

The Top Six Ways Parents Can Support Their Children in Godly Play

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1. Bring your children to class on time.

The sacred story, liturgical lesson, or parable is presented to the circle of children early in the Sunday School time. Children who arrive more than five minutes late will often miss hearing the lesson with the rest of the group. The child who is late will hear the lesson in some other way, but will miss the opportunity to “wonder” about it within the community of other children.

2. Bring your children to Godly Play as regularly as you can manage.

Regular contact with the storyteller, doorman, and the circle of children will help each child build trust and begin to take the risks necessary to enter the Bible stories and use them to make meaning. Many children do not feel safe enough to share their ideas with others or make a truly meaningful response to a Bible story until they have spent a good deal of time in the classroom. After a routine is established in Godly Play, the children begin to learn that their ideas and efforts will be treated with respect. That is when their relationship with God can begin to blossom.

3. Respect the sacred space of the Godly Play classroom.

In some places where Godly Play is used, the Sunday School rooms are called “Worship Centers.” Godly Play emphasizes creating a safe space for children to encounter God through the stories of our faith. A sense of trust and a calm, quiet atmosphere help this happen. You can support us in this work by not interrupting the class once it has begun. If you need to get an important message to your child, the greeter or doorman will relay it to your child after the story and wondering are complete. If you do enter the room at other times, talk more quietly and move more slowly.

4. Avoid asking your children, “What did you learn in Sunday School this week?”

This will put children on the spot and give them the impression that Godly Play is for acquiring the correct information about God and the Church. The goal in Godly Play is for each child to progress according to God’s timetable, not ours. If you spend even a small period of time in silence with your children, they will often begin to share what they are really thinking. Time looking at the stars or the trees moving in the wind — even time during the drive home from school can provide the opportunity to be still and listen to your child’s ideas.

5. Respect your children as people on their own distinct spiritual journeys.

Children have as much of a sense of awe and wonder about spiritual things as adults do — they just lack the language with which to express religious feelings. It is a goal of Godly Play to give them the gift of religious language so they can use it to find meaning in their lives. You can support this goal by using appropriate moments to talk with your children about what you think God is like and how important the Bible stories are in your life.

6. Tell stories at home.

Human beings have an innate love of stories that can be nurtured at home. Don't let the television be the primary storyteller at your house. Know what your favorite stories are and tell them often. These can be any stories you love — not just Bible stories. Share the stories of your family history. Tell the stories you enjoyed as a child. Your children will learn how to listen to and respect the stories of real human beings.

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For more information about Godly Play and how you can nurture your child(ren)'s spiritual life at home, check out www.faith-at-home.com.