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Gospel Light's  
**baby beginnings**

teacher's guide

*0 to 18 months*



Tips and Activities for Parents of  
Children 0 to 18 Months • Year 1

## People at Church Help Me

**"God gives people to help me."**

(See 1 Corinthians 12:28.)

.....

**This month we will help your child:**

- develop an awareness of the name of Jesus;
- and associate Jesus with being loved and helped.

# May

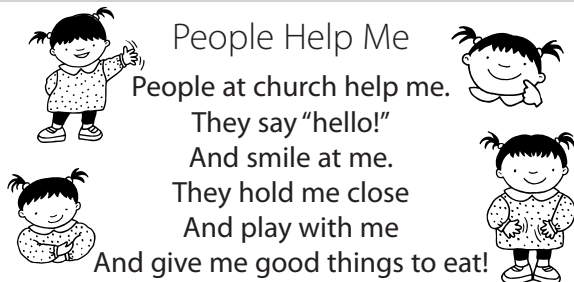
Do these activities with your child to continue the learning your child has experienced at church.

## Little Activities for Little People

Babies

- When looking at a book or magazine with pictures of familiar objects around the house, call your child's attention to the real object along with the picture. Say, **Here is a picture of a rattle. Here's one of your rattles. Listen to the rattle.** Such comparisons help develop your child's awareness.
- Talk about people and activities your child has enjoyed at church. Assure your child that the teachers at church love him or her. Say, **I like to go to church with you. Mrs. Stevens loves to take care of you and help you at church.**

### Do It!



Say and do this finger play as you play with your child. Use your child's name instead of "me." Talk about the people who care for your child at church. (If your church has a picture directory, show pictures of these people to your child.) Do this finger play many times, but especially immediately before and after your child has participated in the church nursery program. Your child's confidence and pleasure in the nursery will grow as he or she sees you affirming and enjoying your child's experiences in the nursery program, too.

### Sing It!

Showing God's Love

(Tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

I will smile and play with you.  
Jesus helped His good friends, too.  
I can show I care for you  
To help you know that God loves you.

Sing this song as you serve a meal to or play with your child. Talk about how you enjoy caring for your child. Smile at your child and tell him or her that you smile to show you love him or her. Talk about how people at church like to smile and take care of your child. If a child knows the name of his or her teacher at church, sing the song using the person's name in place of the word "I."

# May Parent's Home Page

## Children Won't Wait

There is a time to anticipate the baby's coming,  
a time to consult a doctor;

A time to plan a diet and exercise, a time to  
gather a layette.

There is a time to wonder at the ways of God,  
knowing this is the destiny for which I was  
created;

A time to dream of what this child may become,

A time to pray that God will teach me how to  
train this child which I bear.

A time to prepare myself that I might nurture  
my child's soul.

But soon there comes the time for birth,

For babies won't wait.

There is a time for night feedings, and colic and  
formulas.

There is a time for rocking and a time for walk-  
ing the floor,

A time for patience and self-sacrifice,

A time to show that my child's new world is a  
world of love and goodness and dependability.

There is a time to ponder what my child is—not  
a pet nor toy; but a person, an individual—a  
soul made in God's image.

There is a time to consider my stewardship. I  
cannot possess my child.

This child is not mine. I have been chosen to  
care for, to love, to enjoy,

To nurture and to answer to God for this child.

**Little children know how to  
make us laugh—even when we  
probably shouldn't!**

I resolve to do my best for this child,

For babies don't wait.

There is a time to hold my child close and tell  
the sweetest story ever told;

A time to enjoy earth and sky and flower, to  
teach my child of wonder and reverence for  
God and all He has made.

There is a time to leave the dishes, to swing my  
child in the park,

To run a race, to draw a picture, to catch a but-  
terfly, to give my child happy comradeship.

There is a time to point the way, to teach infant  
lips to pray,

To teach my child's heart to love God's Word, to  
love God's way.

For children don't wait.

—Originally published by 20th Century Christian.  
Used by permission.

## Color Walk

- Cut some paper (red, blue, green, yellow) into 4-inch (10-cm) squares.
- Give your child one of the papers. Walk around the house together, looking for items the same color as the paper.
- Repeat the activity with other colors.
- Say, **You're holding the red paper. Look! There's a red truck. It's the same color as the paper. What else do you see that's red? We're helping each other find red toys. God gives us people to love and help us.**

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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.

# May

## People at Church Help Me

### Jesus Helped His Friends

(See John 13:2-5.)

### "God gives people to help me."

(See 1 Corinthians 12:28.)



#### This month you will help each child:

- develop an awareness of Jesus;
- associate Jesus with being loved and helped.

## Devotional

Time in the nursery often seems a bit like a tornado: whoosh, children and parents suddenly arrive; fully absorbed, you whirl and turn and move through a series of caregiving tasks—then suddenly, they are gone! You sit breathlessly, assessing the needed cleanup and asking, "What on earth happened here?"

On such days, it may seem that one task after another took up all your time and energy. Was anything accomplished beyond basic physical care? In some nurseries, no more is expected. But Jesus shows us that in even the most ordinary act of care, there is potential for ministry. When Jesus washed His friends' feet, He taught them not only about being washed physically, but by the way in which He washed their feet, He also taught them the depth of His servanthood and the value He placed on each one of them—even the one who would betray Him. The disciples learned about servanthood and how Jesus valued each of them not by simply having their feet washed, but from the way in which it was done.

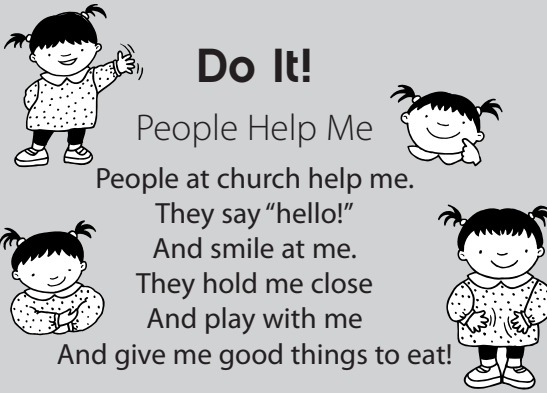
You are not merely a provider of services to children. You are a teacher! On the surface, those tasks may seem to involve only the physical care of changing diapers, feeding, playing, cuddling and singing. However, your actions go far beyond mere physical care and become ministry when you use them to express the warmth of Jesus' love. The gentle way in which you talk to, play with and love each child for whom you care teaches each of them something about Jesus' love and about the people at church who love God. That's a powerful lesson!

Such love will radiate from you only as you take time each day to "taste" God's goodness. As you consider His love for you and as you pray for each little one for whom you care, the routine tasks of service to children can become ministry!



During the month of May, display this poster at child's eye level. Talk about the way in which the adult in the poster is demonstrating God's love to the child by playing with him.

# People at Church Help Me



**Do It!**

People Help Me  
People at church help me.  
They say "hello!"  
And smile at me.  
They hold me close  
And play with me  
And give me good things to eat!

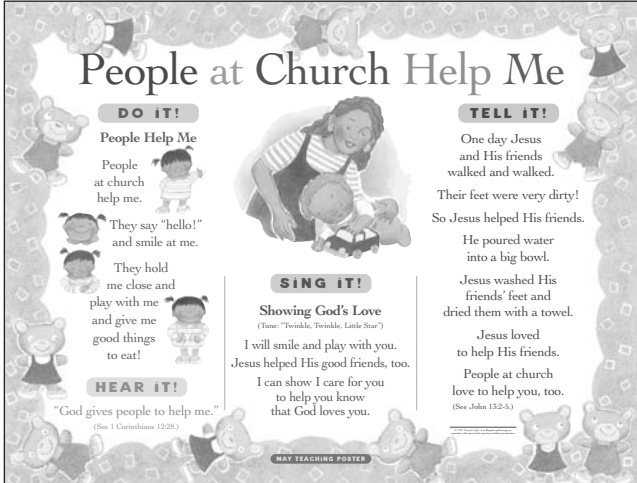
**Sing It!**

Showing God's Love  
(Tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

I will smile and play with you.  
Jesus helped His good friends, too.  
I can show I care for you  
To help you know that God loves you.

**Tell It!**

Jesus Helped His Friends  
One day Jesus and His friends  
Walked and walked.  
Their feet were very dirty!  
So Jesus helped His friends.  
He poured water into a big bowl.  
Jesus washed His friends' feet  
And dried them with a towel.  
Jesus loved to help His friends.  
People at church love to help you, too.  
(See John 13:2-5.)



**DO IT!**

People Help Me  
People at church help me.  
They say "hello!" and smile at me.  
They hold me close and play with me and give me good things to eat!

**HEAR IT!**

"God gives people to help me."  
(See 1 Corinthians 12:28.)

**SING IT!**

Showing God's Love  
(Tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")  
I will smile and play with you.  
Jesus helped His good friends, too.  
I can show I care for you to help you know that God loves you.

**TELL IT!**

One day Jesus and His friends walked and walked.  
Their feet were very dirty!  
So Jesus helped His friends.  
He poured water into a big bowl.  
Jesus washed His friends' feet and dried them with a towel.  
Jesus loved to help His friends.  
People at church love to help you, too.  
(See John 13:2-5.)

MAY TEACHING POSTER

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.

### God's Wonders

#### Bubble Fun!

##### Collect

Bubble-blowing solution and wand

##### Do

Blow bubbles in the nursery where a baby can see them. Point to the bubbles and talk about how they are floating around the room.

Gently blow a bubble toward a baby and describe the action.

##### Say

I'm blowing bubbles for you to see, William.  
I'm glad to be with you today.  
I like taking care of you.

### Movement

#### Up, Down and All Around

##### Collect

One or more baby rattles

##### Do

Stand near a baby who is in a crib, or sit near a baby who is lying on a blanket on the floor.

Shake a rattle directly in front of the baby. After the baby focuses on the rattle, move the rattle to a different location (up, down, side, behind your back) and shake it again.

Continue the activity as long as the baby is interested. When the baby indicates by movement or sound that he or she wants the rattle, give it to him or her.



##### Say

Madeline, can you hear the sound this rattle makes? I'll give you the rattle to play with. I'm glad to help you.

At church, people love to help you! We're glad you are here.

### Music

#### Singing Time

##### Collect

*I Love to Sing!* CD and player

##### Do

When you are helping a baby (changing a diaper, putting on a jacket, feeding a bottle, bringing a toy, etc.), play "Helping."

You may also sing the following words to the tune of "Are You Sleeping?" Sing the child's name and appropriate pronoun in the song.

I love Lauren. I love Lauren. Yes, I do! Yes, I do!  
I like to help her. I like to help her.  
Yes, I do. Yes, I do.

##### Say

God loves you, Lauren. I love you, too. I'm glad to help you.

Thank You, God, for Lauren.

##### Tip

Let the baby know by your smile, your unhurried manner and your calm voice that you enjoy helping him or her.

#### I'll Smile at You

##### Collect

*I Love to Sing!* CD and player

##### Do

While you are holding, rocking or seated near



a baby, play “Yours and Mine.” Make motions appropriate to the song (point to your mouth, point to child, etc.).

**Say**

James, I’m so glad you are here today. I like to be with you. I’m glad to help you.

At church, God gives us people who help us. God loves us.

**Pictures and Books****My Favorite Toys****Collect**

Sturdy book with pictures of familiar nursery toys

One or more toys similar to those pictured in the book

**Do**

Show a baby pictures of nursery toys. Show the child a similar toy in the nursery and compare it to the one in the picture.

**Say**

Michael, here is a picture of a ball. Look! Here is the ball we play with at church. God loves you, Michael.

It’s fun to play together at church. I’ll help you play with the ball.

**Reading Together****Collect**

Several sturdy picture books

**Do**

Offer two books to a child and let the child choose which one to read first. Continue as interest allows.

**Say**

Abby, I’m looking at this book about a farm. Would you like to look at the book with me? I’m glad to help you by reading a book with you.

**Quiet Play****Silly Sounds****Do**

Sit near a baby or hold him or her in your lap.

Make a silly sound (clicking tongue, animal sound, saying “la, la, la” or “boom, boom, boom”), repeating it several times in a row.

As long as the baby is interested, make additional sounds. Imitate any sounds the baby makes.

**Say**

We’re playing by making silly sounds together. I’m glad to play with you.

Brianna, when you’re at church I like to help you. Thank You, God, for Brianna.

**Choose and Play****Collect**

Two toys

**Do**

Place baby on a blanket on the floor. Bring two toys and sit with the child. While the child is watching you, do something with each toy (shake the rattle, tap the block, etc.).

Offer the child both toys. Watch to see which toy the child chooses and the way in which the child plays with the toys.

**Say**

Austin, I like to play with you. Look at these toys.

You’re holding a block in each hand. I like to help you have toys to play with. Jesus loves you, Austin.

**Tip**

Repeating an action several times allows a child to focus on what you are doing.



## Activities with Toddlers

Choose one or more of the learning activities on pages 77-80 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

#### Slide!

##### Collect

- Several blocks
- Sheet of cardboard
- Several toy cars

##### Do

Stack several blocks on the floor. Lean a sheet of cardboard against the blocks to form a slide.

Invite a toddler to watch you as you let a car roll down the slide. Repeat the action several times.

Invite the child to play with the slide. Let the child experiment using the slide.

##### Say

Gracie, I'm going to let this car go down the slide. We're having fun playing with this slide.

I'm glad to help you by building the slide. I love you. God loves you, too.

### Color Walk

##### Collect

4-inch (10-cm) construction paper squares in a variety of colors (red, blue, green, yellow)

##### Do

Give a child a red paper. Invite the child to walk around the room with you, looking for items the same color as the paper.

Repeat the activity with other colors.

##### Say

Jake, we're helping each other find red toys. God gives us people to love and help us. Thank You, God, for people who help us.

### Row Boat

##### Do

Sit on the floor with a child as shown in the sketch.

Hold hands with the child and slowly rock back and forth, gently pushing and pulling the child's hands. (Optional: Sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" while rocking back and forth with child.)



##### Say

Jasmine, would you like to play row boat with me? Let's sit down on the floor together like this. We can hold hands and help each other go back and forth, back and forth.

I'm glad to play with you and help you. God loves you!

### So High!

##### Collect

- Blocks

##### Do

Invite a toddler to take turns with you building a block tower up to his or her shoulders.

##### Say

Brooke, let's build a tower together. We'll help each other!

Thank you for helping me. God gives us people to help us.

**Art Play****Mother's Day Card****Collect**

8½x11-inch (21.5x28-cm) sheet of white card stock for each child

Heart and flower stickers

**Do**

Fold sheet of card stock in half to make a card. Print "Happy Mother's Day" on front of card. Print "I'm glad God made you my mommy" on inside of card. Make a card for each child. (Optional: Instead of lettering each card individually, photocopy first card to make one card for each child.)

Children decorate cards with stickers.

Read the words to the child and write child's name inside card.

**Say**

This is a special card you can make to give to your mom. I will be glad to help you make your card.

I like to be with you at church, Adriana. Jesus loves you!

**Tip**

Participate with children in making a card yourself. A child will likely want to play and do what you do.

**Foot Tracing****Collect**

9x12-inch (23x30.5-cm) sheet of construction paper for each child

Jumbo crayons

**Do**

Show a child how you can trace around your foot on a sheet of paper.

Help a child stand on a sheet of paper while you use crayons to trace around the child's feet. Write the child's name on the paper.

**Say**

Let's make a drawing of your feet. I will help you! At church, people like to help you.

**God's Wonders****Bags of Nature****Collect**

Variety of nature items (shells, rocks, pinecones, leaves)

Several paper bags

**Do**

Children touch and examine the nature items, putting them in and out of the bags. Talk about the colors, sizes and textures of the items.

Encourage interested children to put all the shells in one bag, all the rocks in another bag, etc.

**Say**

Today we're looking at all these things that God made. I brought these things just for you to look at and touch.

Jesus liked to help His friends. I like helping you, too.

**Bubble Fun!****Collect**

Bubble-blowing solution and wand

**Do**

Blow bubbles in an open area of the room (or outdoors, if possible) where a child can see them and try to catch them. Point to the bubbles and talk about how they are floating around the room.

Gently blow a bubble toward a child and describe the action. Some children may want to try blowing through the wand while you hold the wand.

**Say**

I like to blow the bubbles for you to catch and pop! I like you, Sophie.

God gives people to help us. God loves us. Thank You, God, for people who help us.

**Music****Circles and Squares****Collect**

*I Love to Sing!* CD and player

Masking tape

**Do**

Use masking tape to make a large circle and square on the floor.

(Remove tape after session ends.)

While playing "A Happy Place," walk with a child around the circle. Clap hands while you walk. Repeat the activity while walking around the square. (In another session, you can make these other shapes: triangle and zigzag.)

Demonstrate different ways of walking for a child to imitate if he or she chooses: walk on tip-toes, sliding, giant steps.

**Say**

Owen, we're walking around the circle. I'm glad to walk with you. And I'm glad to help you do new things.

God gives us people to help us. Thank You, God, for helpers.

**Pictures and Books****Read with Me!****Collect**

May Poster from *Nursery Smart Pages*

Sturdy picture books

Several large washable pillows

**Do**

Place books near pillows. Begin to look at a book, and invite an interested child to look at the book with you. Talk about the pictures. Point to the poster and talk about the teacher and boy playing together.

**Say**

Victoria, let's sit on the pillows and look at a book together. See the picture on the wall? That teacher is helping the little boy by playing with him. I like to help you, too.

When you are at church, people like to help you! God gives people to help you.

**Who Helps You?****Collect**

May Bible Story Picture from *I Love to Look!* or *Nursery Posters*

**Do**

Have the picture available as children are playing. When you help a child, or when you see a child help someone, be ready to show and talk about the picture.

**Say**

Fernando, thank you for handing the block to Gianna. You are a helper!

The Bible tells about a time Jesus helped His friends. He helped them by washing their feet.

**Tip**

While several toddlers may be interested in an activity at the same time, most of your "teaching" will happen one-on-one. Be ready to take advantage of teachable moments when you can connect the child's activity to the Bible theme.

**Marching Band****Collect**

*I Love to Sing!* CD and player

Rhythm instruments

**Do**

Let each child choose an instrument.

Play "Helping" and march with children around the room.

**Say**

Let's be in a marching band together. Which instrument do you want? This is how you play it.

I like helping you at church. I'm glad you are here today.

**Quiet Play****Puzzle Play****Collect**

Several toddler puzzles

**Do**

Set out puzzles. Remove a piece from a puzzle, and let a child remove the other pieces. Describe what is pictured on the puzzle piece. Watch to see if the child can replace the puzzle piece. Help the child by setting a piece near the place where it belongs in the puzzle.

**Say**

Katie, look at this puzzle with all the animals. Let's help each other play with the puzzle. You can take out the pieces. We can help each other put them back.

I like to help you. God gives people to help you.

**Tip**

Don't rush to do the puzzle for the child. It takes many tries for a child to develop the skill required to complete a puzzle. One of the best ways to help a child develop that skill is to make large pieces with knobs on each piece.

**Match the Picture****Collect**

Sturdy game cards that have matching pictures

**Do**

Collect three or four pairs of cards. Set out one card from each pair. Show one of the matching cards to a child and let him or her find the matching card. Continue matching other cards if child is interested.

**Say**

Samuel, can you find the card that looks just like this one? It's fun to play this matching game. I like to help you play new games.

God gives people to help you. At church, I help you and Teacher Susan helps you. At home, your grandpa helps you.

**Pretend Play****Going for a Walk****Collect**

Dolls

At least one doll stroller or a large shoe box to which you have tied a string

**Do**

Place a doll in the stroller or in the shoe box. Pretend to take the doll for a "walk." Invite a child to take turn to help the doll go for a walk. Continue as long as the child is interested.

**Say**

Juan, I'm helping this doll go for a walk. Would you like a turn to be the helper? Thank you.

At church we can help each other. God loves us. God gives us people to help us.

**Gettin' Ready to Eat****Collect**

Toy dishes and cups  
Several placemats

**Do**

Set out dishes, cups and placemats and use them to play with children. Let children pretend to serve you food and drink. Thank them for helping you and talk about the ways people help them.

**Say**

Elizabeth, I'm thirsty. Can you give me something to drink? Thank you. That milk tastes good. You are a helper! We can help each other.

Isaiah, who helps you have good food to eat at home? Your mom and dad help you. God gives us people to help us.

Thank You, God, for helpers.