

Resources to Explore Godly Play in Depth

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Godly Play invites one into a life-long journey of exploration. A number of resources have become available recently that you may find helpful for your continuing education. We shall begin with two of my own recent books. The first is about the big picture in theology and the second one is about the art of teaching Godly Play.

First, let's look at the big picture. *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace* was published in late 2009. It traces the history of what theologians have said about children and the experience their views were based on. Some twenty-five theologians were reviewed and four themes emerged from this study: ambivalence, ambiguity, indifference, and grace. These themes form the implied, or *de facto*, doctrine of children that still shapes the church today, often in unconscious ways. This confusion needs to be cleared away, so children, as a means of grace, can be more clearly recognized and nourished.

Teaching Godly Play: How to Mentor the Spiritual Development of Children is a good companion to *Children and the Theologians*. *Teaching Godly Play* is a revised and expanded, second edition of a book published in 1995. It begins by discussing why serious-serene play is important to nourish children's spirituality and then moves the reader through the process of how to mentor children so they can enter adolescence with an inner working model of the Christian language system. This system includes sacred stories, parables, liturgical action, and contemplative silence. It needs to be internalized and functioning by adolescence so it is available in a deeply rooted, yet open and creative way, to help young people to fashion a new, larger, more conscious, and increasingly

flexible identity during this important time in life. They need the security and creativity of “playful orthodoxy” to encounter new situations, new people, new ideas, and other religions in constructive ways without becoming uprooted. This *method* is used in combination with the Godly Play *curriculum*, which is found in the seven volumes of *The Complete Guide To Godly Play*. The eighth volume will be published later this year.

In addition to the above resources in theology, method, and curriculum there has also been a great deal written recently about the spirituality of children. I would like to mention three key books in addition to one of my own from this growing collection. The three books are David Hay’s and Rebecca Nye’s *The Spirit of the Child*; Rebecca Nye’s *Children’s Spirituality (What It Is and Why It Matters)*; and Brendan Hyde’s *Children and Spirituality: Searching for Meaning and Connectedness*. My own 1991 book *Godly Play* is also useful. There is even a scholarly journal now available, published in England, called *The International Journal of Children’s Spirituality* to support your work.

Finally, an exciting new opportunity has just become available at General Seminary in New York City. Beginning in the fall of 2010, a certificate and an M.A. will be offered in the spiritual guidance of children. General is the oldest of the Episcopal seminaries, but all qualified students are welcome. The theology, foundational theory, method, and practice of Godly Play are emphasized and creative new ways of distance learning are being developed. This program is developed jointly by The Center for the Theology of Childhood of the Godly Play Foundation and General Seminary to serve the children of the world.

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