

Celebrating Special Events with Toddlers

by Lois Truman

Celebrating special days with toddlers is unique. The beauty of working with toddlers is that everything can be celebrated because everything is new and exciting to a two- or three-year-old! Most people can trace their first memories back to their toddler years. The significant milestones made during the toddler years make lifelong impressions. Older ages also have significant milestones unique to their stages in life such as losing/getting new teeth, beginning school, or being baptized, but toddlers encounter a total of more new experiences than any other age/stage.



To celebrate means to mark, memorialize, commemorate, observe, or recognize a special event. When we celebrate Jesus, we extol, praise, exalt, glorify and honor Him. In celebrating special events in our classrooms, we need to be sure we are making a good connection between celebrating Jesus in the events. Celebrate each day

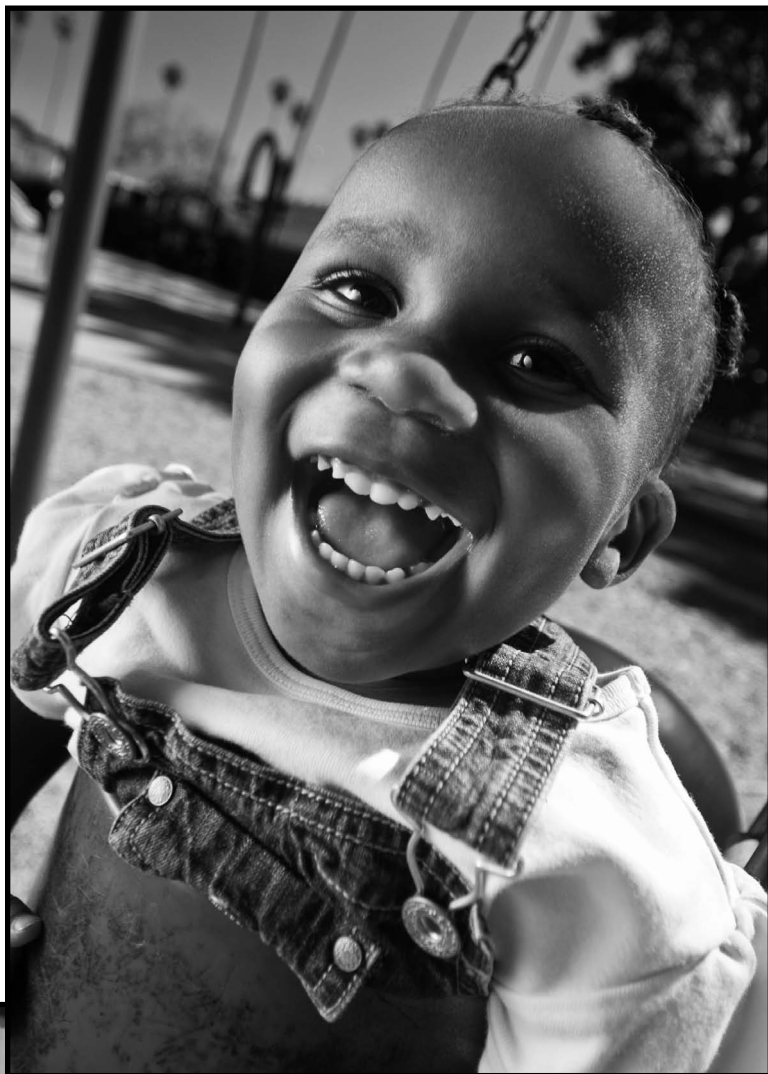


that Jesus wakes us up and starts us on our way! Celebrate how we are all wonderfully made to be like Him! Celebrate that He loves us very much! Celebrate how He helps us grow big!

Toddlers associate certain objects or things with special events. Our two toddler grandchild-

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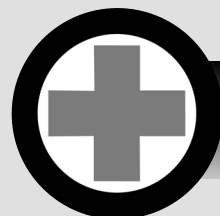
dren immediately associate candles with birthdays. When they see a candle they break out into singing “Hoppy bir-day,” and then pretend to blow on a candle. Celebrating with toddlers is a good way to make lasting associations with the things of God. The ritual of thanking God for food is a form of celebrating God caring for us and giving us food. Just the routine of going to church and Sunday school each week is something significant to celebrate with a toddler. Parents often tell me about their toddlers who want to go to Sunday school every time they go to church. Each time toddlers gather in their group is a great time to celebrate the act of being together! This is the prime time to create celebrations for nearly everything (friends, changing seasons or plant cycles, weather, animals, types of foods, smells, learning music, saying Bible words, being potty trained, and so forth) in addition to celebrating recognized special days. Note: If you or other people in your congregation do not believe in celebrating special days (birthdays, Christmas, and so forth), there is no need to compromise convictions. To be on the safe side teachers need to make



sure the pastors are in agreement with celebrating special calendar days. Fortunately, toddlers are just as happy to celebrate learning a new word, being with friends, or celebrating Jesus' love, so there are lots of choices for celebration with toddlers.

Celebrating special events actually does as much, if not more, for the teachers as it does for the children by presenting new and exciting ideas for the children to experience. Through use of the Internet, teachers can search for and find a variety

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Play Dough Recipes



Kool-Aid Play Dough

- 1 cup flour
- ½ cup salt
- 3 teaspoons Cream of Tartar
- 1 package Kool-Aid mix (any flavor of unsweetened)
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon cooking oil

Mix dry ingredients together in a large saucepan. Slowly add water mixed with oil and stir over medium heat until mixture thickens to dough. Turn out onto a heatproof bread board or counter top and knead until cool enough for children to handle. Dough will be the color of the Kool-Aid mix and will smell like the Kool-Aid mix.

Storage: Can be stored in a tightly covered container for up to six months.



Jell-O Play Dough

- 1 cup flour
- ½ cup salt
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 2 teaspoons Cream of Tartar
- 1 (3 ½-oz.) package sugar free Jell-O

Mix all ingredients together and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until consistency of mashed potatoes. Let cool and knead with floured hands until dry.

Storage: This recipe needs to cool completely before storing it in an airtight container.

Note: The items made from this play dough recipe can be painted when they are dry.

Girl Scout Peanut Butter Play Dough

- 1 cup peanut butter
- ½ cup honey
- 2 cups powdered sugar

Mix all ingredients in a bowl, using your hands. Dough should feel soft and pliable. Form shapes and be creative!

Storage: When not using, must be stored in an airtight container.

Cream Cheese Play Dough

- 8-oz. package of cream cheese
- ½ cup non-fat dry milk
- 1 tablespoon honey crackers or bread slices

Combine cream cheese, milk, and honey in a bowl and mix until well blended. Mold sculptures on wax paper.

Note: The shapes can be placed on crackers or bread slices, decorated with edibles (celery or carrot slivers, raisins, dried fruit pieces, nuts, or seeds) for a healthy snack.

Storage: Unused portions must be stored in an airtight container and kept refrigerated. Because cream cheese is perishable, use the expiration date on the cream cheese package as your guide for how long you can keep this play dough.

Peanut Butter Play Dough

- 18-oz. jar creamy peanut butter
- 6 tablespoons honey
- ¾ cup non-fat dry milk

Mix ingredients together, using varying amounts of dry milk for desired consistency. Knead it with fingers, forming into desired shapes, adding other foods like M&Ms or peanuts for eyes, mouths, and so forth. Great fun!

Storage: When not using, must be stored in an airtight container.

Smooth Peanut Butter Play Dough

- 2 cups smooth peanut butter
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 2 cups dried milk
- ¾ cups honey

Mix all ingredients until thoroughly combined.

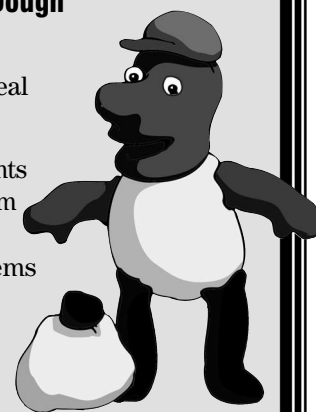
Storage: When not using, must be stored in an airtight container.

Oatmeal Play Dough

- 1 part flour
- 2 parts oatmeal
- 1 part water

Mix ingredients together and form into shapes.

Note: The items made from this play dough recipe can be painted when they are dry.



Peanut Butter/Graham Cracker Play Dough

- Equal amounts of peanut butter and marshmallow creme
- Graham crackers

First, have the children wash their hands before beginning so they can safely lick their fingers during this project.

Allow children to crumble up graham crackers into crumbs, then set these aside. Let students have just a little touch of the marshmallow creme and a little touch of peanut butter to feel the different textures and to lick off their fingers.

Cover surface area with wax paper or use a breadboard; let children make into shapes. Roll shapes in graham cracker crumbs, then eat.

Storage: When not using, must be stored in an airtight container.

Celebrating Special Events (Continued)

of special days/events to celebrate along with their weekly lessons. One such Web site is: http://homeschooling.about.com/od/fundaycalendarars/Holiday_Calendar_Celebrate_Special_Days_Every_Month.htm. When using ideas from other sources, make certain that no choking hazard items are used and that the project or activity is developmentally appropriate for the toddler age.

It is good for toddlers to have a variety of cultural experiences as they are learning the many ways people dress, act, smell, and sound by meeting new people, reading books, singing, and by looking at pictures. Display pictures from missionaries and other people who live in different cultures and environments.

Even though toddlers are still too young to understand why some days are celebrated, this is the best time to introduce them to the idea of seeing things as special. After all, God celebrated each of His days of creation in what He saw as good. We should do the same, and it is delightful to celebrate special things with toddlers! If you have forgotten the wonder and joy of the many aspects of life, just take another look at life through the toddlers' eyes and you are sure to remember what joy it is to celebrate sights, sounds, smells, and touches all around. . . and even right there in the classroom. Celebrate!



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