

# PUZZLES & MANIPULATIVES

## Through Puzzles, a child...

- Develops fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination.
- Builds thinking, matching, and recognition skills.
- Strengthens problem-solving ability.
- Learns to associate, match, classify, and sequence.
- Practices cooperation, making choices, and persistence.
- Gains feelings of satisfaction and competence.
- Engages in Bible story conversations, verses, and songs woven into play.



## Types of Puzzles/Manipulatives

- Wooden inlay puzzles (appropriate piece counts by age).
- Pull-apart and put-together toys (blocks, nesting cups, shape sorters).
- Fill-and-dump activities.
- Matching and sequencing games (picture cards, memory/concentration).
- Floor puzzles for group play.
- Pattern cards and stringing beads.
- Homemade puzzles (photo puzzles, cardboard with magnets, nuts and bolts matching, colored cotton ball sorting, sound canisters, cube matching).

# TIPS FOR MANIPULATIVES

- Guide children to remove pieces from left to right to encourage early reading readiness.
- Allow preschoolers to work at their own pace.
- Provide options for children with different ability levels.
- Integrate Bible stories, verses, and songs naturally during play.
- Encourage children to complete puzzles and return items before moving on.
- Invite children to help peers when they feel frustrated.
- Ask guiding questions: “What’s missing?” “Where could this piece go?”
- Celebrate effort as much as completion.

## Setting Up the Puzzles/ Manipulatives Center

- Place puzzles in a quiet corner, away from high traffic.
- Offer 2–3 puzzles per session; use mats, construction paper, or carpet squares as bases.
- Store manipulatives in clear bins/containers, labeled with pictures or words.
- Provide duplicates of popular puzzles and manipulatives.
- Rotate puzzles and manipulatives regularly.
- Ensure puzzles are safe: no splinters, toxic paint, sharp edges, or choking hazards.
- Store puzzles in large zip-lock bags to keep pieces together.
- Use realistic images of people, animals, and objects — not fantasy figures — to reinforce Bible truths.
- Mark puzzle pieces and boards with matching numbers/words for easy clean-up.

## Choosing Wooden Inlay Puzzles:

- **Ones-Twos:**  
2–6 pieces
- **Older Twos-Threes:**  
2–11 pieces
- **Older Threes-Pre-K:**  
10–24 pieces
- **Kindergartners:**  
11–30 pieces.

