

## Curriculum: **Godly Play**

**Publisher:** Morehouse Education Resources  
[www.morehouseeducation.org/godlyplay.htm](http://www.morehouseeducation.org/godlyplay.htm)  
The Godly Play Foundation [www.godlyplay.org](http://www.godlyplay.org)

**Denomination:** Episcopal

**Foundational doctrine:** Based on the Montessori method, Godly Play invites children (ages 2-12) to wonder about themselves, God, and the world in a way that is playful and meaningful. 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. Bible stories are told to children using objects to encourage them to enter into the stories with a sense of wonder and awe and relate them to their personal experience.

**Scriptural/Theological Content:** Scripture is told through sacred stories (Old Testament), parables, and liturgical action (including Eucharist and Baptism). Biblical stories are told using a Montessori approach. Focus is on the child’s relationship to God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit and the characters and actions within the story. Godly Play™ teaches us that everything in God’s creation is charged with the possibility of holiness, including each of us, and that we are in relationship with everything in Creation. Godly Play™ teaches that there is *Kairos* time as well as *Chronos* time. Each “lesson” is a worship service in itself, modeled after a Eucharist: a time for lesson/story, wondering / response, prayers, feast, and goodbye / blessing.

**Articulation:** There is no particular order that stories are given in, which is left up to the discretion of the adult leaders. Many Old Testament stories are available, as well as parables and stories related to the church year, such as Lent, Advent and the church calendar. There is a set of stories for Jesus’ life and the life of Paul.

**Interest / Abilities of Teachers:** The teacher is one who loves religious language, trusts its creative power, and uses it to meet God at the limits of knowledge and being. A teacher needs to be comfortable in learning the stories to tell from memory and the ability to allow for silence and a child’s own creative response. Training is most valuable – having the opportunity to attend a workshop or watch an experienced Godly Play storyteller. Besides the storyteller, another teacher role involves being the “doorperson” or greeter, who also assist the children with their art responses and “the feast.”

**Learning Activities, Format & Media:** 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. Some may wish to work on the same story week after week. Stories are told using multi-sensory materials and a variety of media is available for their response. Craft activities are used, but differently

than most curricula, with each child creating an expressive response to what is individually thought and felt after "receiving" the story in a group setting.

**Setting:** A worship-education center: a place for children to be themselves that is respected as a space for community and open to the sacredness of God. The room contains shelves full of objects for children to use – images that make the stories come alive, a whole system of Christian language.

**Inviolate Principle of Choice:** After a bible story is told to the children, 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 (work). Every child has a personal folder that serves as a spiritual journal which stays in the room to hold their paintings, sketches, poetry, etc. that is ongoing work. Teachers do not interfere with the children’s work unless the child asks for help, although an adult should always be present to assist when needed. Teachers are seen as guides that do not have to have all the answers. Children have much to teach adults also.

**Age group differentiation:** Lessons are developed for children ages 3-11, although there is work being done to use the material with older children and adults.

**Home Involvement:** At the end of the year, each student takes home their folder of work. Parents have reported that their children “wonder” aloud at various times during the week and begin to retell the Bible stories at home. Parent Papers are available to help connect the Godly Play experience with home and family conversation.

**Language:** Convictional. Language is very theological as children are encouraged to use objects make the images of our religious language come alive.

**Sociological:** The worship-education classroom is a safe space for children – a place where their ideas, opinions, and gifts are deeply respected. The materials/figures usually do not have faces on them, allowing children to project their own image/face on them.

**Attendance Pattern:** Although each lesson is independent, children would need to be regular in attendance to learn the pace of the classroom. A child who arrives late will be admitted by the “greeter” as soon as they are ready to enter the room quietly without disturbing the circle of children engaged in a story.

**Cost:** 8 Volumes, \$24.95 each. DVD training session for Volumes 3-5, \$24.95. Parent Pages, \$2.95 per season. Materials are provided through Morehouse Education Resources. [www.godlyplay.com](http://www.godlyplay.com)