



Baby Bible Lessons

by Sharon Ellard

While you take care of babies in the church nursery, you can also begin to teach them about God's love, God's Son, and God's people. While rocking babies to sleep, for example, you can sing "It's So Good To Be in the Arms of the Lord." You can attach pictures of Jesus to crib rails where babies will see Him as they fall asleep and wake up. You can tap the picture when a baby is lying on his back. When the baby turns his head, you can sing, "Yes, Jesus loves you!" tapping first the picture of Jesus and then the baby.

On-the-Go Learning

Babies learn by doing—by mouthing, by touching, by exploring. As babies swing, they can hold baby-proofed pictures of Jesus. When babies reach for board books, you probably point to and name pictures, making matching sounds for animals, vehicles, and people. You can also include simple ideas about God or create simple songs that connect the pictures with ideas about God.

Suppose you had a book about baby animals. To the tune of "Yankee Doodle," you could point to pictures and sing:

God made ducks.
I'm glad He did.
God made ducks go quack,
quack.
God made cows that moo
and then
God made lambs go baa-baa.

Usually this kind of song is fair-

ly simple to create and then adapt to different books. It's perfectly OK if the words don't rhyme. The tune and repetition help babies learn. Enthusiasm and grins help babies want to hear it again.

Use little songs with other activities too. While playing with a ball, sing these words to the tune of "Row the Boat":

Roll, roll, roll the ball
Back and forth to friends.
God made hands to have
some fun.
Roll the ball again.



Music activates more of both sides of the brain, so babies pay closer attention to singing than to talking.

The Power of Repetition

How do babies learn to wave "bye-bye"? Parents wave their hands over and over until babies begin to wave by themselves.

Bible learning benefits from

repetition too. As you and others on the nursery team repeat simple lesson activities for at least a month, babies will begin to remember ideas about God.

Here's an example: For several weeks, move a picture of Jesus where a baby can see it. Then cover the picture with a tissue or cloth and say, "Where's Jesus?" Slowly pull the cloth from the picture. Eventually, babies will begin to reach for the cloth to help uncover Jesus. Celebrate every accomplishment with applause.

Passive Participants

Babies learn by watching first. For several Sundays, a baby or toddler may simply hold a toy and watch while you move a duplicate. Eventually, the little one will begin to imitate what you do. Temperament plays a definite role in how quickly a baby moves from passive to active participation.

- **Easy** children with easy temperaments may begin to imitate very quickly.

- **Slow-to-warm** children may watch for several weeks and then begin to participate. These children may also join activities several minutes after you begin.

- **Sensitive** children may switch between active and passive participation.

From birth, babies display these temperaments. Accept their responses as a part of their God-given distinctives.

Teaching With Toys

Every church nursery includes

toys. The nursery ministry team can create simple play rituals that connect the toys with first ideas about God. Every time a baby crawls to a doll, for example, team members know to pat the doll and say, “Baby. This is a baby. God lo-o-o-ves babies.” To the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” they could sing:

**Baby, Baby, God loves you,
And you know I love you too.**

Radiant Baby and *Radiant Life Toddlers & Twos* teacher guides include many simple ways to connect toys with ideas about God.

Routine Schedules

Routines give babies a sense of security, of knowing what to expect next, of repeating enjoyable rituals with enjoyable people.

Create a nursery schedule that

includes care times, play times, and quiet times. Post the schedule in several locations around the nursery, including at the entrance where parents can see it.

Of course, responding to tears always takes priority over any nursery schedule. Even so, if all of the nursery team will proceed through the elements of a session in the order listed on the schedule, babies will begin to “feel at home” in God’s house.

Teacher-Directed Learning

Much of the teaching in the nursery will be interest-directed. As a toy catches a baby’s attention, the teachers connect the toy with an idea about God. Some Bible learning, though, can be teacher-directed, even in the

nursery. Rather than teaching all babies at once, bring a toy, book, or picture to two or three little ones. Try to use duplicates so every baby can hold a copy. Use words, movements, or songs to connect the toys with Bible ideas. Encourage the babies to imitate—sometimes moving toys for them. Applaud any attempt to imitate.

While you interact with two or three children, several others may crawl over to you. Include newcomers by smiling, handing them duplicates, and showing them what to do.

When children begin to lose interest, stop. Since the toys are always available, there will be other times to reuse them.

It’s never too early to teach little ones that God loves them.

Questions For Further Study—

1. Explain briefly how repetition helps babies learn Bible lessons.
2. Describe how temperament affects a child’s active participation in lessons.
3. Why do babies like routines?

This article was adapted from one article in the colorful training booklet called *StepONE, A Guide for Teachers—Nursery*, by Sharon Ellard, Early Childhood Consultant in the Sunday School Field Ministries Department. StepONE reads like a magazine and trains like a conference. It’s a quick, affordable training tool that your nursery team will enjoy reading. StepONE will help teachers and parents minister effectively to babies and toddlers. The complete resource is available from the Gospel Publishing House, order number 02-0285. Call 1-800-641-4310.

