

Empower the Gospel in the Nursery

Praying for the Next Generation (Monthly Prayer Themes)	
January:	Pray that they will know Christ as Savior early in life and treasure their inheritance as Sons of God; that they will not accept Satan’s design against them but walk in light as heirs of the kingdom.
February:	Pray that they will have a hatred for sin and a love for godliness.
March:	Pray that they will appreciate discipline and instructions, be quick to repent; that they will be caught when guilty.
April:	Pray that they will be protected from the evil one in each area of their lives: spiritual, emotional, and physical. Pray that they will stand firm in persecution. Pray that they will be patient in affliction and look to God, trusting in His faithfulness when they have problems.
May:	Pray that they will have a responsible and loving attitude in their relationships with others. Pray that they will walk in humility and look to the needs of others.
June:	Pray that they will respect God’s lordship over them, and those he has placed in authority over them.
July:	Pray that they will choose godly influences; that they will desire the right kind of friends and be protected from the wrong ones; that they will be “hedged in” so they cannot find their way to wrong people or places and that the wrong people cannot find their way to them; that they will be kept from the wrong mate and saved for the right one.
August:	Pray that they would desire inner beauty and godly character, and that they would grow more Christ-like daily; that they, as well as those they marry, will be kept pure both before and after marriage.
September:	Pray that they will learn to totally submit to God and actively resist Satan in all circumstances.
October:	Pray that they will be single-hearted, willing to be sold out to Jesus Christ and joyfully invested in the cause of the kingdom.
November:	Pray that they would grow in faith, obedience and in love for God; that they would “Love not the world, nor the things of the world.”
December:	Pray that they would treasure God’s Word and stand up for truth; that they would be free from deception and the lies of the evil one; and have a great understanding of the Word.

Store the Gospel in Their Hearts: Teaching Fighter Verses to Toddlers

It is recommended that memory work be done at a separate time from the lesson. It can be done informally merely by periodically repeating the verse during free play. Or, if the children are brought together at an additional time during the hour, the memory verse can be repeated four or five times with the children. (For example, when the children are sitting at the table waiting for snacks, take the opportunity to teach the Fighter Verse.)

Start by teaching a phrase and then expanding the verse as the children learn its parts. **One verse is focused on each month.**

The best way to help children memorize verses is repetition. First, pronounce the reference and have the group repeat it. Then say the verse, dividing it into several bite-sized chunks, asking the children to repeat each part. Then say the reference again. Go over the verse several more times, lengthening the parts said each time.

Use the Fighter Verse Flash Cards (Foundation Verses)! The children will quickly associate the shape and color with the verse they are learning. These are particularly helpful for review.

Ideas for Bible Memory

Singing: Put the verse to a traditional tune. Or download Foundation Verse songs at the Bethlehem Baptist Church website. www.hopeingod.org

Tape Recording: Make a recording of your class saying their verses. They will love hearing themselves on the recorder!

Illustrations: Have each child illustrate the verse or a part of it and display their drawings.

Teach the Gospel in the Nurseries

Biblical Truths for Toddlers

God is Good

God is Big

God is Strong

Jesus Loves You

We Love Jesus

Thank You, Jesus!

God Made Everything

God is with Us

God Knows Everything

Jesus is My Friend

Jesus Loves Everyone

We Need God



Truth Statement Posters are available from Children Desiring God. Or make your own!

A Sure Foundation

An Overview of the Philosophy of Ministry to Infants and Toddlers

The philosophy of ministry to infants and toddlers is explained in the Nursery Coordinator’s Kit for *A Sure Foundation*. To fully understand the overall philosophy of ministry to infants and toddlers, it is important to read all three booklets. In this way, you will know the flow of the nursery ministry, understanding both the foundation laid in each age group, the necessary preparation for the next stage of nursery ministry, and the scope of the ministry.

We have divided nursery/toddler ministry into three general groups listed below. Depending on the number of children in a given church, these children can all be present within one nursery or may be divided among three or more nurseries.

Understanding the overall scope will help child care workers minister more effectively to the age group with which they are working. The following chart may help you to understand the foundation laid in each age group as well as an understanding of the next stage of ministry.

Age Group	Ministry Focus
Birth to 18 months (infants)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Prayer❖ Blessing❖ Spreading an atmosphere of Christ—worship music, gently spoken words of kindness and truth❖ Simple truth statements about God
18 to 24 months (young toddlers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Prayer❖ Blessing❖ Spreading an atmosphere of Christ—worship music, gently spoken words of kindness and truth❖ Simple truth statements about God❖ Bible storytelling (4 repeated stories)❖ Training in righteousness
24 to 36 months (older toddlers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Prayer❖ Blessing❖ Spreading an atmosphere of Christ—worship music, gently spoken words of kindness and truth❖ Simple truth statements about God❖ Bible storytelling (13 repeated stories)❖ Training in righteousness

Grab-Bag of Ideas for Getting the Gospel into the Nurseries

Use the names of God to comfort and pray for the children. It is the beginning of their Biblical vocabulary.

Continue to build a Biblical Vocabulary, using the Biblical Truths for Toddlers. They should be taught:

- ❖ Intentionally
- ❖ In conversation and in free-play situations

Teach them Scripture verses.

- ❖ Have a plan.
- ❖ Choose the verses that best match their Bible lessons.
- ❖ Don't be afraid to shorten them to make them easier to learn, (being careful to guard the truth).
- ❖ Use incentives and supports—flashcards, magnets, CDs of verses put to song (if available), reward cards with stickers.

Teach them Bible content. The stories should be:

- ❖ God-centered
- ❖ True to the word of God
- ❖ Age-appropriate language
- ❖ Taught repetitively for helping the children to learn both concepts and vocabulary

Grab-Bag of Ideas for Talking with Little Ones

Words and phrases to use when working with young children that assist in guiding behaviors:

To Help Children Focus:

- ❖ “Listen to my words.”
- ❖ If child needs additional direction you may add “and do what I say.”

To Get the Children's Attention in a Group Setting:

- ❖ “Let me see your eyes.”
- ❖ “Can you point your nose at me?”

In Giving Instruction:

- ❖ Use Grandma's Rule: First, name what the child wants to do followed by what they need to do. Example, “Brad, you may play with the cars after you finish clearing your place at the table.”
- ❖ Or you can turn it into a question: “What do you need to do before you play with the cars?”
- ❖ If a child is running in the room: “Sally, please tell your feet to walk.”
- ❖ If a child is being rough: “God made our hands to touch people gently.”

Comments to Use When Children are Playing:

- ❖ “It's kind of Jesus to give us mommies and daddies to care for us.”
- ❖ “[Color, pets, rain, etc.] is one of God's good ideas.”

- ❖ “I’m so glad that God gave us hands and fingers to play with this playdough.”
- ❖ “Isn’t it great that God gave us strong legs to play this jumping game?”
- ❖ “This is amazing! Only God could think of this! Or make this! Or do this!”

Or you can turn these comments into questions:

- ❖ Don’t you wonder how God could make such a big thing as a mountain?
- ❖ How did God do that? He is wonderful, or strong, or so smart, etc.

Focusing on God’s qualities formulates an ideal for children—Use comments such as the following:

- ❖ “Because Jesus is kind, we should be kind.”
- ❖ “Because God is loving, we should be loving.”
- ❖ “Because God is good, we should be good.”
- ❖ “Because God is gentle, we should be gentle.”
- ❖ “We are weak, but God is strong.”

Avoid giving evaluative praise, such as, “Good job.” or “Beautiful picture!” or “What a helper!” or “You’re so smart, or kind, or thoughtful.” These tend to puff up the child’s ego and distract him from the point of true encouragement in positive behaviors.

Instead, describe what you see a child do. This will reinforce the desired behavior and help build additional vocabulary. For example,

- ❖ “You put the red cup inside the yellow cup.”
- ❖ “You shared the blocks with Isabelle.”
- ❖ “You put the paper scraps in the wastebasket.”
- ❖ “Yes, that’s where we put the books.”
- ❖ “Thank you for picking up the dolls.”

If we describe what the child does (rather than praise him) we gain the opportunity to link the action with God.

- ❖ Jamie, when you shared the truck with Tommy you pleased God, or made God happy.
- ❖ Rhonda, you came when I called. You obeyed me and obeyed God’s word.

Ask questions that stimulate the children’s thinking. Adults are often too quick to answer questions and solve problems for children. In order to learn to think for themselves, they need the opportunity to answer and solve questions and problems. Use open-ended questions:

- ❖ I wonder why (or how) _____?
- ❖ How do you suppose _____?
- ❖ What could have made _____?
- ❖ What else could you try?
- ❖ Where could you find [a chair]?
- ❖ Where could you look [_____]? (for an answer)

- ❖ What other ways are there to _____? (Use this questions with puzzles, other toys of perception, any problem, etc.)
- ❖ What do you need to do before you eat? Play? Leave?

Response to whining:

- ❖ “Please use your 3-year-old voice.”
- ❖ “I will listen to you when you use a pleasant voice.”

Response to child using unkind words or a disrespectful tone:

- ❖ Your words (or your voice) were not kind; I will listen to you when you use kind words (or a kind voice).

Response to Wrongdoing:

When a child hits another, or takes a toy from a child, or calls someone a hurtful name, **help the child make it right.**

1. **Begin** with identifying the offense: “Mary, it was wrong to take Mike’s puzzle.”
2. **Then** say, “You may say to Mike, “I was wrong to take your puzzle.”
3. **Finally** help her say, “Will you be my friend again?”
4. If the child says, “I’m sorry.” instead of what was asked of her, repeat steps 2 and 3.

Do Not Overtalk:

There are two ways to err in talking: One is never to engage the children in conversation and miss opportunities to bless and instruct them; the other is the opposite. When we read a list of suggestions (like this one) on things to say, we may come away with the impression that we are to be talking every minute. But there is much to be gained from quiet observation, praying that the Lord will show you when to insert one of the above suggestions appropriately. A child can also be blessed by a smile or a gentle pat from you. So don’t overtalk—not even about God—but also be alert to the many opportunities around you in the nursery to guide and bless the children by using these suggestions.

Compiled from the study and personal experience of Konnie Plaep. Konnie has a BA in Christian Education (Wheaton College), and licensures in Early Childhood Education (U of M) and Parent Education (Crown College). She has over 40 years of experience teaching preschoolers, directing preschool, and evaluating college students in pursuit of their degrees and licensures in Early Childhood Education.