



GOD'S PLAN FOR **DEVELOPMENT**

**Leading Others to Understand
God's Good Design**

by Zoe E. Jones



Presbyterian Church in America

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Although many publishers do not capitalize terms, and particularly pronouns which refer to the Trinity, in this study CDM publications has capitalized those elements for clarity of reference.

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INTRODUCTION

GOD'S PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT

Overview

This eight-lesson unit, on God's plan for human development, has been used with both under-resourced and economically strong families. All participants have valuable things to share and to learn. This unit is designed for families with preschool and younger children to engage in nurturing, holistic, and educational endeavors. It provides a time for Caregivers to be in a supportive group and to learn more about the reasons behind the children's learning activities.

These methods were first tested when I was designing and co-teaching curriculum for the parenting workshops at a public preschool in a U.S. inner city. Parents and other caregivers are much more responsive to learn when engaged in activities *with* their children, rather than being taught something about, but separated from, their children.

Each lesson has three main components:

1. A whole group time, which is teacher-directed and incorporates storytelling
2. A Caregiver-with-their-child time
3. A teacher-directed time with the Caregivers while the children play in another area with supervision

This curriculum can be utilized as a church Sunday school class, as part of a mom or parent group, as a neighborhood outreach, or as part of a school or daycare program.

This curriculum introduces the triune God (Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit) and the story of the gospel. It is missional in nature and designed

God's Plan for Development

for Christian families as well as those not in the church. The lessons present God as Creator and Redeemer in a gentle and sensitive way. Bible references are a part of each lesson and influence the whole lesson.

To prepare for each lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passages within their broader context. Consider the intent and culture of both the author and the original audience of each passage. A short devotional is provided in each lesson to assist with this. Then, carefully read over the full lesson making notes of supplies and preparation needed. Connect with your helpers to let them know of anything special in the lesson.

God's Plan for Development focuses on how God designed humans to grow in a predictable manner. At various stages of human development, certain areas of growth are dominant. For example, prenatally and in the first year of life, physical development is significant. This influences the way we should care for and teach young children. **Child development and the importance of attachment to caregivers are key to understanding young children.**

Connecting with the Families

This curriculum is designed to be done with both believers and unbelievers. Since it may draw out some deep feelings about life and God, this Teacher's Guide will help you know how to gently lead people into better understanding and, hopefully, acceptance of the truths that are presented. Building trusting relationships with the families is more important than getting through the lessons. Observe the children well to look for possible developmental delays that should be evaluated by a pediatrician.

The progression of starting with God as Creator and ending with the gospel is intentional—meant to be done slowly, prayerfully, and carefully. God draws people to Himself in many ways: nature, beauty, order, and even the science of human development. **Everyone** has

something to learn and something to offer; even those who were not parented well will have valuable contributions.

For more information on how to approach sensitive topics like faith or how to create a welcoming environment for people who aren't in traditional family groups/are dealing with challenging situations, please see Appendices.

Lesson Titles:

1. Made in God's Image (Caregiver Attachment)
2. Look How I Grow (Physical Development)
3. Exploring God's World (Sensory Development)
4. Let's Chat! (Language Development)
5. How Are You Today? (Social & Emotional Development)
6. What Shall We Learn Today? (Cognitive Development)
7. Let's Create! (Creative Development)
8. Two More Parts of Development (Moral & Spiritual Development)

Schedule Suggestions: 60-90 Minutes

5 Minutes	Gathering for Motivation
10 Minutes	Whole Group/Storytelling
20-30 Minutes	Caregiver & Child Activities
5 Minutes	Closing—then children leave to play
20-30 Minutes	Caregiver-Only Time

Scheduling in 10 minutes of flextime allows for some "wiggle room." For example, there may be a day that most people arrive late or that the Caregiver & Child Activities take longer. On days when things run smoothly, you will have more time for discussion or to answer questions at the end.

Providing 30 minutes for breakfast, lunch, or dinner before the class is a great way to encourage attendance and develop relationships.



Lesson One

MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE
CAREGIVER ATTACHMENT





PREPARING YOUR HEART FOR TEACHING

Read Genesis 1

Genesis 1 is the story Moses shared with the newly emancipated Israelites of how God created the world. Verses 26 and 27 are significant as they reflect our triune God talking about making people as image-bearers and then doing it! All humans are born image-bearers—reflecting our wonderful God—even if they don't know Him as Savior and Lord. This is what you want to remember as you teach, especially if your group has people who either aren't believers or have been hurt by the church. In this first lesson, we are only introducing God as the Designer of creation. You want them to understand that *all* people are image-bearers of God, even their children. Generally, in God's common grace, people deeply desire to take care of their young children so their children can attach in healthy ways.

Note: See Genesis 1:2 and John 1:1-5 for more clarity in the triune God's presence in creation. The first verse in John is a companion verse to Genesis 1:1.

Materials:

Main Lesson/Story

- Mother/Baby artwork or illustrations
- Basket of Props
 - Baby Maggie doll
 - Blocks
 - Blanket
 - Toy & Book
 - Doll clothes
 - Bottle

Caregiver & Child Activities

- Copies of handout
- Age-appropriate toys
- Child friendly snacks

Caregiver-Only Time

- Worksheets
- Pens
- Beverages & snacks

Children's Playtime

- Toys
- Coloring sheets
- Paper
- Books
- Crayons

Objectives:

1. Families will listen to and participate in a storytelling activity.
2. They will engage in nurturing activities with one another.
3. Caregivers will describe ways that God nurtures them and how they can demonstrate that kind of love to their children.
4. Caregivers will discuss ways to nurture themselves.

Gather for Motivation:

Sing one of the choruses found on page 16 as a signal to gather.

Show the group mother/baby artwork or illustrations. Either one picture of a loving mother and baby or several pictures (perhaps a collage you've made), depending on the number of races and ethnicities found in your group. See the Introduction for further information as to why attention to diverse visuals is important.

Main Lesson (Teacher's words in *italics*):

1. *"It looks like these women love their babies very much, doesn't it? Today I am going to tell you a story about Baby Maggie. Baby Maggie's family loves her very much."*
2. Using the props, tell the children the story about Baby Maggie. Invite the toddlers and preschoolers in the group to take the props out of the basket as you tell the story. Encourage the whole group to act out parts of the story. If time permits, encourage people to list ways that Baby Maggie's family showed love to her.



Story: Meet Baby Maggie

Baby Maggie is brand new—just born! Maggie's family loves her very much. Baby Maggie's mommy picks her up when she cries and holds her in her arms and kisses her little head. She nurses her because Maggie is hungry. Then Mom wraps Maggie in a blanket and lays her down for a nap. Baby Maggie wakes up and cries. Grandma picks

Maggie up. She notices that Baby Maggie is wet. Grandma takes off the baby's clothes and diaper and puts on dry ones. Then Grandma cuddles and sings to Baby Maggie. Baby Maggie's older brother comes over with a toy. Brother holds it up so Baby Maggie can see it. Baby Maggie just looks and looks at him, not the toy! It is time for bed. Daddy gives Baby Maggie a bottle. Then, Daddy reads a story to Maggie and Brother . . . and rocks them both gently. Baby Maggie is loved! (So is Big Brother.)

Caregiver & Child Activities:

1. Go over the Loving Family Handout with the families.
2. Encourage the families to choose a few materials in the room, and then find a space either in or outside of the room to begin doing the age-appropriate activities on the handout. Remind the families to return the materials to the designated areas after using. Toward the end of the time, give a ten- and then five-minute warning. (An alternative to the families working individually is to go through the activities together as a group, especially if there are non-readers. This works well with a small group.)

Closing:

Sing one of the choruses found on page 16 as a signal to gather.

Say the following as they gather.

"You did love-activities today with your families!"

"Who loves you?"

"Guess what? God loves you too! We are all made in God's image!"

Caregiver-Only Time:

- Toddlers and preschoolers leave with adult helpers.
- Pass out the Caregiver Worksheets. Go through the worksheets as a group. Make sure to encourage participation. (See Caregiver Worksheet with Teacher Notes for more information.)

LOVING FAMILY HANDOUT

Made in God's Image - Caregiver Attachment

(To be practiced in class and at home.)

Babies

1. Rock and tell your baby *"I love you."*
2. Recite this, as you point to each body part:

Here are your eyes.	Here are your hands.
Here is your nose.	Here are your toes.
Here is your mouth.	Here is your body.
See how it grows!	See how it grows!

3. Choose a few baby toys to play with together.
4. If your baby is able, let your baby eat a snack as you cuddle.

Toddlers

1. Allow your toddler to enjoy a snack as you cuddle.
2. Allow your child to choose one or two toys. Play with them together.
3. Pick your child up, gently swing around, and say, *"I love you,"* over and over again.
4. Recite the rhyme found in the baby section, inviting your child to point to the body parts.

Preschoolers

1. Hold your preschooler on your lap. Tell and show your child, *"I love you"* in many different ways. Examples: If able, use different languages, make signs with your hands, drawing, writing, rubbing noses, butterfly kisses, kiss both cheeks like they do in other cultures, kiss hands. Your child can also do these activities with another person in your family group, if desired.
2. Enjoy a snack **together**.
3. Make up a special cheer or handshake.
4. Do activities #2 and #4 on the toddler list.

CAREGIVER WORKSHEET

Made in God's Image - Caregiver Attachment

The Bible teaches us that we are made in God's image—that we, as humans, reflect God in different ways! Think about an image in a mirror, not exactly the same, but it's similar. One way that we reflect God's image is in how we love our children. (It is okay if you don't believe in God or the Bible; you are still welcome in this class.)

Why your interactions with your child matter:

1. _____ is the most important thing you can do for your child at the beginning of his/her life. Your child needs to _____!
2. Why?

How to apply this to your family's life:

1. Repeat the activities done today at home. What are some other activities you can do?
2. Remember, God loves and cares for you! Think of some ways you can experience God's care. Try out some of the nurturing activities your teacher has available.
3. List some activities that you can do that are soothing to you. Jot down what you liked doing in today's lesson. Add to the list other things that are soothing to you.

CAREGIVER WORKSHEET - TEACHER NOTES

Made in God's Image - Caregiver Attachment

(Teacher notes in italics)

The Bible teaches us that we are made in God's image; that we, as humans, reflect God in different ways! Think about an image in a mirror; not exactly the same, but it's similar. One way that we reflect God's image is in how we love our children. (It is okay if you don't believe in God or the Bible; you are still welcome in this class.) **A mirror is helpful for demonstrating.**

Why your interactions with your child matter:

1. ***Nurturing*** is the most important thing you can do for your child at the beginning of his/her life. Your child needs to ***attach!***
2. Why? ***A small baby is completely dependent on adults for physical and emotional care. Babies cry not to be manipulative but because they have needs that they cannot meet themselves and cannot express. Receiving love is one of their top needs. And all the rest of their development is based on their attachment to their parents.***

How to apply this to your family's life:

This is for Caregivers to consider on their own. There are a variety of answers.

1. Repeat the activities done today at home. What are some other activities you can do?
2. Remember, God loves and cares for you! Think of some ways you can experience God's care. Try out some of the nurturing activities your teacher has available. ***(Examples: a cup of tea, a hot bath, a soft blanket or robe, music)***
3. List some activities that you can do that are soothing to you. Jot down what you liked doing in today's lesson. Add to the list other things that are soothing to you.