



What is Godly Play?

Godly Play is a method of a Christian education and spiritual direction for children ages 2 – 12. The goal of Godly Play is to teach children the art of using religious language – parable, sacred story, silence, and liturgical action – to help them become more fully aware of the mystery of God's presence in their lives.

Godly Play was developed and classroom tested for more than twenty years by Episcopal priest, author, and teacher Jerome Berryman. The Godly Play method is currently being used in churches of many denominations throughout the United States and Canada.

What makes Godly Play distinctive?

In Godly Play, we tell Bible stories to children to encourage them to enter into the stories and relate them to their personal experience.

Godly Play is concerned with the *spiritual development* of each child as an individual and with modeling the appropriate *moral behaviors* expected of people living within a Christian community.

In Godly Play, each class session follows the pattern of the church's Sunday service, so children will have a deeper understanding and enjoy fuller participation in the parish worship.

How does Godly Play follow the service of the Holy Eucharist?

Each class follows the pattern of getting ready (Opening Acclamation), listening and responding to a Bible story (The Word of God), the feast (The Holy Communion), and saying goodbye (Blessing and Dismissal).

When we arrive at Sunday school, why can't my child go into the classroom immediately?

We treat each Godly Play worship-education center as "sacred space". A *greeter* or *door Person* waits at the door to help each child become ready to enter the room quietly. A child who arrives late will be admitted as soon as this can be accomplished without disturbing the circle of children.

What kinds of projects will my child do in Godly Play?

After a Bible story is told to the students, the *storyteller* and children use "wondering questions" to reflect on the story together. Then each child chooses whether to respond to the story with art materials or play. Every child has a personal folder that serves as a spiritual journal. The folders stay in the room to hold students' paintings, sketches, poetry, and other writing because often students will choose to work on a project many weeks before they feel it is finished. At the end of the year, each student will take the folder home.

How will I know if my child is learning anything?

The most important thing we teach in a worship-education center is how Christian people live and work together in community. Many parents who have children in the Godly Play program find that their children will begin to retell Bible stories – often in the car on the way home from church. Parents also report that their children "wonder" aloud at various times during the week about the meaning of the Bible stories they heard on Sunday.

Why don't the students work at tables and chairs?

The Godly Play rooms contain shelves full of objects for the children to use – objects that make the images of our religious language come alive. In most churches using Godly Play, it is customary for the children and storyteller to sit in a circle on the floor, literally surrounded by our religious language system. The multi-sensory materials used to help in telling the Bible story of the day can then be placed in the center of the circle, symbolizing the fact that God can be present and accessible to everyone – both the students and the teacher. Working in a

circle also helps us emphasize many aspects of being together in a Christian community.

Will my child bring home craft projects or "take-home sheets"?

The worship-education center holds a variety of art supplies for the children to use as they respond to the stories they hear. Because each child may be wrestling with different existential issues, each student will bring a different perspective and a different response to the Bible stories told in class. Some students may want to work with one Bible story for several weeks. For this reason, we do not assign crafts or give out take-home sheets as part of the Godly Play program.

What "existential issues" do children face?

Existential issues are simply issues that have always bothered people. Aloneness, what to do with freedom, fear of death, and the search for meaning in life are four of the existential issues that even young children wonder about.

Will my child enjoy Godly Play?

One of the goals of Godly Play is to create a safe place for children – a place where their ideas, opinions, and gifts are deeply respected. Because everything in the worship-education center is designed for children to use and enjoy, most children look forward to Sunday school.

