

Godly Play for children and teachers – Jerome Berryman

(Notes from: The Complete Guide to Godly Play Volume 1 by Jerome Berryman)

- a distinctive approach to Christian ministry with children, both innovative and deeply grounded in our spiritual tradition.

Godly Play:

- Helps resacralize everyday things such as bread, wine, candles, oil, wood, linens, clay. Reteaches a sacramental worldview in a society that is so often utilitarian and materialistic.
- Teaches children and adults that being quiet and deliberate about their work can be just as satisfying as being noisy, busy and pushy. Delivers this counter-cultural message in a comforting and consistent way.
- Combines the two primary gateways to knowing for young children – language (the verbal system) and play (the non-verbal system).
- Is a *discovery* method of learning that engages the whole child – heart, hands, mind, senses, intuition. This is the best way for children (and adults!) to internalise what is being taught.
- Uses craft activities to allow children to create or express their own response to the story or parable. They have the opportunity to enter the story, wonder about it and *then* create meaning for their own lives.
- Respects the many demands placed on teachers' time – maintains stable set-up and routine from week to week.
- Teaches reliance upon a gracious God who is real and accessible in all the mystery of life, both sad and joyful- rather than dependence upon the transient "magic" that comes from the latest toy or video game.
- Teaches children to respect the things and people they work with and to enjoy each with care and patience.
- Teaches the classic rhythm for living modelled in the Bible: the alternation of action and reflection, engagement and prayer. Teaches those who teach it and those who learn it to build a spiritual rule/way of life.
- Teaches kindness and mutuality through its rituals and by the way it organises physical space, objects and the community of children. A GP community embodies the biblical ethic of how people are to live together.
- Offers a contemporary and child-accessible version of the ancient spiritual practice of *lectio divina*: holy reading, wondering and responding to the Bible's sacred stories. Helps children to know God and the Bible instead of simply knowing *about* them.
- Teaches that everything in God's creation is charged with the possibility of holiness, including each of us, and that we are in relationship with everything in Creation.
- Teaches that there is *kairos* time as well as *chronos* time. *Kairos* is not concerned with knowing what the time is, rather it gives us the opportunity to reflect on what time is for.

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