

About Godly Play

- ✘ Godly Play teaches reliance upon a gracious God who is real and accessible in all the mystery of life, both sad and joyful (rather than dependence upon the non-renewable magic that come from the latest movie, toy, or video game).
- ✘ Godly Play re-sacralizes the everyday things of the world (e.g. bread, wine, candles, linens, boxes, clay), re-teaching a sacramental worldview in a society that is so often utilitarian and materialistic.
- ✘ Godly Play teaches kindness and mutuality by its ritual character and by the way it organizes physical space, objects, and the community of children.
- ✘ Godly Play teaches children and adults that being quiet, deliberate, and respectful toward things and space can be as satisfying (if different) as being noisy, busy, and grabby. It delivers this counter-cultural message in a consistent and comforting way.
- ✘ Godly Play is not a “rote” or “transfer” method of teaching and learning. It is a “*discovery*” method which engages the whole child — hands, heart, mind, senses, intuition. This is the best way for children to internalize what they learn.
- ✘ Godly Play uses craft activities very differently. Rather than have children create something prepackaged to show Mom or Dad, each child creates an expressive response to what is individually thought and felt after “receiving” the parable, sacred story or liturgical lesson in a group setting. The children have the opportunity to “enter” the story, “wonder” about it, and *then* create meaning for their own lives.
- ✘ Godly Play combines and integrates the two primary gateways to knowing for young children — language (verbal) and play (non-verbal), providing the best environment for real learning.
- ✘ Godly Play teaches the classic rhythm for living modeled by our Lord’s own life — the alternation of action and reflection, engagement and prayer. Godly Play helps those who teach it and those who learn it to build a spiritual Rule of Life.
- ✘ Godly Play’s way of “wondering” and responding to the Bible’s sacred stories is, in fact, a “children’s version” of the ancient Christian practice of *lectio divina*. Instead of meditating mentally on God’s word, the children “meditate” in an artistic and kinesthetic way. Godly Play helps children know God — not just know *about* God.
- ✘ Godly Play teaches 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. There is no sacred vs. profane; all ground is holy ground.
- ✘ Godly Play teaches that there is *Kairos* time as well as *Chronos* time. *Kairos* time is not concerned with knowing “what time it is” but instead with the relational notion of “what time is for,” which includes time to be with God. Godly Play put God back into the center of daily life.

Taken from a handout distributed at the Godly Play training seminar.

In a Nutshell: The Godly Play Philosophy

About Children:

- Children already have a spiritual life of a depth that we may not understand.
- Children can be given the gift of religious language that will allow them to express their spiritual experiences.
- Children are treated seriously and with deep respect; it should never seem to them that we see them as "cute" or as objects for our amusement.

About Children's Work:

- Children's play is their work.
- Children are encouraged to choose their own work.
- Children like to work when it is work they have chosen for themselves.
- Teachers do not interfere with the children's work unless the child asks for help.
- When a child seems unable to ask for assistance, it should be offered by the adult.
- Part of the work of the community of children is the care of their own classroom.
- Children like to feel self-sufficient; it is good to allow them the opportunity to clean up their own spills and put away their own work.

About Teachers and Children:

- Teachers are guides. They do not need to have all the answers.
- Children have much to teach adults who take the time to listen.
- Children are encouraged to do the work of finding their own answers.
- When a teacher takes time to listen to and observe a child, the teacher can find more effective ways to lead the child into new discoveries.

About the Church School Environment:

- The Godly Play classroom is a place for children
 - To be themselves
 - To learn how Christians live in community
 - To come closer to the mystery of God's presence
- Respect for the space and for one another is maintained in a Godly Play Classroom to help children feel safe.
- A Godly Play classroom should help each child feel successful.

About Enabling a Community of Children to Develop:

- In Godly Play, children are encouraged to form their own community and take care of one another.
- A class room is not "over-adulted". This allows children to form a community and empower them to be in control of their space. It also keeps the storyteller and doorman focused on the children and their work.