



Nursery Foundations



This article lists twenty-six fun and easy ideas for incorporating faith practices into the nursery.

FAITH FLUENCY FROM A TO Z

Whether a young child is a first-time visitor to the nursery or one of your weekly regulars, you can weave faith practices into your time together. Try some of these fun A-to-Z ideas for developing faith fluency in your nursery community. Watch how others develop as you become more deliberate in practicing faith in your nursery setting.

- **A is for Artwork.** People have expressed their faith through artwork for thousands of years. Encourage creative expression by giving children in the nursery opportunities to use art materials to express their responses to Bible stories and songs.
- **B is for Birthday.** When a child in the nursery is celebrating a birthday, sing the "Happy Birthday" song, followed by a prayer of thanks to God for that child.
- **C is for Congregation.** Invite the congregation to pray for the children in the nursery. Using cutout shapes of children, write each child's first name and age on a figure and distribute them to members of the congregation, so they can pray for the children.

- **D is for Diapers.** Signage at your diaper changing station can emphasize the love and care expressed for children during this necessary caregiving action.
- **E is for Eating Together.** The earliest Christians broke bread together. Little ones in the nursery continue this tradition with crackers and juice! Say a simple table prayer together before snack time, and model the action of folding hands as you pray.
- **F is for First Aid.** Make sure you have bandages in an easy-to-access spot. When you need to administer one, always accompany it with a hug and a prayer.
- **G is for God's Name.** As you pray, sing, and play together, you'll have moments to introduce other names for God, like Lord, Creator, and Heavenly Father.
- **H is for Handwashing.** While you wash hands together, sing faith-based songs or say faith-based rhymes together. You are helping them associate these loving words with important hygiene skills.
- **I is for Illness.** Sometimes little ones are not in the nursery because they are sick. Talking about—and praying for—these young children with their friends reinforces empathy and prayer practices.
- **J is for Jesus.** Talking about Jesus can be part of everyday conversations with young children. You can also reference images of Jesus that are featured in the Frolic First Bible.
- **K is for Kindness.** We read of the importance of kindness throughout the Bible. The nursery can be a setting for living out this kindness through words, actions, and physical treatment of young children.
- **L is for Leaders.** Invite children to pray for the pastors and other leaders of your church. Write the pastor a note telling about these prayers. Include artwork from the children.

- **M is for Music.** Play Christian music in the nursery, starting with the Frolic Nursery Music CD. Play recordings of other Christian children's songs, along with faith-based songs for adults too. This gives them experience with a variety of Christian music.
- **N is for New Baby.** When a new baby arrives in your nursery, put a bow on him or her for just a few moments while you tell the other children that this child is a gift from God. Celebrate this new gift in your nursery community.
- **O is for Offering.** Display a collection jar in which children can place coins, making sure it is safely tucked away so little ones won't handle the coins. When the jar is full, plan a time when the children can give it to a church leader for a specific purpose.
- **P is for Parade.** Plan a parade with the little ones! Gather instruments, ribbons or streamers, and other colorful and noisy items. Parade through other children's classes as you sing and celebrate. Praise God as you go!
- **Q is for Questions.** You may have talkative toddlers and preschoolers whose favorite question is "Why?" Delight in their questions, provide brief responses, and let children know their imagination and inquisitiveness are encouraged.
- **R is for Reading.** Support early literacy by equipping your nursery with plenty of board books, story Bibles, storybooks, and other formats that are appealing to young children. Make sure some titles are faith-based, like the Frolic series.
- **S is for Stickers.** Give little ones stickers that say "I am a child of God!" or "Jesus loves me!" to remind them—and their parents—that they are loved children of God.
- **T is for Thank You.** Reinforce these words when you hear them, and make sure to thank little ones for their kind and generous actions too. Learn the ASL sign for *thank you*, and teach it to others.

- **U is for Understanding.** Family structures vary! Children in the nursery may have two parents, single parents, biological parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, stepparents, non-parent caregivers, or another configuration. Showing understanding (and acceptance) of different family configurations goes a long way in letting caregivers know their child is welcome and safe.
- **V is for Voice.** Your tone of voice helps establish the emotional climate of the nursery. The words you say can speak volumes about faith, even when you aren't telling a Bible story or saying a prayer.
- **W is for Welcome.** Make sure all nursery staff and volunteers know the process for welcoming a new child into the nursery. Whether they are a newborn, toddler, or preschooler, a confident and kind welcome will let this child—and their caregivers—know that this is a good and safe place.
- **X is for EXtra Care.** Some children in the nursery may require extra attention and care because they're having a challenging day. (Some parents may need extra care too!) Be prepared for the days you're called to do more ministry in your nursery.
- **Y is for You.** You are an important presence in the lives of children who visit the nursery. Let children know about your own faith by sharing stories, prayers, and other parts of your faith journey.
- **Z is for Zest.** Nursery workers are fueled by the energy of children and the understanding that they are making a difference in the faith lives of these little ones. Celebrate this enthusiasm!

Remember that the language and practices of faith, when learned young, can last a lifetime!