

TEACHING THE TODDLER/2 CHILD



Are you ever too young to learn about God? There was a time when very young children were not expected to absorb much Bible truth. Their church experience was limited to nurturing child care. But with the latest research on the brain have come some amazing new findings. Children younger than three actually have *twice* as many brain cells as their pediatricians! Their brains are wired to “super absorb” information. Although they may not be able to communicate verbally with us, we now *know* that what we say and do with them has everlasting impact.

What is taught children 18 to 36 months matters! But we must be clear on *how* they learn. Their minds may be sponges, but they still have very short attention spans. They use their senses to input information, so they must look at, touch, smell, hear, or taste things in order for new learning to impact the brain.

That is why a Toddler/2 child is constantly moving, touching, experimenting, investigating. They do learn during a Bible presentation, but they don’t stop learning when the story ends. They are learning every second from every experience. Because of this, the entire classroom environment is extremely important. These children must have a classroom where they are free to move around, explore, and touch everything.

While they are discovering about their world through play, look for moments to present the Word of God to these children. Rather than stop the whole

class, sit them on a rug, and expect them all to listen to you, it is more effective to invite one or a few children to meet with you and hear God’s Word. When they have finished, they can return to exploring the room. Remember, it only takes a minute or two to tell these Toddler versions of favorite Bible stories. This process can be repeated until all of your class has experienced the **Bible Step**.

Now you are ready to use the hand-held **felt board** to share the **Bible Review Step** with each child—wherever he or she is in the room. The felt board review is another opportunity to reinforce Bible learning.

Meanwhile, the craft can be set up at a table in the room so children can experience the **Craft Step** whenever they are ready.

Repetition is crucial for young children to learn. They can repeat a craft, hear a story, or sing a song time after time. As the teacher, you provide opportunities for children to participate in learning about the Bible story many times in many ways.

A Toddler/2 lesson does not follow a straight path. The events do not occur in a straight line and the lesson parts do not happen only once during the class time. A Toddler/2 lesson is more like a spiral where the teacher presents the parts of the lesson over and over. You can do this when the entire classroom is filled with interesting things for young children to explore.

Are they too young to learn about God? Not at all! Our responsibility is to teach them in the way they learn best.

Here's one Sunday school class time for a little girl named Ashley, who is two and a half years old. (The order of events will be different every Sunday!)



The teacher invites Ashley to join her and some other children as they play with toys.



Ashley becomes comfortable with the classroom and begins to explore other activities.



The teacher shares the **Talk Time** poster with Ashley and Julia and they discuss what they see. This leads the teacher and children directly into the interactive **Bible Story**.



After doing the **Bible Step**, Ashley goes to play with the dolls while the teacher shares **Talk Time** with Daniel.



children enjoy moving and clapping to the **Music Time** song for this lesson.



Ashley returns to play with the dolls.



Ashley experiences the craft project by exploring how the crayons make colors on the paper. Her favorite paper is then taped to her copy of **Starting Steps** and set aside to be taken home later.



Ashley asks to hear the Bible story again. This time she does the actions by herself.



Ashley's parents arrive to pick her up. She's eager to share her craft project with them.

Toddler/2 teaching tips

Setting Up the Room

- Keep your room attractive and safe. Be sure that all electrical outlets are covered and there are no small objects, disinfectants, or cleaning supplies within the children's reach.
- Set up the room activities, including the craft, before the children arrive. This allows you the time to greet the children as they arrive and get them involved in an activity.
- Try to have one helper for every 4-5 children. Encourage parents to volunteer on a one-week rotating basis. Teens and grandparents also make good helpers.
- In the **Books** area, set out a few books and a couple of pillows. For this age we recommend that you use sturdy books which are easy to clean. Three-to-five piece puzzles also work well here.
- In the **Care Area**, use a pair of clean, disposable rubber gloves for each diaper you change. If disposable gloves are not available, wash hands thoroughly with disinfecting soap before and after each diaper change. Be sure to sanitize the area with disinfectant often.
- **Toys** should be appropriate for ages 18 to 36 months. Divide the toys into different sets which can be changed periodically. Regularly check toys for broken parts. Disinfect the toys with a solution of one teaspoon bleach to one gallon of water at least twice a month.
- A play kitchen set, dolls, dress-up clothes, blankets, and dishes make a wonderful **Home Living** area. Use a corner of the room to set these up.
- Containers with lids or stacking bins can hold items for the different activity areas. If you have a small room, open two or three different containers in corners of the room.
- **Blocks** can be offered in many varieties, such as wood, interlocking, and stacking. Adding animals, cars, and toy people will add interest to this area. Set out one type of block of varying sizes at a time. The type of blocks can be changed once a month.

Bible Time and Review

- When gathering children for the **Bible Step**, invite no more than four children to join you. Use the rhyme on the **Bible Step** page to capture children's attention.
- Allow time for the children to talk and share during **Talk Time**. This gives them an opportunity to share what they know.
- It is important that the children move the figures on the board as you tell the **Bible Review Story**. The same flannel figure may be used as different characters throughout the quarter. For example, the woman may be Hannah in Lesson 1 and Mary in Lesson 5. This doesn't create a problem for the children.
- Here's a way to attach the story card to the back of the **Felt Board**. Put a 2-inch strip of self-adhesive magnetic tape on the back of the Felt Board. Attach a paper clip to the story card for the week. The paper clip will stick to the magnetic tape.
- Before class, set the **Music Time** cassette tape at the starting point of the song for the day.
- Be familiar with the song before trying to teach it to your class. Knowing the actions before you teach them will help the children learn more effectively, as they will try to imitate you.
- The cassette tape can be played as background music while children are doing other activities in the classroom.

Craft Step

- Some craft experiences need little supervision, such as those involving crayons. If you have helpers working with crafts, be sure they understand their role during the **Craft Step** by asking them to read over the **Craft Step** page for that lesson in your teacher's guide.
- To protect your clothes during the **Craft Step**, make a smock. An oversize man's short-sleeve shirt, a large apron, or a lab coat from a thrift store would work. An old shower curtain or plastic tablecloth can be placed under the table to protect the floor.