

THROUGH Nature & Science

a child . . .

*can make a connection
between his world and the
God who created it.*



Setting up a **Nature/Science** Center

- ✓ Choose an area close to a window or in a quiet area of the room.
- ✓ Set up the area near a water source so it is readily available when needed.
- ✓ For kindergartners, consider adding a table.
- ✓ Encourage grandparents and parents who travel to be on the lookout for unusual items.
- ✓ Place a Bible opened to an appropriate verse.
- ✓ Place a tool caddy in the center for rulers, magnifying glasses, and other items; add pencils or crayons and paper so children can note their observations.
- ✓ Collect these items for the nature center: small rocks, dried flowers, textured fabric, cork, rulers, shells, seed packets, sand, nature pictures, scales, hay, clear containers, magnifying glass, magnets, and watering can.

Safety TIPS

- ✓ Always wash hands after handling nature items.
- ✓ Be aware of preschoolers' allergies. Ask parents to complete a health form that includes information about food, animals, or scent allergies.
- ✓ Read ingredients of prepackaged foods before using with preschoolers.
- ✓ Do not allow preschoolers to touch reptiles. They may carry salmonella.
- ✓ Place a bird's nest in a clear, closed container.
- ✓ Smooth sharp edges of shells with sandpaper.
- ✓ Closely supervise small nature items since they could pose a choking hazard.
- ✓ Place leaves and flowers in a clear container or plastic bag for younger preschoolers.

Guidelines for Using Science Experiences with Preschoolers

Use activities that will allow the children to succeed.

Try activities before using them with children.

Encourage children to observe and ask questions.

Place all materials and tools for the activity in the center.

Allow children plenty of time to observe, explore, and discover.

Use books and pictures to give information about science and nature activities.

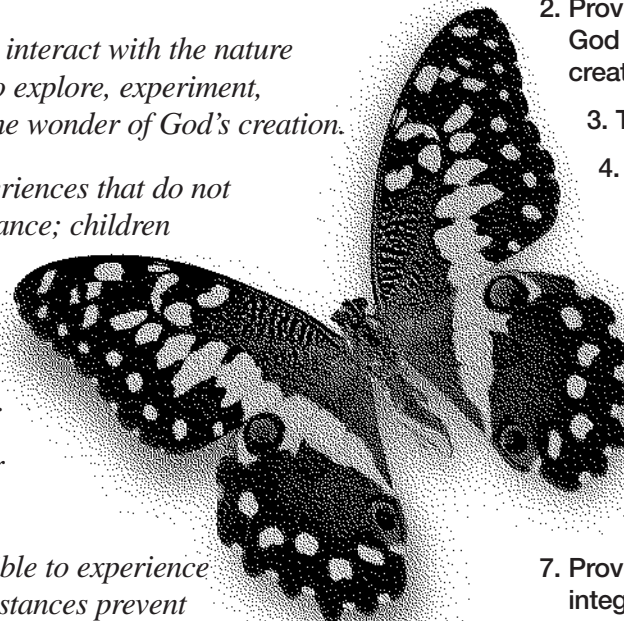
Ask open-ended questions to encourage preschoolers to think.

Include resources (pencils, crayons, paper) for children to record their observations.

- Allow children to discover a nature item before showing it to them. Discovery encourages the physical, logical, and natural learners to grow.
- Give simple answers to preschoolers' questions about nature. The child will ask for more information when he needs it. If you give too much information initially, you may discourage children's questions and curiosity.
- Avoid using the word "magic" when referring to natural processes. Explain that God planned for seeds to grow or for water to freeze and make ice.

GUIDING Nature/Science EXPERIENCES

- Allow preschoolers time to interact with the nature materials. Children need to explore, experiment, examine, and experience the wonder of God's creation.
- Provide activities and experiences that do not require much teacher guidance; children should be able to do the activities themselves.
- Provide a balance of individual and group activities.
- Permit children to get their hands dirty.
- Go outside whenever possible to experience God's world. When circumstances prevent walking outside, bring nature items inside.
- Encourage responsibility by letting older preschoolers care for plants and small animals (fish).



REASONS TO USE A NATURE/SCIENCE LEARNING CENTER

1. Provides a natural venue for teachers to use Bible verses, Bible stories, songs, and books.
2. Provides opportunities for learning about God by experiencing His creation.
3. Teaches respect for living things.
4. Encourages preschoolers to worship as they experience the wonder of God's world.
5. Provides a vehicle for preschoolers to learn as they play and explore.
6. Sharpens children's senses and contributes to their total development, including language, motor skills, social interaction, intellectual skills, and emotional development.
7. Provides a meaningful web for integrating math and reading.
8. Provides an insight into understanding their world and themselves.
9. Develops lifelong skills of observing, problem solving, questioning, experimenting and exploring.

Adapted from *Teaching Preschoolers: First Steps Toward Faith*, Tommy Sanders & Mary Ann Bradberry, LifeWay Press, 2000

The GIANT Encyclopedia of Science Activities, edited by Kathy Charner