

What is Godly Play?

At Trinity we believe that kids need an environment where the truth of Scripture is presented to them in age-appropriate ways. In addition to being age-appropriate, these learning environments should be safe and comfortable, creative, interactive, educational, inspiring and relational. We will seek to create these environments for our kids at each Sunday gathering. To this end, we have adopted the Godly Play model[1] for our Sunday morning classes. Godly Play assumes that children have some experience of the mystery of the presence of God in their lives, but that they lack the language, permission and understanding to express and enjoy that in our culture. In Godly Play, we enter into the story of God in order to discover God, ourselves, one another and the world around us. The following is a description of the flow of the morning for all classes, toddlers to fifth grade.

::Welcoming/Getting Ready:: Children are greeted at the door and brought into the space (K-5th graders go straight to circle time; toddlers engage in free play until all have arrived). We intend to create more of a sacred space and invite the kids to get “ready” for the story—any number of activities are used, including learning the memory verse, engaging in prayer, singing, or review the 3 basic truths[2]. Kids will then sit with the teacher for “circle” time to hear the morning’s Bible story.

::Storytelling:: The teacher comes prepared to share the morning’s Bible story with the children (there is as much hands on retelling of the story—with figures, action, etc—as possible). The teacher focuses on the story (the kids will have a chance to respond during wondering). The aim is for children to experience the story and be open to what the Spirit has to say. As much as possible, we will utilize a visual timeline to refer to our place in the larger story of God. And of course, that timeline or storyline extends to today and into future. Each age group is presented with the story in an age-appropriate way.

::Wondering:: Immediately following storytelling is a time for children to respond to the story as the teacher[3] engages in a time of wondering with the children. Wondering is structured with open-ended questions that help children process the story and guide them toward heart-centered application. In some ways, this approach is more akin to spiritual direction than to what we generally think of as religious education[4]. Parent Cue materials are provided to instruct and go deeper with children as God’s Word is explored and shared at home.

:: Response:: Children are then released into a time of process oriented, rather than product oriented, activity. Time and space are provided for children to creatively “work” out and process a particular aspect or meaning of the story by using their hands and bodies in creative ways. The key areas of response are: interact with the story, prayer, recreating the story, responding to the story (through art, movement, exploration of some aspect of the story, etc). Children are given a variety of materials to engage in response time (but not directed to create something or respond in any one particular way[5]). During Response time, teachers engage with the children and encourage them to keep responses focused on the story, while encouraging the process. Each child has a place where they may store their “work” and return to it or take it home when ready.

::Feast:: After response time, kids clean up and come back to the circle for Feast. This is a time to engage in relationship building and fellowship around something to eat[6]. Children are given time to share about how they each responded to the day’s story. Additional wondering questions may be asked at this time or general relationship building discussions occur.

::Blessing:: As the morning comes to a close, children are blessed—being sent out into the world in Jesus’ name.

[1] While the Godly Play method is used, it serves mostly as a framework in which all lessons, being pulled from our favorite sources are placed within. So, for example, a story may be shared from the *Jesus Storybook Bible* or visually shared with figures as a piece of Scripture or an actual Godly Play lesson is told. Our curriculum cycle is currently planned for each age group in a three-year cycle that builds, but follows a yearly rhythm.

[2] There are three sets of 3 Basic Truths being utilized with our children (wondering, discovery and passion stages). These 3 Basic Truths will be referred to in various units throughout the year, connected with Parent Cue material and serve as a “common thread” in the overall spiritual formation of children as they grow older.

[3] It may be more accurate to use the terms, and think of our co-teachers and teachers as, “Shepherds” and “Storytellers” in this model.

[4] The intent is to avoid studying the Bible with children in a way that suggests that *this* story has *this* point and once you’ve learned this, there’s nothing more in it.

[5] This encourages children to think about what they’ve just heard and to respond in whatever way the Spirit leads. Younger children will be given more direction.

[6] As much as possible, food items are tied to an aspect of the story shared that day.

The 3 Basic Prayers and 3 Basic Truths

The following are the **3 Basic Truths**. They provide the foundation for our curriculum units and are connected to Bible stories explored on Sunday mornings. They lead children through a progression from Wonder to Discovery to Passion, creating a “common thread” or continuum for our children’s spiritual formation. We encourage parents to incorporate these truths into your everyday language and routines.

Wonder: 2yo-PreK

-God made me.

-Jesus loves me.

-The Spirit is always with me.

Discover: K-5th Grade

-I can trust God no matter what.

-Jesus shows me the wise choice.

-The Spirit helps me treat others the way I want to be treated.

Journey: Middle School

-We can embrace God’s unconditional love.

-We can follow Jesus, who knows us better than we know ourselves.

-With the Spirit, we can live out God’s story.

Passion: High School

-We are created to pursue an authentic relationship with God.

- We belong to Jesus and can define who we are by what he says.*
- When we are filled by the Spirit, we can join God's work among us.*

The following are the **3 Basic Prayers**. It is our hope that these prayers will serve as discipleship tools at home for those tiniest disciples among us. Parents are encouraged to pray over their children during normal, everyday routines.

[3 Basic Prayers for Nursery aged children:](#)

- May you grow in the understanding of God's love for you.*
- May you see, hear, and touch the world as Jesus does.*
- May your heart learn to hear the Spirit's voice.*