

FASCINATING PRESCHOOLERS



TINA HOUSER

TINA HOUSER'S
FASCINATING
PRESCHOOLERS
WITH KELLEY HOUSER



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Fascinating Preschoolers
Written by Tina Houser with Kelley Houser

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BIG TIME THANK YOU!

This book has been a delight to put together, mainly because I find an amazing amount of joy when I have the opportunity to fascinate preschoolers. I love their wide eyes. I love how they wait for you to do the unexpected. I love their unconditional hugs. I love when they are amazed by the stories of God's faithful people.

Let me pause for a few moments and express some BIG TIME THANK YOUS. Thank you to the team at Warner Press, especially Karen Rhodes, who was so understanding about a missed deadline. I had some major health issues surface right when the files were due, and they graciously took the pressure off to "get 'er done."

Thank you to all the preschoolers in my life who constantly inspire me to figure out something new they'll be fascinated by. Bowen and Kendall (my 7-year-old grandtwins) have now moved beyond the preschool years, but it's only due to the challenge of staying one step ahead of them that the activities in this book came to be. And now their little sister, Lucy, has entered the world, and I'm so pumped about getting the opportunity to fascinate her also. I love the preschoolers I get to love on at our church. Their smiles and hugs are a constant reward for preparing fascinating activities. Some of them are pictured in this book: Alex Oswald, McKenna Graf, Olivia Graf, and Emma Graf. They were amazing at the photo shoot! And, to those preschoolers I don't even know—the ones I see when I'm shopping or at the park—thank you for accepting my smile. I pray that someone fascinates your own personal relationship with God.

I never want it to go unsaid that I am forever grateful for the support of my husband, Ray, and son, Jarad. They always encourage me to stretch much further than I think is possible. When you have wind in your sails, like Ray and Jarad provide, you don't hesitate to shoot for the stars. To say I love them and appreciate them is far too little.

The thanks I want to express to my lovely, talented daughter-in-law, Kelley, is huge...gargantuan...humongous! Kelley's really the one who has enlightened me on how to fascinate preschoolers. I continually learn from watching how she communicates with the littlest ones. She's a master! Many of the ideas in this book were inspired by Kelley or tweaked from projects we have worked on together. Thank You, Lord, for the gift of such a beautiful godly woman who blesses our entire family.

Thank You, Lord, for giving me opportunities to ignite others to minister to and with preschoolers. I am so blessed to serve You and want to do that with every ounce of energy and enthusiasm You give me. I'm grateful to be able to capture the ideas You put in my brain and use them to touch the lives of children I will never meet this side of heaven. You are my good, good Father.

In His incredible joy, *Tina!*

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UNDERSTANDING PRESCHOOLERS

EMBRACING FASCINATION

A preschooler's existence is all about learning what their world is like. This includes their body, their family, the community, and anything else that happens across their path. The things that we take for granted...things that are commonplace...may never have been experienced by a preschooler. This is something new! They're seeing it for the first time, and it's *FASCINATING!* It doesn't mean that it's a new technology, which fascinates adults more. It simply means that it's new to them.

Embrace their fascination. They're trying to do something on their own and it's fascinating. Yes, how to change the stations on the radio is fascinating to a preschooler. Yes, getting peanut butter on a piece of bread is fascinating to a preschooler. Yes, sitting on the top of the dryer and pulling wet clothes out of the washing machine is fascinating to a preschooler. How ordinary and mundane to adults, but how fascinating to preschoolers.

Preschoolers are notorious for asking questions. They want to find out more about what they're seeing and experiencing for the first time. You can collect all kinds of figures about the number of questions a preschooler asks each day (anywhere between 200 and 800!). If you're conservative and go with the lowest number on that scale, my goodness, that's still a lot of questions! The more you fascinate kids, though, the more questions they're going to ask, so get ready. Their questions are a super-valuable tool for retaining information from their fascinating experience. Don't discount those questions.

Preschoolers learn through experiences and not simply listening to words. Experiences build their vocabulary exponentially. Every new word also has new ways of describing it, which means more vocabulary. Our goal is not to cram knowledge into kids, but to *FASCINATE* them with the wonders of the world God created. Direct them to new experiences, and don't be satisfied to keep repeating the same ones. It takes a little extra work to stay out of a rut. But, it makes teaching these little ones so much more interesting when you're there, and they discover something for the very first time.

So, what fascinates a preschooler? Just about anything—anything they've not seen before—anything they've not done before. Did you know that fascination has a sound? It's a squeal of delight. It's an, "Oh my goodness!" It's talking fast and saying the same thing over and over, because they don't know what to ask first. It's giggles. It's hearing, "Do that again!" because once just isn't enough. The sounds of fascination make my heart soar! They are my reward and my motivation when I'm preparing.

Embrace fascination. Make it the banner that flies over your ministry to preschoolers. Create experiences that will fascinate them with the Word of God and with their Creator, Savior, and Lord. If this is the time when their brains are taking in more information than at any other time in their lives, then we need to take advantage of that by introducing them to a foundation of faith in the One True God. Don't make their learning just about numbers and letters, but help them learn about the love letter God has written to each of us.

Speak the language of fascination and you will find great satisfaction and joy.



Tinsley and Maelyn Gardner sat in front of the oven door and watched their peanut butter muffins bake for 30 minutes. Why? Because they were fascinated!

UNDERSTANDING PRESCHOOLERS

PRESCHOOL PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Preschoolers go through developmental stages so quickly! The child you have this week most likely will not have the same capabilities next week. Vocabulary is growing by close to 100 words a month. Social skills are taking hold. And, their physical development changes almost daily. The child who was totally unable to stand on one foot last Sunday can now rival a flamingo this Sunday.

Parents, teachers, and children's ministry leaders are all on the same team. They all are interested in the whole child and seeing each one develop in a well-rounded manner. So, it's wise to incorporate age-appropriate activities that will exercise the specific developmental stage of the preschoolers you teach.

Let's look at some physical things they are learning to do and how we can include those activities in our biblical teaching.

Sweeping

Preschoolers are learning the sweeping motion.

- Practice with a small broom to actually clean up.
- Sweep a ping-pong ball into the correct bucket—one with a smile or one with a frown—to respond to a situation.
- Put animal stickers on milk jug caps. Give the kids dustpans and hand brooms (from the dollar store) to gather up the animals to put on the ark.

Balancing

From balancing their entire body to balancing something in a spoon, balancing is a big part of physical development.

- Walk across balance beams to retrieve something to do with your lesson.
- Write questions on cardboard pancakes. Challenge the kids to carry one across the room on a pancake turner. When they reach the wall, they can respond to the question.
- Walk across inflatable pool mattresses (end to end) when telling the story of Jesus walking on the water.
- Balance a beanbag on your head and walk to the "hillside" where Jesus is talking. Beanbags are so flexible and much easier to keep on your head than a book—a great place to begin.

Jumping

- Jump in front of a full-length mirror. Kids love to see themselves jump, and they are not familiar with what they look like from head to toe.
- Jump between two boards as if jumping across the river/sea. Then, move the boards a little bit further apart. Talk about the Israelites crossing the Jordan River or the Red Sea. The river is wide!

Using Tools

- Hammers are fascinating to preschoolers. When Jesus was a boy, He learned how to work with wood by practicing at Joseph's feet. Have nails already started in wood, and let the kids pound to their hearts' content.
- Use a large spike and big piece of wood to practice hammering when talking about Jesus being nailed to the cross. Listen to the sound.

Digging

- Mix some brown M&Ms in a bucket of potting soil. The kids can use spoons or toy claw gardening tools to find the M&Ms. We must decide what is good and what is bad...what are good choices and what are bad choices. They may look alike, and we need to separate the good and bad choices.
- Plant seeds so kids can watch a plant grow. Isn't God amazing!

Pinching

They are learning to bring their fingers to their thumb in order to cause the pinching motion.

- Use appetizer tongs to pick up Styrofoam packing peanuts. Gather manna or sheep.
- Fold a paper plate in half; then decorate it like a face. Kids can pinch the plate together to use as a puppet. Normally shy children will respond to questions and carry on conversations when they have a puppet.
- Use grabbers—long sticks with an animal head on the end—to move objects from one place to another.

Pouring

Preschoolers love to pour!

- Pass several ping-pong balls from cup to cup around a circle while music plays. When the music stops, the kids with a ball in their cup will say the memory verse together.
- A child will carry a half-cup of water, while walking on his knees, to someone at the end of the room. That person will have his/her bare feet in a pan. The child will pour his water on the person's feet and say, "Jesus washed their feet." Or, this could go along with the woman kneeling to pour perfume on Jesus' feet.

Tossing/Throwing

- The kids can take turns tossing beanbags into a tub or inflatable pool ring. Each time a beanbag goes in, the teacher will yell out another disciple's name: "Peter was in the boat!" Then, the kids will echo this back before the next person tosses. When the thirteenth beanbag goes in, yell, "Jesus joined them in the boat!"
- Cut pool noodles into 18" lengths. The leader will hold a hula hoop, and the kids will toss their pool noodles through the hoop. Use this with the story of David and Jonathan—with the pool noodle representing the arrows that Jonathan is shooting as a message to David. When a noodle goes through the hoop, the child should shout, "Go farther!"

Oh my, there are a zillion more skills—bouncing, rolling, climbing, catching! Think about how you can incorporate the natural physical development stages into your next lesson. Your kids will be more engaged and will have one more opportunity to hone those skills.



A NEW T-SHIRT

Romans 5:6 (ICB)

Christ died for us while we were still weak. We were living against God, but at the right time, Christ died for us.

Needed:

- Black construction paper
- Large white T-shirt
- Large T-shirt, any color
- Tape

Salvation is a difficult concept to grasp, but we need to start laying the foundation at an early age. Providing many different visuals helps kids put the pieces together and understand what Jesus actually did.

- Choose two children to help with this activity. Place a large T-shirt (any color) over one child's regular clothes; then, place a large white T-shirt over the other child's clothes.
- **Beforehand**, cut out pieces of black construction paper that will represent sin. The shape of the black paper should look like a blotch. With every sin discussed, the leader will tape a black blotch to the child's any-colored shirt.

Address the child who has on the colored T-shirt.

- *Let's pretend this child's name is Jimmy. Jimmy is totally bummed today. His week was really rough. It seemed that he made really poor choices everywhere he went.*
- *On Monday, Jimmy got angry at the playground and said some things to this kid that were really mean.* (Attach a sin-blotch to the child.)
- *On Tuesday, Jimmy's parents asked him to put away his toy trucks that were in the hallway and he just ignored them. So, when Mom got up in the middle of the night, she tripped over them and fell into the cabinets. He totally disobeyed his parents.* (Attach a sin-blotch to the child.)
- *On Thursday, Jimmy lied to his preschool teacher. He told her that he hadn't been the helper of the day yet, when he really had been just the week before.* (Attach a sin-blotch to the child.)
- *On Friday, Jimmy got a time-out for being mean to his little sister. But she was such a pest to Jimmy! Still...he really should not have shoved her.* (Attach a sin-blotch to the child.)
- *And then on Saturday, it seemed like Jimmy couldn't do anything right! He may have set a record for the number of times anyone had ever been put in time-out!* (Attach several sin-blotches to the child.)
- *What a week! Jimmy feels covered in the things that he did wrong. These are what we call sin. Have any of you ever felt this way? Have you ever had a day, or a week, when you were always getting into trouble?*

Talking to the child in the white T-shirt.

- ***You represent Jesus. You're wearing white, because you're the perfect Son of God. You never once disobeyed God. You never made bad choices and sinned. But when we disobey, we get punished. So, God should punish us for not obeying Him, right?***
- ***(Point to kid representing Jesus)***
- ***When You (Jesus) died on the cross, you (Jesus) took the punishment for Jimmy's sins.*** The child wearing the white T-shirt representing Jesus will remove the stained any-colored T-shirt from the other child and then remove his own white T-shirt. He will then place his white T-shirt on the other child, and put on the T-shirt covered with sin blotches. (Point to the appropriate kids as you speak.)
- ***We should be punished for all the things we've done against God. But Jesus says He will take that punishment for us when we ask Him, and when we believe that He is God's Son. Because Jesus took our punishment, our lives are clean, and God gives us a brand new start.***



TINA HOUSER'S FASCINATING PRESCHOOLERS

WITH KELLEY HOUSER

Pretty much everything in a preschooler's life is new...and all of it is fascinating! Through each experience they learn more about the world, themselves, and hopefully, more about God. *Fascinating Preschoolers* is full of activities that will spark a preschooler's interest, cause their eyes to get big with wonder, and connect them to their Creator.

Embrace fascination. Make it the banner that flies over your ministry to preschoolers. Create experiences that will fascinate them with the Word of God and getting to know their Creator, Savior, and Lord. If this is the time when their brains are taking in more information than at any other time in their lives, then we need to take advantage of that by introducing them to a foundation of faith in the One True God. Don't make their learning just about numbers and letters, but help them learn about the love letter God has written to each of us.

This book contains a huge variety of ideas to fascinate preschoolers and connect them with the Word—prayer ideas, worship instruments, science, games...we call it, "the tina stuff." Along with the ideas come a list of items needed for each activity, and often a picture of kids taking part in the activity. You won't be running out of ideas with which to fascinate these precious youngsters.



After 33 incredible years in children's ministry within the local church, Tina thrives on being able to train those who share her passion for reaching kids for the Kingdom. She is a member of the Kidmin Academy faculty, focusing on early childhood ministry. Tina has authored 17 books, one of which is used as a textbook in some universities (but it's not boring). She loves...really loves... spending time with her three grandkids who give her tons of ideas to use in kids' ministry and refer to her as Silly Grandma. Check out what's happening with Tina at tinahouser.net.



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