

Living Faith @



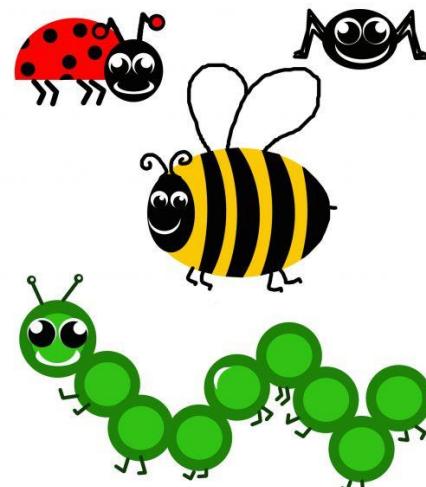
Welcome to June and SUMMERTIME!

Sometimes summer can seem almost as busy as the school year. Often the busyness of school is exchanged for summer sports, bible camps, family vacations, vacation bible school, and family reunions. Hopefully you will have a little time to put your feet up and relax too.

There's nothing wrong with children having some "down time" too – not *everyday* has to be filled with activities. Just like adults, children can benefit from quiet time. Try to schedule some quiet/down-time now and then for everyone in the family. This is the time when laptops, television, smartphones, and video games are set aside. Even if it's just for 15 minutes a day, it gives kids (and adults) time to dream, invent, pray, imagine, and create - all on their own. Just as physical exercise is important to the body, it's important to exercise our mind and our imaginations now and then too!

June can also be a great time to experience God's creation – June is beautiful in Iowa – it is so green, and everything seems so new and fresh. It's the perfect time to take walks in nature – June (usually) isn't quite as hot and humid as July and August – and (usually) the mosquitoes aren't in full force yet (but it might be a good idea to have some bug repellent with you on your walks – just in case!)

ABC's of Creation: On your walk, take a sheet of paper and a pen with you, and on it, list all the letters of the alphabet and a space for writing after each letter. Then tell the children to come up with something that God has created that corresponds to that letter. Example: A: Ants, B: Bumble Bee, C: Clouds, D: Dandelions, and so on. When you get back home, look up the creation story in Genesis. End with a prayer and thanking God for creating everything on your list!



Garden of Faith



Gardening is a fantastic summertime activity for adults and kids alike! Growing your own vegetables and flowers can teach us so much about creation and life, and the Bible is full of gardening stories and illustrations. It's a perfect way to teach children the responsibilities of caring for life, *and* the benefits of gardens – especially when those yummy green beans, tomatoes and cucumbers are harvested and enjoyed at dinnertime! If you don't have space for a garden, you can use large pots or buckets.

Here are some ways to teach God's Word along with gardening:

Good Soil: Matthew 13:23: *But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.*" Kids love digging in the dirt!

Matthew 13:1-23 is the "Parable of the Sower." As you are preparing the soil in your garden, talk about the different kinds of soil, and how God wants us to have hearts like good soil – ready to receive God's Word and God's love.

Planting Seeds: Matthew 13:31: *"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field."* As you plant your seeds, talk about how tiny they are to start with and how big they will eventually get. It's a lot like our faith! Read the "Parable of the Mustard Seed." (Matthew 13:31-32)

Weeds: The "Parable of the Sower" can be referenced here as well. (Matthew 13:1-23) As the kids help you pull weeds out of the garden talk about how distractions in our life can sometimes keep us from following God's word or seeing that God wants the best for us.

Watering: John 4:14 "...*whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.*" Water is important to us – Jesus tells us he is the "living water." Watering time is also a great time to talk about how fortunate we are to have running water – and countries where water is scarce. What can we do to protect our water resources?

Harvest: Psalm 67:6 *"The earth has yielded its harvest. God blesses us—our God blesses us!"* As you are harvesting your produce, talk about how God provides. Have the children think about all of the ways that God blesses us!

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