

# Preschoolers and Easter

*Kindergartners pressed their faces to the window of my classroom. Our church was building new classroom space, and we had a close-up view of the construction. Most of the girls glanced out of the window and returned to activities in the room. Many boys stayed at the window; of course, I did, too! We watched the machinery move dirt, load rocks, and flatten the ground.*

I really enjoy watching those workers constructing a new building. And I am repeatedly amazed at the process. While I watched my church building being constructed, I noticed that the crew worked on the ground for a long time. For weeks, they only seemed to dig a hole and move around the dirt and rock. I thought, "They will never get the building completed on time at this rate." But, after the secure foundation was completed, the rest of the construction moved along very quickly. I realized that without a strong, secure base, the building would never be as safe and useful as it could be.

Teaching preschoolers is like constructing a building. We must create a strong base, a strong foundation, for future understanding. The Bible is the foundation for all of our teaching. As you talk about Easter, focus on the true biblical aspects. Minimize the secular traditions and commercial aspects of Easter. At church, teachers should base all activities and teaching on the Bible. At home parents should avoid mixing the biblical story and secular fantasy. Children can become easily confused or develop misconceptions.

During the preschool years, teachers and parents also develop spiritual foundations in the children's lives. As adults help boys and girls begin to understand more about God and Jesus, they establish a strong base on which others can build for future understanding. Parents and teachers must guide young children to understand fully the basic concepts before moving to more complex ideas and truths.

The Bible study sessions in the Sunday School leader guide help teachers build foundational understanding about Jesus, guiding preschoolers to have a secure foundation for further understandings of the message of Easter. To form an understanding of who Jesus is, preschoolers explore Bible stories that tell about things Jesus did and ways Jesus showed His love.

Babies, 1s, and 2s begin to sense the love of Jesus by their interactions with loving parents and other significant adults. They hear the name of Jesus and begin to associate loving and happy feelings with that name. They can hear stories about ways Jesus helped people and begin to understand that He helped people because He loved them. Younger preschoolers can look at biblical pictures of Jesus, turn the pages in the Bible as they hear Bible phrases, and listen to adults talk about Bible stories. These simple activities will begin to construct a strong spiritual foundation in the lives of boys and girls. Easter can be a time of hearing people thank God for Jesus.

Threes, 4s, and pre-kindergartners can talk about what they know about Jesus. They can recall Bible stories about Jesus and explain what Jesus did. They can grow in their understanding that Jesus showed love in different ways and that Jesus loves all people. As they repeat Bible phrases and sing songs about Jesus' love, boys and girls can develop a deeper understanding that Jesus loves them. Teachers and parents can use Easter as a time to focus on the love of Jesus, especially that Jesus loves each child individually and

specifically. (Note: Two choices for the Easter session are offered in the leader guide; teachers and parents can choose which best fits the needs and developmental levels of their children.)

Kindergartners are expanding their learning at a great rate. Teachers and parents can build on the foundations established earlier as they teach about Easter. Kindergartners can discover that Jesus died on the cross and is alive. By hearing the story of the resurrection and seeing a biblical picture of the empty tomb, kindergartners can develop a solid structure for future understanding. As they learn these facts about Jesus, they will be prepared to learn later the full implications of the cross and the resurrection. Adults can lead kindergartners to know that Easter is when we celebrate that Jesus is alive.

As you build spiritual foundations in the lives of preschoolers, remember that each child develops in his own way and at his own rate. Let the child be your guide as you teach. Encourage him to ask questions. Give brief answers and allow him to ask for more as he chooses. Knowing each child allows you to help develop his individual spiritual growth.

We may be the builders, but God is the Architect. He is responsible and able to further each child's spiritual development. God lays the foundation; He gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6-11).