understanding the common characteristics and needs that God gives all preschoolers. This book also provides insights and suggestions in accepting and helping preschoolers deal with various life situations in which they might find themselves. Through prayer, God will help you understand each unique child and his unique life situation.

When you understand your preschoolers individually the way God created them and their life situations, you are truly able to let God use you in their lives. For example, when you accept that preschoolers are sensitive, you will know to teach them in ways that allows them to stay in their comfort zones. God made



them to be sensitive, so why would you get upset when a child gets upset over something trivial from your perspective? With this understanding, carefully plan learning opportunities that will avoid making a child feel uncomfortable. Consequently, effective teaching and parenting is based on a positive understanding of the way God created boys and girls and their life situations.

### Appreciation

Many thanks to the group of Southern Baptist leaders of preschoolers who designed and guided the development of this resource:

**Anita Bice** (LifeWay Christian Resources—Music)

**Derrell Billingsley** (LifeWay Christian Resources—Music)

**Pamela Boucher** (LifeWay Christian Resources—Pastor-Staff)

**Pat Brown** (LifeWay Christian Resources—Christian Schools)

**Larry Dry** (LifeWay Christian Resources—Discipleship and Family)

**Landry Holmes** (LifeWay Christian Resources—Sunday School)

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**Cindy Lumpkin** (LifeWay Christian Resources—Sunday School)

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**Jerry Vogel** (LifeWay Christian Resources—Sunday School)

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**Dr. Jerry Aldridge** has contributed the section “God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People.” He is the coordinator of early childhood education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He directs the Happy Singers Choir for persons with disabilities in his church, Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham.

## Introduction

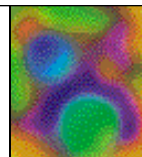
### Suggestions for Ways to Use this Resource

As you read and study each article, consider your own preschoolers. You will not find pictures of preschoolers in this resource because we want to provide you with an inexpensive tool for developing your teaching skills. We also want you to think of your preschoolers. To enhance your experience with this book, take pictures of your boys and girls as a group then individually. Lay the pictures on the table nearby as you read the articles. As a parent, you probably have many pictures to use for this purpose.

As you read an article, **apply** the discussion to each child. How does the information relate to him or her? Use the discussion to prompt a desire to know more about each child. As you reflect on each discussion, **consider** each child by taking notes on how the information applies to each specific child. You will find suggestions throughout this resource. You are encouraged to duplicate the Preschool Portfolio on pages 73-76 and use it as a way to record this information.

In order to meet your needs as parents and teachers, you have choices as to how you will engage this resource. Some of you have access to the Internet and enjoy learning from electronic media. Others of you prefer print material that you can see, touch, and smell. In addition, as a church leader, you may want to consider using this resource in bits and pieces instead of giving your teachers the entire resource at one time. Whatever your approach, select one or more of the following options for using this resource:

- 1. Online:** click on [www.lifeway.com/presource/understanding.asp](http://www.lifeway.com/presource/understanding.asp) for a free online copy of this resource.
- 2. Download:** click on [www.lifeway.com/presource/understanding.asp](http://www.lifeway.com/presource/understanding.asp) to download the resource at no cost. You are welcome to make copies for others in your church or school. Or print out specific articles as you need them.
- 3. Text:** A text is available for \$5.95 plus shipping. Call 1-800-458-2772 to place an order. Please allow three weeks for printing and shipping.



As you use this resource, **resist the temptation** to compare the boys and girls. Development in all areas has a wide range for what is considered “normal.” This wide range means preschoolers will develop skills at their own rates and in their own ways. The more you understand each child, the more effective you will be as a parent and teacher for each individual child.

### **Leadership Development Resource Series**

This resource is part of a series of leadership resources designed to equip teachers and parents as they let God use them in the lives of preschoolers. The information you will explore in this resource answers the *who* and *why* questions. Who do we teach? Why do we teach the way we do? The *what* question will always be answered with the Bible. The Bible guides us in becoming Christlike in all that we do and say. It is our source of information that leads us to our living Lord.

The resources listed below help teachers and parents learn *how* to teach preschoolers. They are the basic teaching books that provide information about the teaching methods that work well at home and at church. You will also find below the resources that answer the *when* and *where* questions regarding teaching preschoolers. These are the administration resources for the various ministries that assist parents in guiding their preschoolers to God. In addition to this resource and the Bible, additional resources are listed below and are available by calling 1-800-458-2772:

#### **Parents**

*ParentLife* magazine

*Parent Project: Tools for Godly Parenting, Birth-24 Months*

*Parenting by Grace: Discipline and Spiritual Growth*

#### **Discipleship Training**

*Teaching Preschoolers: First Steps Toward Faith*

*Transformational Discipleship: Your Church Helping People*

*Be like Jesus*

*Share Jesus Without Fear*



## Introduction

**Mission Friends®**

*Teaching Preschoolers: First Steps Toward Faith*

*Mission Friends Guide*

*Tackling Tough Issues*

**Preschool Choir**

*Teaching Preschoolers: First Steps Toward Faith*

*Discipline, Who Needs It?*

*Plans and Pluses*

*How to Lead Preschoolers in Musical Activities*

**Sunday School**

*Teaching Preschoolers: First Steps Toward Faith*

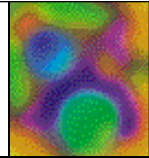
*Good News for Preschoolers and Their Families*

*Preschool Sunday School for a New Century*

**Weekday Early Education**

*Teaching in Christian Weekday Early Education*

*Church Weekday Early Education Administration Guide, Revised*



## God Created Preschoolers with Basic Needs

You will find the following basic needs introduced in the book *Teaching Preschoolers: First Steps Toward Faith* on pages 17-18. Thomas Sanders and Mary Ann Bradberry provided an excellent overview of these needs. You are encouraged to read each overview then explore each need with your preschooler(s) in mind as you read the following.

### *Love*

During the Last Supper, Jesus gave a new commandment. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13: 34-35). By loving preschoolers, we are not only carrying out this commandment but also teaching them by modeling for them how to “love one another.”

Preschoolers need a loving environment in order to grow and thrive. All areas of development are affected by love. Love serves as an internal motivator for preschoolers to take the risks involved in growing physically. You can see the love in their eyes as they connect with a parent or teacher who is coaxing them to take that first step. The love attracts them to move closer to that parent or teacher.

In social and emotional development, love serves as the context for growth. The love a child sees in the face of a parent or teacher guides him to have positive feelings about himself and his world. This love leads to acceptance which frees a child to develop effective social skills and skills in expressing his emotions in constructive ways.

Love also plays an important role in mental development. A child that knows she is loved and is lovable does not have to spend mental energy on dealing with a lack of love. That love frees a child to develop mental skills that enhance her abilities to love and grow according to God’s plan for her life.

Love is the basis for spiritual growth. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul provided a concise definition of *love* and the role of love in the Christian life. Paul spelled out the results of God’s kind of love that is patient, kind, and never

## God Created People to Need Him

fails. God's love is learned through experiences of loving relationships with parents and other significant people. As children experience unconditional love from their parents and teachers, they will easily understand God's grace and love for themselves.

In addition to identifying love as the greatest of faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13: 13), Paul also listed love first in the fruit of the Spirit:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,  
kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

—Galatians 5:22-23

All aspects of the fruit of the Spirit are relational. According to God's plan, people who experience love from birth usually grow unhindered in their relationships with God and others. Love plays a significant role in all aspects of developing a strong spiritual foundation for life.

**As you consider each child, note the presence or absence of a loving family and church family.**

**Teachers, what do you love about the boys and girls in your group? Do you struggle to love a child? If so, prayerfully consider the cause of the struggle. Ask God to help you love these children. These children need your love.**

**Parents, is your home a loving environment? If not, seek a counselor to help you express your love in healthy ways. Perhaps your own lack of feeling loved is preventing you from freely loving your child.**

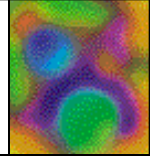
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### *Trust*

In many ways trust is a result of love. Most of us find trusting someone we do not love to be difficult. Loving relationships are built on trust.

Infants are learning that they can trust people to take care of them. As they grow older, they learn to trust themselves to take care of themselves. At the same time they learn that God can be trusted with their lives. God wants them to grow and take care of themselves as He meets all of their needs.

As preschoolers grow, they develop a more and more realistic understanding about their world. For some preschoolers reality may not be an environment that can be trusted. These children need the love and care of a church family so that they can experience trust in some form. For other children the reality of an environment they can trust is real and significant. They thrive in positive, loving relationships with parents and people including teachers at church. Both types of environments are real in all economic levels and all ethnic groups.

The salvation experience depends on the ability to trust God with one's life. Jesus comforted His disciples by saying, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me" (John 14:1). As preschoolers practice trusting their parents and teachers, God is preparing them to trust Him. The ability to trust is a major spiritual foundation that will influence life through eternity.

**Parents, as you think of your own children, can they truly trust you? Take a few moments to evaluate the level of trust in your home. Think of specific experiences of trust. When your baby cried, did you comfort her and try to meet her needs? When you promised your child that you would give him something or do something with him, did you follow through?**

**Teachers, how about the level of trust in your church family? Are you in the room before the first child arrives? Do you focus your attention on the children or on the other teachers during a session? Can preschoolers experience a trusting relationship with you?**



## God Created People to Need Him

**In considering each child, note the opportunities he or she has to develop the ability to trust people.**

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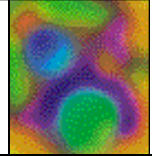
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### ***Security***

Security is an integral part of our relationship with God. “The security of the believer” is the doctrinal term for the way believers are saved eternally. Jesus taught this truth when He said, “No one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:29). Hence, true believers do not have to worry about losing their salvation. We can live our lives in the security of God’s love and grace.

Again, God sets the pattern for parents and teachers in meeting the need for security. Through love, trust, and acceptance, parents and teachers can develop a secure relationship with each child in which he knows he is secure. In order to learn and grow, preschoolers need to feel secure in their environment. A safe environment frees preschoolers to explore and enjoy their world.

The standards for baby equipment, restraining seats in cars, and toys are constantly being revised today. Think how often you hear of “recalls” in the news? It is no wonder that parents today have raised the standards for clean preschool rooms in church buildings. They expect teachers to provide a clean, safe, secure room for their preschoolers. Teachers, however, wash their hands, clean the toys, and follow strict sanitary procedures in diapering young preschoolers as a way of expressing their love for preschoolers and their parents. They fix or remove broken toys and equipment immediately for the



same reason. Parents are looking for church families that have teachers with this kind of love. If safety is not a priority, parents need to become advocates for their preschoolers and help the leaders of the church family provide a safe and secure learning environment for their preschoolers.

Another aspect of meeting the need of physical security is understanding the presence of allergies in your group. Parents need to know that teachers will only serve healthy snacks such as natural juices and unsalted crackers. If other foods are planned for an activity, always ask for permission from the parents in case of allergies. Avoid sugary snacks and the temptation to give candy as gifts.

In addition to a physically safe environment, preschoolers need an emotionally secure environment. Parents and teachers need to take care of themselves emotionally. For example, if parents and teachers struggle with feelings of anger, they need to deal with the causes of the anger and learn how to control their feelings. When children are in danger due to emotional outbursts, the church family needs to take swift action to protect the children and help the parents and teachers get help for their problems.

Unfortunately, we live in a dangerous world today. Churches must be proactive in providing security procedures that allow parents to trust the church family when they leave children in a preschool classroom on Sundays, Wednesdays, and during the week. Parents need to know that teachers are trained and can be trusted to care for their children. Parents also need to know that they are the only persons who can take a child from a classroom. For information about providing such security procedures, use the book *Preschool Sunday School for a New Century* by Cindy Lumpkin and Thomas Sanders.

**Parents and teachers, carefully evaluate your homes and classrooms to make sure they are safe for your preschoolers. Repair or remove anything that might injure your children. Also prayerfully consider your emotional state. Do you express your anger in constructive ways? If not, seek professional help to assist you in controlling your emotions in acceptable and safe ways.**

## God Created People to Need Him

**As you consider each child, note his or her sense of security level. Does he feel secure enough to try new activities? Does he ever seem afraid of you? Does he express joy and comfort when with you or does he shy away from you?**

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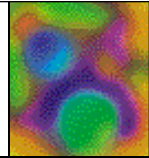
### ***Acceptance***

Another result of love is acceptance. All preschoolers including infants have a way of knowing if people accept them. If they do not feel accepted by you, they will resist you and will not be able to trust you.

God accepts each of us just the way He created us. In Genesis 1:31, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." God accepts us just the way we are when we come to Him. We do not have to behave better before He accepts us when we come to Him. Children are like that. They need acceptance even though they may not be able to verbalize it. They come to the adults in their lives with great need to know that significant adults in their lives accept them. This acceptance enables them and us to grow and improve our lives.

However, God does not always approve of our behavior. He is clear about His expectations through the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20), the commandment to love one another (John 13:34), and the life and teachings of Jesus as a model for Christian living. When we fail to live up to His expectations, He does not approve of our behavior, but He continues to love and accept us as His children.

God teaches us how we are to accept our children by the way He accepts



us. Our preschoolers will grow and develop as they experience our acceptance. They also need to know and understand our expectations of them. When they fail to meet the expectations, we need to follow God’s example in our response.

**Parents, how do you express your acceptance of your child as a person? Recall something you said to your preschooler today to express the way you accept your child. Did she understand you were expressing your acceptance of her?**

**Teachers, how do you show your acceptance of each child? How do they show their acceptance of you? Do you struggle to accept one of the preschoolers in your group? Be honest with yourself, because the needs of the other children may be blinding you to the needs of this child. Perhaps a feeling that you do not accept her as she is causes the chronic misbehavior of a child.**

**Add a note to your portfolio for each child as to the child’s ability to trust. If you discover a child who is struggling to trust you, seek professional help to look for ways to enable him to trust you.**

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***Independence***

When God created humanity, He gave us independence from control. In Genesis 2:16-17, God gave Adam the freedom to eat from any tree in the garden with a caution not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Adam and Eve chose to eat from that tree. In the same way God gives us freedom of choice today. He wants us to be independent with the knowledge

## God Created People to Need Him

of His expectations. God is always with us to guide us and meet our needs.

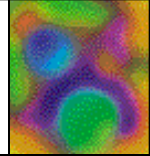
Both parents and teachers can help preschoolers learn how to handle their God-given independence by following God's example. By meeting their need for independence, parents and teachers are giving preschoolers the opportunity to learn how to make choices and take care of themselves. Just as adults need to know God is with them and available to help them when they make choices, preschoolers need adults nearby to help them when they cannot handle something by themselves.

This independence involves letting a child do things for himself. For example, older preschoolers can put on their coats without help. This practice will take longer, but the preschoolers usually succeed with a feeling of "I did it myself!" Sometimes, however, preschoolers find some things difficult such as pouring milk from a small pitcher. When preschoolers are allowed to wipe up the spilled milk without being shamed for what happened, they will be encouraged to practice pouring until they are able to do it without spilling any milk. By meeting the preschoolers' need for independence, teachers and parents are fostering the ability to solve their own problems and develop a sense of responsibility that will last a lifetime.

**Parents, consider ways you can meet your child's need for independence. Are you letting your child try to put on his coat by himself? Are you letting your child wipe up her own spilled milk?**

**Teachers, sit on the floor of your classroom for a few moments. Look around the room to see if any changes are needed to make it possible for the boys and girls to do things for themselves. Where are the coat hooks? Can a preschooler hang up his own coat? Where are the puzzles you plan to use during a session? On a high shelf or on a low table or on the floor?**

**As you consider each child's level of independence, note what he can do for himself without help. When a child**



**does something for himself, remember to express your approval in appropriate ways.**

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### *Freedom*

As discussed with the need for independence, God gave humankind freedom in making choices. This freedom of choice causes us to become independent individuals. The experience of freedom in making choices enables people to learn how to make the right choices for their lives. Adam and Eve certainly learned the hard way how to make the right choices. This experience of making choices needs to begin during the preschool years.

Freedom to make choices in the home and classroom is not permissiveness. Just as Adam and Eve knew their limits, preschoolers need to know the boundaries or limits within which they have choices. As a preschooler matures, these boundaries or limits need to be gradually expanded in order to give the preschooler more experience in handling freedom.

The experience of making choices at home and at church provides the child opportunities to develop skills in making the right choices. Instead of picking out a toy for a baby to play with, offer him a choice of two toys. Instead of keeping all of the three-year-olds in a group as they experience the activities during a session, have two or more activities available for the preschoolers to choose from as they individually move from activity to activity. This freedom fosters a sense of responsibility and skill in making wise decisions.

Meeting the need for freedom also plays a role in guiding a child to self-discipline. A child that is externally controlled by others will struggle to develop the ability to control himself. Freedom in making choices allows a child to practice making the right choices that lead to an inner sense of control. Have you

## God Created People to Need Him

ever considered why self-control is listed as part of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23? By truly loving God and obeying Him, believers experience the freedom of choosing God instead of all the little gods that confront us everyday. Through this experience we are truly enabled to control ourselves.

**Parents, how about your children? Are you letting them experience some sense of freedom in everyday choices? Do you give them a choice of clothing? Are you expanding the limits as they mature?**

**Teachers, during a planning meeting, discuss the “rules” for your classroom. Do the rules allow boys and girls freedom in making choices? Spend time during each planning meeting evaluating individual preschoolers in how they are maturing in their ability to handle responsibilities. How can you meet the individual needs for freedom in your classroom?**

**As you profile each child, note the level of freedom he or she can handle when you give him such opportunities.**

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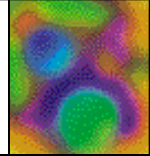


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### ***Guidance***

Through the Holy Spirit, God guides us to live in the light and truth (John 16:13). The result of this guidance is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). Can you imagine what our homes and church families would be like if all of us let God guide us in such a way? Consider how effective we would be as parents and teachers if we freely allowed God to transform us to be Christlike in every aspect of our lives.

With God's guidance we are empowered to guide our preschoolers to



know right from wrong and to take responsibility for their behavior. Here are some practical suggestions for meeting the need for guidance.

Instead of guiding a child with what not to do, tell him what he can do in a positive way. For example, say, “Please keep your feet on the floor” instead of “Don’t sit on the table.” A child does, however, need to hear the word *don’t* when he fails to follow instructions. For example, when a child starts to run out to the street, use the word “don’t” to stop him.

Instead of using a loud voice to get their attention, use a quiet tone of voice and face-to-face eye contact that expresses confidence. This sense of confidence conveys that you mean what you say which makes compliance easier for most preschoolers.

Instead of using lengthy instructions, get to the point with a few, simple words. For example, say, “It is time to put your toys on the shelf.” Sing instructions with a happy voice.

Instead of giving guidance in the form of a question, use a short simple statement. Use questions only when a child has a choice. If you want your child to enter his room at church, say, “It is time to go to Mission Friends.” Avoid saying “Do you want to go to Mission Friends?” and ending the statement with “OK?”

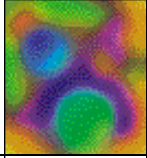
These are just a few of many effective ways to guide preschoolers. From your experience, what tips would you add to this list?

**As you consider your preschoolers, identify what works best with each child in meeting the need for guidance.**

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## Multiple Intelligences

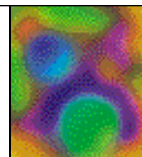
### *A Sense of Accomplishment*

God expressed a sense of accomplishment when He finished His creation (Gen. 1:31). However, God continues to accomplish His will in His creation. Everyday God works through believers in accomplishing His will. Through parents and teachers God furthers His kingdom.

God created human beings with the need to accomplish something in life. This inner drive connects with God's plan as each believer uses his or her gifts to accomplish something for God. In Ephesians 4:11-13, Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God "gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers." The goal is unity and maturity, "attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). God is working through parents and teachers to meet the God-given need in preschoolers to feel they are accomplishing something. God wants them to have these early experiences of success so that they will be encouraged to try to attain maturity in faith during the rest of their lives.

Hence, preschoolers need to receive some form of approval or recognition for their successes. When preschoolers build an interesting design with blocks, they need teachers to recognize it by saying, "I saw you really thinking about your design. Thank you, God, for our minds." When preschoolers successfully pour water from a pitcher to a cup without spilling the water, they need to hear "You poured the water into the cup without spilling it!" When two preschoolers successfully work out a problem, they need to hear "The two of you figured out how to use the truck together. Give me five!" These simple comments encourage preschoolers to continue to strive to grow and learn.

A key to meeting this need for accomplishment is to provide activities that preschoolers can experience with success. Perhaps you have had an experience where you became frustrated and wanted to quit or give up. Preschoolers experience these same kinds of feelings when they cannot do an activity. God promises us that He will never give us more than we can handle (1 Cor. 10:13). This promise is wise for us to follow in our relationships with preschoolers. Carefully select activities that can be done by each preschooler with a feeling of success. If you have preschoolers in your group who are at different maturation



levels, consider variations of an activity such as having puzzles with different numbers of pieces.

In addition, a feeling of accomplishment is one of the goals for experiencing an activity. Teachers and parents do not need to reward a child's success with a piece of candy or a sticker on a chart. Simple words of praise or recognition and positive touch, such as a pat on the shoulder, help a child recognize how he is feeling. When a child successfully works a puzzle by himself, say, "You did it all by yourself!" With an older preschooler, ask, "How does that make you feel?" By guiding preschoolers to develop an inner motivation to do things, teachers and parents are letting God work in the lives of preschoolers. These early experiences of feeling successful prepare preschoolers for the way God will reward them the rest of their lives.

**As you continue to consider each child, note phrases or approaches that work best with each child in recognizing his or her accomplishments.**

**Parents and teachers, consider how God recognizes your personal accomplishments. You might find an idea from God as to ways to praise preschoolers for their accomplishments.**

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By meeting these and other needs, parents and teachers are letting God prepare preschoolers for their relationships with Him. God created preschoolers with these needs because He wants people to realize they need Him. In reality all of these needs are also true for parents and teachers. Every person needs love, trust, acceptance, independence, freedom, security, guidance, and a sense of accomplishment. As God works through you to meet the needs of preschoolers, let God also work through you to meet these needs in those with whom you parent and teach everyday as well as in your own life.

## God Created People to Learn

### Learning During the Preschool Years

God created preschoolers to learn through a lifelong process. They persevere with eagerness to learn unless someone thwarts the inborn drive to reach out to new experiences. Observe the laborious effort with which babies study their hands, toddlers strive to walk, two-year-olds learn to talk, three-year-olds work at caring for the baby doll, four-year-olds build intricate block towers, and five-year-olds master puzzles.

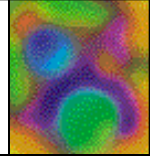
As God planned in creation, children grow through predictable steps which are like building blocks, but at their own rates. For example, preschoolers vary widely in a normal range of physical growth. They gain control of their bodies in a direction from head to foot and from the middle of the body to the extremities. They concentrate on large muscle development (walking, running, skipping, hopping) followed by intense effort to develop small muscle control (drawing, cutting, pasting, tying shoes).

The most remarkable growth of any five-year span occurs during the preschool years. The environment has tremendous effect on learning during the years of fastest growth. Development involves the whole body and everything about the child. What happens to the body affects the mind and the spirit. When teachers and parents nurture a child's emotions, they affect physical and mental well-being. Development, more difficult to observe than physical growth, occurs slowly and steadily as children get a basic outlook on life—a view of themselves, God, others, and their ever-expanding world. Trust, self-control, competence, responsibility, and initiative are major steps in development through the preschool years.

#### *Preschoolers and Thinking*

Too often, preschoolers are the most misunderstood of all age groups. They do not think like adults, but adults often expect them to. Paul acknowledged this truth in 1 Corinthians 13:11 when he wrote, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child."

As preschoolers grow, they mentally develop from concrete to abstract



thinking. As preschoolers and through most of childhood, they understand the surface meaning of words, not the deeper or abstract meaning. Symbolic words are distorted as preschoolers put **literal** meaning into them. What meaning will they get from such phrases as “Lamb of God”; “give your heart to Jesus”; or “red and yellow, black and white” from the song “Jesus Loves the Little Children”?

Another key to understanding how preschoolers learn is that from an adult perspective they think **illogically**. How else could preschoolers be expected to believe in the tooth fairy or Santa Claus, who delivers toys in a single night to all children from a sleigh drawn by reindeer? Preschoolers are limited in their experiences, and they think only with experiences they have had during their lives. A story is told of a child who heard the Sermon on the Mount. She drew a picture, which she labeled, “Jesus on the Summer Mound.”

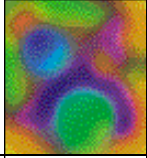
Learning means changing how a person thinks, feels, or acts. Change can occur in attitudes, knowledge, understanding, or skills. Learning is incomplete until children can apply or use what they have learned.

### *Avenues of Learning*

Another key to understanding how preschoolers learn is the fact that they learn at their level of understanding. In a similar way this fact is true for adults. When someone talks about molecular biology, most adults have difficulty understanding his terminology. When teachers try to teach preschoolers words they cannot understand or use, they will either (1) distort the meaning, (2) tune out, (3) avoid such experiences, or (4) perhaps say or sing words for a lifetime without ever asking what they mean. What does the word *Ebenezer* mean in the hymn “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing?”

Preschoolers learn from **firsthand, hands-on experiences**, or active involvement. They learn from doing and through their **senses**—seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching. As teachers talk about what the preschoolers are sensing, they learn how to describe their experiences. For an overview of each avenue of learning, read pages 21-22 in the book *Teaching Preschoolers: First Steps Toward Faith* by Thomas Sanders and Mary Ann Bradberry.

In addition to their senses, preschoolers learn through **play**. Play is the



## God Created People to Learn

work of preschoolers somewhat in the same sense that playing an instrument is work to performers. Play becomes an activity when the leader uses it for an instructional purpose. In planning play opportunities, capitalize on the natural, God-given inclination to play. Provide choices of activities including blocks, homeliving, art, puzzles and manipulatives, nature, books, pictures, and music.

In addition, preschoolers learn through **relationships** with parents, teachers, and other preschoolers. How the adult makes the child feel is more important than what the adult says. Children learn more from actions than through words. The best gift a teacher can give children is the knowledge that they are loved. To literal preschoolers love is an action. It is a hug, a gentle pat, a warm smile, calling them by name, loving eye contact, listening and mirroring what the preschooler says so he knows you listened. Through playing with others, children can learn to cooperate, negotiate, take responsibility, respect the rights of others, disagree, solve problems, get along, take turns, and share. All of these are taught in Matthew 7:12.

Preschoolers also learn through **repetition and practice**. Most preschoolers love to read some of the same books and work some of the same puzzles over and over. Having some kind of routine to their schedule fosters security.

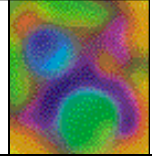
Preschoolers learn best in a relaxed environment, in which they feel safe, secure, respected, accepted, and loved. Pressure, competition, punishment, and drill hinder a child from developing talents and confidence.

### *Styles of Learning*

Through all of these avenues of learning, preschoolers differ in how they learn. Some prefer to **hear** stories and music. They are called **auditory learners**. Approximately 20-30 percent of preschoolers would say, "I need to hear it." The majority of auditory learners are girls.

Approximately 40 percent of preschoolers would say, "I need to see it." They prefer learning by looking at picture books, drawings, and videos. The majority of **visual learners** are boys.

The remaining preschoolers (approximately 25 percent) need movement and action to learn. They would say, "I need to do it." They are called **kinesthetic**



**learners**, and they include both boys and girls. (See Beckie Snow, “Learning Styles in Young Children: Part I,” *EarlyChildhood.about.com*, 29 June 2000, online, available from *earlychildhood.about.com/education/earlychildhood*.)

The implications of learning avenues and styles of learning guide teachers and parents to use a variety of learning approaches. Each preschooler will change and use all of the avenues of learning during the first five years of life. Children will change their styles of learning many times before determining a preference during the elementary years. Instead of choosing one, teachers and parents need to provide learning opportunities that involve all three—looking, listening, and doing. For more information, read the book *Teaching Preschoolers: First Steps Toward Faith* by Thomas Sanders and Mary Ann Bradberry.

“Give to the child instruction conformably to His way {the way God made him and in keeping with his own readiness and uniqueness}” (Prov. 22:6). (From Franz Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume VI: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976], 86.

**As you consider your preschoolers, note which avenues of learning are used and the current learning style(s) for each child.**

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## God Created People to Learn

As you seek to improve your teaching skills, consider the resource *Teaching Preschoolers: First Steps Toward Faith* by Thomas Sanders and Mary Ann Bradberry (available by calling 1-800-458-2772).

For curriculum resources, consider the following:

**Discipleship Training (available by calling 1-800-458-2772)**

*Bible Foundations for Preschoolers*

*TeamKid for Preschool*

**Mission Friends® (available by calling 1-800-968-7301)**

*Start*

**Preschool Choir (available by calling 1-800-436-3869)**

*Music Time Series* (ages 4–K)

*Music and Me* (age 3)

**Sunday School (available by calling 1-800-458-2772)**

*Family Bible Study for Preschoolers*

*Bible Foundations for Preschoolers*

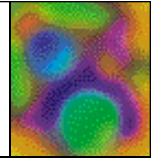
**Weekday Early Education (available by calling 1-800-458-2772)**

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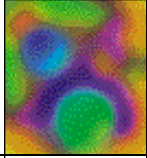
Adapted from an article written by Dr. C. Sybil Waldrop, "How a Preschooler Learns," *The Church Musician*, October 1990, 4-5.

## God Designed People to Grow



This section of articles explores each area of growth (mental, physical, social/emotional, and spiritual) for preschoolers. These are organized by distinct age levels during the preschool years: babies, ones and twos, threes and fours, and kindergartners. Each discussion begins with common characteristics and how they relate to that area of growth at that age level. These are highlighted in bold print. The characteristics are followed by a listing of growth skills that are common by the end of each age level. Remember that the sequence is the important part, not when a child accomplishes a skill. Avoid comparing one child to another. Across from the skills, you will find the “Implications for Teaching at Home and Church.” Because a preschooler has these characteristics and these skills, consider these implications for your home and/or room at church. At the end of each discussion, you will find in bold print questions for you to discuss with your teaching team or your spouse. You will also find a suggestion for information to include in the portfolio you are developing as you read this resource.

This section is the heart of this resource that you may want to revisit often as you stay in touch with the growth needs of your preschoolers. Parents may want to review these articles as their preschoolers move from one age level to the next. Teachers may want to refer to these articles as they evaluate the growth of each child in their groups.



# God Designed People to Grow

## God Made Babies

God continues to create babies every day. They are part of His plan for His world. For believers, babies are a reminder of God's love and His presence in our world.

God creates each baby as a spiritual being with a plan for growth. During these early months of life, each baby develops physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually at a unique rate.

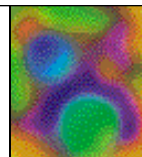
### *Physical Growth*

At birth the ears are well developed, while vision is not fixed until the child is six years old. The body temperature "regulator" is not fully functioning, which causes babies to easily chill. For most babies hunger pangs come every three to four hours. They spend most of their time sleeping, not all at one time.

Even though babies sleep a lot, they are **active**. When they are awake, they tend to wiggle and will eventually move from one place to another by themselves. Note the capabilities babies will develop at individual rates and the teaching implications:

CAPABILITIES	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use many complex reflexes.</li> <li>• Begin to reach toward objects.</li> <li>• Hold up their heads.</li> <li>• Sit without support.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide clean rattles, a ball, and colorful teething toys to encourage a baby to reach and crawl.</li> <li>2. Provide a clean mat on the floor to allow the baby a large space to explore and move around.</li> <li>3. When the baby is awake, play with him as you talk and sing to him. Say or sing prayer thoughts such as "Thank you, God, for Jake."</li> </ol>

## God Designed People to Grow



- Roll over, crawl.
- Look for dropped toys.

4. Hold the baby so that her face is not more than 10 inches from your face when talking and singing with her.
5. Maintain a steady, comfortable room temperature.
6. Provide a clean crib for each baby to sleep in while at church.
7. Wash your hands before picking up a baby.
8. Wash your hands and disinfect the diaper-changing area after each diaper change.
9. Provide quiet, private place for nursing mothers.

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**Parents, have you prepared your home for the time when your baby begins crawling?**

**Teachers, are you washing your hands and providing a clean room for the babies?**

**As you consider each baby, note his or her physical abilities. Be sure to date each ability.**

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## God Designed People to Grow

### ***Mental Growth***

Just like the eyes, the brain is not fully developed at birth. God made human beings with a brain that takes 12 or so years to develop fully. Paul alluded to this fact in 1 Corinthians 13:11, “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.”

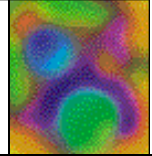
One way God set the stage for the brain to develop is **curiosity**. Even young babies start exploring their world because they are curious about everything. They use all five senses as they explore things near them. Their very **limited attention span**, however, causes them often to shift their curiosity from one thing to the next.

One signal that babies are growing mentally is **stranger anxiety**. By six to eight months, a strong attachment should be developing in the baby’s mind and emotion to his or her parents. Consequently, the tears expressed when separated from parents is a positive sign of growth and should be celebrated by parents and teachers.

Stemming from their curiosity and limited attention spans, infants may show the following mental abilities. (Again, these vary from child to child.)

CAPABILITIES	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use senses to learn.</li> <li>• Cry to signal pain or distress.</li> <li>• Recognize principal caregivers.</li> <li>• Use vocal and nonvocal communication.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide a variety of clean toys and nature items for babies to explore with their senses. (For safe nature materials, see the book <i>Teaching Preschoolers: First Steps Toward Faith</i> by Thomas Sanders and Mary Ann Bradberry).</li> <li>2. Clean the toys, books, pictures, and nature materials often with soapy water and friction with a paper towel then rinse.</li> </ol>

## God Designed People to Grow



- React differently to familiar and unfamiliar.
  - Know and respond to name.
3. Respond to a baby's cry immediately.
  4. Celebrate when the baby cries at the door. Parents, kiss your baby and assure him you will be back. Teachers, plan a way to make greeting time smooth and calm. Distract a crying baby with a favorite toy and soft singing.
  5. Use the baby's name often when you feed, diaper, and play with the baby.

**Parents, observe your baby to see if he or she is progressing and doing these mental activities. If a baby is six or more months old but not exhibiting one or more of these mental abilities, talk with your pediatrician.**

**Teachers, are you providing ways for babies to use their senses in your room? Are you reading picture books with them? Are you letting them touch the Bible?**

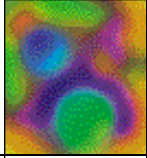
**As you consider each baby, note the mental skills you observe during a session. Be sure to date it with an illustration.**

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## God Designed People to Grow

### ***Social/Emotional Growth***

Some babies are more social than others. Some are more emotional than others. That is another way God created each one unique. (By the way, adults are the same way!)

When babies are awake, they usually want to interact with someone. In grace and love God created human beings for fellowship. Since human beings are created in His image, we have the same desires. We want/need to interact with God and with other people.

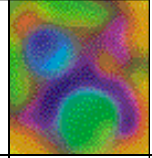
In regard to social and emotional growth, babies are **sensitive**. Perhaps through their delicate skin, babies can sense the feelings and/or moods of those people around them. When someone is upset about something, many babies will respond by crying.

Babies are also sensitive to light and color. Bright colors will arouse them, while pastel colors will calm them.

Babies need opportunity to practice these emerging skills. Adults tend to talk with other adults, but both parents and teachers need to remember to interact with their babies, too. The more interaction babies have, the more opportunities they will have to develop socially and emotionally.

This sensitive characteristic is evident in the following social and emotional activities:

ACTIVITIES	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show alertness when someone talks to them.</li> <li>• Smile broadly at others.</li> <li>• Begin to initiate social interchange.</li> <li>• Become quiet in unfamiliar setting.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interact with babies when they are awake.</li> <li>2. Focus your attention on the babies; avoid chatting with the other teachers.</li> <li>3. Place two or three babies on a large clean mat on the floor so they can observe each other while they play.</li> </ol>



- Make eye contact.
  - Show interest in other children.
  - Babble and coo in response to others.
4. Provide soft, gentle background music during the session at church and during the day at home.

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**Parents, as your baby grows older, are you giving her opportunities to be around other people including children?**

**Teachers, if you tend to chat with the other teachers while you are giving a bottle to a baby, start interacting with the baby. Sing and talk softly with lots of loving eye contact.**

**As you consider social and emotional skills, be sure to note how a baby responds when you interact with him.**

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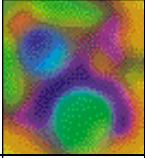
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### ***Spiritual Growth***

From the very first moment of life, babies are growing spiritually. As they learn to trust parents and teachers, they are beginning to learn how to trust God. These early experiences prepare them for trusting Jesus Christ with their lives.

Babies think in literal ways. Consequently, babies need to hear the literal names for the Bible, Jesus, and church. By hearing these terms, the babies can develop a strong connection to the Bible, Jesus, and church. For example, instead of pointing to the church building saying, “God’s house” say, “church.”

As you teach babies, be aware of the following emerging spiritual capabilities:



## God Designed People to Grow

CAPABILITIES	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a sense of trust as needs are met consistently.</li> <li>• Sense attitudes and expressions of love.</li> <li>• Learn to associate God's name with love and trust.</li> <li>• Sense importance associated with Jesus and the Bible.</li> <li>• May point to the Bible and pictures of Jesus.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meet the needs of the baby so that she learns to trust you.</li> <li>2. Express your love for each baby with gentle words and loving touch.</li> <li>3. Often say, "Jesus loves you, (child's name)."</li> <li>4. Provide a real Bible (not a Bible storybook) for babies to explore.</li> <li>5. Use nature items such as an apple. Then you can say, "God made the apple."</li> <li>6. As you look at pictures in the Bible, use short, simple words and sentences to describe pictures.</li> </ol>

**Parents, as you respond to your baby's needs, realize that God is working through you to help your child learn how to trust God for the rest of his life. As you have your quiet time with God, hold your baby. Let him watch and listen to you pray and read the Bible.**

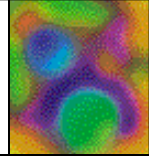
**Teachers, use the Bible with babies by showing them pictures in the Bible.**

**As you consider each child's spiritual growth, observe indicators that she is sensing the importance of God, Jesus, and the Bible.**

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## God Made Ones and Twos

As babies grow to become one-year-olds, they are following a sequence designed by God. They all follow the same gradual process, but they move through the developmental process at individual rates.

One- and two-year-olds typically have a negative reputation. Their parents and teachers are often told that “this stage will soon pass.” By understanding the rapid changes that take place during these two years, parents and teachers can be patient and enjoy these special years.

### *Physical Growth*

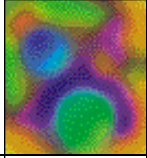
Ones and twos continue to be **active**. They are developing their large muscles by running, climbing, pushing, and pulling. They need space to exercise indoors and outdoors.

As their large muscles develop, their smaller muscles begin to take shape. When they put on their socks, hang a coat on a low rack, feed themselves with their fingers or a spoon, they are exercising small muscles. Whether they are using their large or small muscles, they are very active.

One aspect of physical growth is toilet training. Again, each child has his own timetable for beginning this process. Parents and teachers can help this process by working together to encourage preschoolers. One way is to use the same terms, such as *potty*.

Here are some physical capabilities for most one- and two-year-olds. Remember that some children develop these later than others, so drawing comparisons is not wise.

CAPABILITIES	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<p><i>One-Year-Olds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit well.</li> <li>• Climb.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide indoor open space for one-year-olds.</li> <li>2. Provide indoor space with limited pieces of furniture for twos.</li> </ol>



## God Designed People to Grow

- Explore using senses.
- Use crayons on paper.
- Carry objects from place to place.
- Move constantly.

### *Two-Year-Olds*

- Develop preference for right or left hand.
- Jump on tiptoes.
- Walk between parallel lines.
- Have better growth motor coordination.
- Have difficulty relaxing.
- Help undress self.

3. Provide space and equipment for climbing.
4. Provide large pieces of paper on the floor for scribbling with crayons.
5. Avoid requiring ones and twos to sit and listen to a story. Tell them Bible stories as they play and move around the room.
6. Provide a clean, safe place for diapering. With twos, provide a nearby toilet for those who are learning to use the toilet.
7. Provide a routine for a day at home and during a session at church.
8. Let them remove their own coats with your help if needed.

**When you consider your ones and twos, note the activities that they cannot do. Plan opportunities to practice these difficult skills.**

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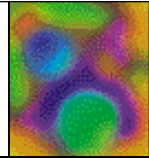
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### ***Mental Growth***

Ones and twos take **curiosity** to a new dimension. They are driven to explore their world with their whole bodies. Their **creativity** begins to emerge as they enhance their experiences with their imagination. They encounter everything

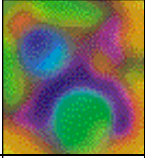


from **their point of view** because they have had limited experiences. Their **limited attention span** keeps them moving from one activity to the next. They continue to be **literal minded** as they hear new words. Ones and twos are talking. They love the sounds of words, and they repeat them over and over. When adults verbally label what toddlers see, they begin to make the mental connections between the objects and the word. Interactive listening is important to encourage toddlers to continue to add words to their vocabulary.

Opportunities to enjoy firsthand experiences are key to the mental growth of toddlers. These opportunities need to be both indoors and outdoors. The more senses they use, the more they will learn.

Most toddlers master these mental skills during their second and third years of life (one- and two-year-olds):

SKILLS	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<p><b><i>One-Year-Olds</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember simple events.</li> <li>• Begin to group familiar objects.</li> <li>• Use trial and error in learning.</li> <li>• Label body parts.</li> <li>• Understand and use words for items.</li> <li>• Try to make self understood.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Two-Year-Olds</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use 5–300 words.</li> <li>• Begin using sentences.</li> <li>• Identify self by gender.</li> <li>• Follow simple directions.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage talking by asking questions and pointing to things for toddlers to name.</li> <li>2. Listen when they talk.</li> <li>3. Provide objects to sort and compare.</li> <li>4. Repeat activities and Bible stories over and over.</li> <li>5. Sing instructions.</li> <li>6. Sit on the floor so that they can interact with you at eye level.</li> </ol>



## God Designed People to Grow

- Match, compare, group, and sort items.
- Enjoy repetition.
- Begin using numbers.
- Repeat songs.
- Know colors.

7. Provide colorful picture books with simple, realistic pictures that have few words.
8. Play the game “What color is this?”

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**Parents and teachers, how can you enhance opportunities to be curious and creative through firsthand experiences? Are you reading books, including the Bible, with toddlers? As you consider each child, observe the mental skills you see in the child. Note the date and give illustrations.**

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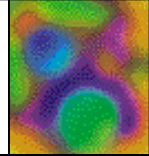
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### ***Social/Emotional Growth***

The source of most of the negative reputation of ones and twos falls in their social skills and emotional outbursts. Their social skills do lack perspectives because they're trying to be more and more independent. They desire to do things for themselves. This desire often results in frustration, which is expressed emotionally. Hence, toddlers are **exploring their limits**.

Toddlers also see events from their **individual points of view**. Consequently, sharing toys will be difficult. Parents and teachers can help toddlers broaden their perspective by guiding them to take turns with toys. To prevent problems, provide duplicates of toys—two dolls, three balls.

Discipline becomes an important learning avenue during these two years. The goal is to guide a child to control himself. A toddler cannot put all of his

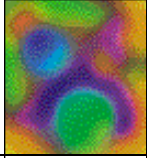


emotions into words, so he may hit or bite another child in order to express himself. With consistency, a child can come to understand what is acceptable behavior and what is unacceptable. For more information on discipline, see the article in this resource, “Discipline and Behavior Issues.”

Toddlers continue to be as **sensitive** as they were as babies. They should never be left without a parent’s saying, “Good-bye, I’ll be back soon.” In addition, toddlers are slow and tend to dawdle. Parents and teachers should avoid hurrying them by saying, “Hurry up or I will leave you.” Such threats are terrifying to toddlers.

Note the following social and emotional abilities and teaching implications for one- and two-year-olds:

ABILITIES	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<p><b><i>One-Year-Olds</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience stranger anxiety.</li> <li>• Play simple games.</li> <li>• Can practice “taking turns.”</li> <li>• Like to exert control.</li> <li>• Recognize others’ emotions.</li> <li>• Imitate household actions.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Two-Year-Olds</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take interest in family.</li> <li>• Try to help.</li> <li>• Initiate play with peers.</li> <li>• Can be loving and affectionate.</li> <li>• Respond to others’ moods.</li> <li>• Use imagination.</li> <li>• Strongly asserts independence.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remain calm and loving when a child cries and screams. Your calm, loving response will help a child regain control of himself.</li> <li>2. Play simple games such as peekaboo and “name that color.”</li> <li>3. Prevent problems by providing two or three dolls, more than one ball.</li> <li>4. Use distraction to solve most problems.</li> <li>5. Provide a small child-sized sink unit with a few plastic dishes for dramatic play.</li> <li>6. Provide consistency in teachers including both men and women so that relationships can be formed among the teachers and preschoolers.</li> <li>7. Interact with ones and twos. Avoid chatting with other adults.</li> </ol>



## God Designed People to Grow

**Parents and teachers, what is your honest attitude about toddlers? Your positive attitude makes a significant difference for the toddlers.**

**Consider each child socially and emotionally. Note the vast differences in development.**

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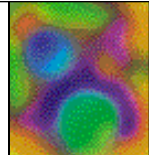
### ***Spiritual Growth***

Ones and twos continue to be very **literal minded**. As they are developing their concepts of church, the Bible, God and Jesus, remember to avoid saying, "God's house" or God's Book." By using concrete terms such as "church" and "Bible," you are helping them develop strong spiritual foundational concepts on which they will build over a lifetime.

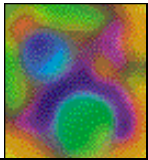
Ones and twos are developing their skills and making choices. The practice they have in making choices among toys, books, and activities prepares them for being able to make spiritual choices.

In addition, they are beginning to learn what is right and what is wrong. For example, when teachers consistently stop a child from biting another child, he is learning that biting is wrong. These early experiences help him to begin to understand what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in God's world.

Spiritually, most one- and two-year-olds can do the following:



CAPABILITIES	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<p><b><i>One-Year-Olds</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin to make simple choices.</li> <li>• Continue to grow in trust of adults.</li> <li>• Begin to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.</li> <li>• Begin to recognize the Bible and simple pictures of Jesus.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Two-Year-Olds</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sing simple songs about God and Jesus.</li> <li>• Say thank you to God.</li> <li>• Listen to Bible stories.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide choices such as two puzzles, two books, and two toys.</li> <li>2. Continue to meet their needs as they learn to trust you.</li> <li>3. Provide consistency in response to acceptable (“I like the way you are taking turns with Alex.”) and unacceptable behavior (“Megan, you can bite the toy. You cannot bite Jonathan.”).</li> <li>4. Provide a real Bible and pictures of Jesus for toddlers to explore.</li> <li>5. Sing simple songs about God and Jesus.</li> <li>6. Provide prayer opportunities for toddlers to hear you say, “Thank you, God, for crackers.”</li> <li>7. Use “teachable moments” for using Bible conversations and short Bible stories as toddlers play at home and at church.</li> <li>8. With twos, use short, simple Bible stories as they enjoy their activities. Avoid requiring them to sit and listen to a Bible story.</li> <li>9. Continue to use concrete terms.</li> </ol>



## God Designed People to Grow

*Understanding Today's Preschoolers: Developing Tomorrow's Leaders Today*

**Parents, as you ride in the car with your child, push the stroller, shop at the grocery store, and give your child a bath, talk about God and Jesus. Say, “Jesus loves Alex”; “God made Anna”; “God made the birds.”**

**Teachers, permeate every session with “Jesus loves Anna” and “God made Sam” phrases.**

**Parents and teachers, as you consider ones and twos, note progress in trusting people.**

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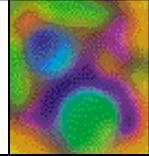
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## God Made Threes and Fours (Including Pre-Kindergartners)

Threes and fours are enjoying an active time of life. They are physically and mentally developed enough to spend most of their waking hours exploring, investigating, and imagining all kinds of situations. God is readily at work in their lives.

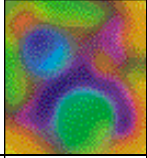
These can be happy and fun years when parents and teachers tap into what God is doing in the lives of three's and four's. God gives each child a timetable for developing physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. The following characteristics and skills can help parents and teachers have realistic expectations of boys and girls.

### *Physical Growth*

Threes and fours continue to be **active**. Their desire to explore, investigate, and pretend prompts physical activity. They need active play to mature and exercise their growing muscles.

Most three- and four-year-olds can do the following physical skills:

SKILLS	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<p><i>Three-Year-Olds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use large muscles.</li> <li>• Dress self fairly easily.</li> <li>• Display some fine motor skills.</li> <li>• Notice the difference in boys and girls.</li> <li>• Dislike nap time and often cannot sleep during this time.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide opportunities to use both large and small muscles indoors and outdoors.</li> <li>2. Provide opportunities for threes and fours to explore and investigate their world with all five senses.</li> <li>3. Provide play materials that will encourage dramatic play.</li> </ol>



## God Designed People to Grow

### *Four-Year-Olds*

- Show good large muscle coordination.
- Develop a longer, leaner body.
- Develop fine motor control for cutting with scissors, painting, and drawing.
- Walk backward.
- Need a high level of physical activity.
- Show good eye-hand coordination.
- Dress themselves.
- Exhibit right-and-left-handedness.
- Control large muscles.
- Enjoy building material with parts to assemble.
- Are learning to print and copy words.

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**As you consider each child, observe the physical differences in the children. Note each child's preferences in physical activity.**

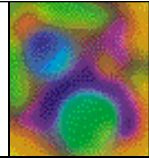
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### *Mental Growth*

Threes and fours are able to use more of their **curious** nature due to their increasing physical skills. They also express more and more **creativity** in their play. They, however, become more engaged in their exploration due to their expanding **attention span**. They might stay with an activity three to four minutes or even longer. As they talk more, parents and teachers will continue

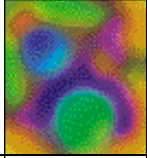


to hear evidences of their **literal mindedness**.

Fears are common among threes and fours because they have active imaginations. They tend to mix reality and fantasy. The bear under his bed is very real to a child. Parents and teachers help preschoolers with fears by gently distinguishing what is real and what is not. Making fun of a child’s fears will cause a child to hide his fears, which will result in confusion.

Most three- and four-year-olds are able to do the following mental skills:

SKILLS	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<p><b>Three-Year-Olds</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use 300–1,000 words.</li> <li>• Learn short songs and song fragments.</li> <li>• Display creativity and imagination.</li> <li>• Experience fears and bad dreams.</li> <li>• Begin speaking complete sentences.</li> <li>• Do one thing at a time.</li> <li>• Want to know what things are and how they work.</li> </ul> <p><b>Four-Year-Olds</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember name and address.</li> <li>• Have increased attention span.</li> <li>• Do two things at once.</li> <li>• Use their imagination; may not be able to separate fact and fantasy.</li> <li>• Show a curiosity about life-cycle.</li> <li>• Understand time concepts better.</li> <li>• Use 500–2,000 plus words.</li> <li>• Enjoy the challenge of new tasks.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide a choice of blocks, art materials, puzzles, music, and books, including the Bible and pictures of preschoolers to expand their mental skills.</li> <li>2. Provide group activities including singing, Bible stories and games.</li> <li>3. Model excellent language skills by using complete sentences with the boys and girls.</li> <li>4. Acknowledge and accept a child’s fears in order to help the child distinguish reality from make-believe.</li> <li>5. Provide a variety of props for dramatic play.</li> </ol>



## God Designed People to Grow

- Seek explanation concerning why and how.
- Begin to recognize basic reading words.
- Enjoy classification, sequencing, and sorting.
- Use many words without knowing their meaning.

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**Parents and teachers, when considering threes and fours, note specific mental skills.**

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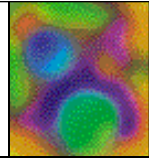
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### ***Social/Emotional Growth***

Three- and four-year-olds become very socially **active** by seeking playmates. As they experience a variety of opportunities to play with other children, they learn about themselves in regard to their place in God's world. They continue to view their experiences from their **personal perspectives**. They are also continuing to **explore their limits**. They learn quickly how to relate to their peers.

Their emotions are very strong during these two years of life. Whether alone or with someone, they can become very upset when frustrated. With experience they are learning how effectively to express their emotions in constructive ways.

As preschoolers seek to find their place in the world, they explore gender roles. As they play house in the homeliving area, they play out the roles they observe men and women playing in their homes and communities. Preschoolers

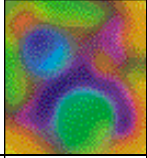


often switch roles in their play. All of these play experiences help preschoolers develop basic concepts about God’s plan for His world that will last a lifetime.

As preschoolers misbehave or step beyond their limits, guide them to take responsibility for their behavior. God models positive guidance for parents and teachers in how He guides them through life. For example, when a child deliberately spills a cup of juice, hand the child a paper towel to wipe up the juice. Say, “Will, when you drink juice, you need to be careful with your cup. You need to clean up the juice now. When you calm down, I will give you another cup of juice.” Avoid saying, “It was an accident,” when it was not an accident. Also avoid saying, “God will not love you if you continue to. . . .” Both of these statements are not true. Help preschoolers see the connection between cause and effect. When he spills his milk (cause), he will clean it up (effect).

Most three- and four-year-olds can do the following social and emotional skills:

SKILLS	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<p><b><i>Three-Year-Olds</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to please adults; conform more often.</li> <li>• Show self-control but resort to temper tantrums when angry.</li> <li>• Take turns more readily.</li> <li>• Like to hear own voice.</li> <li>• Respond to verbal guidance and enjoy encouragement.</li> <li>• Play with others.</li> <li>• Have imaginary friends.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide play groups such as Parents Day Out for preschoolers during the week in addition to Sunday School, Discipleship Training, Mission Friends®, and Preschool Choir.</li> <li>2. Provide homeliving materials for role-playing at home and at church.</li> <li>3. Provide effective role models for preschoolers to observe at home and at church.</li> </ol>



## God Designed People to Grow

### *Four-Year-Olds*

- Have total confidence in own abilities.
- Are bossy; show great independence.
- Tattle frequently.
- Focus on cooperative play and take turns.
- Like to help when they initiate the idea and when initiated by adults.
- Respond to reason, humor, and firmness.
- Play cooperatively with other children.
- Enjoy imitating adults.
- Begin to distinguish truth from untruth.
- Enjoy competition.
- Are learning to share and take turns.
- Accept responsibility.

4. Provide clear and easy-to-understand limits and expectations that are consistent among teachers in a room at church and parents at home.

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**Parents and teachers, as you consider social and emotional growth, write in illustrations of positive relationships with other children and adults.**

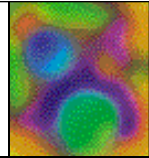
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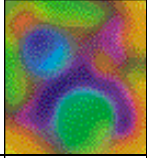
***Spiritual Growth***

Since middle preschoolers are increasingly able to express themselves, parents and teachers can observe how they are developing spiritual concepts. As you listen to preschoolers, note any misunderstandings about spiritual truths. Their **literal minds** make them vulnerable to mixing fantasy with spiritual truths. For example, the fantasy of Santa Claus can lead to confusion about Jesus when a child discovers the reality of Santa Claus. He may be confused about what he can believe as truth.

As a middle preschooler begins to take responsibility for his behavior, respect his guilt feelings. These feelings will vary from child to child. Follow God’s example by assuring the child that you still love him but you cannot accept his wrongdoing. Avoid saying, “God won’t love you if you continue to do. . . .” Instead say, “Jeremy, I cannot let you hit Dan. You are hurting Dan.” Quickly redirect Jeremy to an acceptable activity. If Jeremy expresses feelings of guilt, talk with him and assure him of your love. The ability to recognize feelings of guilt is an important key to spiritual development. As you guide the child, you are helping him to develop important concepts of God.

By their fourth or fifth birthday most preschoolers can do the following:

SKILLS	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Three-Year-Olds</i></b></li> <li>• Identify some Bible characters and stories.</li> <li>• Enjoy singing songs.</li> <li>• Understand that God, Jesus, the Bible, and the church are special.</li> <li>• Try to please adults.</li> <li>• Begin to understand consequences of behavior; may feel embarrassed.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use books about Jesus that have realistic pictures instead of cartoon pictures. Realistic pictures help a child understand Jesus to be different (real) from cartoon characters (fantasy).</li> </ol>



## God Designed People to Grow

### *Four-Year-Olds*

- Like to retell Bible stories.
- Enjoy Bible verse games.
- Recognize that God loves people and help people in special ways.
- Accept responsibility for helping people.
- Begin to develop conscience.
- Ask questions about God.
- Express love for God and Jesus.
- Recall Bible stories.
- Make life application of Bible verses.
- Show concern for others.
- Sing songs about Jesus.
- Continue to develop a conscience.

2. Use books designed to teach spiritual truths that feature people instead of talking animals. Mixing fantasy and reality is confusing to preschoolers.
3. Sing songs that use concrete terms and concepts easily understood by middle preschoolers.
4. Use Bible verse games that will help preschoolers learn the meaning of the words as well as the words.
5. Provide prayer opportunities for preschoolers to talk to God.

**Parents and teachers, as you consider spiritual growth, identify their basic concepts of God, Jesus, the Bible, and church.**

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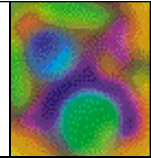
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## God Made Kindergartners

Whether or not a kindergartner is in school, this year is a time of transition. As God designed, this transition is a first of many life transitions. Consequently, the kindergarten year is full of twists and turns through physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual growth.

### *Physical Growth*

Most kindergartners have gained significant control of their bodies. They continue to be **curious, active, and creative**. Their maturing muscles allow them to pursue more sophisticated kinds of exploration and investigation. For example, most kindergartners enjoy cutting with scissors, drawing with crayons and markers, and painting with brushes. In addition, they can tie their own shoestrings, button buttons, and wash their own faces.

By the time most boys and girls enter first grade, they can do the following physical activities:

CAPABILITIES	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skip well; hop in a straight line.</li> <li>• Display good eye-hand coordination.</li> <li>• Cut well with scissors.</li> <li>• Exhibit well-established right-or-left-handedness.</li> <li>• Begin cutting permanent teeth.</li> <li>• Girls may display more maturity than boys.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide outdoor and indoor play spaces that encourage the refinement of large and small muscles.</li> <li>2. Allow child to use his preferred hand without forcing him to use the other hand.</li> <li>3. Encourage independence by allowing kindergartners to tie their own shoes, feed themselves, and button their own buttons.</li> </ol>

## God Designed People to Grow

**Parents and teachers, as you consider kindergartners, note their weak physical skills. Practice those skills with individual kindergartners. Note the preferred hand for each child.**

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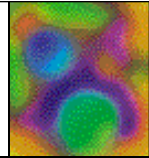
### ***Mental Growth***

As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:11, kindergartners do not think like adults. However, their thinking is more organized than before. They continue to think in **literal ways**. In addition, their language skills exceed their thinking skills. They may use the right words as they quote a Bible verse, but most likely they will not understand the meaning of the verse. They continue to think in terms of their five senses. Consequently adults enjoy the funny things kindergartners say when they respond in literal ways in terms of the senses..

Kindergartners continue to view their world from **their personal experience**. They are developing the ability to put themselves in another person's position. Therefore, taking turns communicates better than sharing, though teachers may begin to interchange the two words with some kindergartners.

While attention span is lengthening, most kindergartners continue to have **short attention spans**. They should not be required to do the same thing for more than five minutes although the range differs from child to child. If the activity is being enjoyed by the kindergartners, their attention span will be longer with that activity.

Kindergartners also tend to focus on one part of the story or picture. They cannot logically combine several parts to make an idea. Consequently, when telling a story, show a picture before or after the story is told so that the



boys and girls focus on the story. Or use an object before the story to help the boys and girls relate the story to their lives. Otherwise, they will only hear part of the story.

Most kindergartners have the following mental skills by the time they go to the first grade:

SKILLS	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin to print name.</li> <li>• Know colors and shapes.</li> <li>• Name most uppercase letters.</li> <li>• Read a few words.</li> <li>• Use a 2,000-word vocabulary.</li> <li>• Say numbers 1–20.</li> <li>• Know morning from afternoon.</li> <li>• Hear the beginning sounds of words.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use Bible verses repeatedly in games and songs to help kindergartners learn the verses.</li> <li>2. Provide Bible-learning activities for kindergartners to develop an understanding of Bible verses.</li> <li>3. Provide a choice of activities for kindergartners to enhance their mental skills.</li> <li>4. Provide a variety of blocks and art material to encourage creativity.</li> </ol>

**Parents and teachers, as you consider mental growth, listen to progress in their language development. Provide practice time for a child who cannot print his name.**

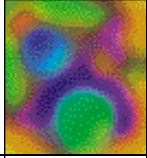
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## God Designed People to Grow

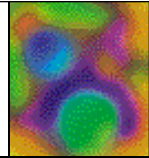
### *Social/Emotional Growth*

By kindergarten age most boys and girls are more and more emotionally stable. They are not as extreme in emotional outbursts as before. They tend to be **sensitive** to the emotions and feelings of people around them. They continue to **explore limits**, but they are becoming more cooperative than before. Taking turns is an acceptable way of working with their friends. Basically, kindergartners are delightful human beings.

By the time a child goes to first grade, she can do the following social and emotional skills:

SKILLS	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in small groups.</li> <li>• Comfort upset friends.</li> <li>• Have best friends but change friends often.</li> <li>• Like to please adults.</li> <li>• May be prone to self-criticism and guilt.</li> <li>• Enjoy group play.</li> <li>• Play easy games with a friend, following rules.</li> <li>• May continue to express fears.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Take advantage of a child's desire to please adults by guiding the child with reasonable expectations.</li> <li>2. When kindergartners squabble over something, let them work it out. Step in only when necessary.</li> <li>3. Continue to provide props for dramatic play, as boys and girls practice gender roles and future occupational roles.</li> <li>4. Continue to provide the same teachers each session for preschoolers to have positive relationships with special people at church.</li> <li>5. Continue to provide assistance in dealing with fears.</li> </ol>

**Parents and teachers, consider your kindergartners' social and emotional growth. If you note a problem, contact your doctor for more information.**




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### *Spiritual Growth*

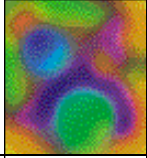
Spiritual growth makes a transition during the kindergarten year. They continue to be **literal minded** and focused on **their personal perspectives**, but they can do more Bible activities and understand more about God and His world than they did in the past.

Their understanding, however, may not be the same as that of adults. Consequently, teachers and parents need to listen for misconceptions and help the child correct them.

Kindergartners have a difficult time getting the spiritual meaning from activities that require combining parts to understand something. For example, kindergartners will focus on the action in action songs and miss the meaning of the words. Before introducing the actions, teach the song and talk about the meaning.

Most kindergartners accomplish the following by the time they enter first grade:

SKILLS	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT HOME AND CHURCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like to tell Bible stories.</li> <li>• Use the Bible to find Bible phrases/verses.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When a child knows the Bible story, let him tell it; then add to the story.</li> <li>2. Practice being kind with the boys and girls as they learn to take turns and share with one another.</li> </ol>



## God Designed People to Grow

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like to know they are doing what the Bible says.</li> <li>• Sing songs about God and Jesus.</li> <li>• Help and love others.</li> <li>• Take care of God's world.</li> <li>• Continue developing conscience and express guilt.</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Provide meaning opportunities for the boys and girls to take care of God's world.</li> <li>4. Provide worship and prayer opportunities.</li> <li>5. Actively listen for any misconceptions about God, Jesus, the church, and the world.</li> <li>6. Guide a child to correct any misconceptions through Bible conversation and discussion.</li> </ol> |
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**Parents and teachers, as you consider each child, identify spiritual milestones during this transition year.**

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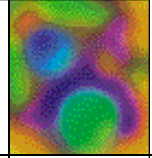


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## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People



This section of articles provides current information in relating to life situations of preschoolers. While discipline and behavior issues relate to all preschoolers, the remaining four articles deal with special situations that involve many preschoolers today.

The loving way God relates to human beings is the model for parents and teachers to follow in their relationships with preschoolers. God depends on parents and teachers to minister to preschoolers who are experiencing learning difficulties, blended families, divorce, and multicultural issues. Your loving support can make a difference in a child's life through eternity.

Dr. Jerry Aldridge writes from a Christian educator's view in helping teachers and parents understand how life situations can affect learning. Some of these ideas may be new and different for you. Some may be true of your own life situation. As you study each article, consider the preschoolers in your family and those in your group at church. How can you let God minister through you to meet the needs of your preschoolers?



## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People

### Discipline and Behavior Issues

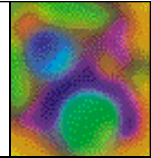
The diverse views on discipline often confuse teachers and parents. The following information is intended to assist in deciding how to approach discipline with each individual child.

One way to deal with discipline concerns helping preschoolers think about their actions rather than simply behaving in appropriate ways. The focus is to get them to think about their actions. Connie Kamii suggested the use of *sanctions* in the book *The Preschool in Action: Exploring Early Childhood Programs* edited by M. C. Day and R. K. Parker. Sanctions are used instead of rewards or punishment. Most preschoolers have specific reasons for disliking rewards and punishment. Sanctions, however, are designed to help preschoolers think about their actions so they will act in appropriate ways. Four recommended sanctions are: (1) temporary exclusion from the group; (2) calling the child's attention to the consequences of his actions; (3) depriving the child of whatever he has misused; and (4) perhaps the most important—restitution. Restitution means a child must correct that which he has harmed.

*Temporary exclusion* from the group is not the same thing as time-out. Time-out works like this: if a child does something inappropriate, the child is sent to time-out for five minutes. The adult says, "Go to time-out, and don't come back for five minutes." Temporary exclusion from the group is different. A child is asked to leave the group until he can participate and follow the rules of the group. The child makes the decision when he is able and ready to come back and participate. Of course, this will not work with some children. For example, introverts may be pleased to leave the group and choose never to come back. However, preschoolers who really enjoy being a part of and participating in the group will be more influenced by temporary exclusion.

*Calling a child's attention to the consequences of his actions* is another sanction. A child who is breaking crayons can be told, "When you break all the crayons, we will not have any more to use." Of course, anyone who has worked with preschoolers will know that some boys and girls will defiantly say, "I don't care." In these cases the third sanction might be used.

## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People



*Depriving the child of whatever he has abused or misused* is a sanction a teacher or parent might apply in this instance. When a child is breaking crayons, a natural consequence is that the child cannot use the crayons. As with all sanctions, the consequences are directly related to the child's actions.

*Restitution* is perhaps the most important sanction we can use.

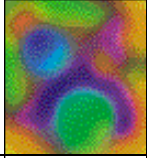
*Restitution* means, "making good that which you have harmed." Whether a child intentionally commits a transgression or accidentally hurts someone or damages something, restitution can be a powerful tool to help children think about their actions and the consequences of such actions.

Here is a true story about how restitution can be effective. A four-year-old intentionally knocked down the block structure built by another four-year-old. Obviously, the builder was upset. The teacher said, "Carey, Ben has been working all morning on this building. Why did you knock it down without Ben's permission?" Carey responded that Ben was not taking turns. The teacher said, "Carey, I cannot let you destroy what Ben built. Let's help him rebuild it. Ben, tell us what to do first."

Sometimes restitution is not possible. For example, if one child pushes another one and breaks his arm, how can the child make restitution? The child is not a physician. Even so, there are ways the child can make restitution. For example, the child can be responsible for helping the child with the broken arm. She can run errands for the child with the broken limb, such as taking the child's empty juice cup to the trash can. While exact restitution may not always be possible, the important thing to remember is that if we make a mistake we must do what we can to correct it.

Having older preschoolers come up with their own solutions for restitution is often helpful. This is also helpful for disputes. When preschoolers have an argument, the most likely solution is to tattle. Adults can discourage tattling by telling the boys and girls to solve their own disputes and then come back and tell you what they decided and how they solved the problem.

**What do you believe about restitution? What does the Bible say about restitution? (Ex. 22:3; 1 Kings 20:34; 2 Kings 8:6; Neh.**



## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People

**5:10-12; Acts 3:21) Can you think of specific stories in the Bible in which restitution was used? (Luke 19:1-10) Can rewards and punishment be used as well as restitution? If so, how?**

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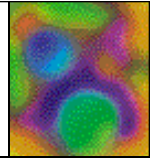
In the book *Punished by Rewards*, Alfie Kohn suggested five reasons rewards are harmful to children: (1) rewards punish; (2) rewards negatively influence relationships; (3) rewards do not consider reasons; (4) rewards discourage appropriate risk-taking; and (5) rewards may make children less interested in activities they naturally enjoy. (For more information see Alfie Kohn, *Punished by Rewards* [New York; Houghton Mifflin, 1993].)

**Rewards punish.** How can rewards possibly punish preschoolers—especially when they are designed to do the opposite? For example, some teachers give preschoolers a star on a poster for attendance. However, one child in the group has a shared-custody arrangement with his parents; he can only come when he is with his father. Another has a chronic health problem, and yet another gets to come only when his mother gets off work early. These boys and girls are punished because of situations they cannot control. Further, rewards are like punishment in that both are used to manipulate people into doing what we want them to do.

**Rewards negatively influence relationships.** Rewards often foster competition and thus damage or destroy cooperative relationships. If only one person can win in a game, every other child is seen as someone to beat.

**Rewards also do not consider reasons** preschoolers do things. If a child is constantly fighting, parents and teachers might give rewards or administer punishment to change the child's behavior. The problem with this approach is that rewards and punishment do not consider *why* the child is constantly fighting. When we give rewards, we are not addressing the real issue—why children do the things they do.

## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People

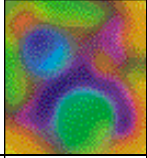


*Rewards do not encourage appropriate risk-taking.* The key word here is *appropriate*. What, exactly, is appropriate risk-taking? When a child is working for a reward, he may do only what is necessary to get the reward. He stops when he gets the reward. For example, if a child is given a reward for being nice to his friends, he will only go so far as required by the reward. If a child is interested in learning more about relationships, he would probably not take the initiative to try to learn more because he would be focused on getting the stars. Preschoolers are naturally interested in learning, but if we give rewards, we may be discouraging them from digging deeper for fear they might miss a reward. Rewards work, and they work fast; but in the long term, they may do more harm than good.

*Rewards may make preschoolers less interested in activities they naturally enjoy.* For those children who naturally like to draw or paint, rewards for drawing or painting are discouraging. In one study of preschoolers and rewards, preschoolers (who generally like to play with blocks) were shown two sets of identical blocks in their preschool room. The teacher told the boys and girls that if they played with one set of blocks they would receive a reward. However, they could play with the other set of blocks, but they would not receive any rewards. What do you think happened? They immediately went to play with the blocks for which they would receive rewards. However, after a couple of weeks, the teacher said, "You can now play with either set of blocks, but you will not receive any rewards." Then what happened? The children rarely ever played with the blocks for which they had earlier received rewards. They most often went to play with the other set of blocks. When we reward children for things they naturally like to do, we are sending a message: "This is not fun. You must be rewarded for doing this."

**Is that the message you want to send preschoolers at home and church? What does that say about unity and cooperation in the church?**

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## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People

### Preschoolers with Special Needs

Every child is unique and special. Each one deserves our prayers, attention, and guidance. However, one child may provide more challenges than others. During the preschool years three particular groups of children often need special types of attention or help: (1) developmental disabilities; (2) emotional conflict; and (3) AD(H)D. A brief discussion of each follows. The importance of including all children in church settings will also be described.

**Developmental disabilities**—Some boys and girls have developmental disabilities or they might be at risk for being classified with a disability once they reach school age. Some of them have a noticeable difference, such as children with Down Syndrome, but most will look like other children. Jimmy is an example of a child with a developmental disability. He goes to a special class in kindergarten for two hours a day. During Sunday School he attends the kindergarten class. One Sunday the teacher asked him to sit still. Jimmy has great difficulty sitting still. While Jimmy was struggling to sit still, one of the boys asked, “Jimmy, quit hitting me!” The other children laughed. The teacher was caring and tried to do damage control. Another example is Jennifer who has a processing disorder. She needs teachers to repeat instructions in order for her to understand what is expected of her.

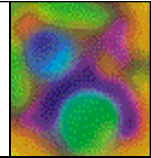
**How could you help Jimmy and Jennifer be a part of the group without asking them to do things that might unnecessarily embarrass them? In what ways could you help the other children develop caring behaviors and accept Jimmy and Jennifer for their abilities and differences? In what ways could you help Jimmy and Jennifer find their God-given strengths?**

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## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People

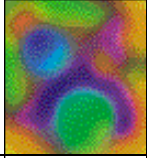


**Emotional conflict**—Some of the most challenging preschoolers are those with emotional conflicts. There are so many different types of emotional conflict in the 21st century that each child has to be considered individually. What sets one child off will not affect another. Teachers find as many causes of emotional conflict as there are children who experience it. One child might cry and completely withdraw for no apparent reason, while another might become violent and strike out at others. In church settings it may be necessary to enlist the help of a volunteer who helps all children but is especially available to attend to a child with emotional difficulties. The child may need to leave the room from time to time to cool down or regroup. This would not be possible without a designated helper to assist in these situations. Parents who have a child in emotional conflict may need to be consulted to make recommendations as to how to deal with specific situations that may arise.

Church leaders may want to incorporate and post the following three rules for all older preschoolers. These rules can be used to help explain to children who are violent or self-destructive why we are taking certain actions when they deviate from them. The rules are: (1) You cannot hurt yourself. (2) You cannot hurt others. (3) You cannot destroy property. Most transgressions fall under one of these three areas.

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**—The number of children identified with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder increases every year. AD(H)D is a general category for four specific types of differences. These are: (1) children who are inattentive; (2) children who are hyperactive or impulsive; (3) children who are both inattentive and hyperactive or impulsive; and (4) children who have attention or activity difficulties but do not fit in the first three categories. (For more information see Jerry Aldridge, Anne Eddowes, and Patricia Kuby, *No Easy Answers: Helping Children with Attention and Activity Level Differences* [Olney, MD: Association for Childhood Education International, 1998].)

Teachers will probably need to know about the medical and educational treatments used with these boys and girls. Many children who have AD(H)D are placed on a stimulant drug such as Ritalin. Medication, prescribed by a physician, may help a child control himself so that he can focus his attention



## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People

on an activity. Interestingly though, the amount of a drug necessary to help with attention may not be enough to assist with hyperactivity. The amount of drug needed to help with hyperactivity may be too much for the attention deficit. Drugs are not magic. They only bring the child to a level in which the child can then learn to pay attention or deal with hyperactivity or impulsiveness. Drugs do not make the child pay attention or learn. Drugs do not keep the child from moving from place to place. We should not say to a child, "You must have forgotten to take your medicine." What we are saying is, "You are not responsible for controlling your behavior, the drug is." We want children to learn that they have responsibility in working with their behavior. Drugs can only assist.

We want preschoolers with special needs to enjoy learning at church for its own sake—not because of the stars, stickers, or candy they will get. Other ways to help them include:

1. Provide hands-on activities and movement.

**What are some ways you can provide for more active learning?**

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2. Help find each child's God-given abilities or talents and encourage him or her to use their abilities.

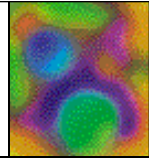
**What do you need to do to find out each child's talents or abilities?**

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**God Calls Parents and Teachers  
to Take Care of People**



3. Teach to children's learning styles.

**How is it possible to meet each child's learning style? What are some ways you can incorporate visual learning, auditory helps, and movement strategies into each session?**

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4. Provide structure while simultaneously using novel or interesting ways to teach.

**How can you set guidelines, provide structure, make learning fun, and be flexible all at the same time?**

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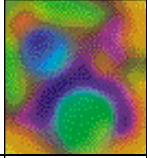
5. Prepare AD(H)D children for change and guide them through transition times.

**What times at church are most difficult? How can you prepare preschoolers for change and then follow through in helping them with difficult transition times?**

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## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People

### Blended Families

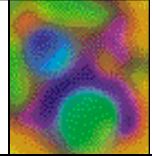
More than half of 21st-century marriages in the United States will end in divorce. Many of these marriages will involve children, and the parents may get married again, creating blended families with new and unique challenges, issues, and problems. According to a Web site produced by Blue Cross Blue Shield, blended families may produce as many as eight people who consider themselves to be grandparents of one child. This is but one of many situations which are different for blended families. Who has authority over the children? Who watches the preschoolers when parents or stepparents are away? Who is responsible for disciplining the preschoolers? How can you ensure some degree of consistency in the lives of these boys and girls? These questions must often be negotiated and difficulties resolved.

Four basic tasks confront blended families: (1) parenting, (2) managing change, (3) separating the current marriage from the previous one, and (4) dealing with the parent who does not live in the same house. Depending on how blended families deal with these four issues, a new family structure is developed. This new family may be a new traditional one, a romantic family, or a matriarchal family. The new traditional family tries to operate with harmony, love, and traditional values; but they realize they must work hard at it, given the many added people with whom a blended family must communicate.

A romantic family is similar to a new traditional family, with one main exception. The romantic family expects to have harmony and love established from the start. This is somewhat unrealistic, considering the amount of adjustments blended families must make. In some blended families the mother has the desire to take the dominant role and be the family leader. With these families a matriarchal pattern may be established for the new stepfamily. (For more information see Mary Lou Fuller and Glenn Olsen, eds., *Home-School Relations: Working Successfully with Parents and Families* [Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998].)

Church leaders must be sensitive to the complex nature of blended or stepfamilies. There is much to consider when working with children from blended families. During the early days of the new family structure, some chil-

## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People



dren will be angry and have difficulties adjusting. Others will not. Showing patience, caring for the child, and listening to the child can provide a tremendous amount of support during these days. Another thing to consider is the religious conflict that may occur within blended families. A child's biological parents or even the stepparents may have different views on religion, church attendance, and denominational differences. Children may even be asked to go to one church with one parent one Sunday and a different church with another parent the next Sunday.

**How many children in your group come from blended families? Do these children have special needs? How can you help meet these needs?**

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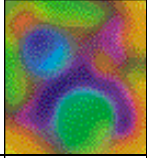
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## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People

### Divorce

Divorce is one of the more complex issues of the 21st century. The influence divorce has on a particular child is based on at least six, possibly more, situations. These include: (1) the length of time since the divorce, (2) the child's level of vulnerability, (3) the socioeconomic level of the child after the divorce (and other economic stressors), (4) the family composition, (5) the parents' interaction and mental health, and finally (6) the family schedule.

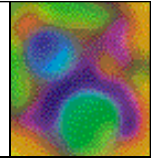
***Length of time since the divorce***—The first 18 months after a divorce is usually a crisis time for the preschoolers and children of the family. Many of these boys and girls will go through what Kubler-Ross describes as denial, anger, depression, and acceptance. Not all preschoolers in divorce situations will go through these emotions; but many, if not most, will. During this time guilt is a predominant emotion. A lot of preschoolers blame themselves for their parents' divorce. Teachers at church and parents need to provide tremendous encouragement and support during this time. It is vitally important for the parents to tell the preschoolers that the divorce was not the preschoolers' fault. After 18 months, preschoolers of divorce are more often more adjusted to their situation.

***The child's level of vulnerability***—Preschoolers have different temperaments and personalities. This influences their level of vulnerability. A child's age and sex during the time of divorce also contribute to that child's vulnerability level. Boys appear to be more affected by a divorce because they are more likely to act out their behavior. However, many girls have a tendency to internalize the divorce and withdraw inwardly.

***The socioeconomic level***—Mothers who gain custody of their children often live in an economic decline that adds to the difficulties of raising children alone. This contributes to the amount of stressors present during the adjustment period after the divorce.

***The family composition***—How many children are present; where the family lives (such as with grandparents); and the neighborhood, child-care, and church environment impact a child's adjustment after the divorce. Preschoolers who receive a lot of support, possibly from their church family, can make a better adjustment than those who are isolated or have limited family support systems.

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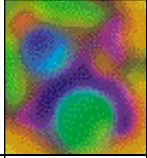


***The family schedule***—Schedules change dramatically after a divorce. Custody issues influence these schedules. Today children may be involved in joint custody in which their schedule changes from week to week. The single parent who is primarily responsible for the children may also have significant family scheduling issues that directly impact the preschoolers. Work schedules and child care are often major issues.

### ***Suggestions for Helping Preschoolers Through a Divorce***

Church leaders can assist in helping preschoolers through a divorce. These actions include:

1. Provide encouragement and spiritual support to all preschoolers—especially those who are going through the initial stages of a divorce.
2. Provide consistent, loving teachers whom preschoolers will know every time they go to church.
3. Be sensitive to issues of divorce related to religion. Specifically, preschoolers of divorce may have parents of different faith, not only within a Christian perspective but also between Christianity and other religions. If you are a teacher of preschoolers, pray that God will use you to show love to these families and to reach unsaved family members with the love of Jesus Christ. If you are a parent and your spouse is not a Christian, pray that God will lovingly use you to point your loved one to Christ. In some cases the child's attendance of church activities may be an issue with one of the parents.
4. Be a good listener and observer, but remember that most teachers are not trained psychologists or social workers. When issues arise related to divorce, it is sometimes necessary to seek help and guidance in working with children and families who express excessive anger or emotions during the divorce process.
5. Pray that God will help you accept all children, regardless of their family situation.
6. Finally, be sensitive on special occasions such as Mother's Day or Father's Day. Know each child's situation. Make sure you include all preschoolers on these days. Make sure no child feels ashamed or guilty because his or her family situation (such as a single-parent home) is different.



## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People

### Multicultural Issues

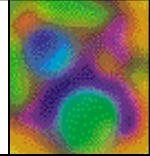
The world is changing rapidly, and most people live in communities where other people from different cultures and religions coexist. Several misconceptions about other cultures are important to address for us to work effectively with preschoolers and families from other nations and cultures. Here are three of the most common misconceptions:

- People from the same country who speak the same language share a common culture. This is not true. For example, while people from Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, and Puerto Rico share a common language; they do not share a common culture. Customs and traditions vary.
- Families from the same culture share common values. This is another widespread misconception. The values held by people within a cultural group may differ. This is also true of varying generations living in the same household.
- Many people identify with only one culture. This is also not true. For example, Maria is an active member of a Southern Baptist church. She is originally from Ecuador but married Mohammed, a Muslim from Pakistan. They have two children who are going to school in New York where the family now lives. In another situation, Patrick is of Chinese heritage but does not speak any Chinese. He was born in Jamaica but was raised in Canada. Today he lives in the United States. These individuals cannot be stereotyped as belonging to a particular culture. This is increasingly true throughout the world but especially in the United States.

**Based on this information, what guidelines can you invent for working with preschoolers from other cultures?**

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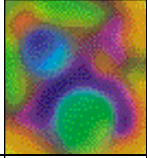
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### *Suggestions for Working with Parents from Other Cultures*

1. Find out as much as you can about the culture but do not generalize.
2. Be a good listener and look for appropriate ways to communicate with both the parents and the child.
3. Find out the nature of immigration. For example, a child of Chinese heritage could come from a traditional Chinese family or one that does not speak any Chinese language.

### *Suggestions for Working with Preschoolers from Other Cultures*

1. Adjust your interactions with young children based on their culture. For example:
  - In some cultures parents teach their children to look down when their names are called. This indicates respect. In the U.S., most teachers expect a child to look at them when the child's name is called.
  - Many U.S. parents value punctuality and believe having their child in your class on time shows respect to you and others in the group, teaches their child responsibility, and demonstrates the importance they as parents place on the event and their child's activities. Many other cultures, even within the U.S. do not value rigid starting and ending times. Be aware that parents may not have bad motives behind being late and that the child has no control over his/her arrival time.
2. Try to include authentic information about the different cultures represented in the class. This shows respect for every child's heritage.
3. Be inclusive of all children no matter what culture or background exists in the group.
4. When speaking about families, find out who each preschooler considers "family." Some will include extended family members.



## God Calls Parents and Teachers to Take Care of People

### ***Practical Applications***

1. Make sure preschoolers see persons on teaching pictures and classroom posters who look like them.
2. Listen carefully when parents and preschoolers speak their names. Practice pronouncing them as correctly as possible and use a child's "real" name, unless requested to do otherwise.
3. Do not assume that everyone in a group has the same understanding of holiday traditions (i.e., that we thank God and eat turkey at Thanksgiving, that Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus and is a time for hanging stockings and decorating a tree with ornaments and electric lights, that "Happy Birthday" is sung to celebrate birthdays).

**Based on these characteristics, how would you adjust your interactions with preschoolers and parents from these broad examples?**

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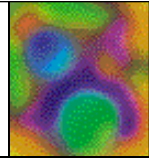
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Adapted by Anita Bice.

# Preschool Portfolio



**Child's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name(s) of Parent(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Home Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Loving family:       Present       Absent       Needs nurturing

2. Loving church family:       Present       Absent       Needs nurturing

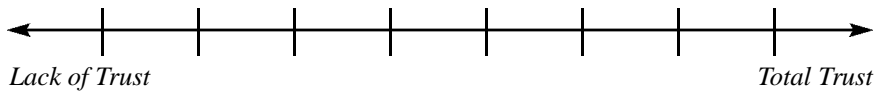
3. Opportunities to develop the ability to trust people:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

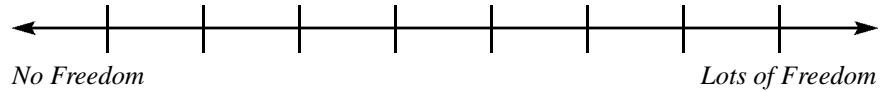
4. What is the child's level of trust in you? Mark the level on the scale.



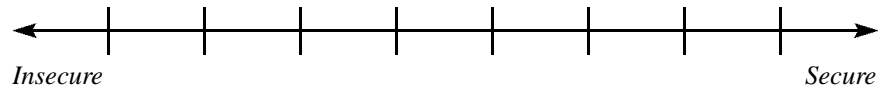
5. List what the child can do without help:

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What level of freedom can the child handle? Mark the level on the scale.



7. What is the child's level of security? Mark the level of security.



8. What approaches work best when guiding the child?

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9. What approaches work best when recognizing his or her accomplishments?

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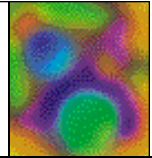
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10. Check the avenues of learning used by this child:

- |                                     |                                   |  |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doing      | <input type="checkbox"/> Play     | <input type="checkbox"/> Senses        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repetition | <input type="checkbox"/> Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Relationships |

11. For now, check one or more of the following styles that this child exhibits while learning:

- |                                   |                                 |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auditory | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual | <input type="checkbox"/> Kinesthetic |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|



12. For each of the following, identify abilities shown by the child:

Physical Growth

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Mental Growth

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Social/Emotional Growth

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Spiritual Growth

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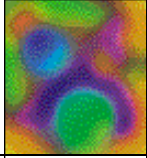
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13. For this child, what discipline approach works best?

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## Preschool Portfolio

14. Does this child have special needs?

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15. Is this child in a blended family?

Yes    No

16. Is this child dealing with the divorce of his or her parents?

Yes    No

17. Check this child's culture group:

Anglo-American

Native American (American Indian)

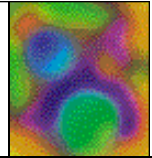
African-American

Latino

Asian

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# Group Study Guide



P

**Purpose:** To provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on what they read in this resource, talk with one another, and apply the information to the preschoolers in their homes and groups at church.

**Objective:** Through reflection and conversation, participants will develop an understanding of the preschoolers in their homes and their groups at church. With this understanding they will be able to transform their methods to match the needs and characteristics of their learners.

**Participants:** This plan is for parents, teachers, leaders, and ministers who relate to preschoolers, birth through kindergarten and pre-first.

**Sessions:** This plan can be used in a variety of settings including retreats, planning meetings, and conferences. The suggestions are generally designed for one-hour sessions, but you are encouraged to adapt it to meet the needs of your group. For example, you can easily adjust the suggestions to fit a 15-minute training segment during a planning meeting. Some of the session outlines are designed for shorter sessions. Combine these with another outline for one session to meet your needs.

Also feel free to use the sessions in any order. A conclusion exercise to the entire study is located at the end of the session titled “Multicultural Issues.” Use this exercise at the end of your last session.

**Approach:** This plan is designed for discussions based on what participants have read in this resource. The convener serves as facilitator of the discussion. Group members participate by sharing their reflections or thoughts concerning what they have read. The exercises enable the participants to identify implications for applying the information to their group of preschoolers. If your group of participants is small, adjust the suggestions for breakout groups to meet the needs of your group.

## Group Study Guide

**Room Arrangement:** Arranging tables and chairs in a square is preferable so that participants can see one another. If tables are not available, arrange chairs in a circle.

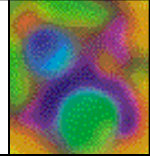
### Session: Introduction

#### *Preparation*

- Gather paper and pencils or copies of class or group rolls for the participants.
- Order copies of the book *Understanding Today's Preschoolers: Developing Tomorrow's Leaders Today* (allow three weeks for delivery) or download the contents page and make copies.
- Provide name tags if the participants do not know one another.

#### *Reflect and Practice*

1. As participants arrive, distribute copies of the class/group rolls or ask them to write down the names of the preschoolers in their class, group, or team. Guide them to keep this list with them during the group discussions so that they can consider how the information is true of the individuals in their groups.
2. Distribute copies of this resource or the contents page to participants.
3. Ask participants to share what they would like to learn about the preschoolers in their homes and groups at church. Refer them to the contents page. Note that the four sessions for the section "God Designed People to Grow" are organized by areas of growth (spiritual, mental, physical, and social/emotional). As a group, determine the order of sessions the group will discuss. Also identify sessions your group wants to combine for discussion.
4. Encourage the members of your group to read before each session the article(s) to be discussed during the session. The group experience will be enhanced by individuals reading the article(s) to prepare themselves for the discussion. Have a time of prayer to give each person an opportunity to make a commitment to understand the preschoolers in his or her group.
5. Depending on which session your group decided to discuss first, ask them to



- share what they know about the subject and what they want to learn during the next session. For example, if your group decided to reflect on the article “Preschoolers with Special Needs,” ask them to share an experience they have had with a preschooler with special needs. Ask, “What do you want to learn about these special needs as we read this week and reflect next time?”
6. Close the session with prayer concerning personal needs and concerns of participants. Remind your participants to read the article(s) for the next session.

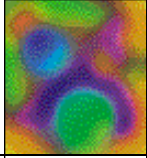
### **Session: God Created Preschoolers with Basic Needs**

#### ***Preparation***

- Tape a large sheet of paper to the focal wall in your meeting room. You will need a marker.
- Collect pictures of the preschoolers you parent or teach. Display the photographs on a table or on the floor in the meeting room.
- Cut out of a magazine a picture of a preschooler.
- Collect eight boxes that will nest inside of one another and colorful wrapping paper. The smallest box needs to be large enough for the magazine picture to fit inside.
- Make a photocopy of this page and the next. Cut out each of the following paragraphs:

*A. Preschoolers need a loving environment in order to grow and thrive. All areas of development are affected by love. Love is the basis for spiritual growth. Love plays a significant role in all aspects of developing a strong spiritual foundation for life.*

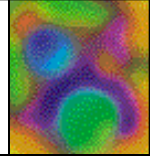
*B. Loving relationships are built on trust. As preschoolers practice trusting their parents and teachers, God is preparing them to trust Him. The ability to trust is a major spiritual foundation that will influence life through eternity.*



## Group Study Guide

- C. *God sets the pattern for parents and teachers in meeting the need for security. Through love, trust, and acceptance, parents and teachers can develop a secure relationship with each preschooler in which he knows he is secure. In order to learn and grow, preschoolers need to feel secure in their environment. A safe environment frees preschoolers to explore and enjoy their world.*
- D. *God teaches us how we are to accept our preschoolers by the way He accepts us. Our preschoolers will grow and develop as they experience our acceptance. They also need to know and understand our expectations of them.*
- E. *Both parents and teachers can help preschoolers learn how to handle their God-given independence by following God's example. By meeting their need for independence, parents and teachers are giving preschoolers the opportunity to learn how to make choices and take care of themselves. This independence involves letting a preschooler do things for himself.*
- F. *Freedom to make choices in the home and classroom is not permissiveness. Just as Adam and Eve knew their limits, preschoolers need to know the boundaries or limits within which they have choices. As a preschooler matures, these boundaries or limits need to be gradually expanded in order to give the preschooler more experience in handling freedom.*
- G. *With God's guidance we are empowered to guide our preschoolers to know right from wrong and to take responsibility for their behavior.*
- H. *Preschoolers need to receive some form of approval or recognition for their successes. A key to meeting this need for accomplishment is to provide activities preschoolers can experience with success. A feeling of accomplishment is one of the goals for experiencing an activity.*

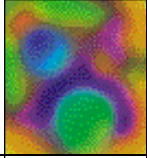
- Place the magazine picture in the smallest box and wrap it. Place this box in the next sized box with paragraph H on top. Wrap it, then place it in the next



size box with paragraph G. Proceed with this process until you have one large wrapped box. Be sure to place the paragraphs on top of the enclosed boxes where the participants can easily find them.

### ***Reflect and Practice***

1. Begin the session with a time of fellowship and prayer.
2. Invite participants to choose a picture from the display. Say, “The preschooler you choose will become your friend and prayer concern for the duration of the study.”
3. As a group, list common characteristics of the preschoolers in the pictures. Write the characteristics on the large sheet of paper with a marker. These characteristics include active, curious, limited attention span, sensitive, creative, literal minded, view experiences from their personal perspectives. Say, “Though preschoolers have many common characteristics, God has designed each preschooler in unique and special ways.” Suggest that teachers and parents observe boys and girls for clues that help them understand the way God created them so that God can guide them to the best ways to teach preschoolers. Discuss the implications of each characteristic.
4. Pick up the wrapped box. Say, “Inside each box we will discover a clue to help us understand the needs of preschoolers.” Ask one of the participants to unwrap the large box and read the enclosed paragraph. Ask, “What kind of learning environment do you believe this preschooler prefers?”(loving) Facilitate a group discussion about a loving environment based on pages 9–10.
5. Proceed to unwrap each box, identify the need, and discuss the implications of each need for your families and church.
6. Give the last box to a volunteer to open it to discover the picture. Say, “As we have unwrapped the boxes and discussed needs of preschoolers, we have more clues than we had before about our preschoolers. Take the picture you selected when you arrived and find a partner. Together, share observations you have made about this preschooler that helps you understand how God uniquely created her or him.
7. Close the session with a time of prayer for the preschoolers in your groups and homes. Remind participants to read the article(s) for the next session.



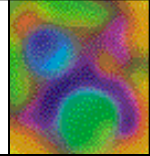
## Session: Learning During the Preschool Years

### *Preparation*

- Write each of the following statements on a different large sheet of paper or poster board: Preschoolers do not think like adults. Preschoolers learn at their level of understanding. Preschoolers have different avenues of learning. Preschoolers differ in how they learn. Place the sheets of paper in the corners of the room with markers.
- Ask teachers to bring their current teacher's guides to this session.

### *Reflect and Practice*

1. Begin the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Ask participants to select one of the statements in the corners of the room and move to their selected corners. Ask each group to prepare a creative presentation explaining the statement to the whole group. Refer them to pages 22–25.
3. Give each group time to make their presentation and facilitate a brief time of reflection on each presentation. Ask, "How does this fact of learning impact your teaching practices?"
4. As a total group or in pairs, guide participants to study their teaching guides. Ask them to find examples of the avenues of learning and styles of learning during the next session with their preschoolers.
5. Close the session with a season of prayer for the personal concerns of your participants. Remind your participants to read the article(s) for the next session.



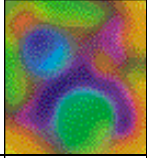
### Session: Spiritual Growth in Preschoolers

#### *Preparation*

- Write each of the following points on sentence strips: Preschoolers are learning how to trust. Preschoolers are literal minded. Preschoolers are learning how to make choices. Preschoolers are learning what behavior is acceptable and what is not.
- Ask teachers to bring their teaching guides to this session.
- Write each of the following scenarios on an index card:  
Teacher One: *Just let him cry. I don't see any tears. He just wants to be held all the time.*  
Teacher Two: *We are going to God's house to learn from God's Word.*  
Teacher Three: *Jonathan, you can pick red, green, or blue paint.*  
Teacher Four: *Amy, you are a bad girl. Give Stephanie the doll.*

#### *Reflect and Practice*

1. As participants arrive, ask for four volunteers to read the scenarios later in the session. Open the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Attach the first sentence strip (Preschoolers are learning how to trust.) to the wall where everyone can see it.
3. Ask Teacher One to read his or her scenario. Ask the group, "Does this statement encourage a baby to trust his teachers? What statement would better help a child learn how to trust?"
4. Attach the second sentence strip to the wall. (Preschoolers are literal minded.) Ask Teacher Two to read his or her scenario. Ask, "Is this statement understood by literal-minded preschoolers? How would you change the statement so that a preschooler could understand it?" Let the participants reflect on experiences they have had with literal-minded preschoolers.
5. Attach the third sentence strip to the wall. (Preschoolers are learning to make choices.) Ask Teacher Three to read his or her scenario. Ask, "How does this statement express understanding preschoolers? What are other choices we can give preschoolers?"



## Group Study Guide

6. Attach the fourth sentence strip to the wall. (Preschoolers are learning what behavior is acceptable and what is not.) Ask Teacher Four to read his or her scenario. Ask, "What is a better way to guide Amy to learn what is acceptable behavior?"
7. Organize your group according to the age level they teach. Ask them to review the list of implications regarding the spiritual growth of their groups. then find illustrations in their teaching guides. Challenge them to make appropriate changes in their teaching procedures.
8. Close the session with a season of prayer for their own spiritual growth and that of their preschoolers. Remind your participants to read the article(s) for the next session.

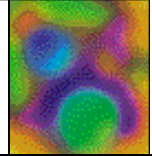
### Session: Mental Growth in Preschoolers

#### *Preparation*

- Gather materials to make shoebox collages: shoeboxes, glue, markers, old newspapers and magazines.
- Write the word "Milestones" on the marker board.

#### *Reflect and Practice*

1. Begin the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Say, "During this session we are going to discover how preschoolers develop mentally."
3. Divide participants into four groups according to the preschool age-level they parent or teach (babies, ones and twos, threes, fours, and kindergartners). Ask each group to reflect on the information on mental growth for their age level. Prepare a creative way to engage the total group in conversation about mental growth. Identify the implications of mental growth to use in learning activities.
4. Let each small group make a presentation and facilitate the discussion. Give each group a time limit as appropriate.



5. As a group, review the sections on mental growth to identify milestones. Write them on the marker board.
6. Close the session with a time of prayer for personal concerns. Remind your participants to read the article(s) for the next session.

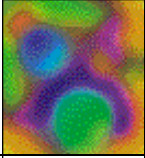
### **Session: Physical Growth in Preschoolers**

#### ***Preparation***

- Cut slips of paper. Write the physical capabilities or skills for each age level on the slips of paper. The physical capabilities are located on pages 28–29, 35–36, 43–44, and 51.

#### ***Reflect and Practice***

1. Open the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Place the slips of paper on the floor. Ask participants to arrange on the floor the capabilities according to what develops first. Use the articles if necessary.
3. As a group, consider how teachers and parents can help preschoolers develop physically. Review the implications for parents and teachers to identify teaching procedures you need to revise or begin using.
4. Close the session with a season of prayer for these specific preschoolers as well as the physical growth of all of your preschoolers. Remind your participants to read the article(s) for the next session.



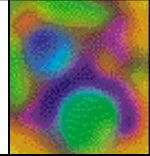
## Session: Social/Emotional Growth in Preschoolers

### *Preparation*

- Gather paper and pencils for your participants.

### *Reflect and Practice*

1. Begin the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Organize your participants into four groups according to the preschool age level they teach. Give each group a piece of paper and pencil for the recorder. Ask them to review the social/emotional skills and implications for teaching, then draw conclusions about how the implications result from the skills.
3. At the appropriate time call the group together and ask groups to share their conclusions. Ask the rest of the participants to consider how the conclusions of one group affect the conclusions of another group
4. Ask participants to look at their list of preschoolers. Ask, "Based on what we have discussed during this session and your experience, how can you help your preschoolers to grow socially and emotionally?"
5. Close with prayer for the emotional needs of your participants. Remind participants to read the article(s) for the next session.



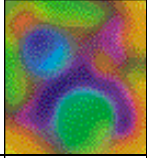
### Session: Discipline and Behavior Issues

#### *Preparation*

- On four large sheets of paper or poster board, write one of the following statements on each sheet: Temporary Exclusion; Consequences; Depriving; Restitution. Attach each sheet to the focal wall.
- Gather paper and pencils.

#### *Reflect and Practice*

1. Open the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Organize participants into four groups. Let each group select one of the four sanctions. Ask, “What is an example of how a teacher might use your selected sanction to manage a child’s behavior?” Write the ideas on the sheet of paper.
3. At the appropriate time bring the group together to discuss each form of sanctions. Ask, “How can we adjust our procedures to use sanctions?”
4. Consider the use of rewards in light of the suggestions on pages 60–61.
5. Conclude the session by asking participants to apply these ideas to specific behavior problems they are encountering with their groups of preschoolers.
6. Close the session with a season of prayer for behavior problems in their groups. Remind your participants to read the article(s) for the next session.



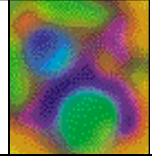
## Session: Preschoolers with Special Needs

### *Preparation*

- Gather paper and pencils.
- Cut three slips of paper. Write the name of one of the following groups of preschoolers on each slip: preschoolers with developmental disabilities; preschoolers in emotional conflict; preschoolers with AD(H).

### *Reflect and Practice*

1. Open the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Organize the participants into three groups. If your group is small, do this exercise as one group. Offer each group the opportunity to pick one of the three slips of paper. Ask each group to create a game for the total group to play to help participants learn about the group of preschoolers on their slip of paper. Refer them to pages 62–64. Offer the paper and pencils.
3. When the games are ready, bring the total group together. Play the games in any order. Follow each game with an opportunity to discuss specific preschoolers in their groups.
4. Close the session with prayer for these boys and girls. Remind your participants to read the article(s) for the next session.



### **Session: Blended Families and Divorce**

#### *Preparation*

- If your church family has a blended family with parents who would be comfortable sharing with your group, invite them to meet with your group. In addition, if your church has a ministry or support group for divorced persons, ask one of the facilitators of that group to meet with your group during this session.

#### *Reflect and Practice*

1. Begin the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Introduce your special guests. Begin the interview by letting each guest share a brief testimony about his or her journey. Ask them to share how they think your church family is ministering and could minister to preschoolers in blended families and those in divorced homes.
3. Open the discussion up for your participants to ask questions, but ask them to be sensitive to personal needs of the guests. If someone asks an inappropriate question, move the discussion in another direction. Refer them to suggestions on pages 66–69.
4. With the guests and your participants, develop a strategy or set of actions your participants could take to help your church effectively meet the needs of these preschoolers and their families.
5. Close the session by thanking your special guests. Have a season of prayer for the blended families and divorced families in your church and community.



## Group Study Guide

### Session: Multicultural Issues

#### *Preparation*

- Ask your church office for the multicultural part or ethnic makeup report from the Scan US report for your church. If they do not have this report, ask your pastor or someone on staff assist you in contacting the state convention office for a copy of your church's Scan US report. Ask specifically for a report of the culture groups within a five-mile radius of your church building. This report is free in most states.
- Set up the marker board or poster board with markers.

#### *Reflect and Practice*

1. Open the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. On the marker board or poster board, list the cultures represented among preschoolers in your church.
3. Share the Scan US report that will inform your participants about the various cultures represented in the community surrounding your church. List these groups on the marker board or poster board.
4. As a group, reflect on the information on pages 70–72, which will help you minister to these cultures. List actions beside each culture group that will help you reach these groups.
5. Close the session with prayer for these unreached culture groups near your church building. Remind your participants to read the article(s) for the next session.
6. **If this is your last session**, spend a few moments reflecting on the experiences your participants have had with this study. Ask, “What difference has this experience had on the way you teach and minister? What actions can we take to encourage our church family to be more intentional in ministering to preschoolers and their parents?”
7. Close with a concert of prayer where teachers and leaders verbalize the names of preschoolers in their groups at the same time. Open the prayer time for specific requests and concerns about understanding preschoolers in your church and community.

# CHRISTIAN GROWTH STUDY PLAN

In the **Christian Growth Study Plan (formerly Church Study Course)**, this book *Understanding Today's Preschoolers: Developing Tomorrow's Leaders Today* is a resource for course credit in seven Leadership and Skill Development diploma plans. To receive credit, read the book, complete the learning activities, show your work to your pastor, a staff member or church leader, then complete the following information. This page may be duplicated. Send the completed page to:

**Christian Growth Study Plan  
127 Ninth Avenue, North, MSN 117  
Nashville, TN 37234-0117  
FAX: (615)251-5067**

For information about the Christian Growth Study Plan, refer to the current Christian Growth Study Plan Catalog. Your church office may have a copy. If not, request a free copy from the Christian Growth Study Plan office (615/251-2525).

## COURSE CREDIT INFORMATION

Please check the appropriate box indicating the diploma you want to apply this credit. You may check more than one.

- Leadership Skill Development (LS-0002)
- Preschool Leadership Sunday School (LS-0014)
- Preschool Leadership Discipleship Training (LS-0014)
- Preschool Leadership Mission Friends (LS-0014)
- Preschool Leadership Preschool Choir (LS-0014)
- Weekday Early Education Directors (LS-0018)
- Weekday Early Education Teachers (LS-0018)

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Rev. 6-99

Social Security Number (USA Only)	Personal CGSP Number*	Date of Birth (Mo., Day, Yr.)
-	-	-     -
Name (First, MI, Last)		Home Phone
-		-
Address (Street, Route, or P.O. Box)	City, State, or Province	Zip/Postal Code

### CHURCH INFORMATION

Church Name		
Address (Street, Route, or P.O. Box)	City, State, or Province	Zip/Postal Code

### CHANGE REQUEST ONLY

<input type="checkbox"/> Former Name		
<input type="checkbox"/> Former Address	City, State, or Province	Zip/Postal Code
<input type="checkbox"/> Former Church	City, State, or Province	Zip/Postal Code
Signature of Pastor, Conference Leader, or Other Church Leader		Date

\*New participants are requested but not required to give SS# and date of birth. Existing participants, please give CGSP# when using SS# for the first time. Thereafter, only one ID# is required. Mail To: Christian Growth Study Plan, 127 Ninth Ave., North, MSN 117, Nashville, TN 37234-0117. Fax: (615)251-5067