

Outdoor Activities

Spring is the time to get moving again after the long winter. This time of year begs for outdoor adventures-digging in the fresh dirt and becoming acquainted anew with the wonderful world God made. Communicate this excitement to your preschooler and spend some wonderful time with him and the entire family as you welcome spring with some of these fun activities.

Take a Hike: Find an easy trail near your home that can spark a sense of adventure. Choose a location that offers opportunities to enjoy the beauty and provision of God. It might be a mountain trail flanked by laurels and rhododendron or a nature walk around sand dunes at the beach. Pack sandwiches or snacks to enjoy on the hike. Sing together, talk with one another and have fun!

Fly a Kite: In many areas the balmy days of spring bring gentle breezes that are ideal for flying a kite or wind sock. A kite can be as simple as a piece of string attached to a cutout shape or an elaborate commercial investment. The important thing is to find a safe place where you and your child can run, fly your kite and enjoy the warm spring breezes together.

Go on a Nature Hunt: On an unruled 4-by-6 inch index card, make simple drawings of a variety of nature items in your area. You might include the following items: tree, flower, bird, rock and water. Invite your preschooler to accompany you on a nature walk. Give her the card and tell her to make a small mark by a picture on the card each time she sees one of the items. As you walk and look for nature items, talk or sing about the wonderful world God made. You could also play the game "I Spy." Describe things you see that God made; your child can guess what you are describing.

Dig in the Dirt: Most preschoolers are fascinated as they watch a small plant grow from a tiny seed. If you plant a garden consider staking off a small section where your child can tend his own garden. Help him prepare the soil, plant the seed and care for the plants as they grow. As your preschooler enjoys working in his garden, talk about how God planned for us to have food. Lead your child to thank God when he receives a harvest from his garden.

Indoor Activities

Sometimes spring days can still be cool for outdoor activities, or spring showers can keep you and your preschooler indoors. Consider using some of the following suggestions to help your child think Spring!

Prepare a Snack Mix: Involve your preschooler in helping prepare a snack mix that can be used on a hike later in the week. Gather a variety of small snack-type items such as dry cereals, small marshmallows*, chow mein noodles, pretzel sticks, raisins *, and small fish-shaped crackers. Give your child a small ziplock bag and guide her to place a small scoop of each item into the bag. Help her fasten the bag and shake the bag to mix items together. Prepare several snack bags to have on hand. (*Note: Foods designated with an * are a choking hazard for children under 3.*)

Make a Wind Sock: Cut a flower or butterfly shape from heavy craft foam and cut 12-inch lengths of colorful ribbon. Guide your preschooler to glue the strips of ribbon to the foam shape. Punch 3 holes along the top of the shape, approximately equal distances apart. Lace 15-inch lengths of ribbon through these holes and tie together at the end of the ribbon length for hanging. Help your child hang the wind sock on a porch or covered deck where he can watch it move when the wind blows.

Plant a Grass Cup: Invite your preschooler to fill a small foam cup about full with potting soil. She can sprinkle grass seed over the potting soil, then cover with another small layer of potting soil. Help her moisten the soil with water. Set the cup on a windowsill where it will get plenty of sunshine. Guide your child to watch what happens. Tell her to sprinkle more water on the soil when it becomes dry to the touch. When the grass begins to grow, pull out one piece

for your child to examine. Talk about how each blade of grass is a plant that needs soil, water and sunlight to grow. Challenge your child to take care of her grass cup and see how long the grass grows.

Make a Suncatcher: Cut out the center of a paper plate. From clear contact plastic, cut a circle slightly larger than the hole in the plate. Attach the circle to the back of the paper plate with the sticky side facing toward the front of the plate. Provide scraps of different colors of bright tissue paper for your child to stick to the sticky contact plastic. Let her decorate the paper plate border with washable markers. Punch a hole at the top of the plate border and tie a strip of yarn or string through the hole to make a hanger. Help your preschooler hang her suncatcher in the window in her room or other area where she can watch the sun's reflecting rays.

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