

Citizenship – Toddlers (Ages 0-4)

Fishing For Family

Supplies: Craft foam or an unused kitchen sponge, Small catching net

Activity: Cut out each member of the toddler's family, including the toddler himself, from craft foam or an unused kitchen sponge. Draw a bath or fill up a sink with water. Throw the foam pieces into water. One by one, fish them out and say their names aloud. Once everyone has been fished out of the water, put them together in a pile and say "family!" Repeat the process and have toddler say, "family!" Explain that everyone together makes a family. This will teach your toddler they are a citizen of their family.

Something to Talk About – Talk about a family you've read about in the Bible such as Mary/Joseph/Jesus, Adam/Eve, Noah and his sons, etc. Where do families come from? Do you think God puts our family together for a reason? How do you think he wants us to treat people in our family? How can we show love for Jesus by our behavior toward people in our family? Read Matthew 25:45 *He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'*

Recycle With Me

Supplies: Recyclable items around the house

Activity: Designate a special bin or bag for recyclables. Have toddler give the bin a name. It could be a real name, a made-up name or any variety of options. The key is for the toddler to feel connected to the recycle bin in a special way. Give your toddler the responsibility of cleaning-up recyclable items in the house and placing them in the "name they give" bin. Explain that putting certain items in the bin will help others in their community. This will teach the toddler to be a good citizen of their community.

Something to Talk About – Talk about WHO made the world. Ask your toddler who lives in the world. Talk about God's command in Genesis to Adam to care of the earth. Other questions to discuss: where does our trash go? What happens to it when it leaves our homes? How does trash smell? Do we like to have it around? Do you think it would be showing care for others and for God's earth if we could make less trash? Do you think it would be good if we could send some of our trash to be cleaned and re-used by someone else?

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God's Puzzle

Supplies: One puzzle with all the pieces

Activity: Take your child's favorite puzzle, or any puzzle, and keep the pieces for yourself. Tell the child that every time they do something nice for someone, they will get one puzzle piece back. Designate a special area for the puzzle to be built. Once the puzzle is complete, explain that the puzzle is like our world should be, made up of love and kindness. This will teach toddlers that they are a part of a community and what they do makes a difference.

Something to Talk About: A good platform for verses like Luke 6:35 - *But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.* Or, *A friend loves at all times...* -Proverbs 17:17. Talk about how God uses our kindness to do his good work in the world. Talk with your child about something kind someone has done for you and how thankful you were. Ask your child to think of one kind thing they could do for someone else that would show God's love to that person. Explain that all of these things makes us a good friend.

Dinner and Friendship

Supplies: Stuffed animals or dolls, pretend food items

Activity: Let your child help you plan and set up a dinner party to teach your toddler how to serve others. Make the party as elaborate or as simple as your child would like, but emphasize and compliment the child on being thoughtful to her guests. Attend the party yourself and be a guest who exemplifies how to behave, leading by example by using good manners.

Something to Talk About: Talk about how good manners are showing kindness to another person. Read a simple book about manners. (Good book for toddler manners: *Manners are Fun* by Munro Leaf. A bit old fashioned, but nice.) Ask your child to think of a time when they were treated kindly by another. Ask them to tell you how it made them feel. Talk about the concept of hospitality. Ask them to think of a way they could make another person comfortable in their home. Verse for thought: *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.* -1 Peter 4:8

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Flag Hunting

Supplies: Mini American flags, a bucket or fabric bag

Activity: Hide a number of flags in a room. Make some easy to find and choose more difficult hiding places for others. Give each child a bucket or fabric bag (be careful not to give plastic bags to avoid suffocation) and encourage them to find as many flags as they can. Once they have found a group of flags, put them down and begin counting them out together. This will introduce the concept of being a citizen of their country by learning about the American flag.

Something to Talk About: talk about the colors in the flag and how they are our national colors. Count the number of white/red stripes. (Stars too, if you're child is up for the challenge!) Point out flags and things that are red/white/blue when you are running errands. Ask the child to find a flag as you are driving down the road.

Follow the Leader

Supplies: One adult and one child

Activity: One person plays the leader and calls out a different shape or color for the child to touch. The players touch something close-by that is related to the color or shape. The next player takes a turn being the leader. Explain that sometimes it is good to lead and sometimes it is good to follow. This teaches the child that we are all called to be both leaders and followers at times.

Something to Talk About: Ask your child, who is in charge of you? Who is in charge of Mommy? Who is in charge of God? What do you think being a leader means? Do you think it means just giving directions, or does it mean taking care of the follower too? Do leaders sometimes have to do hard things, or is their job always easy? A chance to talk about the 12 disciples and Jesus and Abraham being chosen by God as a leader.

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Gifts for Friends

Supplies: rocks, poster or tempera paint

Activity: Take your child outside and together, find rocks to paint. The larger and smoother rocks will work best. Let him paint the rocks as a gift for someone who did something nice for him. You could also find smaller rocks and glue them to construction paper to make an art piece as a gift. Include a tag, “Thank You For Being My Friend _____. [insert name]” Add googly-eyes for fun!

Chef Kiddo!

Supplies: a simple recipe, kitchen utensils

Activity: Allow your child to help you cook a simple recipe. For example, make Jello and you add the hot water and then have your toddler stir it and choose which pan to put it in. Serve it for the family for dessert. Other recipe ideas: mini-pizzas (English muffins with spaghetti sauce and cheese sticks cut into circles on top) and cookies. Your child will get so much pride and enjoyment from being able to eat their treat! Other recipe ideas: Have the child sprinkle cinnamon, sugar and chopped nuts onto applesauce. Have them put raisins on a graham cracker you've spread with peanut butter or Nuttella. Let them string marshmallows, grapes, or strawberries on a stick! This shows a child the good feeling of contributing to something as special as mealtime.