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# Introduction



## Welcome to The Giant Book of Bible Fingerplays for Preschoolers!

**T**he *Giant Book of Bible Fingerplays for Preschoolers* gets children actively involved in telling Bible events that shape God's great story. No supplies are needed—just this book! Each page features a Bible verse and passage to read, along with a Bible fingerplay that preschoolers can say and act out with you. What better way for young children to learn about the Bible? Imagine a lesson time with listening, speaking, and action. Sounds like fun!

### THIS BOOK:

- teaches Bible passages on an age-appropriate level
- features a key Bible verse from each passage
- includes 101 fingerplays

## What Is a Fingerplay?

A fingerplay is a short verse, poem, or rhyme where hand and body movements act out the words being said. Young children enjoy actively engaging in telling the passage along with you. Acting out the passage helps children remember the details while keeping them interested and having fun!

### FINGERPLAYS IN THIS BOOK:

- teach Bible passages
- are easy to learn and remember
- are fun, fast attention-getters
- can be sung to the tune *Frère Jacques*
- contain short versions of Bible passages from the Old and New Testaments

## How to Use This Book

Active children like to be involved in the Bible passages you read and teach. This book has three components for each activity: an easy-to-understand telling of the Bible passage, a related Bible verse, and a fun fingerplay. Each component plays a part in helping children learn about the Bible in an engaging way. Use this book with one child or with a group of children.

First, read children the Bible verse. When you read the Bible verse, clap once for each syllable; then repeat. This helps children learn the verse by heart. For example, in the verse “And God saw that it was good,” all the words have one syllable. Clap once as you say each word, and encourage children to clap with you. Each dot equals one clap.

Let’s try it:

• • • • •  
*And God saw that it was good.*

In the verse “An angel said to Mary, “The Lord is with you,” some of the words have one syllable and some have two. Clap once for the one-syllable words, and clap twice for the two-syllable words. Each dot equals one clap. Let’s try it:

• • • • • • • • • •  
*An angel said to Mary, “The Lord is with you.”*

Next, read aloud the simplified Bible passage. Want to find the full passage and verse in the Bible? See the Bible reference listed under the passage title. Once you’ve read the Bible verse and Bible passage, act out the fingerplay.

Reading these three components (*verse, passage, fingerplay*) helps children learn and understand the passage. You can read these components separately, too. Read and repeat the verse to practice memorization. Focus on the Bible passage, saving the verse and fingerplay for another time. If you want to get everyone’s attention, act out a fingerplay.

## How Do You Act Out a Fingerplay?

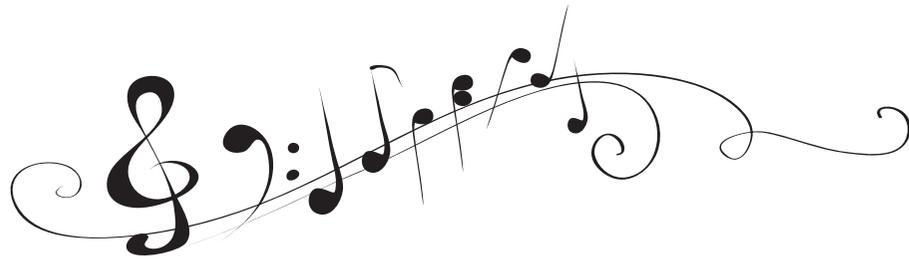
Fingerplays are fun and easy! Teach them line by line, speaking the words as you do the actions in parentheses.

For example, in the first fingerplay, *Creation*, say the words “God created” while doing the action: “(*curve fingers, hands apart to form a ball*).” Children should repeat the words and mimic your actions. Then go to the second line, saying “All the heavens” while doing the action: “(*point up*).” Continue until you complete the verse. Each fingerplay has a total of eight lines. If children are having trouble or are reluctant to follow, you can repeat the verse and action again, or just go on. They will get the hang of it.

Perform each of the 101 fingerplays in this book the same way, saying the words and performing the actions. You’ll be surprised at how children will be able to memorize and act out the Bible passage fingerplays! They might even begin to say them on their own without any prompting from you.

To make it even easier, you can sing the fingerplays. Each one can be sung to the tune of the French nursery rhyme “Frère Jacques.” Do you remember this nursery rhyme? Here are the words, as translated in English:

Are you sleeping?  
Are you sleeping?  
Brother John,  
Brother John?



Morning bells are ringing.  
Morning bells are ringing.  
Ding, ding, dong.  
Ding, ding, dong.

*The Giant Book of Bible Fingerplays for Preschoolers* is more than fun—using it will help children grow and develop. Children will gain knowledge about Bible events and truths. Children will learn to speak new words, which helps with language development and pre-reading skills. Saying and acting out these passages will help children develop fine motor control by using the small muscles in their fingers and mouths. Knowledge, language development, pre-reading skills, and fine motor control are all important ways young children grow and develop.

My hope is that this book will introduce your child or Sunday school class to the Bible, and begin a lifelong journey and love of Bible reading.

—*Amy Houts, author*



**Amy Houts** taught preschool at Head Start and as a graduate assistant in the early childhood department at Northwest Missouri State University. She is an award-winning author of over 60 children's books and numerous articles and poetry. Amy and her husband attend the First United Methodist Church in Maryville, Missouri, where Amy has been involved in Sunday school, vacation Bible school, Bible study, and committee work for many years. They have two grown daughters and twin grandsons.

# Jesus Walked



Matthew 14; Mark 6; John 6

## BIBLE VERSE

“They saw Jesus... walking on the water.” (John 6:19)



**J**esus told his disciples to take the boat and leave without him. He would say goodbye to the crowd of people. By evening, the disciples had rowed to the middle of the lake. Jesus was alone on the mountainside, praying. It was getting dark, but Jesus could see the wind was strong. He could see it was hard for the disciples to row. So Jesus went to them, walking on the lake. The disciples saw Jesus walking on the water and they were frightened. They thought he was a ghost. “It is I,” said Jesus. “Do not be afraid.”

## Fingerplay

**Jesus said, “Go** (*push air with hand, palm outward*)

**On without me** (*turn in a circle*)

**In the boat.** (*pretend to row boat*)

**I will pray.** (*praying hands*)

**Jesus walked on water;** (*walk in place looking around at water*)

**Jesus walked on water** (*walk in place looking down at water*)

**To the boat** (*arms crossed over chest*)

**In the storm.** (*shoulders up, look up*)

## GET STARTED GUIDE TO FINGERPLAYS! *Plus FREE sample!*

Fingerplays are fun, fast attention-getters! Whenever I gather with a group of preschoolers, I *love* to start out with a fingerplay. They focus on a key point or a simple story, and are easy to learn and do. Children enjoy acting out the motions, and it helps to get their wiggles out! Then they can more easily listen to what I have to say. Here's what you need to know:

### Who?

Fingerplays work great with young children ages 2 to 5.

### What?

Fingerplays are short poems acted out with hand and body movements. Sometimes fingerplays rhyme and sometimes they don't. Sometimes the rhythm is patterned a nursery rhyme, so you have the option to say or sing them. Here's a classic: "The Eensy, Weensy Spider."

### When?

Recite a fingerplay at the beginning of group time, before reading a book, or during a transition.

### Where?

Anywhere preschoolers gather: At Sunday School, preschool, or daycare. Or, individually, while you are waiting in line at the store, before naptime, or before you read a book.

### Why?

There are several benefits to reciting fingerplays. They encourage language development, social skills, and small and large (finger, mouth, and body) motor control.

### How?

Decide which fingerplay you want to use. Rehearse beforehand so you can perform it easily. Read the words and do the actions (in parenthesis). Children can listen and watch you, or repeat each line after you, or say it with you. Use facial expressions. Add explanation, if needed. In the example below I might start, "Hold your seeds." I always smile because it's so much fun!

The following fingerplay can be sung to the tune of the French nursery rhyme, "Frere Jacques," translated, "Are You Sleeping?" in English. This fingerplay, from *The Giant Book of Bible Fingerplays for Preschoolers*, focuses on the key points in the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

### SAMPLE FINGERPLAY

#### So Big!

Mustard seeds are (look at cupped hand as if it holds seeds)  
Very tiny, (pick a seed from cupped hand with pointer finger and thumb)  
But they grow (palm downward, hand above your head, looking)  
Very tall. (continue looking gradually higher)

Seeds are like God's kingdom, (pointer finger and thumb together holding  
seed) Which can grow in your heart. (hands over heart)  
It can grow (palm downward, low to ground)  
Very tall. (palm downward, hand above head)

Amy Houts (amyhouts.com) is a grandmother, Joy Camp volunteer, and author of over 70 books including *The Giant Book of Bible Fingerplays for Preschoolers*, Group Publishing, 2017. For more information, visit Group.com.