

## **Nursery/Toddler Classroom Philosophy**

How can we teach children under three years old the truths of the Bible? Should we wait until they are older and can understand more? Although the minds of young children are limited, their spirits can be active. The responsibility of a nursery/toddler worker caring for children at this age is to nurture that spirit.

The best foundation we can lay for these little children is the sure foundation of Jesus Christ. Everything else will crumble. The nursery/toddler ministry is just the beginning of leading a child to Jesus. Much of the work is hidden, and the fruits of this ministry may take years to see. But God is faithful. The foundation of prayer, God's Word and a godly atmosphere may look unimportant to the untrained eye but a sure foundation can be the means of salvation for a child.

If each volunteer views this as a place of prayer for young children, a place where children learn simple truth statements as they form their language skills, and a place where they hear foundational Bible stories, the nursery/toddler classes can be transformed into an integral beginning of ministry to children. They is can be done by the workers viewing themselves not only as childcare workers but also a prayer warriors and ministers to children. If workers see their primary function as not only changing diapers but also sowing truth in the lives of these little ones, what might God be pleased to accomplish?

### **BIBLICAL TRUTH**

This can be done through very simple truth statements spoken frequently and casually. Children need to see that biblical truth is part of the fabric of everyday life. It is not set apart. It is an essential part of life; in fact, it is the hub around which the rest of life revolves.

These truth statements can be sprinkled throughout your conversations and modeled over and over. Young children love repetition, and the most common way we teach young children is through repetition. When we develop language in young children, we do it by repetition. They do not understand the first time we label a four-legged seat a "chair", but after much repetition, they understand that the four-legged object they sit on is a chair. Biblical truth is taught in the same way. Children do not understand "God is good" the first time you say it. But as you repeat is over and over and label situation in their lives with this statement, they begin to understand that God is good.

This same repetition process employed in teaching biblical truth to young children gives them a biblical vocabulary, and helps them to see a great God. In teaching young children, we need to remember that part of teaching them truth is to go beyond their present intellectual understanding. Although a child may not understand every phrase, he will come to understand as the phrase is continually repeated and as he matures. These truths and vocabulary become part of the developing core of truth and that the child begins to understand. We also need to remember that we are a partner with the Holy Spirit in the faith nurturing process of children. Our responsibility is to teach the truth. The Holy Spirit will bring understanding and produce fruit.

Some simple truth statements that can be repeated to children include the following:

God is Good  
God created everything  
God is love  
God is faithful  
God is perfect  
God is forgiving  
God tells the truth  
God is everywhere  
God is powerful  
Jesus died for our bad choices  
Jesus was born  
We can talk to Jesus

Toddlers are more apt to benefit from short sentences or phrases frequently sprinkled through your interaction with them than by sitting still for a long “lesson”. The teachers should be very familiar with the truths emphasized so that they can slip them into their interactions with the children naturally and frequently.

### **PRAYER**

While it may seem to some that working in the nursery/toddler classrooms has fewer ministries potential than teaching older children, it actually affords great ministry opportunity. This ministry lends itself to the crucial ministry of prayer for children. Although all Oasis Volunteers can pray for the children in their care, there are wonderful “free” moments when a worker can pray for a child. When rocking a fussy or sleepy baby, changing a diaper, or winding up a swing, we can be praying for the children. Without the work of the Holy Spirit drawing us to God, we have no hope of coming to God. Throughout the time we spend with children, we can be “praying without ceasing” for the Lord’s work in the hearts of the children.

### **VOLUNTEER MINDSET**

The most important condition for teaching truth to young children is for the teacher to be spiritually alive. When you are walking closely with God, full of love and appreciation for Him, you will see His hand in all things. Then it will be a natural overflow of your faith to talk about God. Because you see God is everywhere, you will naturally comment on His presence. As you commune with God, your spirit will touch those around you. In addition, the loving and gentle spirit of workers coupled with conversation about God will reflect God’s love to the children.

The difference between a toddler ministry that is basically good child-care and one in which spirits are nurtured and truth is imparted is mainly a question of intention. Are you intentional about what happens during that time with young children? Weaving God’s truth into the classroom time is not difficult, but it is of great importance—it must be an intentional goal.