



Getting Ready to Create a Schedule

- **Know what you have, what you need, and what you want.** An initial inventory of your story materials may seem daunting, but it is essential to know what story materials you have before you begin planning. Taking and maintaining the inventory can be a good job for a volunteer who wants to support your Godly Play program in a way other than serving as a guide. Investing the time to teach someone (or a group of people) some of the principles of Godly Play and how to care for the environment of your Godly Play room not only eases the burden on the guides, it also builds community and creates new advocates for the important work you are doing. If any stories have missing or broken pieces, try to replace or repair them before the new program year starts so that the schedule you put together can be effectively executed. Keep notes on stories you will need in within a year and within three years.
- **Remember that the children's needs are the top priority in a Godly Play classroom.** If you are not a guide in the classroom you are planning for, be sure to check in with the people who know these particular children best and invite their input. Children, and especially young children in the 3-6 range, routinely engage the same material over and over again (how many times have you read Goodnight Moon at bed time?) If the guides working with a particular group of children are ready to extend the core stories, it may be time to invite them to work with an older age group who are also ready to explore new materials. Research school breaks and major community events and include them in your planning document alongside notes about the liturgical year. As you plan, consider what, if any, impact they might have on your circle of children. If you know in advance that a special event is likely to cut short the time the children have in the Godly Play room, consider how to best maintain the unhurried pace and attentiveness to silence that the children expect during the shortened class.
- **Keep the Spiral Curriculum in mind as you plan.** For classes with experienced Godly Players aged 6-9 and 9-12, create a three year story cycle grounded in the core stories with an intentional plan for introducing extension and enrichment stories over the course of their three years in the each room. The story cycle for the oldest age group can also include synthesis stories. If your program year does not allow you to present all of the core stories each year in the youngest classroom, you will also want a three year cycle of stories for that classroom. Appendix B in the revised and expanded editions of *The Complete Guide to Godly Play* contains the complete list of stories labeled by genre as well as category (core, extension, enrichment, synthesis), and included detailed information about the spiral curriculum.
- **Be clear about the purpose of your Godly Play program, provide opportunities for guides and parents to understand that purpose, and be attentive to what "unspoken lesson" the schedule you create could be communicating to both adults and children.** Consider these thoughts on the purpose of Godly Play: "Children know God's elusive presence, but they have few opportunities to learn an adequate language to identify, name, express, or gain perspective on it. Godly Play makes classical Christian language available to them in a way that allows them to discover that what they have experienced personally has important echoes in the larger narrative of the Bible and the

church." (Berryman, The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 3 Revised and Expanded Church Publishing, 2017, Appendix A p.6.) "The goal of Godly Play is for children to move through the spiral curriculum during early, middle, and late childhood in such a way that they will enter adolescence with an inner working model of the classical Christian language system to root them deeply in the tradition and at the same time allow them to be open to the future" (Berryman, Teaching Godly Play, Morehouse Publishing, 2009, p. 21) Consistently evaluate your schedule, along with other parts of your program, to ensure that the structures you have in place are serving the big picture, long term hopes of your community for your children.

- **Schedule time for getting ready (children, families, and guides).** Consider offering a "Getting Ready for Godly Play" room for two and young three year olds. Begin the year with at least one "orientation" Sunday, and be prepared to spend even longer introducing the room, process, and expectations if you have a large group of new children or are starting Godly Play for the first time. Provide a "10 Best Ways for Parents" at the beginning of the year, along with time to explore the room outside of class time and an explanation of the process for observing during class time. Prioritize nurturing the spiritual health and growth of guides, providing opportunities for guides to come together to pray, reflect on their practice, feast, and play. If possible, it is also helpful to set aside periodic opportunities for guides to deeply engage the response materials available to the children in their circle.
- **Consider the role of planned work days in your schedule.** Programs with the typical "45 minute hour" often find it necessary to schedule a work day every four to six weeks, while programs with a longer period for Godly Play each week may find that holding one Sunday open as a work day and simply agreeing in advance to adjust the schedule to best support the circle of children works best for them.
- **Leverage technology!** A simple Excel or Google sheet can help you keep up with your three year story cycles so that you or the next leader can easily make adjustments to the calendar and start the cycle over again once it is completed. We have several samples to share electronically. Free services like Sign-Up Genius are helpful to keep your story and guide schedules up to date and accessible to all ministry leaders. If it is difficult to schedule in-person refresher trainings or times for guides to reflect together, consider using Zoom, a free video conferencing platform. Consider the formative value to parents of creating a "marketing plan" for your program as part of your scheduling process. Map out key information you want to share throughout the year, and consider including the digital Godly Play Parent Pages as part of your effort.
- **Ask for help.** Have a unique situation, particular concern, or just feel overwhelmed by all of this information? The Godly Play Foundation Trainers and Missioners are here to help! You can find a list of trainers here: <https://www.godlyplayfoundation.org/godly-play-training/us-trainers/> and a list of missioners here: <https://www.godlyplayfoundation.org/godly-play-foundation-missioners/> The Godly Play Facebook Page is another great resource for feedback and ideas.