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# Stories of God's Love: Preschool Program (Ages 4-5)

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# Welcome to Stories of God's Love!

This year you will be a teacher in a religion readiness program that helps young children take their first steps on their journey of faith. *Stories of God's Love*:

- teaches children appropriate Scripture stories that tell them of God's love and connects these stories to the children's lives.
- follows the guidelines of the Catechism Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to assist the review of preschool materials.
- incorporates a simple "Teach and Apply" process in every session.
- weaves prayer experiences into every lesson.
- connects your sessions to the home by offering weekly family enrichment.
- supports your religion coordinator with resources to make your religion readiness program effective and enjoyable.

## Your Role

Beginning to teach from your new program can be a wonderful experience. As *Stories of God's Love* was being developed, you were thought about every step of the way. We considered the needs of both beginning teachers and the needs of experienced, veteran preschool educators. The result is teacher guides that will make a difference!

We created two guides for *Stories of God's Love*: a guide for those who teach one session per week, and one for those who offer religion sessions on multiple days. You'll find that the session plans are very simple and easy to use. They were written by people who actually teach religion readiness classes just like yours, so we know that these lessons will work for you.

This teacher guide has excellent organizational pages and background information on the topics that you will be teaching—hundreds of ideas you can use. Colorful Teaching Posters and a Music Songbook with CD are also available. In addition, we hope you'll become a regular visitor to our supportive Web site designed to offer even more ideas. You'll find it at [RCLBenzigerPreschool.com](http://RCLBenzigerPreschool.com).

*We're looking forward to working with you!*





# The Catechetical Ministry



Preschool catechists and teachers do more than simply teach religion to their young learners. First of all, catechists are people of faith themselves who let the word of God echo, or resound, through their lives and teaching. Religion teachers and catechists share their faith and help the children to apply and live out their faith day by day.

If you are like most catechists and teachers, you may already have realized that teaching religion is different from most other teaching tasks. Certainly, your storytelling ability and skills for organizing cooperative play activities will serve you well. But there is a different atmosphere in faith formation because you are sharing your own faith as well as your knowledge.

You may be wondering what you are getting yourself into and asking how you can ever help children to grow in faith. You might also be wondering if you are up to the challenge. Well, you are! You are one of the thousands of catechists and teachers who have asked these same questions and have discovered a wonderful secret: Helping young children begin their journey of faith is one of the most important ministries of the Church and one of its most rewarding.

Here is a simple approach to your ministry that will make this year a satisfying one for you:

**Relax!** Some teachers and catechists find the idea of sharing faith a little frightening. Remember, the Scriptures tell us that our ancestors in faith, including Moses, Jeremiah, Peter, and Mary, faced the same fear. With God's help, they did great things. You will too.

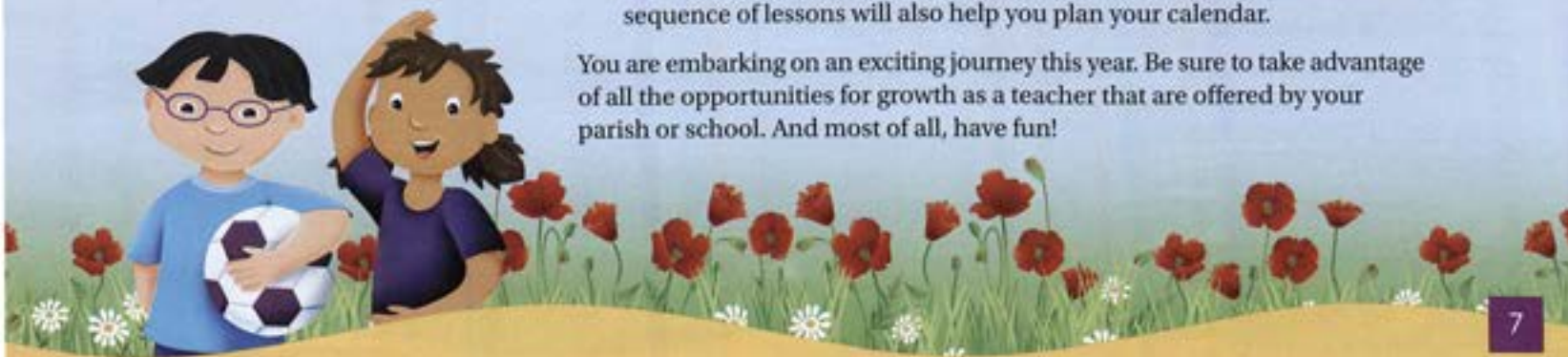
**Ask questions!** You are not expected to have the answers to every question the children may ask. Your pastor, priests, principal, DRE, preschool coordinator, and other catechists will gladly help you respond to the children. We will too.

**Take your time!** Remember, you are both a teacher and a learner. Be patient with yourself as you learn. Trust in the Holy Spirit. The important thing is to continue to grow in your ministry.

**Use your guide!** In the pages that follow you'll find a comprehensive introduction to *Stories of God's Love*, including an overview of the effective and easy-to-use "teach and apply" format. You'll find hundreds of helpful tips and activities to engage young children in the lesson plans that follow. Gradually, you'll find yourself growing in competence and confidence about your ministry.

**Examine the children's leaflets.** Browsing through the children's leaflets, including the family pages, will help you to capture the flavor of what you are to present to the children. Becoming familiar with the sequence of lessons will also help you plan your calendar.

You are embarking on an exciting journey this year. Be sure to take advantage of all the opportunities for growth as a teacher that are offered by your parish or school. And most of all, have fun!





# Getting Started

## Your Students

Your success as a teacher depends on your relationship with the children. Welcome the children with warmth and enthusiasm. Be sure to tell them how much you look forward to getting to know them.

Here are some basic principles to keep in mind with all young people:

- Respect them as children of God.
- Honor the children's abilities, their imagination, and their desire to know and love God.
- Value the children as learners.
- Involve the children actively in the learning process.
- Help the children understand what a difference faith can make in their lives.

You will learn more about the special characteristics of three-, four- and five-year-old children on pages 10 and 11 of this guide.

## Your Teaching Space

Every teacher and catechist faces the challenge of creating an inviting and safe catechetical teaching environment. With a little creativity and determination, you can transform your setting into a warm and inviting environment for the teaching of religion.

Here are some questions to discuss with your principal, DRE, or religion coordinator:

- What are the safe environment guidelines of your parish or diocese?
- Is your teaching space shared with others? Can you meet with the other people who use the space to discuss needs and to build a spirit of cooperation?
- Are the chairs, desks and tables the appropriate size for the children? Can the seating be rearranged for different activities?
- Can the lighting and temperature be adjusted for comfort?
- Is a chalkboard, a dry-erase board, or newsprint available?
- Are you allowed to tape posters or other materials to walls or bulletin boards?
- How will the children clean up after the activities?
- What electronic media equipment is available? How can you be trained to use that equipment?





## Your Prayer Center

The prayer center is the heart of your catechetical teaching space. It tells the children that sharing faith together is a sacred activity. Gather with the children in or around the prayer center for prayer each time you meet with them.

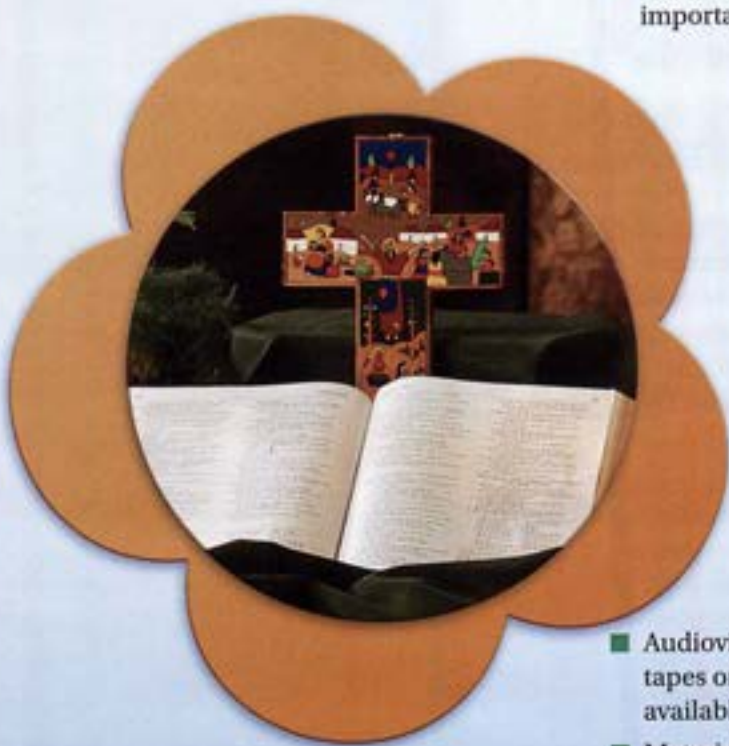
Here are some practical ideas for creating a prayer center:

- Cover a small table with a cloth, preferably with a cloth that is the color of the current liturgical season or the liturgical feast you are celebrating.
- Place a crucifix on the wall or on the table in the prayer center.
- Place a candle on the table as a sign that Christ is the Light of the World. (Be sure to check and follow all fire regulations.)
- Enthroned an open Bible on the table by displaying pages from important passages for the day.
  - Place a plant or other objects that symbolize the lesson theme in the prayer center. Invite the children to take turns helping you decorate the prayer center by bringing in objects from home that might be appropriate to symbolize the themes you are covering in class.

## Your General Supplies

No matter how well equipped with materials your school and parish programs are, there will usually be additional materials that you will need. Here are some items to have on hand:

- Art supplies such as art paper, construction paper, poster board, newsprint, colored markers, crayons, glue, washable paints, paint brushes, paint smocks, appropriate safety scissors, tape and yarn.
- Audiovisuals such as DVDs and videos, photos, posters, and music tapes or CDs. *Stories of God's Love* Music CD and Songbook are available and specifically designed for this program.
- Materials for your prayer center such as a cloth, a Bible, a crucifix, a candle, a plant, and symbols for the liturgical seasons and feasts.
- A bulletin board reserved for displaying religious projects and education topics such as the liturgical seasons and feasts of the Church.





# Who is the Preschool Child?

The development of three-, four- and five-year-olds varies greatly from child to child. Children in these age groups tend to enjoy the same active learning techniques. However, as you read these developmental descriptions, consider that three-year-olds may be at an entry level while five-year-olds are more likely to be working on mastery. Remember that typical preschoolers vary greatly in their development.

## Physical Development

While older children may take physical development for granted, young children are generally very proud of their physical accomplishments. Whether growing taller, learning to catch a ball or climbing the ladder of a slide, these physical feats mean a lot to three-, four- and five-year-olds. Activities that capitalize on the preschooler's interest in and need for movement are necessary for instruction to be effective for this age group. In order to do this, be sure to expect your preschoolers:

- To be developing body awareness including the parts of their body and the ability to navigate their body gracefully through space.
- To be unaware of safety issues related to physical activity.
- To be developing both large muscle and small muscle (eye-hand) coordination.
- To enjoy moving their body to music.
- To enjoy some small motor skills, such as scribbling, pretend writing, cutting and gluing, coloring and painting. These skills are just emerging so reward the children's efforts and not the product.

## Cognitive Development and Learning Skills

Young three-, four- and five-year-olds make great strides in cognitive development which refers to their growing ability to make meaning of the world around them. They start with what they know and they learn new concepts by comparing new concepts to those with which they are familiar. During these early years, children enjoy opportunities that develop their ability to reason, acquire new knowledge and to solve problems. You can expect your preschoolers:

- To be interested in nature but have gaps in their understanding of the world around them, especially the physical laws of nature.
- To use both fact and fantasy to make sense of their world and, at times, not be able to distinguish between truth and fiction.
- To look at the world through their eyes alone and have limited ability to understand the perspectives of others.
- To learn by touching and manipulating objects.
- To learn by talking to others and by asking a lot of questions.







## Language Development

Preschoolers develop language at a rate that is astonishing to most adults. They are learning to share their thoughts, feelings and ideas through language, gestures and facial expressions. Language development is important to both cognitive development and to social and emotional development. If language and communication skills are underdeveloped, young children will likely struggle to understand the language of others or to express their own ideas and feelings. As you support your preschoolers' language development, you can expect them:

- To be learning the rules of language as well as the meaning of words.
- To practice new words, concepts and voice tones in pretend play.
- To copy adults as they imitate their words and expressions.
- To talk in short sentences.
- To understand one-step and some two-step directions.
- To listen to an interesting story for eight to ten minutes.



## Social and Emotional Development

Social development refers to the preschoolers' ability to get along with others while emotional development speaks to their ability to develop a concept of "self." This self-concept is the child's mental image of their characteristics and capabilities. The child's understanding of "self" is important in their learning how to interact with others. The feelings that children develop about themselves and about the people around them lay the foundation for their ability to take the risk to make mistakes or learn new things. This "self-concept" is newly forming and is fragile. To help children develop both a positive view of themselves and of others, it is important to know that preschoolers are likely:

- To need to have their feelings and the feelings of others labeled and explained.
- To need positive support from others in order to learn to resolve conflicts.
- To be just developing the language of interaction.



## Spiritual Growth and Development

As young children grow and develop spiritually, it is important to remember the cognitive limitations that exist in young children. This series is designed to help children lay a positive foundation for faith formation. The concepts are presented in a positive way that allows children to explore new ideas in safe and familiar terms. Maintaining a positive and responsive classroom will allow young children to explore the concepts while growing stronger in their relationship with God and the Church community.





# Scope and Sequence

## Ages Three and Four

### INTRODUCTORY CHAPTERS

#### I Am Welcomed

##### INTRODUCTORY CHAPTERS FOCUS

*Jesus welcomes the children. We feel welcome in our religion class.*

- Chapter 1 Jesus Welcomes the Children**  
Major Concept: The Bible tells us that Jesus welcomes all children.  
Key Word: Bible  
Bible Story: "Let Them Come to Me"  
Based on Matthew 19:13–15, Mark 10:13–16 and Luke 18:15–17
- Chapter 2 My Teacher Welcomes Me**  
Major Concept: We welcome you in religion class as Jesus welcomed the children. We will do things together and learn about Jesus and how much God loves us.  
Key Word: Jesus  
Story: "Jamal and Abby"

### UNIT ONE

#### God Knows and Loves Me

##### UNIT ONE FOCUS

*God loves and knows everyone by name.*

*Our parents gave us our name and they love and care for us.*

- Chapter 3 Jesus Is the Good Shepherd**  
Major Concept: Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep by name.  
Key Word: shepherd  
Bible Story: "I Am the Good Shepherd"  
Based on John 10:3–5, 11, 14–15.
- Chapter 4 My Name Is Special**  
Major Concept: People call me by my name. God knows each one of us by name.  
Key Word: special  
Story: "Carlos and Grandpa Go to the Park"
- Chapter 5 The Good Shepherd Cares for His Sheep**  
Major Concept: Good shepherds always take care of their sheep. Jesus the Good Shepherd loves and cares for us.  
Key Word: Good Shepherd  
Bible Story: "The Good Shepherd Cares for His Sheep"  
Based on Luke 15:4–7
- Chapter 6 My Family Cares for Me**  
Major Concept: My family loves me and cares for me.  
Key Word: care  
Story: "Music Across the Street"

### UNIT TWO

#### God Gives Us All That Is Good

##### UNIT TWO FOCUS

*God made and gave us the world because he loves us.*

*We show our love for God by taking care of ourselves and of the world.*

- Chapter 7 God Made the World**  
Major Concept: God created the world because of his love. God's creation is good.  
Key Word: creation  
Bible Story: "God Made All Things Good"  
Based on Genesis 1:1–25
- Chapter 8 I Help Take Care of the World**  
Major Concept: God told people to take care of all that he made. We show our love for God when we take care of the world.  
Key Word: care  
Story: "The Perfect Beach"
- Chapter 9 God Made People**  
Major Concept: God created people to share in his love. We are special.  
Key Word: people  
Bible Story: "God Made People Special"  
Based on Genesis 1:6–27
- Chapter 10 I Take Care of Myself**  
Major Concept: We are good. We take care of ourselves.  
Key Word: good  
Story: "Shiny Teeth"

### UNIT THREE

#### Jesus Is God's Own Son

##### UNIT THREE FOCUS

*Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are the Holy Family.  
Our family loves us and cares for us.*

- Chapter 11 Jesus Is Born**  
Major Concept: We celebrate the birth of Jesus. Mary is the Mother of Jesus, God's own Son.  
Key Word: Mary/Holy Family  
Bible Story: "Mary's Baby" Based on Luke 1:31, 2:3–7
- Chapter 12 I Have a Family**  
Major Concept: I have a family. A baby is a special gift from God to a family. I am happy when a new baby is born into our family.  
Key Word: family  
Story: "A Baby to Love"
- Chapter 13 Shepherds Visit Baby Jesus**  
Major Concept: The angels tell the shepherds about the birth of Jesus. The shepherds thank God for the birth of Jesus.  
Key Word: angels/shepherds  
Bible Story: "Shepherds Hear Good News" Based on Luke 2:8–20
- Chapter 14 A Visit from My Family**  
Major Concept: I am happy when our family visits.  
Key Word: family (extended family)  
Story: "The Birthday Visit"



## UNIT FOUR

### I Belong to My Church Family

#### UNIT FOUR FOCUS

*We are friends of Jesus. The friends of Jesus are called the Church.*

- Chapter 15 Friends of Jesus**  
Major Concept: Jesus invites four fishermen to be his special friends.  
Key Word: friends of Jesus  
Bible Story: "Come, Follow Me"  
Based on Matthew 4:18–22
- Chapter 16 I Am a Friend of Jesus**  
Major Concept: I am a friend of Jesus. I like going to church.  
Key Word: church (as building, the place Jesus' friends come together.)  
Story: "The Remember Game"
- Chapter 17 Jesus Has Many Friends**  
Major Concept: Jesus' friends invite others to become friends of Jesus.  
Key Word: Apostles, invitation  
Bible Story: "Jesus Makes Two New Friends"  
Based on John 1:43–49
- Chapter 18 My Church Friends**  
Major Concept: I join with other friends of Jesus at church.  
Key Word: Church (the people, the community of Jesus' friends)  
Story: "Carlos' Church Friends"

## UNIT FIVE

### I Tell God I Love Him

#### UNIT FIVE FOCUS

*I talk to God and speak to him. I pray every day.*

- Chapter 19 David Talked with God**  
Major Concept: God chose David the shepherd boy to be his special friend. David talked and listened to God.  
Key Word: pray  
Bible Story: "God's Good Friend David"  
Based on 1 Samuel 16:11–12, 18; Psalm 5:3; Psalm 17:6
- Chapter 20 I Pray Every Day**  
Major Concept: I talk with God every day.  
Key Word: prayer  
Story: "Abby Says 'Thank You' to God"
- Chapter 21 David Sang His Prayers**  
Major Concept: David played music. He wrote and sang his prayers.  
Key Word: hymns  
Bible Story: "David Sang His Prayers" Based on 1 Samuel 16:11b–12, 16:18; 2 Samuel 5:4–5; Psalm 23 and Psalm 25
- Chapter 22 I Can Sing My Prayers**  
Major Concept: I sing songs with my family and friends to tell God how much I love him.  
Key Word: love  
Story: "Kim's BIG Surprise"

## UNIT SIX

### I Celebrate Holy Days and Holidays

- Chapter 23 All Saints Day**  
Major Concept: Saints help us know God's love. They show us how to love God and live as friends of Jesus.  
Key Word: saint  
Story: "Dressing Up as Saints"
- Chapter 24 Thanksgiving Day**  
Major Concept: We thank God for all his blessings. We show we are thankful for the blessings that God gives us by sharing them with other people.  
Key Word: thankful, blessing  
Story: "The Thank-You Game"
- Chapter 25 Getting Ready for Christmas**  
Major Concept: During Advent the friends of Jesus prepare for Christmas and look forward to celebrate the birth of Jesus.  
Key Word: Advent  
Bible Story: "The Angel Tells Mary Wonderful News"  
Based on Luke 1:26–32, 36, 45–46
- Chapter 26 We Celebrate Christmas**  
Major Concept: The Magi honor Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Mary. We honor Jesus in a special way during Christmas time.  
Key Word: honor/Magi  
Bible Story: "The Magi Visit the Baby Jesus"  
Based on Matthew 2:1, 9–11
- Chapter 27 Valentine's Day**  
Major Concept: Saint Valentine showed his love for God and for people. We are doing what Jesus told us to do when we help people and show them we love them.  
Key Word: love  
Story: "A Valentine's Day Hug"
- Chapter 28 We Love God More and More**  
Major Concept: Lent is a special time of the year for our Church family. We do things that show we are growing in our love for God, for our family and for other people.  
Key Word: Lent  
Bible Story: "Kim Is Growing Up"
- Chapter 29 We Celebrate Easter**  
Major Concept: At Easter the Church sings "Alleluia." We remember that Jesus is alive and is always with us.  
Key Word: Easter/Alleluia  
Story: "Grandpa Keeps His Promises"
- Chapter 30 We Love Mary**  
Major Concept: We love Mary as our Mother, the Mother of all the friends of Jesus. The Church shows her love for Mary in many ways.  
Key Word: Mary  
Story: "Mary Loves Us"



# Scope and Sequence

## Ages Four and Five

### INTRODUCTORY CHAPTERS

#### We Gather as the Friends of Jesus

##### INTRODUCTORY CHAPTERS FOCUS

*Jesus is our friend. We have friends in religion class.*

- Chapter 1 Jesus' Special Friends**  
Major Concept: Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow him and to be his special friends.  
Key Word: Bible/friends of Jesus  
Bible Story: "Come, Follow Me." Based on Matthew 4:18–22
- Chapter 2 We Are Friends**  
Major Concept: We gather with friends at religion class. We come together to learn about Jesus.  
Key Word: friends  
Story: "Be My Friend"

### UNIT ONE

#### God Knows and Loves Us

##### UNIT ONE FOCUS

*Jesus tells us that each person is special to God. God loves us and cares for us.*

- Chapter 3 Jesus Welcomes the Children**  
Major Concept: Jesus invites the children to come to him and he blesses them. Children are special to God.  
Key Word: Jesus  
Bible Story: "Jesus Blesses the Children" Based on Matthew 19:13–15, Mark 10:13–16 and Luke 18:15–17
- Chapter 4 We Are Special**  
Major Concept: God loves us. We are all special. Our likenesses and differences make us special, or unique, individuals.  
Key Word: special/unique  
Story: "Who Is God's Favorite?"
- Chapter 5 The Good Shepherd**  
Major Concept: Jesus is the Good Shepherd. The sheep trust the good shepherd because he is always kind to them. He loves and cares for his sheep.  
Key Word: trust  
Bible Story: "Jesus Is the Good Shepherd." Based on John 10:14–15 and Luke 15:3–7
- Chapter 6 We Are Kind**  
Major Concept: We show our love for one another. We are kind to one another.  
Key Word: kind  
Story: "Ming's Furry Puppy"

### UNIT TWO

#### God Gave Us the World

##### UNIT TWO FOCUS

*God created the world and everything and everyone good. All of God's creation is a sign that God loves us. We show our love for God by taking care of his creation.*

- Chapter 7 God Made the World**  
Major Concept: God is the Creator. God created the world and people good.  
Key Word: creation  
Bible Story: "God Made All Things Good" Based on Genesis 1:6–27
- Chapter 8 We Care for God's Creation**  
Major Concept: We show our love for God by taking care of creation.  
Key Word: care/caring  
Story: "Ducks and Flowers"
- Chapter 9 God Always Loves Us**  
Major Concept: God promises to always love and care for Noah, his family, and for all people. The rainbow in the sky is a sign of God's promise.  
Key Word: promise  
Bible Story: "God's Promise" Based on Genesis 6–9
- Chapter 10 We Love Others**  
Major Concept: God always shares his love with us. We show our love for others when we share with them.  
Key Word: share  
Story: "Only One Cookie"

### UNIT THREE

#### Jesus Is God's Own Son

##### UNIT THREE FOCUS

*God sent Jesus, his own Son, to us. Mary and Joseph loved and cared for Jesus. Our families love us and care for us.*

- Chapter 11 Jesus Is Born**  
Major Concept: Jesus was born to Mary. Jesus is Mary's Son and God's own Son.  
Key Word: Mary  
Bible Story: "Mary's Baby" Based on Luke 1:26–35, 2:1–7, 15–17
- Chapter 12 We Celebrate Jesus' Birthday**  
Major Concept: We celebrate the birth of Jesus with joy. We celebrate the birth of Jesus with our family and all the friends of Jesus.  
Key Word: celebrate  
Story: "The Christmas Play"
- Chapter 13 Jesus Belonged to a Family**  
Major Concept: Jesus, Mary and Joseph are the Holy Family. Jesus lived in a family who loved and cared for him.  
Key Word: Holy Family  
Bible Story: "The Boy Jesus in the Temple" Based on Luke 2:41–52
- Chapter 14 We Belong to a Family**  
Major Concept: We are a part of a family who loves and cares for us.  
Key Word: belong  
Story: "A Family's Love"



## UNIT FOUR

### God Gave Us Our Church Family

#### UNIT FOUR FOCUS

*We are members of our Church family.  
We celebrate God's love with our Church family.*

- Chapter 15** **Jesus Has Many Friends**  
Major Concept: Peter, one of Jesus' special friends, tells people about Jesus. Many people become friends of Jesus. The friends of Jesus are called the Church.  
Key Word: Church  
Bible Story: "New Friends of Jesus"  
Based on Acts of the Apostles 2:14–47.
- Chapter 16** **We Are Friends of Jesus**  
Major Concept: We belong to the Church family. At Baptism we become children of God and members of our Church family.  
Key Word: Baptism/Pope  
Story: "Baby Diana's Special Day"
- Chapter 17** **Jesus Feeds Many People**  
Major Concept: Jesus shows the people God's love when he feeds the crowd with five loaves of bread and two fish.  
Key Word: Mass, Thank You  
Bible Story: "Everyone Had Enough to Eat"  
Based on Luke 9:10–17 and John 6:1–13
- Chapter 18** **Jesus Gives Us Special Food**  
Major Concept: At Mass Jesus gives us special food. Holy Communion is the special food Jesus gives us at Mass.  
Key Word: Holy Communion, Mass, Thank You  
Story: "Justin and His First Communion"

## UNIT FIVE

### We Talk to God in Prayer

#### UNIT FIVE FOCUS

*We pray. We tell God that we love him and trust in his love.  
We pray alone, with our family and with our Church family.*

- Chapter 19** **David Teaches Us to Pray**  
Major Concept: David, the shepherd boy who became king, teaches us how to pray.  
Key Word: pray/prayer  
Bible Story: "David Sang His Prayers" Based on 1 Samuel 16:11–13, Psalm 51:3, Psalm 118:1, Psalm 136:1–3 and Psalm 145
- Chapter 20** **We Pray Every Day**  
Major Concept: We pray every day. We thank God for his blessings when we pray.  
Key Word: thanksgiving  
Story: "A Birthday Thank-You"
- Chapter 21** **Friends of Jesus Pray Together**  
Major Concept: The friends of Jesus came together to pray.  
Key Word: praise/Sign of the Cross  
Bible Story: "The Friends of Jesus Praise God"  
Based on Acts of the Apostles 2:42–47
- Chapter 22** **We Pray with Our Church Family**  
Major Concept: We pray together as Jesus' friends. We praise God because he loves us and we love him so much.  
Key Word: prayer of praise  
Story: "A Special Celebration"

## UNIT SIX

### We Celebrate Holy Days and Holidays

- Chapter 23** **All Saints Day**  
Major Concept: Saints help us know God's love. They show us how to love God and live as friends of Jesus.  
Key Word: saint  
Story: "The Parade of Saints"
- Chapter 24** **Thanksgiving Day**  
Major Concept: We thank God for all his blessings. We show we are thankful for the blessings that God gives us by sharing them with other people.  
Key Word: thankful  
Story: "A Special Way to Thank God"
- Chapter 25** **We Prepare for Christmas**  
Major Concept: During Advent our Church family prepares and looks forward to celebrating Christmas.  
Key Word: Advent/angel  
Bible Story: "An Angel Brings Wonderful News to Mary"  
Based on Luke 1:26–40, 46
- Chapter 26** **We Celebrate Christmas**  
Major Concept: The Magi honor Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Mary. We honor Jesus in a special way during Christmas time.  
Key Word: Magi/honor  
Bible Story: "The Magi Honor Baby Jesus"  
Based on Matthew 2:1–2, 9–11
- Chapter 27** **Valentine's Day**  
Major Concept: We are doing what Jesus told us to do when we help people and show them we love them.  
Key Word: love  
Story: "Helping Mom"
- Chapter 28** **We Celebrate Lent**  
Major Concept: Lent is a special time of the year for our Church family. We grow in our love for God and for others. One way we grow in love is to say, "I'm sorry" when we hurt someone.  
Key Word: Lent/forgiveness  
Bible Story: "A Son Says, 'Father, I'm Sorry'"  
Based on Luke 15:11–32
- Chapter 29** **We Celebrate Easter**  
Major Concept: At Easter we remember that Jesus is alive and is always with us. The Church sings "Alleluia! Praise God!"  
Key Word: Easter/Alleluia  
Bible Story: "Alleluia! Jesus Is Alive" Based on Matthew 28:1, 5–8; Mark 16:2, 7; Luke 24:4–6, 9–12; John 20:1–10
- Chapter 30** **We Honor Mary**  
Major Concept: The Church honors Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and shows our great love for her. We love and honor Mary as our Mother, the Mother of all the friends of Jesus.  
Key Word: Mary  
Story: "A Special Celebration for Mary"



# The Stories of God's Love Kids



## NINA

Hi. My name is Nina.  
I love gymnastics.  
I like living with my grandparents.  
My favorite color is pink.

Nina loves to move. She runs, spins, tumbles and giggles the whole time. She loves to hold her baby sister, Diana. Nina and her parents live with her Grandma and Grandpa. People like to be with Nina because she loves to play. When she grows up she wants to be a ballerina.



## ADAM

Hi. My name is Adam.  
I like to be with animals, and have two cats.  
We have a big family.  
My favorite color is red.

Adam is very loving. He has a big brother, Justin, and a little sister, Sara. They all live in an apartment with their mom and dad. Since Adam loves to help people and animals, he wants to be a firefighter when he grows up.



## MING

Hi. My name is Ming.  
I play soccer.  
I also like to draw.  
My favorite color is green.

Ming lives with his mother and big brother. His brother Shun watches him while his mother is at work. They have a new puppy named Sunny. Ming is quiet but smiles a lot. He is kind to everyone. He loves to draw pictures and wants to be an artist when he grows up.



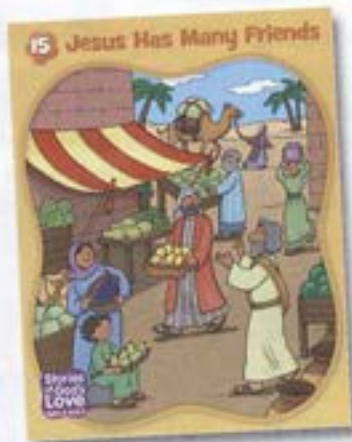
## KEESHA

Hi. My name is Keesha.  
I like to make up stories.  
I want to be a teacher when I grow up.  
My favorite color is purple.

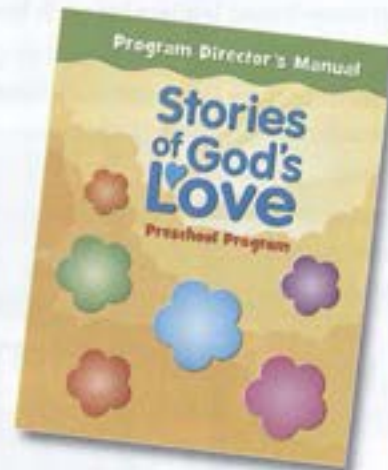
Keesha lives with her mom and dad. They go to visit her Grandma once a week. Keesha likes to pick flowers to take to Grandma. She likes to collect books. She is anxious to learn to read and someday she wants to be a teacher. Then she can teach other boys and girls to read.



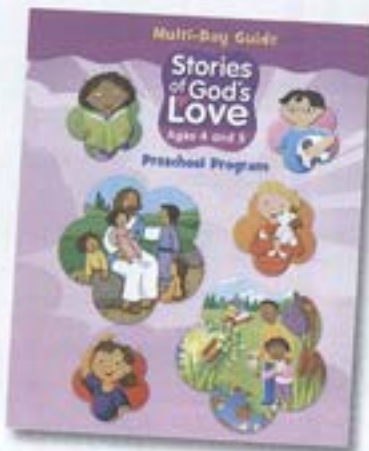
# Component Overview



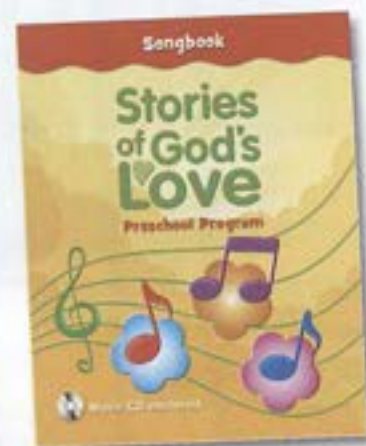
**Children's Leaflets**



**Program Director's Manual**



**Catechist/Teacher Guides**



**Songbook**



**Teaching Posters**



**Music CD**



# Children's Leaflets

There are 30 story-based leaflets for each level of *Stories of God's Love*:

- Two introductory lessons to welcome the children.
- Ten Bible story lessons.
- Ten present-day life story lessons that connect with the Scripture stories.
- Eight seasonal celebrations.

Scripture stories form the heart of the *Stories of God's Love* Preschool Religion Readiness Program. Young children are introduced to a new Bible Story of God's love from the Scriptures every other week. A corresponding Life Story related to the child's life reinforces the Scriptural theme is presented on alternate weeks.

## Week 1: Bible Story



The Bible Story presents the faith theme of the lesson.

## Week 2: Life Story



The Life Story parallels the Bible Story theme from the previous week and connects the faith theme to the child's every day life.

## Character Punch-outs



KEESHA



ADAM



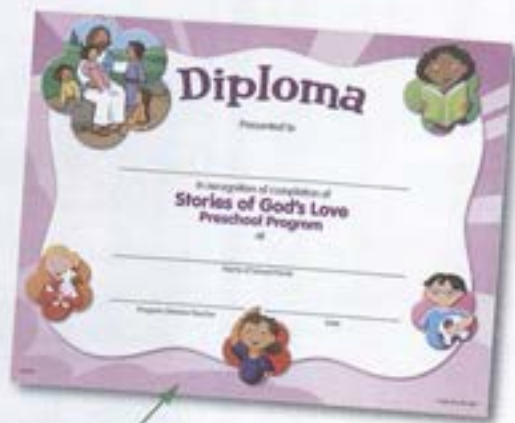
NINA



MING

Set of character punch-outs for child to use for storytelling and other activities

## Certificate

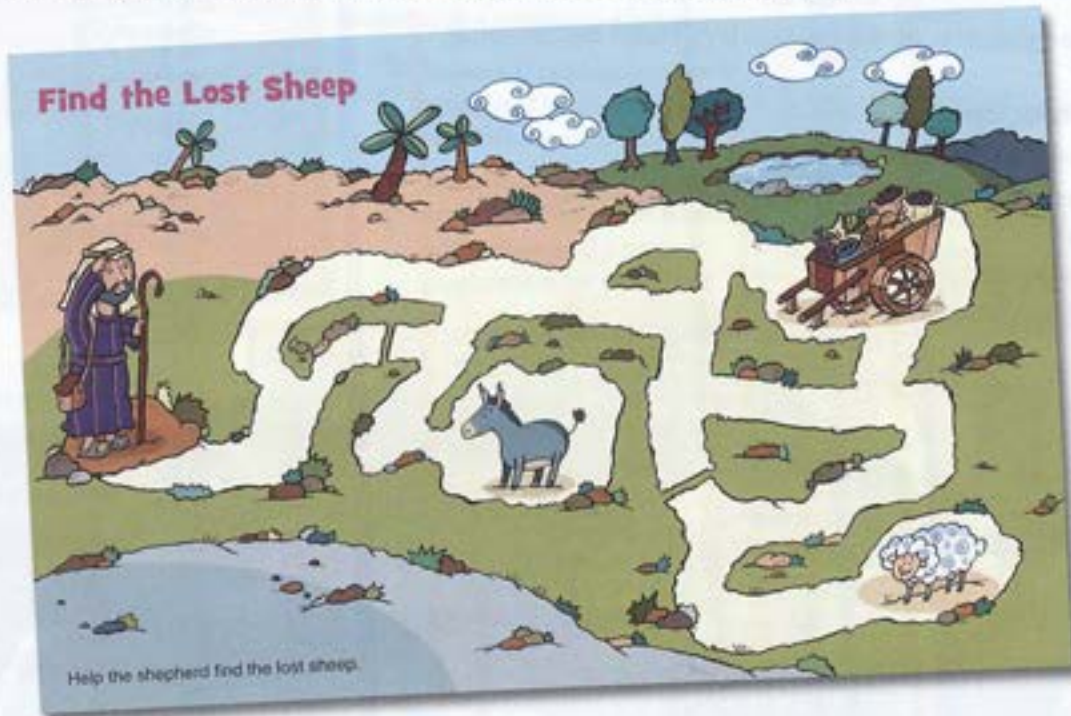


Colorful diploma for each child recognizing their participation in the program



## Activity Pages

The center spread of each leaflet contains an engaging activity to help the children apply and integrate the weekly session theme into their own lives.



## For My Family Page

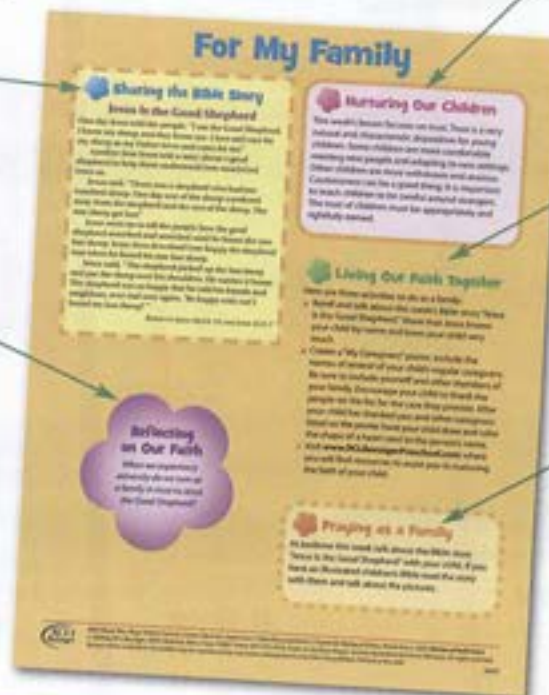
A resource that supports parent's efforts to actively participate in the faith development of their child.

### Sharing the Story

The story told in class is provided for the parents for retelling at home.

### Reflecting on Our Faith

A question invites parents to reflect on the ways the faith theme intersects with their own personal and family life.



### Nurturing Our Children

Advice from experts gives parents tips regarding their child's development.

### Living Our Faith Together

A variety of activities to foster integrating what the children have learned into everyday family life.

### Praying as a Family

Weekly family prayers provide parents ways to guide their children in developing good prayer habits.



## Seasonal Lessons

Each level of *Stories of God's Love* provides eight seasonal lessons that:

- introduce children to holy days, holidays, feasts and liturgical seasons.
- build Catholic identity.
- provide stories, activities, and prayers.
- offer ways to extend the celebrations into the home.



■ All Saints' Day



■ Thanksgiving



■ Advent



■ Christmas



■ Valentine's Day



■ Lent



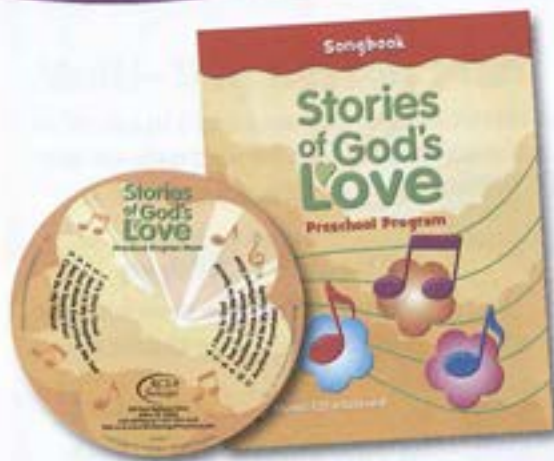
■ Easter



■ Mary



# Additional Resources



## Music Program

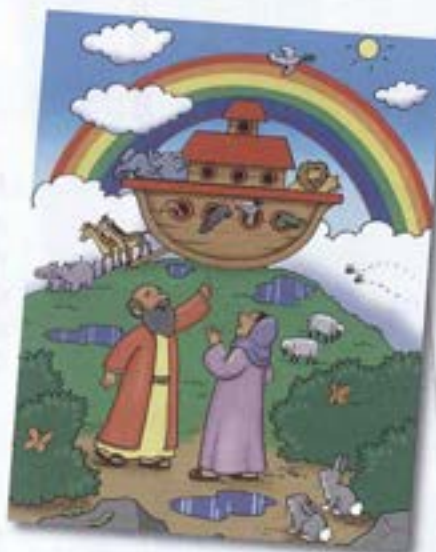
Music is an integral part of *Stories of God's Love*. The music program includes the following elements:

- Music CD containing both lyrics and instrumental versions of each song
- Songbook with lyrics and accompaniment for piano and guitar and a prayer celebration for each unit



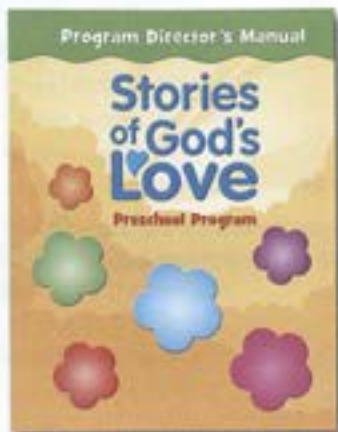
## Teaching Posters

*Stories of God's Love* provides you with a teaching poster for every session. These provide a focal point for story time. The posters contain the same images and story as the ones on the corresponding Children's Leaflet.



[RCLBenzigerPreschool.com](http://RCLBenzigerPreschool.com)

Go to [RCLBenzigerPreschool.com](http://RCLBenzigerPreschool.com) to find a multitude of ideas for teachers and parents to help young children take their first steps in faith. You'll find additional activities, and teaching tips, as well as our unique feature, "Ask an Expert," where you can type in any question you may have about your work as a teacher and receive a prompt reply.



## Program Director's Manual

Preschool Program Coordinators will find a treasury of resources in this manual to support their teachers and parents and to connect the religion readiness program to the whole community of faith.





# Guide

## Background Page

Chapter background information to assist the catechist in preparing for the chapter theme that includes:

### Background for the Catechist

A brief scriptural and theological reflection related to the chapter faith theme

### For Reflection

A question inviting teachers to reflect on their living of the chapter faith theme and their modeling the faith theme for the children



### About the Children

Insights into the development of preschool-age children

### A Few Suggestions

Practical teaching tips for effective and age-appropriate lessons

### More Background

References to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *Compendium: Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*

## Lesson Planner

### Faith Focus

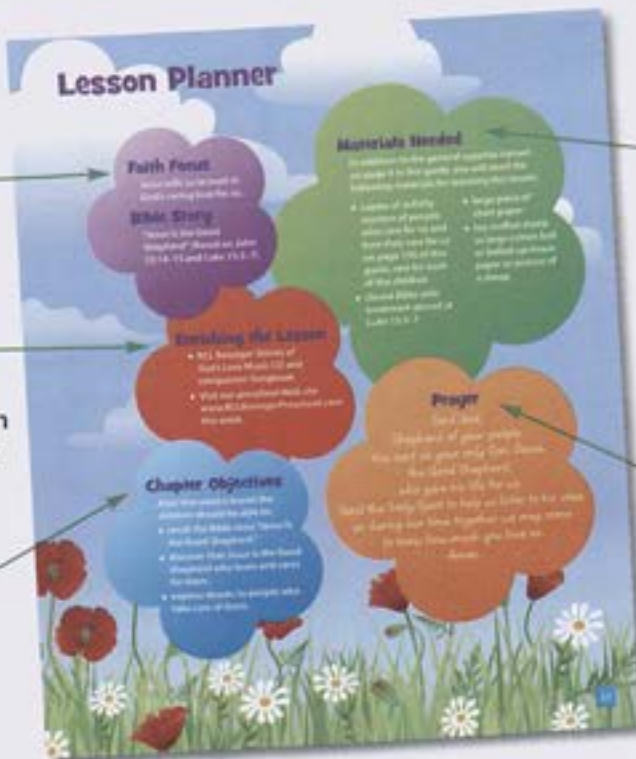
The major faith focus for the chapter

### Enriching the Lesson

A quick reminder for additional resources to enrich the lesson with song and the variety of opportunities on RCLBenzigerPreschool.com

### Chapter Objectives

Brief statement of lesson objectives to guide your teaching



### Materials Needed

A detailed list of necessary materials to complete the lesson

### Prayer

A prayer centered on the session theme to prepare the teacher



# Multi-Day Lesson Plan

In *Stories of God's Love* you will follow this easy to use step-by-step process as you teach each lesson:

- Welcome and Gather
- Teach and Apply
- Pray

## Prayer

Your lessons end in prayer. Additional extended prayer celebrations are provided in the *Stories of God's Love Song Book*.

### Welcome

Each chapter begins with a hands-on activity that introduces the children to the theme of the chapter.

### Gather

Music signals the children to move from the Welcome Center to the Story Time Area and helps focus them on the chapter story.

### Teach

In every lesson the children discover and learn through story. (1) The story is introduced and the children are given a purpose for listening. (2) The children listen to the story. (3) The children are guided to recall the details of the story to reinforce their knowledge of the story.

The collage displays three pages from a lesson plan. The top page is 'Day One' with a 'Lesson Objective' and 'Welcome' section. The middle page is 'Day Two' with 'Lesson Objective', 'Gather', 'Teach', and 'Apply' sections. The bottom page is 'Day Three' with 'Lesson Objective', 'Gather', 'Teach', 'Apply', and 'Additional Activity' sections. Each page includes detailed instructions and activities for children.

### Apply

Age-appropriate activities engage the children that reinforce their understanding of the story and connect what they have learned to their everyday life.

### Additional Activities

Optional activities are provided in every chapter. They offer you choices for class activities that include strategies for the many ways children learn.

### Activity Masters

Reproducible masters are provided throughout to enhance the activities.





# Getting Ready

## The Environment as the Third Teacher

Young children learn from active exploration of their environment. It is important that we think about setting up the classroom with activity centers that allow children to explore and learn.

Preschoolers generally do not sit quietly at a table or floor activity for very long (8–10 minutes maximum). Thus, the environment needs to be designed to allow them to move around, be active, and make choices. Teachers can “play” with the children, guiding them to engage in tasks that help the children learn the concept of the day, such as “caring for others” or “Jesus wants me to be kind to my friends.”

Refer to the Program Director’s Manual or series Web site for suggested materials and centers. Establishing an appropriate and engaging environment will take some planning on the teacher’s part. However, these efforts can pay off with young children who are engaged in learning.





## The Importance of Active Learning and Enticing Materials

Children at this stage of development learn by interacting with the materials and activities. Thus, the teacher will need to plan ahead to have enticing materials (those that make the child want to participate) set up in an inviting and engaging manner. It is best if children are allowed to explore the materials so that they can make their own meaning with the guidance of the teacher. Modeling activities can be helpful, but remember that children at this age may not get it "right" or have their product look like yours. The learning is what is important through active engagement.



## Classroom Management through Guiding Behavior

Positive behavior management techniques have been proven to be more effective than punitive or negative management strategies. Strategies that will help decrease behavior problems include being ready for class (having all your materials ready, music and books ready to go), praising appropriate behavior (sharing, helping others, picking up toys or trash) and having a daily routine with cues to the children when it is time for a transition and what the next activity will be. Guiding children through verbal prompts, modeling of appropriate behavior and praising acts of kindness and acts of helping will all encourage children to "behave" in class. You will also need to support the children as they learn to manage conflicts. Help them learn the words and support them as they practice using them.





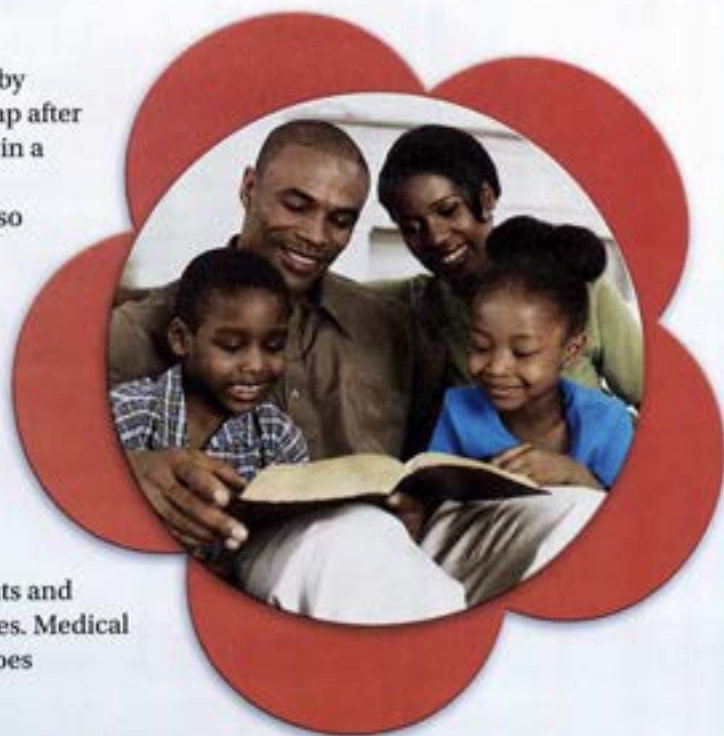
# Getting Ready

## Health and Safety First!

Little children are infamous for runny noses, coughing, and sharing their germs! You can help stop the spreading of germs by encouraging and modeling appropriate hand washing with soap after using the restroom, before eating snacks, or after participating in a particularly messy activity. Having tissues handy and teaching children to “cover your mouth” in the crook of their arm will also be helpful.

Safety also needs to be taught, with gentle reminders of class/school rules (no running in the hallways, no climbing or sitting on furniture other than chairs, no hitting, and so on). It is often helpful for the children to be involved in making the rules, with the teacher writing them on poster board and the children decorating the poster once it is complete.

Appropriate tools need to be available for the children to use, including safety scissors (round tips), non-toxic washable paints and crayons, and child-size tools if using any for the weekly activities. Medical issues and allergies need to be known about the children, as does emergency contact information for the parents/caregiver.



## Family Involvement and Communication

Encourage families to be involved in the program. They can help in the classroom, use the Children's Leaflet to practice new concepts at home or donate materials that are listed on the classroom wish list (see the Program Director's Manual and Web site).

The parents' role may be somewhat different with this age group as separation is often difficult for children until they begin to trust the teacher. Parents should be encouraged to stay and join in with the lesson until their child is comfortable. Gradually they should be able to leave the child for longer and longer periods of time as the children adjust to their new surroundings.

Parents should be encouraged to view the family page of the Children's Leaflet and to read the Bible and life stories presented and discuss the topics of the lesson also included for family discussion. Taking a few minutes to talk with the parents as they drop off or pick up the children will help make transitions smoother for the children and will let the parents be aware of what their child did while at school.





## Working with Children with Special Learning Needs and Developmental Differences

Children with special learning needs are likely to be members of your class and can be accommodated with some basic modifications. Most children with special needs, including children with autism, learn best through repetition, consistency (schedule, locations in the room for specific events such as Bible/story time, prayer table, and so on), cues for attention (calling their name before asking a question, telling the class to listen for a particular concept as you are reading, or seating them next to you for quick taps on the shoulder or knee to help them refocus on you), and visual cues (pictures, models, word cards, or sequencing cards to complete a task).

Children with visual impairments benefit from enlarged materials, physical cues such as outlining a picture with a line of glue that will harden and leave a ridge, and verbal descriptions of what the other children are seeing to help them learn and participate in given tasks.

Children who are deaf or hard of hearing generally benefit from sitting where they can see the speaker's lips, visual cues, and possibly an amplification system.

Physical impairments can be accommodated by room arrangement, seating of the other children in the class (others in chairs instead of sitting on the floor if the child needs to stay seated in a wheelchair), and modified utensils and tools that can be provided by the family or child's therapists.

Children who are gifted or talented also need to be considered. Provide enrichment activities to keep them interested in the tasks and activities.





# Resources to Use with the Children

## Introductory Unit

*First Day* by Joan Rankin (Margaret K. McElderry 2002)

**Theme:** welcome, parent-child relationship

Haybillybun struggles with the first day of preschool while his mother worries at home about whether he will be okay.

*First Friends* by Lenore Blegvad (HarperFestival, 2000)

**Theme:** friendship, sharing

Through object identification, word repetition and rhyme, the reader explores the environment of a preschool classroom through the eyes of a preschool child.

*That's What Friends Are For* by Valeri Gorbachev (Philomel, 2005)

**Theme:** friendship

In this fourth book in a series, Goat and Pig experience the meaning of friendship when Goat misunderstands Pig's tears from cutting onions which turns into an opportunity for them to make and enjoy dinner together.

*Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henkes (Live Oak Media, 2001)

**Theme:** welcome, friendship

Wemberly, a little girl mouse, worries about everything small and big until she meets new friends on the first day of preschool.

## Unit One

*A Stormy Ride on Noah's Ark* by Patricia Hooper (Putnam Juvenile, 2001)

**Theme:** trust

The traditional Old Testament story is told through rhyming verse focusing on the animals overcoming their fear of the storm by trusting in Noah.

*Because of You* by B. G. Hennessy (Candlewick, 2005)

**Theme:** kindness, friendship, peace

This book highlights the importance of the individual and how each of us can make a difference in the world through our sharing and helping others.

*Elinor and Violet: Two Naughty Chickens at the Beach* by Patti Beling Murphy (Amazon Remainers Account, 2003)

**Theme:** trust

Elinor and Violet take their hilarious troublesome adventures to the beach, where Elinor must decide what is the right thing to do.

*Henry and Amy: Right-Way-Round and Upside Down* by Stephen Michael King (Walker & Company, 1999)

**Theme:** uniqueness

Henry and Amy might have very different personalities, but the two complement each other well in this story about how friends who are different can learn from each other.

*How Kind!* by Mary Murphy (Walker Books Ltd, 2004)

**Theme:** kindness

Happy barn animals Hen and Pig exchange gifts which leads to a chain reaction of other acts of kindness on the farm.



*In the Moonlight, Waiting* by Carol Carrick (Clarion Books, 1990)

**Theme:** shepherd, sheep

A young girl and her little brother welcome a new-born lamb, and then the little girl stays awake watching the ewe, waiting for the possibility of another new baby lamb.

*Little Baa* by Kim Lewis (Walker Books Ltd, 2004)

**Theme:** shepherd, sheep, mother and child

A lost lamb and his mother are reunited by a young shepherd and his dog.

*Mary Had a Little Lamb* by Sarah Josepha Hale (Orchard Books, 2000)

**Theme:** shepherd, sheep

In this new interpretation of the classic children's nursery rhyme, the familiar characters of Mary, her family, teacher, friends and lamb are illustrated through fabric relief.

*Otis* by Janie Bynum (Voyager Books, 2003)

**Theme:** uniqueness, friendship

Otis is a young pig who dislikes the mud. He eventually befriends a young frog who also does not care to be dirty by mud.

*The First Thing My Mama Told Me* by Susan Marie Swanson (Harcourt Children's Books, 2002)

**Theme:** names

On her seventh birthday, Lucy fondly reflects back on the joyous memories she has about her name.

*The Kindness Quilt* by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace (Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2006)

**Theme:** kindness

Minna, a young rabbit, and her friends learn about acts of kindness when their teacher, Mrs. Bloom,

assigns them a kindness project. So Minna decides to make a quilt to illustrate the various acts of kindness she performed.

*Toot and Puddle: You Are My Sunshine* by Hobbie, Holly (Little, Brown, 2001)

**Theme:** friendship

Friends of Toot try to cheer him up from his gloominess and sorrow. After some time and a storm, Toot finally gains a new outlook because of the support of his friends.

*Where is the Green Sheep?* by Mem Fox (Chrysalis Children's Books, 2005)

**Theme:** shepherd, sheep

Children will discover various types of sheep through easy rhyme, color recognition and repetition.

## Unit Two

*Because Your Daddy Loves You* by Andrew Clements (Clarion Books, 2005)

**Theme:** caring for ourselves, parent/child relationship

This book celebrates a father's unconditional love and patience for his daughter who experiences some frustration while at the beach.

*Good Job, Little Bear!* by Martin Waddell (Candlewick, 2002)

**Theme:** caring for ourselves, parent/child relationship

Big Bear and Little Bear are on an expedition together where Little Bear explores his surroundings closely supported by his loving father, Big Bear.





# Resources to Use with the Children

***It's MY Birthday!*** By Pat Hutchins (Greenwillow, 1999)

**Theme:** sharing

Billy, the young green monster, is back for his birthday where receiving gifts becomes a difficult lesson in learning how to share.

***Maisy's Wonderful Weather Book*** by Lucy Cousins (Candlewick, 2006)

**Theme:** God's wondrous creation

Whatever the weather, Maisy has fun, and so too the reader with the pull-tabs and flaps to help forecast the weather with Maisy.

***Noah's Trees*** by Bijou Le Tord (HarperCollins Children's Books, 2007)

**Theme:** caring for God's creation

In this new perspective on the Old Testament story, Noah is a gardener who tends to dozens of trees. When God asks Noah to build the ark, he does so obediently, making sure to take pairs of animals and plenty of saplings along.

***One for Me, One for You*** by C.C. Cameron (Roaring Brook Press, 2003)

**Theme:** sharing

Two friends, a hippo and alligator, learn about counting and sharing their cookies and toys.

***Rain*** by Manya Stojic (Chrysalis Children's Books, 2001)

**Theme:** God's wondrous creation

Follow the animals of the African savanna who eagerly anticipate and experience rain through the senses of smell, sight, sound, touch and taste.

***The Way I Love You*** by David Bedford (Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2004)

**Theme:** caring for God's creation

A young girl counts the ways she and her dog are best friends.

## Unit Three

***A Child was Born: A First Nativity Book*** by Grace Maccarone (Scholastic, 2000)

**Theme:** Christmas

The story of the birth of Jesus is told through short rhyming sentences.

***Bubba and Beau Meet the Relatives*** by Kathi Appelt (Harcourt Children's Books, 2004)

**Theme:** family

The hilarious adventures of Bubba and Beau continue when Granddaddy Bubba, Grandma Ruby, Aunt Sapphire, Cousin Arlene and dog Bitsy visit.

***Full, Full, Full of Love*** by Trish Cooke (Walker Books, 2004)

**Theme:** family

In this tribute to extended families, Jay Jay spends a day with Grannie who keeps him busy helping prepare a feast for the whole family.

***The Boy Who Longed for a Lift*** by Norma Farber (HarperCollins, 1997)

**Theme:** family

A young boy who runs away from home eventually returns to the loving embrace of his father.

***We Have a Baby*** by Cathryn Falwell (Clarion Books, 1999)

**Theme:** family

A family celebrates the arrival of a new baby.

***Welcome, Precious*** by Nikki Grimes (Orchard Books, 2006)

**Theme:** family

This poetic illustration joyously highlights an African American family welcoming the newest member of the family.



*Who Was Born This Special Day?* by Eve Bunting  
(Aladdin, 2003)

**Theme:** Christmas

This holiday bedtime story presents the birth of Jesus from a contemplative perspective of those animals present by the manger.

## Unit Four

*Simon and Molly Plus Hester* by Lisa Jahn-Clough  
(Houghton Mifflin/Walter Lorraine Books, 2001)

**Theme:** friendship

Simon and Molly are best friends, and then Molly befriends Hester, causing Simon to feel left out. So the three work through reconciling the friendships.

*That's What Friends Are For* by Valeri Gorbachev  
(Philomel, 2005)

**Theme:** friendship

In this fourth book in a series, Goat and Pig experience the meaning of friendship when Goat misunderstands Pig's tears from cutting onions which turns into an opportunity for them to make and enjoy dinner together.

*Toot and Puddle: You Are My Sunshine* by Holly Hobbie  
(Little Brown, 2001)

**Theme:** friendship

Friends of Toot try to cheer him up from his gloominess and sorrow. After some time and a storm, Toot finally gains a new outlook because of the support of his friends.

*We Go to Mass* by Judy Winkler (Catholic Book Publishing Company, 2004)

**Theme:** Mass, church

This book contains a creative way to help the children learn about the Mass with five exciting jigsaw puzzles alongside a description for the major parts of the Mass.

*What Game Shall We Play?* by Pat Hutchins (Harper Trophy, 1995)

**Theme:** friendship

Duck and Frog seek out their animal friends for a game to play. Eventually Owl suggests the game of hide-and-seek.

## Unit Five

*Barnyard Prayers* by Laura Godwin (Hyperion, 2000)

**Theme:** prayers

A young boy imagines that he is a farmer and his toy animals come to life. Through a series of prayers, each animal prays to God according to his nature.

*God Bless Me, God Bless You* by Lois Rock (Baker Book House, 2001)

**Theme:** prayer

In a style of bedtime prayers, a young boy and girl pray to God for the people, animals and things in their life.

*How Does God Listen?* by Kay Lindahl (Skylight Paths Publishing, 2005)

**Theme:** prayer

Young readers will explore spiritual questions that speak to their heart. The children learn that God's presence can be experienced through the use of their senses.





*My Book of Thanks* by B. G. Hennessy (Candlewick, 2005)

**Theme:** prayer

A collection of prayers and petitions for young children to enjoy.

*Sing a New Song: A Book of Psalms* by Bijou Le Tord (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997)

**Theme:** prayer

A beautiful collection of psalm verses combined with equally beautiful watercolor illustrations.

*Mommy's Hands* by Kathryn Lasky and Jane Kamine (Hyperion, 2002)

**Theme:** motherhood

The love of a mother for her child is affectionately described through the daily actions of her hands.

*My Book of Thanks* by B. G. Hennessy (Candlewick, 2005)

**Theme:** prayer

A collection of prayers and petitions for young children to enjoy.

*My Mom* by Anthony Browne (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005)

**Theme:** motherhood

This book is an affectionate tribute to motherhood from the perspective of the adoring child with illustrations of the everyday mom who is the strongest woman in the world.

*Over the River and through the Wood* by Lydia Maria Child and Iris Van Rynbach (Little Brown & Co., 1989)

**Theme:** thanksgiving

Full-page illustrations detail rural scenes alongside this familiar children's poem about a visit to grandmother's house on Thanksgiving Day.

*Saint Francis and the Christmas Donkey* by Robert Byrd (Dutton Juvenile, 2000)

**Theme:** All Saints Day

Saint Francis meets a donkey in the forest who is struggling with all of the heavy burden he carries every day. Saint Francis tells him the story of the birth of Jesus which raises his spirits.

## Unit Six

*1, 2, 3, Valentine's Day* by Jeanne Modesitt (Boyd's Mills Press, 2002)

**Theme:** Valentine's Day

In this rhyming counting book that celebrates the love of Valentine's Day, Mister Mouse, dressed in a dark pink suit, visits his animal friends to give them gifts.

*A Child was Born: A First Nativity Book* by Grace Maccarone (Scholastic, 2000)

**Theme:** Christmas

The story of the birth of Jesus is told through short rhyming sentences.

*In My Heart* by Molly Bang (Little Brown Young Readers, 2006)

**Theme:** motherhood

With a cast of multicultural characters, a mother describes the love in her heart for her child as she reflects on all the aspects of her day.



# Catechist Prayer

*Gracious God, I ask your blessing as I begin this year as a catechist to the young children in our preschool program. Help me follow the example of your Son, Jesus, and all faithful people as I help these young ones take their first steps in faith.*

*Give me the spirit of **welcome** that Jesus showed when he gathered children around him. Remind me to show the preschool children how much I appreciate the blessing that each of them brings to our class.*

*Give me the gift of **persistence** displayed by the Good Shepherd who cared for each of his sheep. Help me give special attention to the children who most need to know your love for them.*

*Give me the spirit of **love** present in the Holy Family. Guide me in creating a circle of love and mutual respect within my teaching space.*

*Give me the gift of **faith** of the first disciples, who answered Jesus' call to proclaim his Good News to all people. May I tell the stories of your great love for us with the same passion and commitment.*

*Give me the spirit of **forgiveness** as I teach the children to be thoughtful and to forgive one another as your Son taught us to do.*

*Above all, help me to create a community of faith which is marked by listening, sharing, praising you, and treating one another with a spirit of love and care. Instill in me a child's sense of wonder and awe as I reflect on the mystery of your love and on the gift of being invited to serve as your catechist this year. Amen.*

