



What Every Child Should Experience

in Ministry with Children

EQUIPPING WORLD-CHANGING DISCIPLES [UMCdiscipleship.org](https://umcdiscipleship.org)



DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES
The United Methodist Church

Let us go to the Lord in prayer



Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church

**Equipping congregations
to make disciples of Jesus
Christ for the transformation
of the world!**

**Melanie C. Gordon
Director
Ministry with Children**

What do you dream for our children?

What Every Child Should Experience



Today We Will Explore

- Children's Presence
- Developmental Considerations
- Experiences
- Scripture and Experience



A PRAYER FROM JOHN WESLEY

Be present at our table, Lord;
Be here and everywhere adored.
Thy mercies bless, and grant that we
May feast in fellowship with Thee.
Amen.



The Table

Who is present at the table?

Rural *Urban* Suburban Large Church

Small Church UnChurched *Poor* Rich Joyful

Brown Tan White *Those with disabilities*

Young Old Forgotten



The Table

What happens at the table?

Fellowship

Connection

Communication

Relationship

Understanding

Love

Grace

Conflict

Reconciliation

Forgiveness

Understanding

Discipleship

Temperance



The Table

How do we make the table accessible to all?

- GO!
- TEACH!
- Make DISCIPLES!





It is easy to become frustrated.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

What ALL Children Experience

How do we equip our children?

Provide

- Opportunities
- Resources
- Experiences



What Opportunities, Resources and Experiences do you provide for children and families?

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NUDGE

RELATIONSHIPS



Developmental Issues

FAITHFUL FORMATION

Innate Sense of God

Empty Vessels They Are NOT

Montessori and Cavalletti

“help [them] grow closer to God by
[themselves]”

Stages of Selfhood and Faith – James Fowler

Up to Age Seven	School Age
<i>Intuitive – Projective Stage</i>	<i>Mythical - Literal</i>
Gestures and symbols are important, rise in the imagination, no capacity to question fantasy, negative and positive images and experiences have long-lasting effects on faith	Sorts out real from fantasy, strong belief in justice, importance of narrative, takes symbols of faith and beliefs at face value

Stages of Development - Erik Erikson

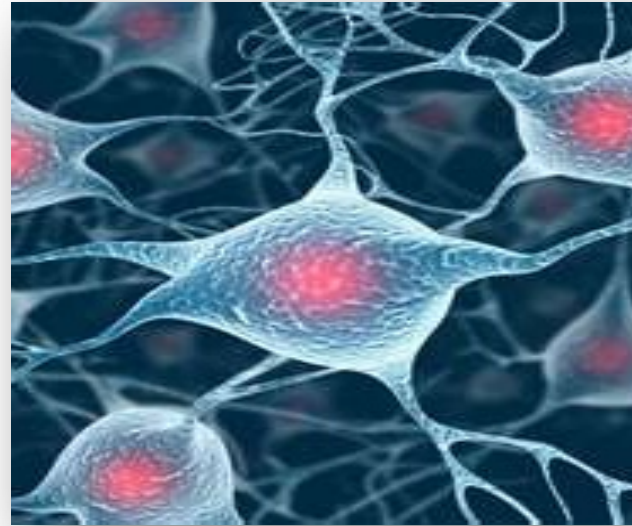
Infant	Toddler	Preschooler	School Age
<i>Trust versus Mistrust</i>	<i>Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt</i>	<i>Initiative versus Guilt</i>	<i>Industry versus Inferiority</i>
Needs maximum comfort with minimal uncertainty to trust himself/herself, others, and the environment	Working to master physical environment while maintaining self-esteem	Beginning to initiate, not imitate, activities; developing conscience and sexual identity	Trying to develop a sense of self-worth by refining skills; becoming more social
Most significant relationship: Primary Caregiver	Most significant relationship: Parents	Most significant relationship: Family	Most significant relationship: School and community

Who are our children?

The Digital Child in Christian Community

“The *architecture* of the developing brain is shaped by a child’s environments of relationships”

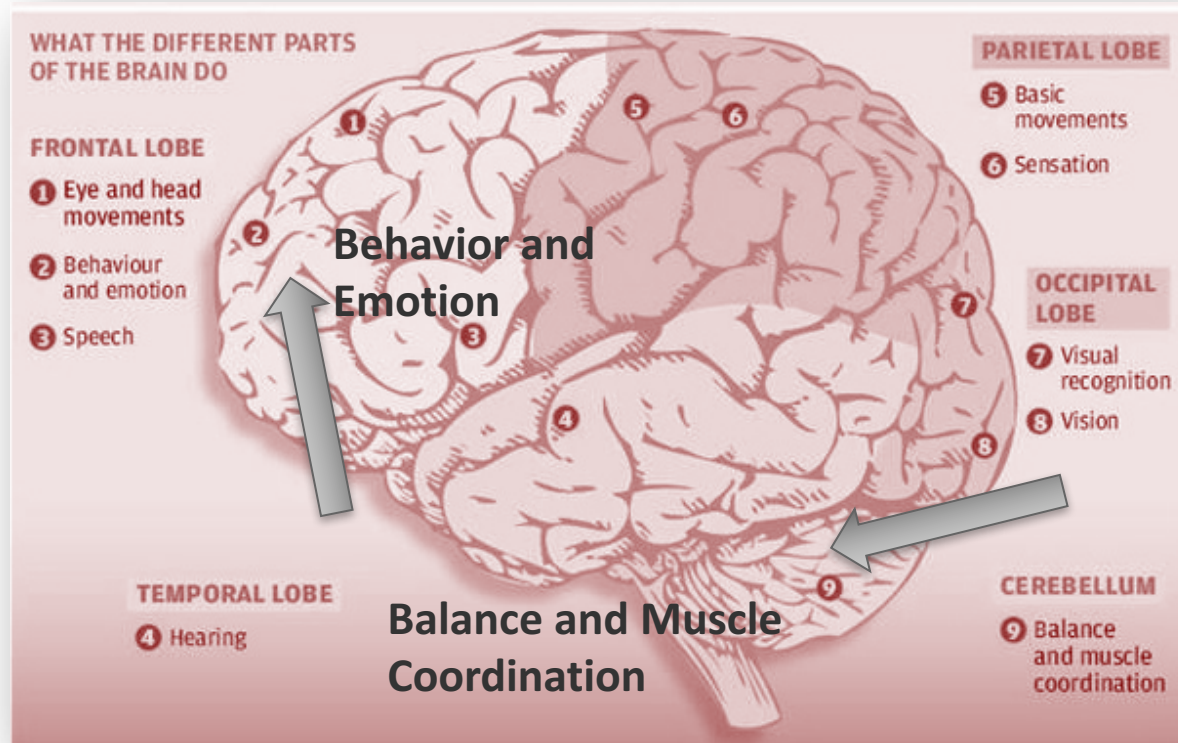
- *Dr. Jack Shonkoff, Director of the Center of the Developing Child at Harvard University*



The Digital Child in Christian Community

The Cerebellum and the Pre-frontal Cortex

Stuart Brown, National Institute for Play



God

Birth to 1 Year

- God made me and loves me
- My caregivers represent God on earth

1 Year to 2 Years

- I am a child of God
- God loves me



Relating Faith to Daily Life

Birth to 1 Year

- God loves me just as God created me
- Talk to me about God

1 Year to 2 Years

- I use my senses to explore God's creation



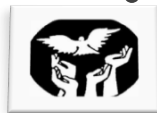
Worship

2 years to 3 Years

- The Bible contains important stories
- I can sing, pray, and recognize the symbols of the church

3 Years to 4 Years

- I need a sense of belonging in the life of the congregation
- I can actively participate in worship
- I can learn the Christian calendar



What is one way you engage young children in worship?

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Community and the World

2 Years to 3 Years

- I have a sense of wonder about the world

3 Years to 4 Years

- I like doing good for others



The Bible

4 Years to 5 Years

- The Bible tells stories about how God wanted the people to live



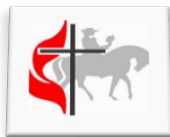
5 Years to 6 Years

- The Bible helps me to know how God wants me to live
- I can tell stories of people in the Bible
- My family connects church and family

Wesleyan Heritage

4 Years to 5 Years

- Love
- Grace
- Assurance
- Sacraments
- John Wesley
- Charles Wesley
- Circuit Riders



5 Years to 6 Years

- Love
- Grace
- Assurance
- Sacraments
- General Rules
- Holy Living
- Sanctification

What other parts of our Wesleyan Heritage can we share with young children?

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Terms and Images

6 Years to 7 Years

- Love
- Joy
- Holy Spirit
- Faithfulness
- Sabbath
- Covenant
- Forgiveness
- Peace
- Tithe
- Disciple
- Discipleship



7 Years to 8 Years

- Love
- Joy
- Evangelism
- Conversion
- Forgiveness
- Repentance
- Reconciliation
- Justice
- Missionary
- Servanthood

Home and Family

6 Years to 7 Years

- My family serves those in need
- My family enables me to serve in appropriate ways
- My family reads stories of faith
- My family prays together



7 Years to 8 Years

- My family talks about how stories of faith have a direct impact on how we live as a family

Teachers and Parents

8 Years to 9 Years

- Be open to discussions about God
- Intentionally guide children in faith development

9 Years to 10 Years

- Be open to ways that children experience God in ways that they are not sure how to articulate



Worship

8 Years to 9 Years

- I can understand and participate in the order of worship
- I can learn the prayers, creeds, and litanies of the church

9 Years to 10 Years

- I can understand that being a part of a faith community expands beyond the physical walls of the church I attend



Faith Formation

Stages Matter



What do you know about the BIBLE?

- The Creation Story
- The Ten Commandments
- The Golden Rule
- The Beatitudes
- The Lord's Prayer
- The Great Commandment
- The Great Commission



The Creation Story



“In the beginning...”

The Greatest Commandment

“What then is the
greatest
commandment?”



What is one way to explore the Creation Story with children?

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Growing with The Greatest Commandment

- What can an infant understand?
 - Demonstrate God's love
 - Demonstrate God's grace



Growing with The Greatest Commandment



- What can a preschooler understand?
 - God loves you
 - Show God love by being kind to others
 - Show God love through prayer

Growing with The Greatest Commandment

- What can an 8 year old understand?
 - The difference between a law and a covenant
 - Showing love through obedience to God
 - Loving our neighbors



Essential Stories for Infants and Toddlers

- Creation
- Noah's Ark
- Moses and Miriam
- Jesus' Birth
- Jesus Blesses Children
- Jesus' Baptism
- Lord's Supper



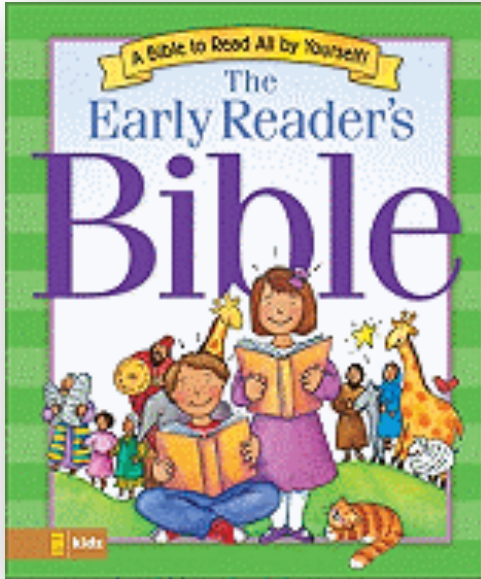
...And Story Books

Essential Stories for Infants and Toddlers



- The First Three Years
- Drive, Hope, Self-Control, Courage, Will
- The Senses
- Caregivers

Essential Stories for Infants and Toddlers



- Bibles
 - *Spark Story Bible*
 - *The Early Reader's Bible*
- Storybooks
- Relationships

What are other stories that you share with infants and toddlers?

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Preschoolers and Scripture

- Adam and Eve
- Abram's Call
- Joseph
- Jonah
- Mary and Elizabeth
- Jesus
- Zacchaeus



...And Dozens More

Preschoolers and Scripture



- Sense of Purpose
- Exploration
- Why?
- I Wonder...

Preschoolers and Scripture



- Bibles
 - *Spark Story Bible*
 - *Early Reader's Bible*
- Storybooks
- Reading Aloud
- Manipulatives

What is another way to explore scripture with preschoolers?

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Early Elementary and Scripture

- Sin Enters the World
- Moses and the Burning Bush
- Hannah Prays for a Child
- Temptation of Jesus
- Jesus Heals Many
- Jesus' Death and Resurrection



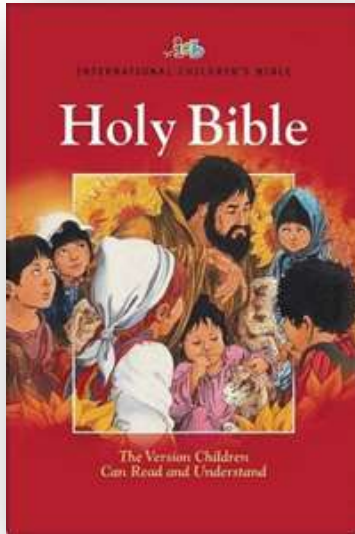
Dozens more...

Early Elementary and Scripture



- Knowledge
- Drawing Conclusions
- Fitting In
- Social
- *I Wonder...*

Early Elementary and Scripture



- Bibles
 - *Spark Story Bible*
 - *International Children's Bible*
- Books

What is one way to explore scripture with early elementary children?

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Older Elementary and Scripture

- David Becomes King
- Solomon's Wisdom
- Esther
- Jesus' Rejection at Nazareth
- The Transfiguration
- Jesus Ascension
- God Sends the Holy Spirit



Older Elementary and Scripture



- Knowledge
- New Skills
- Choices
- Belonging
- Social

Older Elementary and Scripture



- Bibles
 - *International Children's Bibles*
 - *New Revised Standard Version*
- Books

What is one way to explore scripture with older elementary children?

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What ALL Children Should Experience

Opportunities

Resources

Experiences

And especially...



RELATIONSHIPS

LIVE IT OUT!

YOUR HOMEWORK

Notice ways that your children's ministry programming is set up to meet the developmental needs of children.





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