

**Workshop Guide**  
**Love Well**  
**Theresa Mayo, Presenter**

**“Show Up and Love Well”**

**Loving Preschoolers**

Tina Houser says, “Preschoolers combine seemingly inexhaustible energy, boisterous noise, mischievous curiosity and boundless joy with unique developmental needs and the amazing opportunity to shape their view of the Creator from an early age.” This could not be truer.

A couple of quotes I love that speak to this are:

“When the voice a child loves to hear speaks God’s word, he learns to love the Word of God.”  
Karen Apple

“Kids may never know God unless they first know someone who loves God and can show them what God is like.” Reggie Joiner

When we show up in their lives, they see God in us.

An effective preschool leader needs a genuine walk with Christ, a willingness to make an investment in others, and to be ready to help those under their care to understand how to know and follow Jesus.

Three areas to get us there are:

1. Being a spiritually prepared leader
2. Having a physically prepared environment
3. Having a learning environment.

**1. A Spiritually Prepared Leader**

When we are teaching from our overflow, we are compelled by the Spirit of Christ to convince them that God loves them by the way we love them.

For preschoolers to hear you speak God’s Word effectively

For preschoolers to know that you love God

For preschoolers to see that you follow God

YOU need a strong constant relationship with God. The overflow of your relationship with God will become your motivation for your ministry to the preschooler in your classroom and his family. A priority for us is to be spiritually prepared.

Being spiritually prepared is important in our lives, and for the lives we touch and teach in preschool ministry.

## 2. A Physically Prepared Environment

What does it feel, look, smell and sound like?

- What does it feel like?

Many preschool families have fought tough battles to get there on Sunday morning.

Someone left their toy at home, breakfast was spilled on a favorite shirt, mom is worried that someone will judge her, and dad is aggravated because they are late. Those feelings don't go away upon arrival but are diminished when we are standing at the classroom door waiting for them. When we smile and show excitement, when we look their child in the eyes and call him by name, when we make them feel special – that makes all the worries of the morning seem trivial. A Preschool Sunday School teacher holds the ability to sway the mood and atmosphere around a preschool family.

- What does it look, sound, and smell like?

Can the preschoolers expect a choice of activities when they walk in the room?

Is it a bright clean room with space to move, dance, and play games?

Are children laughing? Are teachers interacting with students already in the room?

What does it smell like? Is it fresh and clean?

These are important in creating a safe space for your preschooler to walk into each week. A space specifically for them, where they feel comfortable and loved.

### Group Time

**Thinking of your physical environment, discuss with your group the following:**

- **What are things we can improve in our physical environment?**
- **Do our preschool families feel like they are our very special guests every Sunday they come to Sunday School? If not, what are things we can do better?**

## 3. A Learning Environment

A learning environment is one that can accommodate a variety of learning styles. We know some learn by listening, by talking, by watching, or by doing. Since preschoolers are all different, a learning environment should never be weighted too heavily towards one learning style.

Mark Jones interprets the eight learning styles for preschoolers in this way:

1. Hands-On – Personal involvement in an activity that leads a child to a greater understanding of the biblical truth.
2. Senses – Learning through touching, smelling, tasting, hearing, and seeing.
3. Relationships – These form eternal connections between the child and the biblical truth. The teacher's relationship with the preschooler represents God, His Word, and His power as you relate to the preschooler.
4. Curiosity – Preschoolers want to explore, discover, and ask the question, "Why?"
5. Satisfaction – Gaining a sense of accomplishment.
6. Imitation – Preschoolers follow the lead of the adults in their lives.

7. Play – Playing and learning are inseparable in the lives of preschoolers. But play is just activity unless the teacher is guiding the activity and discussion toward foundational biblical truths.
8. Repetition – Hearing the story again allows preschoolers to gain more knowledge and build on previous foundational truths taught. As the child grows, so does her knowledge and understanding.

A Few Good Reminders:

- Pick and choose so you hit different learning styles each week.
- Remember that we want to help kids process and apply biblical truth – not just pass a biblical literacy test.

**Group Time: Worksheet #2**

- **Think of your class members and put each one of them into one of the above learning styles. Some may go in more than one but put all of them in at least one. After finishing this, think about the activities you tend to use weekly. Are you meeting all your children’s main learning style at least once a month?**

### **Loving Preschool Families**

Let’s turn to scripture again to look at loving preschool families.

Let’s go back to Deuteronomy 6:4-7, but instead let’s paraphrase those verses.

“If you are going to make these truths stick in the hearts of your kids, you will have to be more deliberate about moving to your day-to-day rhythms. In the future, there will be things that distract you. But if you make faith a part of the rhythm of your life, it will be a priority for you and for the generations to come.”

Moses was anchoring the faith of the Israelite people to the rhythms of life. He knew that when they got to Canaan it would be hard for the Israelites to remember the things God had asked of them. Moses was looking to the future. The rhythm of their lives was fixing to change, and he knew that they would have to be deliberate about keeping God in the day-to-day moments.

These three reminders can help us remember the importance of loving on families:

1. No one influences a child more than their parent.
2. A parent isn’t the only influence a child needs.
3. Every parent wants tools to help them be a better parent.

**Group Time: Group Discussion – As leader, share an example of the discussion below before you give them over to sharing in their groups.**

- **Showing up in the natural rhythms are wonderful times of teaching. Can you think of a time as a parent, grandparent, or teacher that you were able to solidify a spiritual truth in a preschooler’s life? Share that with your group.**

Kristen Ivy says: **“As parents and children’s ministry leaders, we do not function as people who have no hope. Our God can tackle our problems. Our God can focus our attention. Our God can redeem our families. Our God can transform our children into victorious spiritual champions.”** Especially when we work together.

Working together with preschool families helps us guarantee a solid foundation for preschoolers that will last them a lifetime, and we have some statistics to prove that.

In *Nothing Less – Engaging Kids in a Lifetime of Faith*, Jana McGruder tells us that the top ranked spiritual influencers that are predictive of strong spiritual health in young adults are:

1. Bible Reading – multiple times a week
2. Prayer
3. Serving

And doing these things as children.

She goes on to remind us that to help parents hit these marks there are a few things we can do:

1. Point children to the beauty of God’s Word.
2. Provide resources to help parents.
3. Use solid Bible based programs.
4. Focus on scripture – even with preschoolers.

**The Bible is the force that makes ministry transformational, rather than merely educational.**

We are often tempted to downplay the importance of preschool ministry – but using statistics again, we see that preschool ministry is the bedrock of families getting plugged into church.

In 2010 Barna Research Group along with Orange Ministries found these stats:

- Having children was a catalyst for 5% of families to become active in church for the first time.
- 20% of parents reconnect with church, after a long period of not attending, when they have children.
- 30% of parents become more active in church than they already were after having children.

**When we hear and understand the importance of these stats in relation to God’s commands for the teaching of children, we can easily grasp our responsibility to love on families.**

We can do this by:

- Connecting with parents
- Showing up for significant life events
- Knowing the details of their world
- Showing up predictably in the week to week
- Showing up randomly
- Providing them resources to direct conversations

### **Group Time: Tear Sheets or Posters**

- **Ask conferees to think of the above-mentioned categories of ways we can love on preschool families. Give them time to share some ideas they have for each area by writing them on the posters and then allow to go back and look at what others added.**

The most natural way for us to connect to families is through shared activities. By us showing up in the natural rhythm of their world.

- Taking food in times of sickness or death.
- Sending cards in recognition of the big things.
- Checking in during a child's absence.
- Following up on a big day.
- Showing up at that big day.
- Inviting families to lunch, outings, etc.
- Friending them on social media to stay up to date on life happenings.
- Providing review questions to guide conversations.
- Giving them details of the weekly Bible lesson before Sunday, so that even the most inexperienced in the Bible can know the story.
- Sharing the Bible video with them.
- Providing the Bible verse to memorize.
- Giving parents the tools to become the Bible hero in their kid's eyes.

### **Our basic guide to help us help families should be:**

**Love them – Encourage them – Pray for them – Serve them – and show up consistently.**

In September of 1995 Cal Ripken Jr. played in his 2,131<sup>st</sup> consecutive baseball game, breaking a record that had been set 56 years earlier by Lou Gehrig.

After the 5<sup>th</sup> inning when the game became official, an outpouring of emotion erupted in the stadium. Fireworks were set off, and the crowd stood up and cheered for a solid 22 minutes. 8 curtain calls, a victory lap around the field with 46,000 fans screaming and millions at home watching while wiping tears. All this – not for someone who had hit the most home runs of all time, not for someone who had the most strikeouts of all time – it was a thunderous tribute to a man who simply showed up and did his job, day after day.

In the book *The Art of Neighboring* we are reminded that “It’s often the small moments that count, so focus faithfully on the small things, day in and day out. Small things have a way of adding up and producing disproportionately great results.”

When we ***Show Up and Love Well*** on preschoolers and their families, God will take your efforts and work miracles.

Thank them for attending.

Pray