

Gospel Light's

baby beginnings®



teacher's guide

0 to 18 months

- Teacher's Home Pages for Easy At-Home Preparation
- 12 Monthly Bible Themes
- Two Years of Parent Newsletters



NURTURE AND TEACH EVEN THE YOUNGEST CHILDREN ABOUT JESUS' LOVE FOR THEM.

Sample Lesson

Includes links to all related resources



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Gospel Light



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Parent's Home Pages—0 to 18 Months

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How to Use the Baby Beginnings Curriculum

If You Are the Children's Pastor or Nursery Coordinator

- Prior to the start of each month, send home the appropriate month's overview (first two pages of each month's section) to each caregiver in the nursery.
- If you have a regular, consistent staff for the month, include the activity pages for the month as well and encourage your staff to plan together which activities they will prepare and provide each week of the month. (For example, one person would be prepared to lead a God's Wonders activity each week while another person would be prepared to lead an Active Play activity each week.)
- If you have a rotating staff, select several of the activities yourself. Collect any needed supplies and place them in the appropriate rooms along with the page of instructions (highlight or mark the activity). Alert the staff to look for these items when they arrive to serve.

Note: Consider creating for each room a box for each month that contains the supplies for the month's learning activities as described in the *Baby Beginnings Teacher's Guides*. At the beginning of the month, the box is placed in the appropriate rooms for use by teachers.

If You Are a Caregiver in the Nursery

For each month, select the activities you will provide. Collect needed supplies.

For Parents

- Distribute a copy of the reproducible *I Love to Sing!* CD to each family.
- At the beginning of each month, send home (or ask your children's pastor to send home) both the appropriate month's *I Love to Look!* Bible Story Picture Card and *Parent's Home Page*. *Parent's Home Pages* are available on the CD-ROM that comes with this book, as well as in *Nursery Smart Pages*. Purchase one set of *I Love to Look!* Bible Story Picture Cards for each family.

Meeting the Needs of Babies

What Are They Like?

When we say “baby,” we may mean a newborn. Or we may be referring to a sitter or to the crawler who picks up, inspects and eats every crumb! Although babyhood is short, the changes from newborn to toddler are enormous!

A newborn is quite aware of and sensitive to surroundings (especially the emotional “feel” of those surroundings), but sleeping and eating are the order of the day.

Around six weeks of age, a baby begins to reach out to touch items that interest him or her and to control his or her head.

A baby may become a sitter at around six months of age. Now that the baby’s range of vision is broadened, he or she loves to reach (and perhaps even roll after) small objects, and drop, throw or bang them.

The crawler is now able to explore a brave new world! From the coffee cup to the full wastebasket, there is nothing that doesn’t interest him or her. Once crawling is mastered, expect lots of pulling up, standing and attempts at climbing.

How Can I Help Them?

Position colorful mobiles hung so babies can see them. An occasional change of scenery and the gentle talking, rocking and comforting that accompany feeding, changing and sleep preparation should keep them happy and content. Be sure to support the head of a baby this age, even if he or she appears to have good control. Remember that frequent burping is necessary when feeding a newborn.

Give babies some time in positions other than the one in which they usually sleep. As a baby becomes able to roll over, he or she will be ready for more changes of scenery and more play and conversation with adults. An infant seat or other device that puts the baby where he or she can see what’s going on nearby is helpful.

Once a baby can sit up, try playing peekaboo with him or her, or pushing gently on the baby’s feet so the child can push back. Provide a number of safe smaller toys (rattles, fabric or vinyl blocks) and other objects for discovering. As you interact with a baby, describe his or her actions or responses to your actions.

For the crawler, freedom to explore within safe limits is the key. Provide lots of space for crawlers to roam without hazards. Crib mattresses and washable, firm pillows can provide a variety of safe crawling, climbing and sitting surfaces. Carpet-sample squares can provide interesting textures to crawl across. Your calm and happy interaction with babies on the floor helps them learn ways to explore and communicate.

A Smooth Schedule

There should be at least one caregiver for every three babies. This makes it possible to keep a close eye on every child’s safety, as well as to give each child individual attention. If possible, the same caregiver should care for the same children from week to week. This continuity is especially important when babies begin to distinguish between strangers and friends!

When a baby arrives, give child and parents a friendly greeting! After check-in is complete, take a moment to talk to and sing to the child. To interest older babies in an activity, begin to do the activity yourself.

When it’s time to change or move a child, don’t pick up the child without warning; rather, talk calmly to him or her about what’s going to happen. Never underestimate the power of your calmness and relaxed attitude. It will likely “rub off” onto the babies you care for!

Remember to watch, ask, and adapt yourself to the children’s changing interests and activities. Your enthusiasm for the theme-related activities suggested in this guide and your interest in each child are what make this a time of effective learning.

Teaching Babies and Toddlers About God

"Get serious," some may say. "We're dealing with babies here. They just need to be fed, changed, rocked—what can they possibly learn about God?"

The Style in Which It's Done

While no one thinks it's vital to post charts of major theological concepts on the nursery wall, it is vital to think about what babies can learn. The goal of teaching in the nursery is not to get a baby to say, "God!" Rather, our goal is to individually (one-on-one) teach the baby what he or she can learn about God's love.

Such teaching is done by your every look, word and act while you are in the presence of a baby or toddler. You represent Christ to each little person in your care. Using a curriculum with monthly themes will help bring consistency to your efforts to help little ones learn about God.

What do you communicate to that baby who seems to throw up on you every time you hold him or her? Do you tense as you pick up the child, steeling yourself against the inevitable? That baby senses your tension! A baby is very sensitive to even such subtle things. And it tells the child how you feel about him or her! Conversely, when your words, looks and actions are relaxed and gentle, loving and kind, you teach the baby not only that people at the church nursery can be trusted, you are also building a foundation for that little child's trust in God!

The attitude in which you meet a baby's needs greatly influences his or her developing personality. As a baby associates you with pleasant experiences and lovingly having his or her needs met, he or she also forms foundational opinions about trusting and about being loved that will affect his or her whole life. This is why it is important, whenever possible, to care for the same babies each time you are in the nursery. Continuity of care means the baby becomes familiar with one person, building the baby's trust and comfort.

Talking with babies and toddlers about God and

Jesus is a reminder to yourself of your purpose in serving in the nursery. Your example in ministering to these little ones will help parents begin to develop these same skills in communicating spiritual truths to their children.

Individual Time with Babies

Play simple games lovingly with babies (such as gently pedaling a baby's legs and saying, "Jesse, God made your strong legs!"). Sing short, simple songs about God's love to even the youngest baby.

Remember that no baby cares about your vocal quality! Your low, gentle song relaxes, calms and teaches trust. As a baby often hears his or her name associated with God's love, he or she begins to associate song, self, God and love. No, it won't turn out a pint-sized theologian. But these experiences build a foundation for faith in the perfect Father who loves His little ones.

Time for Toddlers

Toddlers will enjoy hearing brief Bible stories and verses and short, simple songs about God and Jesus. Use toddlers' names often and show you enjoy them. Repeated, short, direct sentences are often or quite well-understood by toddlers even if they don't make any verbal response.

Older babies and toddlers also enjoy looking at books with you. (Books for babies and toddlers need mainly pictures, not words.) With a picture book and a toddler in your lap, you are in position to look at the pictures and talk with the child about the pictures in the books. "Look, Elisa! There's a big, red apple. I like to eat apples. God made apples for us to eat."

Whether you interact with babies or toddlers, remember that letting God's love flow through you to each child is what makes your teaching in the nursery far more than just a "baby-sitting" experience!

Why Use Curriculum?

"Babies and toddlers simply need to be fed, changed and played with . . . why would we need curriculum for them?"

First of all, our goal in using curriculum is not to get a baby to spout theological concepts! Instead, our goal is to individually (one-on-one) teach each baby through natural learning processes what he or she can begin to learn about God. Curriculum is designed to help you, the teacher, use the time you spend at church with little ones to build spiritual foundations.

Secondly, using curriculum also benefits you, the teacher, as much as the child. Singing and talking about Jesus is a powerful reminder that what you are doing is not just custodial care, but ministry in its truest sense. The same is true for parents. Babies and toddlers may not NEED to hear about Jesus, but parents DO need to begin talking comfortably about Him with their child. The model the church provides of how we care for and "teach" babies and toddlers is intended to help parents catch on to the fact that they can and should do the same things at home.

Curriculum provides you with ideas and words that help make your natural teaching effective. Since the best kind of teaching for babies and toddlers is primarily one-on-one, don't expect that these little ones will sit in a circle or have a group time, or even remain interested in what you are doing for very long. But as you sit on the floor talking and playing with two or three babies, make frequent use of the conversation ideas and songs suggested in this guide. Plan to provide several of the learning activities. Play portions of the CD, repeating the same songs frequently. The sounds, words, actions and most

of all, the feelings that are created in this casual setting will flow into a natural pattern of teaching and learning that will eventually build a young child's understanding of God, Jesus and the loving comfort found in the people around him or her at church. And using a curriculum with monthly themes helps provide continuity to the activities in the nursery, especially when teachers change frequently.

In a large classroom where there are many children and adults in the same room, designate certain learning activities for each adult to provide for children throughout the session. For example, one teacher may position him- or herself on the floor near several books, looking and talking about them with interested children. Another adult may sit near an open area of the room with a container of rhythm instruments, playing them and singing songs with children in that area of the room. However, as the session progresses, adults need to be ready to move to "where the action is." Flexibility is key.

A baby's learning takes place all the time, as a natural part of living. So the teaching in your nursery is accomplished by your every look, word and act while you are in the presence of babies and toddlers. The nursery is ministry just as surely as teaching a theology class for adults would be. A nursery curriculum helps you to focus your playing, talking, caregiving, singing and finger plays in ways that familiarize a child with God's name and His love. Awareness of God's love for each child takes your time in the nursery far beyond the level of just singing "Itsy-Bitsy Spider" again!

Discipline in the Nursery

What Is Discipline?

First, it is imperative to understand that “discipline” at any age level is not “punishment for bad behavior.” Instead, the very word discipline means “teaching”—the very kind of teaching Jesus did with His disciples! Discipline is a door of opportunity: opportunity to teach children appropriate ways to meet their needs. Such teaching of these ways will be twofold: first, to immediately stop inappropriate behavior (behavior that might hurt a child, destroy materials or disrupt the group); second, to help the child find another, more appropriate way to behave.

Discipline of babies and toddlers should NEVER include any sort of negative physical touching (spanking, slapping, swatting, tapping, shaking, pulling, biting back, or the like). It also NEVER includes ridicule, sarcasm, threats or withholding any sort of care from a child.

Meeting Their Needs

Young children have a very small understanding of how the world works.

They have no idea of the consequences of their acts or how another child will respond to them. Part of the process of discipline is to help a child make sense of things even as you help the child understand appropriate ways to act. To meet the needs of very young children:

1. **Prevent Problems.** Be sure the environment is set up to be safe and “trouble-free.” Young children need to be able to explore with as little restraint as possible; this helps a child develop his or her own internal controls and reduces stress on babies and adults alike. Also, having several identical toys can help when toddlers both want the same toy. Because toddlers are still too young to understand sharing, offering an identical toy can often avoid conflict.

2. **Set Clear Limits.** Use the word “no” as little as possible because it does not teach the child an appropriate way to act. Instead, give clear information about the situation. For example, “The truck is for rolling. We don’t hit Jeremiah with it.

It will hurt him. The truck rolls on the floor. See?”

Save use of the word “no” for dangerous situations in which the child must be immediately restrained.

3. **Redirect Behavior.** “Let’s roll the truck. Look! I roll the truck to you. Can you roll it back to me?” Or offer another activity. “Here is a ball. We can roll the ball. Or you may roll the car. Jeremiah will roll the truck.” Redirecting behavior does not mean trying to get a toddler to share or to apologize. This only results in adult frustration and toddler confusion! While your modeling of sharing and apologizing is an important part of your teaching, don’t expect that toddlers will understand it—or imitate it—just yet!

4. **Offer a Choice.** When you offer, “You may play with the bear or the doll. Which one do you want?” you are giving the child a choice between two acceptable alternatives. You will often find that even the most resistant toddler is easily redirected!

5. **Acknowledge Feelings.** Use the words, “I see . . .” often. “Dana, I see you bumped your knee. You feel sad.” Acknowledging what you see shows the child you understand and helps the child begin to make sense of his or her emotions.

6. **Talk Through Problems.** If you are “talking through” as you watch children (describing what you see and how children are reacting), you are already in the perfect position to help solve any problem situation going on. “Ryan wants the car. Janna wants the car. What can we do? Here is another car. Here is a truck. Which one would you like, Ryan?”

Of course, the most important part of this opportunity to teach is found in the way you behave! As you model caring and respectful behavior and follow the above guidelines to meet children’s needs in appropriate ways, you will find not only that the nursery is more peaceful, but also that you are naturally helping children make sense of their world and solve their own problems. This also shows children that their caregivers are loving and considerate people who want to help them. And that is the essence of showing God’s love to little ones!

Welcoming a Baby to the Nursery

It's a familiar scenario: a parent, hurrying to get into the church service on time, hands a baby to you. At that moment, the baby begins to scream! You are in the nursery to minister not only to babies but their families as well. What can you do to improve the situation?

Time to Separate

By around six or seven months, babies begin to very clearly distinguish who they know well and who is a stranger. In most children, this brings on a mild anxiety that is fairly easily dealt with by your gentle smiles and a few distractions. But some children appear to have feelings of screaming panic that just won't quit!

Always remember (and gently remind parents) that when a child cries at separation time, it is normal. It is part of the child's growing ability to distinguish between parents and strangers (and to prefer parents!). Your calm reassurance of both parents and child will make the separation easier all around. Help both child and parents know that you recognize and accept their feelings.

Acknowledge Feelings

Always encourage a parent to say a brief good-bye before leaving the nursery, telling the child that he or she will return: "I'll be back after you've played with toys for awhile." Then be ready to help the child become involved in an interesting activity. When good-bye routines are established, children and parents get to know what to expect, and separation should become less difficult.

Also, expect that a baby's anxiety may vary from week to week. Just when it seems that little Zack is comfortable with separation, he'll "slide back" into anxiety. Remember that this, too, is not a failure on anyone's part! It's simply a normal part of a baby's growth and is best dealt with calmly.

For most children, the crying will not last for long (although it may seem like a long time to you!). Usually, the child will soon calm down and become absorbed in an activity. But remember that you communicate love, relaxation and comfort by your words, your voice and your relaxed

body posture, patting or stroking. If you are relaxed, the baby will likely follow your lead.

Crying It Out

Babies have legitimate reasons to cry! Don't leave them alone to "cry it out"—this sends the opposite message from what you want the child to remember. Because babies often have little experience with adults other than parents and little memory about past experience, it's legitimate for them to wonder if their parents are ever going to return!

Tips to Try

- Sing the same welcoming song every week or use other "welcoming rituals." It's also helpful for the same person to greet the child and settle him or her into the new surroundings each time.
- For some children, too much contact too soon with a stranger results in more fear. Take time instead to talk further with the parent so the child sees that the parent trusts and accepts you. With children who are obviously frightened by your attention, try indirect interaction, playing with a toy that interests a child and talking to the toy to draw the child's interest.
- If the child cries for an extended period of time, send for a parent. Many churches have a "crying policy" limiting how long a baby may cry before parents are summoned (usually about five minutes).
- Try blowing bubbles. Most babies find bubbles fascinating! Taking a baby outdoors briefly may have the same effect.
- Invite the parent to stay in the nursery for a while. If the parent stays, try having him or her leave for five minutes, then come back. Increase the length of time with each absence until the child (and parent) are comfortable.
- Invite families of infants who are having difficulty separating from parents to visit the room when no other children are present. Familiarity with the room can boost the child's comfort level.

September

I See God's Love at Church

Jesus Came to Church

(See Luke 2:22-38.)

"I like to come to church."

(See Psalm 122:1.)



This month you will help each child:

- feel secure and comfortable at church as you demonstrate God's love to the child;
- begin to associate God and Jesus with loving people and enjoyable activities.

Devotional

As you watch and learn from the babies and toddlers you teach, notice how anxious each one is for food to satisfy the pangs of hunger. No substitute will do! You may try bouncing and tickling, rocking and caressing, but a little one's crying will not stop until physical hunger is satisfied. This is one time when the child knows exactly what he or she needs.

Read 1 Peter 2:1-3. The apostle Peter urges us to have the same single-minded drive in satisfying our spiritual needs. Unfortunately, we often allow ourselves to be sidetracked. We try a wide variety of ways to find fulfillment or to eliminate problems. But our spiritual hunger continues, often making us as cranky as a hungry baby! Peter tells us that only the pure milk of the word (see verse 2) can nourish the deepest needs of the human soul. Take time to be fed. Recognize the symptoms of your need and satisfy that hunger!

As a teacher, the gentle care you provide young children introduces them to the nurture and love of the people who love God and His Son, the Lord Jesus. Your tasks may seem to involve only the physical care of changing, feeding, playing, cuddling and singing. However, those actions must be bathed in the warmth of Jesus' love. Such love will radiate from you as you take time each day to "taste" the goodness of the Lord (see Psalm 34:8). Just as babies single-mindedly demand to be fed, demand "time out" from your busy schedule to feed your soul from God's abundant resources.



During the month of September, [display this poster](#) at child's eye level. Talk about the way in which the children in the poster are experiencing God's love at church by playing with toys and friends.

I See God's Love at Church

Do It!

I Come In

I come in,
there's a smile on my face.
I come in,
my friends are in this place.
I come in,
my friends say "hi" to me.
I'm in church,
what a happy place to be!



Sing It!

It's Fun to Go to Church

(Tune: "Farmer in the Dell")

It's fun to go to church!
It's fun to go to church!
With all the other boys and girls
It's fun to go to church!

Tell It!

Jesus Came to Church

When Jesus was a baby,
His parents brought Him to church.

People at church were
glad to see baby Jesus.

They talked to Him.

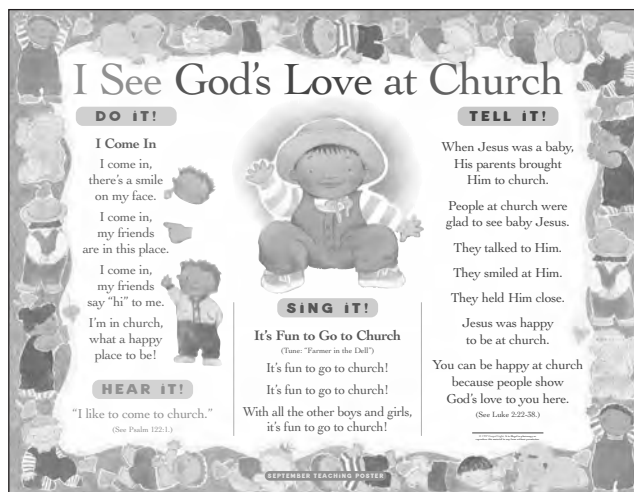
They smiled at Him.

They held Him close.

Jesus was happy to be at church.

You can be happy at church
Because people show God's
love to you here.

(See Luke 2:22-38.)



[Display this poster](#) at teacher's eye level in your nursery. Tell the Bible story, sing the song, do the finger play and repeat the Bible verse to one or more interested children.

Activities with Babies

Choose one or more of these learning activities to provide for babies during a session. Consider your facility, the number of babies and teachers and the supplies you have available as you plan which activities you will use. Continue the activity as long as the child is interested. For more information on using this curriculum, see "Why Use Curriculum?" on page 6.

Active Play

Who's in the Mirror?

Collect

Unbreakable hand mirror

Do

Hold a hand mirror so the child can see his or her face, then hands. Talk about and gently touch each part of the child's face while child looks in the mirror.

Say

Becca, God made your nose. God made you. God loves you!

I'm glad you came to church today. Thank You, God, for Becca.

Movement

What a Kick!

Collect

One or more washable stuffed animals

Do

Hold a pillow or soft toy above the baby's feet for the baby to kick.

Say

God loves you and He made your legs. It's fun to kick and play!

You play at home and you play when you go to church.



Music

Shakers

Collect

I Love to Sing! CD and player

Toy that makes noise when moved or a rhythm instrument such as a shaker

Do

Shake the toy or instrument, saying "Shake, shake, shake."

Let the baby try shaking the toy.

[Play "A Happy Place"](#) while you are playing with the baby. Shake one of the toys or instruments to the rhythm of the music.

Say

I'm glad you are happy.

God loves you.

My Church Song

Collect

I Love to Sing! CD and player

Do

[Play and/or sing "Together"](#) to babies as you rock, feed or play with them.

Say

Adriana, I'm so glad you are here today. We're glad to be at church with our friends.

God loves you.

Tip

Babies like to hear the same song over and over.

SEPTEMBER

I See God's Love at Church • Activities with Babies

Pictures and Books

Families at Church

Collect

September Bible Story Picture from
[I Love to Look!](#) or [Nursery Posters](#)
One or more sturdy books picturing families

Do

Hold a baby while looking at the pictures. If baby is interested, talk about families coming to church.

Point to and name each family member pictured. Relate the baby and his or her family to the people in the picture.

Say

This is a picture of Jesus. When Jesus was a baby, His parents brought Him to church.

Daniel, your dad brought you to church today. I'm glad you are here.

Madison, here's a picture of a big brother. You have a brother, too. You and your brother come to church. Thank You, God, for Madison and her brother.

Tip

Babies will want to explore the book with hands and mouths. Clean a book that has been in a baby's mouth.

Playing at Church

Collect

September Poster from [Nursery Posters](#) displayed at child's eye level

Do

Hold a baby in your arms or on your lap while you are near the photo and talk about the children in the photo.

Say

These children are playing with toys just like you play with toys at our church.

I'm glad you're here. God loves you and I do, too.

Quiet Play

The Cooing Game

Collect

Brightly colored toy

Do

Show a baby the toy. When the baby responds by cooing, imitate the baby's sound. Then give him or her a hug.

Continue imitating any other sounds the baby makes, smiling and nodding at the baby to encourage communication.



Say

I love you and God does, too!

Story Time

Do

Hold a baby in your lap, facing you. Say, "I'm going to tell you a story."

Tell a story about the baby coming to church. Use short sentences, pausing after each one to let the baby respond with coos or other sounds.

Say

I'm going to tell you a story.

Maria woke up today. Her mommy put her clothes on. Then Maria came to church with her mommy and daddy. At church, Maria played with the toys.

I like to tell you stories. It's fun to hear you talk. God loves you, Maria.

I See God's Love at Church

Activities with Toddlers

Choose one or more of the learning activities on pages 13-16 to provide for toddlers during a session. Consider your facility, the number of children and teachers and the supplies you have available as you plan which activities you will use. The best kind of teaching for toddlers will happen as you take advantage of teachable moments as children play and experience the learning activities you have provided. Continue an activity as long as one or more children are interested. For more information on using this curriculum, see "Why Use Curriculum?" on page 6.

Active Play

Build It!

Collect

Cardboard or wooden blocks

Do

Slowly build a tower, describing what you are doing and counting each block. Knock down the tower, or let child knock down the tower.

Encourage the child to build the tower again.

Say

I am putting one block on the floor. Now I'm putting another block on the floor. One, two. There are two blocks in our tower.

God made your hands. You can use your hands to play at home and at church.

Tip

While you are building a tower with a child, say, "Isaiah, you can only knock down your own tower. Eden gets to knock down the tower she built."

Copy Cats!

Do

Imitate a movement the child makes, or ask the child to wave or clap hands and then imitate the action.



Say

God made your hands and feet. I can see you are having fun waving and clapping.

It's fun to come to church. I'm glad you are here!

Teddy Bear

Collect

Two teddy bears (or other washable stuffed animals)

Do

Give a toddler a teddy bear and hold one yourself.

Act out the words of this poem with your teddy bear.

Teddy Bear, Turn Around

Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn around.

Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the ground.

Teddy bear, teddy bear, I'll hug you tight.

Teddy bear, teddy bear, say "goodnight!"

Say

God loves you! God made your arms to hug your teddy bear.

Empty and Full

Collect

Two large containers (boxes, dishpans, etc.)

Small toys (too large to swallow) or blocks

Do

Children move toys from one container to the other. If the child empties a container say, "All gone! It's empty now!" Go to the other container and say, "It's full now!"

Say

I'm glad you came to church today. God loves you!

Thank You, God, for loving Annie.

S E P T E M B E R

I See God's Love at Church • Activities with Toddlers

Art Play

Coloring Fun

Collect

Large sheets of white construction paper
Jumbo crayons

Do

Children color on paper. Identify the color of crayons child uses.

Say

Tyler, you're having fun drawing. I'm glad you like to draw.

God made your eyes to see these colors. God loves you. Thank You, God, for Your love.

Tip

If the child puts the crayon in his or her mouth, say, "Keep the crayon on the paper, not in your mouth."

Sticky Pictures

Collect

Large square of clear Con-Tact paper
Masking tape
2-inch (5-cm) colorful fabric and paper squares

Do

Tape Con-Tact paper (sticky side out) to wall at children's eye level. Invite children to attach fabric and paper squares to the sticky paper.

Say

Tyrell, you put a red paper on our sticky paper. It's fun to make a sticky picture.

I'm glad you came to help us make our sticky picture. God loves you.

God's Wonders

Mirror Fun

Collect

Unbreakable hand mirror

Do

Let each toddler have a chance to hold and look into the mirror. Talk about each part of the child's face.



Say

Can you see your brown eyes in the mirror? God made your eyes. God loves you.

I'm glad you're here today at our church.

What's in the Bag?

Collect

Fabric or paper bag
Variety of small child-safe items with different textures such as toy car, fabric ball, wooden block, etc.

Do

Place items inside bag. (It's OK if child sees you.) Invite child to put his or her hand in the bag and try to find one of the items. Talk about whichever item the child removes.

Say

What's in the bag, Zachary? You found the red block! Let's see if you can find some more toys in the bag.

I'm glad you came to church today to play with our toys. God loves you!

Music

Fun at Church

Collect

September Teaching Poster from
[Nursery Posters](#)
Toys

Do

Move close to one or more children while they are playing with toys and begin to sing the song on the poster, substituting words describing what a child is doing. For example, if the child is playing with cars, sing "It's fun to play with cars."

Say

I'm glad Chino is having a good time at church today.

I like being with Chino at church. God loves you, Chino. Thank You, God, for Chino.

Together Actions

Collect

I Love to Sing! CD and player

Do

[Play "Together"](#) on CD. Sing along with the song, following along with the action suggested in the song. If children remain interested, substitute other actions for "make smiles" (wave hands, clap hands, etc.).

Say

We're so glad to be together today. I see Lily. I see Daniel. I see James.

We're having fun singing and smiling.

Pictures and Books

Books and Toys

Collect

September Poster from [Nursery Posters](#)
Several sturdy books that picture toys

Do

Take a book to where children are playing with toys. Compare the toys they have with the pictures in the book or the poster.

Say

It's fun to play with trucks. It's fun to come to church. I'm glad you are here.

Tip

Toys that are being ignored should be removed from sight to avoid clutter. Toddlers need open space more than they need a vast array of toys.

I Spy!

Collect

Several sturdy books that picture children

Do

Look at a book with a child. As you look at a page, say "I spy a girl who is playing with a doll." Ask the child to point to the girl and pause to see if child responds. If the child does not respond, point to the picture yourself. Repeat "I Spy!" activity as you continue to look through the book.



Say

It's fun to come to church and play with our friends. At church we learn that God loves us.

S E P T E M B E R

I See God's Love at Church • Activities with Toddlers

Pretend Play

Doll Play

Collect

One or more dolls or washable stuffed animals

Do

Give a toddler a doll or stuffed animal. Ask, "Where is the doll's head?" Repeat the question with other body parts: ears, legs, tummy, nose and eyes.

Suggest the child do specific things with the doll such as: feed the doll, tickle the doll's tummy, rock the doll, wrap the doll in a blanket.

Say

You're rocking the baby just like mommies and daddies rock their babies.

Mommies and daddies love their babies. God loves you, too.

Driving to Church

Collect

Several toy cars

Box or large block representing your church

Do

Sit on the floor with a child. "Drive" a car to the "church." Invite a child to drive a car to church, too. Talk about being glad to come to church.

Say

Let's pretend we're driving these cars to church. I'm glad to come to church. At church I hear that God loves me. God loves you, too, Emma. Thank You, God, for loving Emma.

I'm glad you are at church today.

Tip

Expect that children will use toy cars or other toys in a variety of ways. A toddler is likely to pretend to drive the car for a moment or two, and then wander off with the car to another area of the room. Be ready for teachable moments to use the suggested conversation.

Quiet Play

Match It!

Collect

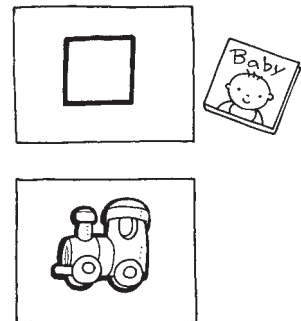
Several toys with shapes that a toddler will recognize (book, block, car, etc.)

Paper

Jumbo crayons

Do

While child watches, trace around one toy on paper. Show the child how the toy and the shape match. An older toddler may be able to match the toy and shape by him- or herself.



Trace around several other toys, matching each toy to the shape. As children are interested, they match the toys and shapes and/or color on the shapes.

Say

We're playing with the toys. I like playing with you at church.

God loves you and so do I.

What's Hidden

Collect

Several large paper or plastic cups

Several toys (too large to be swallowed) that will fit inside the cups

Do

Place a cup over each toy. Give the child time to remove each of the cups.

Toddlers will want to repeat this game over and over again!

Say

God loves you. God made your hands. We are having fun using our hands.

When we come to church, we can play together. I'm glad you are here today.



Gospel Light's baby beginnings[®]

teacher's guide

18 to 36 months

- Teacher's Home Pages for Easy At-Home Preparation
- 12 Monthly Bible Themes
- Two Years of Parent Newsletters



GUIDE TODDLERS' FIRST STEPS TOWARD KNOWING AND LOVING JESUS.

Sample Lesson

Includes links to all related resources



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Gospel Light's

baby beginnings

teacher's guide

18 to 36 months



Gospel Light

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How to Use the Baby Beginnings Curriculum

If You Are the Children's Pastor or Nursery Coordinator

- Prior to the start of each month, send home the appropriate month's overview (first two pages of each month's section) to each caregiver in the nursery.
- If you have a regular, consistent staff for the month, include the activity pages for the month as well and encourage your staff to plan together which activities they will prepare and provide each week of the month. (For example, one person would be prepared to lead a God's Wonders activity each week while another person would be prepared to lead an Active Play activity each week.)
- If you have a rotating staff, select several of the activities yourself. Collect any needed supplies and place them in the appropriate rooms along with the page of instructions (highlight or mark the activity). Alert the staff to look for these items when they arrive to serve.

If You Are the Toddler/2s Classroom Coordinator or Teacher

- Each teacher in the classroom needs a copy of the monthly overview and activities. (Print out copies from the CD-ROM that comes with the *Baby Beginnings Teacher's Guide—18 to 36 Months*.)
- Teachers plan together which activities they will prepare and provide each week of the month. (For example, one person would be prepared to lead a God's Wonders activity each week while another person would be prepared to lead an Active Play activity each week.)

Note: Consider creating for each room a box for each month that contains the supplies for the month's learning activities as described in the *Baby Beginnings Teacher's Guides*. At the beginning of the month, the box is placed in the appropriate rooms for use by teachers.

For Parents

- Distribute a copy of the reproducible *I Love to Sing!* CD to each family.
- At the beginning of each month, send home (or ask your children's pastor to send home) both the appropriate month's *I Love to Look!* Bible Story Picture Card and *Parent's Home Page*. *Parent's Home Pages* are available on the CD-ROM that comes with this book, as well as in *Nursery Smart Pages*. Purchase one set of *I Love to Look!* Bible Story Pictures for each family.

Teaching Toddlers

Somewhere between infancy and the preschool years, is the wonderful world of the toddler. God has made each child unique, and it is important to get to know each one, and their families, personally. Teachers should develop good communication with each family and learn about each child's strengths, challenges and needs. However, there are some characteristics that describe most typically developing toddlers. Taking these characteristics into account will make your teaching much more effective.

- Toddlers are active. They love to move and explore. They learn about the world by using all of their senses, by manipulating objects and by imitating the actions of others. Learning activities should involve things to look at, listen to, touch, smell and do.
- Toddlers live in the here and now. Make the most of "teachable moments" by connecting the curriculum learning aims to what a child is doing at the moment. Such guided conversations can help toddlers begin to understand spiritual concepts. For example, when a child offers a toy or comfort to another child, a teacher can say, "That was a very loving thing to do. Jesus wants us to love each other."
- Toddlers need close supervision. Their drive to explore may lead them to wander, climb, or do things they are not ready for. Some may still be putting fingers and objects in their mouths. It is important that everything in the toddler's environment is safe, too large to choke on and non-toxic.
- Toddlers want autonomy! They often use the word "no," even when they mean "yes." They may cry when their will is thwarted. Good teachers understand these feelings, while still setting and enforcing limits.
- Toddlers have difficulty waiting. It is important to have things ready for snack or other activities in order to minimize

waiting. It is helpful to have more than one of a favored toy available.

- Toddlers' vocabularies are limited, but expanding rapidly. They understand more than they can articulate. A rich language environment is important, including adults who speak often and respectfully with them, and who listen and respond to what they say. Reading short, illustrated stories to toddlers will help expand their vocabularies.
- Toddlers have a short attention span. They will stay with an activity as long as they are interested. It is best to let them move to another activity when they are ready. When doing a group activity such as singing or moving to music, it is important to let toddlers join and leave the group as they choose. Stories work best when read to one or two toddlers at a time.
- Toddlers' concepts of God, Jesus, church, the Bible and prayer are very formative. They need adults who will demonstrate God's love and then connect that love to the name of Jesus. The concepts and stories in this curriculum have been chosen because they can be tied to children's own experiences. For example, when they see things that God has made and are told that God made them, toddlers' concepts of God begin to take shape.
- Toddlers have a short memory. Just because you said something once, do not expect toddlers to remember it later. Repetition of learning concepts, and classroom rules, is important.

Let the example of Jesus be your guide in relating to toddlers. The Bible tells us that He welcomed them even though He was very busy. He took them in His arms and blessed them. You can demonstrate the love of Jesus for His precious children with your loving words, your smile, and your touch.

Loving and Guiding Toddlers

The heart of good teaching is relationships. It is important for teachers to form a relationship with each child in their class as well as with the child's family. Children respond more readily to guidance from those they love, and families are more open to input about their children if they know the teacher knows, understands and loves their children.

To build strong relationships with children and families, you can:

- **Pray** regularly for each child and family.
- **Give** parents a form to fill out requesting information about the child and family (see registration forms in *Nursery Smart Pages*).
- **Greet** each child and parent by name when they enter the classroom.
- **Express** your joy that they have come.
- **Ask** how their weekend is going to get an idea of how the child might be feeling.
- **Remember** the names of siblings and others important to the child and make reference to them.
- **Join** a child in a favorite activity.
- **Notice** and comment on pro-social behaviors. ("Thank you for sharing the play dough. That was kind.")
- **Assist** children when you sense they need help.
- **Comfort** children who are distressed.
- **Give** appropriate physical affection as you sense a child wants or needs it.
- **Follow** the child's lead in warming up to the classroom environment.
- **Tell** parents how the child's time in the classroom was spent, giving details that show you know their child. Be sure to tell parents about any event that might be upsetting to a child (getting hurt or frightened).

- **Call** or send notes to families when their children are absent.

Creating an age-appropriate environment will prevent many behavior problems from happening. To do this, you can:

- Make sure all toys, furniture and equipment are safe and child-sized.
- Store things that children should not touch out of their reach.
- Provide duplicates of popular toys.
- Carefully supervise all children at all times.
- Have enough adults available to respond quickly to children's needs.
- Avoid making children wait longer than necessary.
- Keep a consistent routine (the same activities in the same order), but be flexible with the time taken for each.
- Help children with transitions from one activity to another by giving them some warning and helping them do what you are asking (clean up toys, throw away trash, etc.).



To guide children's behavior in a way that is helpful, teachers must have realistic expectations of toddler behavior. These include:

- High levels of activity. Toddlers need space to move both indoors and out.
- Short attention spans. Toddlers need the freedom to change activities frequently on their own schedule.

Loving and Guiding Toddlers

- Short memory. Toddlers need frequent reminders of what is expected of them.
- Low tolerance for frustration. Toddlers may cry or lash out when they cannot have what they want.
- Self-centeredness. Toddlers have difficulty understanding the feelings and needs of others.
- Resistance to limits. Toddlers resist, but need, limits on their behavior.
- Limited ability to express themselves through language. Vocabulary is developing rapidly, but many children express themselves physically, especially when they are upset.
- Accidents and mistakes. Toddlers may spill their juice, wet themselves or break things.
- Expression of empathy. ("I know you want the toy, but Maria is having a turn.")
- Demonstration of appropriate behavior. ("We don't throw sand. Put it in the bucket like this.")
- Redirection to another activity. ("Jason is using the red truck. Let's see if we can find one for you.")
- Removal from a situation when inappropriate behavior persists. (A child who persists in throwing sand after reminding and demonstration should be removed from the sand area and encouraged to find another activity.)

If there is a child whose behavior consistently exceeds limits or harms others, ask teachers to observe the child and be ready to prevent or stop inappropriate behavior and to demonstrate appropriate behavior.

If the interventions above are not sufficient, the child's parents should be consulted.

Appropriate guidelines for toddlers include:

- Children should use gentle touches and kind words. They should not be allowed to hurt others with their bodies or their words. ("We say kind words." "I can't let you hurt our friends at church.")
- Children should use toys and materials appropriately. ("We need to roll the ball.")
- Children should be seated while eating and drinking. ("Here is the place for you to sit while you eat.")
- Children should walk when running might be dangerous. ("We need to walk when we're inside.")
- Children should obey their teachers' instructions. ("I need you to listen and do what I say. Thank you.")

Teachers should never:

- Use any type of physical punishment, including a slap on the hand.
- Shake a child.
- Raise their voices in anger.
- Deny food or beverage as a punishment.
- Deny physical activity as a punishment.
- Restrain a child, except for safety reasons.
- Use "time out" as a punishment. Children may need to be removed from an area until they calm down. The purpose should be to help the child.

Helpful teacher interventions when toddlers exceed limits include:

- Staying close enough to intervene when a child uses aggressive behaviors.
- Frequent reminders of what is expected. ("Touch your friend gently.")



Loving and Guiding Toddlers

- Use God as a way to control children's behavior (by saying things such as, "God doesn't like it when you do that").

Speaking with parents about their child's behavior will be easier if you have already built a good relationship with the family. However, you should not be surprised if parents respond defensively. Parents believe that their child's behavior reflects on their parenting abilities. The following ideas can make talking to parents go more smoothly:

- Pray for guidance before speaking to the parents.
- Consult a more experienced teacher or children's ministry staff person.
- Talk to parents in private, not when others are around to hear.
- Tell parents positive things about their child.
- Tell parents you have observed some behaviors that concern you.
- State the nature and frequency of the behaviors.
- Avoid using any labels ("hyper"), suggesting a diagnosis (ADHD), or making a value judgment ("aggressive").
- Ask parents if they have noticed the same behaviors at home. If they have, ask them how they handle it.

- Incorporate parents' suggestions, if appropriate.
- Invite the parents to observe in the classroom.
- Provide parenting classes for all families.

Special circumstances: Toddler behavior may be outside the norm in circumstances of family stress, such as divorce, moving, the birth of a new sibling or any other significant change in the family's life. Behavior should improve with time and loving support. Toddlers with identified developmental delays, allergies or other special needs may require extra support or alternate strategies to be successful in your classroom. This should be discussed with the parents, and teachers may need specialized training.

Remember that God made each child unique, with a unique temperament, personality and timetable of development. We have only a few glimpses in the Bible of Jesus' interactions with children. It is clear that children were important to Him. He made time for them while adults waited, He rebuked those who tried to keep them away, He took them in His arms and blessed them. The most important thing we can do for the toddlers in our care is bless them with our words and actions as Jesus would. They can begin to know the love of Jesus through our love. Love must be at the heart of our relationships with toddlers.



Why Use Curriculum?

"These kids simply need to be fed, changed and played with . . . what can they possibly learn about God? Why would we need curriculum for them?"

First of all, our goal in using curriculum is not to get a child to spout theological concepts! Instead, our goal is to individually (one-on-one) teach each child through natural learning processes what he or she can begin to learn about God. Curriculum is designed to help you, the teacher, use the time you spend at church with little ones to build spiritual foundations.

Secondly, using curriculum also benefits you, the teacher, as much as the child. Singing and talking about Jesus is a powerful reminder that what you are doing is not just custodial care, but ministry in its truest sense. The same is true for parents. Just as young children need to hear about Jesus, their parents need to begin talking comfortably about Him with their child. The model the church provides of how we care for and "teach" children is intended to help parents catch on to the fact that they can and should do the same things at home.

Curriculum provides you with ideas and words that help make your natural teaching effective. Since the best kind of teaching for toddlers is primarily one-on-one, don't expect that these young children will sit in a circle or have a group time, or even remain interested in what you are doing for very long. But as you sit on the floor talking and playing with two or three children, make frequent use of the conversation ideas and songs suggested in your curriculum. Look for teachable moments—times when you can talk about the child's actions and connect them to the monthly theme. "Jocelyn, you used your hands to roll the red ball. God made your hands."

In every session, plan to provide several of the learning activities. Play portions of the CD, repeating the same songs frequently. The sounds, words, actions and most of all, the feelings that are created in this casual setting will flow into a natural pattern of teaching and learning that will eventually build a young child's understanding of God, Jesus and the loving comfort found in the people around him or her at church. And using a curriculum with monthly themes helps provide continuity to the activities in the nursery, especially when teachers change frequently.

In a large classroom where there are many children and adults in the same room, designate certain learning activities for each adult to provide for children throughout the session. For example, one teacher may position him- or herself on the floor with large cardboard blocks, building and talking about them with interested children. Another adult may sit near an open area of the room with a container of rhythm instruments, playing them and singing songs with children in that area of the room. However, as the session progresses, adults need to be ready to move to "where the action is." Flexibility is key.

A child's learning takes place all the time, as a natural part of living. So the teaching in your classroom is accomplished by your every look, word and act while you are in the presence of children. Your teaching is ministry just as surely as teaching a theology class for adults would be. This curriculum helps you to focus your playing, talking, caregiving, singing and finger plays in ways that familiarize a child with God's name and His love. Awareness of God's love for each child takes your time in the nursery far beyond the level of just singing "Itsy-Bitsy Spider" again!

September

I See God's Love at Church

Jesus Came to Church

(See Luke 2:22-38.)

"I like to come to church."

(See Psalm 122:1.)

• • • • •

This month you will help each child:

- hear songs and words about God's love;
- feel glad to be at church with people who demonstrate God's love to him or her;
- participate in enjoyable activities at church.



Devotional

As you watch and learn from the children you teach, notice how anxious each one is for food to satisfy the pangs of hunger. No substitute will do! You may try distraction and play with toys, but a little one's requests for food will not stop until physical hunger is satisfied. This is one time when the child knows exactly what he or she needs.

Read 1 Peter 2:1-3. The apostle Peter urges us to have the same single-minded drive in satisfying our spiritual needs. Unfortunately, we often allow ourselves to be sidetracked. We try a wide variety of ways to find fulfillment or to eliminate problems. But our spiritual hunger continues, often making us as cranky as a hungry child! Peter tells us that only the pure milk of the word (see verse 2) can nourish the deepest needs of the human soul. Take time to be fed. Recognize the symptoms of your need and satisfy that hunger!

As a teacher, the gentle care you provide introduces young children to the nurture and love of the people who love God and His Son, the Lord Jesus. Your tasks may seem to involve only the physical care of changing, feeding, playing, cuddling and singing. However, those actions must be bathed in the warmth of Jesus' love. Such love will radiate from you as you take time each day to "taste" the goodness of the Lord (see Psalm 34:8). Just as children single-mindedly demand to be fed, demand "time out" from your busy schedule to feed your soul from God's abundant resources.



During the month of September, [display this poster](#) at child's eye level. Talk about the way in which the children in the poster are experiencing God's love at church by playing with toys and friends.

I See God's Love at Church

Do It!

I Come In

I come in,
there's a smile on my face.
I come in,
my friends are in this place.
I come in,
my friends say "hi" to me.
I'm in church,
what a happy place to be!



Sing It!

It's Fun to Go to Church

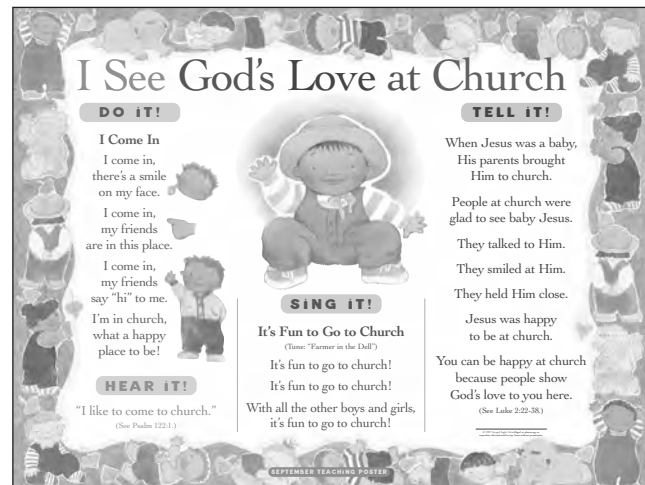
(Tune: "Farmer in the Dell")

It's fun to go to church!
It's fun to go to church!
With all the other boys and girls
It's fun to go to church!

Tell It!

Jesus Came to Church

When Jesus was a baby,
His parents brought Him to church.
People at church were
glad to see baby Jesus.
They talked to Him.
They smiled at Him.
They held Him close.
Jesus was happy to be at church.
You can be happy at church
Because people show God's
love to you here.
(See Luke 2:22-38.)



[Display this poster](#) at teacher's eye level in your nursery. Tell the Bible story, sing the song, do the finger play and repeat the Bible verse to one or more interested children.

Activities with Children

Choose one or more of the learning activities on pages 11-16 to provide for children during a session. Consider your facility, the number of children and teachers and the supplies you have available as you plan which activities you will use. The best kind of teaching for toddlers will happen as you take advantage of teachable moments as children play and experience the learning activities you have provided. Continue an activity as long as one or more children are interested. For more information on using this curriculum, see "Why Use Curriculum?" on page 8.

S E P T E M B E R

I See God's Love at Church • Active Play

Building a Church

Collect

Toy construction tools (hammer, saw, etc.)
Cardboard boxes

Do

Use boxes and tools to “build” a church. Interested children may imitate your actions.



Say

God loves you, Seth.
I'm glad you came to our church today.
What is this tool used for?
I'm glad people built our church so we can come here and learn about God's love.

Climbing Steps to Church

Collect

September Bible Story Picture from
[I Love to Look!](#) or [Nursery Posters](#)
Child's step stool, or a large wooden block

Do

Show and talk about the Bible Story Picture.
Encourage children to go up and down the step stool, or to step on and off the wooden block.

Say

Jesus came to church. Mary and Joseph brought Him to church. The people at church loved Jesus.
Let's pretend we're going up the steps to church. We can see our friends at church.
I'm happy to see you at church today. God loves you!
At church we can learn about God's love.

Driving to Church

Collect

Several age-appropriate ride-on toys (optional—child-sized chairs)

Do

Children ride on the toys, moving around the room as desired. (Optional: If ride-on toys are not available, arrange chairs to make a car. Children sit on chairs and pretend to drive.)

Say

Let's drive to church. Which car do you want to drive?
I'm glad we can come to church!
God loves you! People at church love you, too.
Thank You, God, for the people at our church.

Walking to Church

Collect

Masking tape

Do

Create a “path to church” on the floor of your room using the tape. Remove tape at end of session.

Demonstrate staying on the path while walking on it. Invite children to walk with you.

Say

Let's walk to church. Let's stay on the path together.

At church, we learn about God's love.
God loves you, Chloe.

Bonus Idea: Walk in different ways on the path (jump, tiptoe, etc.).

S E P T E M B E R

I See God's Love at Church • Art and Sensory Play

People at Church

Collect

- Marker
- Construction paper shape or drawing of your church building for each child
- Glue sticks
- Pictures of people cut from magazines or catalogs

Do

- Print "I see God's love at church" on shapes or drawings of church.
- Child glues pictures onto church.

Say

- I'm so glad you came to church today. At church we learn that God loves us.
- Calvin, I'm happy to see you. People at church care about you.

What Did You Wear to Church?

Collect

- September Bible Story Picture from [I Love to Look!](#) or [Nursery Posters](#).
- Pieces of fabric in solid colors approximately 8 inches (20.5 cm) square

Do

- Show and talk about the Bible Story Picture.
- Spread fabric pieces on table or floor for children to see and touch.
- Choose a piece that matches a child's shirt, dress, etc. and hold it next to the article of clothing.

Say

- When Jesus was a baby, He came to church. Mary and Joseph brought Him to church. You came to church, too!
- Devin, this cloth is blue, just like your shirt. You wore a blue shirt to church today.
- I'm glad you're here. God loves you!

Tire Track Roads

Collect

- Length of butcher paper
- Tape
- Crayons
- Toy cars with no small parts

Do

- Tape butcher paper to top of child-sized table.
- Let children use crayons to draw "roads" on the paper. Draw several roads yourself.
- Children "drive" cars on the roads.

Say

- I'm glad you came to church today. Marcus, how did you get here?
- Some people drive to church. Some people walk.
- I like to come to church. At church, I learn that God loves me.

Church Windows

Collect

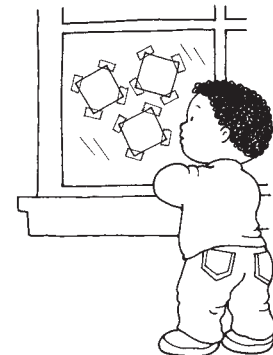
- Pieces of colored tissue paper approximately 4 inches (10 cm) square
- Masking tape

Do

- Let children watch you tape tissue-paper pieces to a window, at child's eye level if possible.

Say

- Now our window has pretty colors.
- This paper is red.
- Some churches have pretty colored windows.
- We see God's love at church. Thank You, God, for our church.



S E P T E M B E R

I See God's Love at Church • God's Wonders

Nature Items

Collect

Variety of nature items (leaves, grass, shells, small branches)

Do

Set out nature items. Play a game like I Spy with children to help them identify and describe the items.

Say

I spy something green and skinny. Elton, what do you think it is? Yes, you pointed to the grass. God made grass. God loves us. At church we hear that God loves us.

I spy some seashells made by God. God loves us.

I Am Loved at Church

Collect

Several pictures of babies and toddlers and several pictures of baby care items and toddler toys cut from magazines and laminated (or covered with clear Con-Tact paper)

Do

Invite children to help you match the pictures of the baby items to the pictures of babies and the toddler toys to pictures of toddlers.

Say

Where is the picture of the baby? Where is the picture of the rocking chair? We have rocking chairs at church for babies. People at church love babies.

Where is the picture of the little girl? Where is the picture of the blocks? We have blocks at church for you to play with. I love to play with you, too!

I'm glad we can come to church. We learn that God loves us.

Who Came to Church Today?

Collect

September Bible Story Picture from [I Love to Look!](#) or [Nursery Posters](#)
Unbreakable mirror

Do

Show and talk about the Bible Story Picture. Help one child at a time see his or her reflection in the mirror.

Say

Look at this picture of baby Jesus. He came to church. People at church loved baby Jesus.

Paloma, who is in the mirror? You came to church today. Mrs. Boyd came to church, too. I'm glad you're here. God loves you!

What Do You See at Church?

Collect

Toy binoculars, or make pretend ones out of two cardboard tubes

Do

Show a child how to look through the binoculars. As child looks around the room, describe what the child is seeing.



Say

I see my friend Kayley at church.

I see a picture of Jesus at church.

What do you see at church? We see our toys. We see people who love us. Thank You, God, for our church.

S E P T E M B E R

I See God's Love at Church • Music

God Loves Me

Do

Sing the following words to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb":

God loves Nathan very much,
very much, very much.
God loves Nathan very much. I love Nathan, too.

Say

I know a song about how much God loves us.
Let's sing it!

At church we learn about God's love. I'm glad
we're at church together.

Bonus Idea: Play and sing along with
"Together" from *I Love to Sing!* CD.

Happy Band

Collect

September Bible Story Picture from
[I Love to Look!](#) or [Nursery Posters](#)
I Love to Sing! CD and player
Variety of rhythm instruments

Do

Show and talk about the Bible Story Picture.
Give several children instruments. Hold one
instrument yourself.
[Play "A Happy Place."](#) Children play instru-
ments with the music.

Say

Do you see baby Jesus in this picture? He is
at church. Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to
church.

We're at church today. At church, we sing
about God's love.

Alicia, I see that you are playing the bells. I'm
glad you came to church to play the bells today.

Caleb, let's hear what the tambourine sounds
like. God loves you!

Walking to Church

Collect

I Love to Sing! CD and player

Do

[Play "I See You!"](#) and/or ["Welcome."](#)

Encourage children
to join you in walking
around the room to the
beat of the music.

Clap in time to the
music as you walk.

Say

Let's pretend we are
walking to church.

Marco, I'm glad you
came to church today.
God loves you.



Making Music

Collect

Toy piano, toy keyboard or real electronic key-
board, or other musical toy

Do

Show one child at a time how to play the
instrument.

Let child experiment with the instrument.

Say

We make music at church.

You can make music, too.

I'm glad you came to church. God loves you!
Thank You, God, that Carl and Katie came to
church today.

S E P T E M B E R

I See God's Love at Church • Pretend Play

Getting Ready for Church

Collect

Dolls

Do

Children pretend they are getting dolls ready for church.

Lead children to walk to another part of the room, pretending they are going to church.

Say

Let's get ready for church. We can bring our dolls to church today. Ready? Let's go!

I want to go to church to hear about God's love.
People at church love you, Anna.

Driving to Church

Collect

I Love to Sing! CD and player

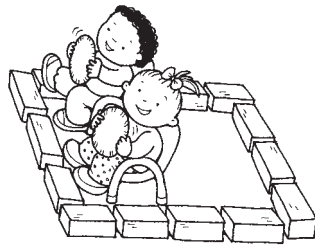
Large cardboard blocks or boxes (optional—masking tape)

Small chairs

Plastic disc or sturdy paper plate for steering wheel

Do

Arrange blocks or boxes to be a vehicle. (Optional: Use masking tape to make a large rectangle on the floor representing a vehicle.) Place chairs inside vehicle.



Encourage children to get in the vehicle and sit on chairs. Let children take turns using the disc or plate to steer the vehicle.

As you "drive," [play "A Happy Place"](#) and sing along.

Say

Evan, how did you get to church today?

Let's build a car and drive to church. Who would like to be the driver?

I'm glad you came to church today. God loves you and so do I.

My Bible

Collect

September Bible Story Picture from

[I Love to Look!](#) or [Nursery Posters](#)

Several sturdy children's Bibles with pictures

Do

Set out Bibles for children to explore.

With an interested child, look at the Bible, talking about the pictures as you or child turns the pages. Show and talk about the Bible Story Picture.

Say

The Bible helps us learn about God's love.
God loves everyone! God loves you, Brandy.
Thank You, God, for loving us.

I see this picture of Jesus at church. Jesus went to church when He was a baby. People at church were glad to see Jesus. They loved Him.

Block Play

Collect

Wooden or cardboard blocks (optional—jumbo interlocking blocks)

Toy cars and people (too large to swallow)

Do

Help children build a church and one or more houses with blocks.

Show children how to drive vehicles between church and home.

Say

Let's build a house. Who lives here?

Let's build a church. How can we get to our church from home?

I'm glad we can go to church to learn about God's love.

Bonus Idea: Make rectangular shapes on the floor with masking tape. Children stack blocks on tape to make houses.

S E P T E M B E R

I See God's Love at Church • Quiet Play

How Many Are Here?

Collect

September Bible Story Picture from
[I Love to Look!](#) or [Nursery Posters](#)

Do

Show and talk about the Bible Story Picture.
Count aloud the number of children sitting or standing near each other.

Say

This picture shows baby Jesus at church. He is happy to be at church. Let's count how many people are in this picture. There are five!

I see three children who came to church today. Ella, Brendan and Evan came to church. I'm glad you are all here.

God loves all of you and so do I. Thank You, God, for Your love.

God Loves Me

Collect

8½x11-inch (21.5x28-cm) sheet of paper for each child

Marker
Stickers

Do

Print the words "God loves (child's name)" on each paper.

Let children decorate their papers by placing stickers on the papers, any way they like.

Say

God loves you, Natalie.

At church, we learn about God's love.

I'm so glad that God loves Natalie. I'm so glad that God loves James.

Bonus Idea: Let children hold and look at a Bible. Say, "The Bible tells us that God loves us."

Puzzles

Collect

Several toddler puzzles

Do

Let children play with puzzles. Talk with children about God's love.

Say

Carlos, can you find where the ball goes in this puzzle?

It's fun to play with you. People at church love you, Carlos.

I'm glad you're here today. I love you and God loves you, too.

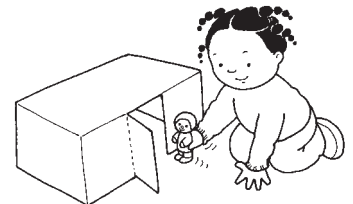
People Come to Church

Collect

Toy people
Shoe box with a flap cut on one side

Do

Show children how to "walk" people into the "church." Then set items on a child-sized table or the floor for children to play with.



Say

The boy is going to church. Now the girl is going to church.

You came to church today. I'm glad to see you! God loves you.

Bonus Idea: Use wooden or cardboard blocks to build a simple structure.