

Wondering With Children



As we minister to and with the children in our congregations, many find it challenging to engage children in theological conversations, and for good reason! Children's brains process their environments with a unique mix of concrete thinking and fantasy. So how do we even begin to engage young children in conversation about God, Jesus, and most Bible stories?

One of the best ways to do this is to engage the children in a process of Wondering. This concept comes out of the *Godly Play* model of faith formation developed by Jerome Berryman, who based it on the Montessori method of education.

Wondering recognizes children's innate sense of the presence of God and helps them to explore their faith through the Story and the opportunity to wonder about its meaning for them. This wondering, with the guidance of an adult, is essential for a child's spiritual formation and for developing a language of faith. The process of wondering about the Bible stories and engaging children's imaginations is teaching them how to think theologically at an age-appropriate level.

The wondering model invites the child to go beyond a binary understanding of good and bad. It helps children to "get it right" the first time, at their current developmental age level, so that they don't have to unlearn inaccurate understandings later.

Examples of wondering together about a Bible story could be:

- I wonder what part of the story you liked best.
- I wonder what part of the story is most important
- I wonder where God is in this story.
- I wonder where you are in the story.
- I wonder what might happen next.

An excellent resource for both parents and congregational leaders on this topic is *I Wonder: Engaging a Child's Curiosity About the Bible* by Elizabeth F. Caldwell.