

Planning Your Summer

Janice Godfrey

As May ends, summer begins. In the fast-paced world we live in, the lazy days of summer can become so packed with activities that we are soon exhausted. So, what is the key to a summer that is fun and relaxing at the same time? Plan *some* activities but don't over plan!

Children need time to be children. We can schedule so many activities for children that there is no opportunity for them to simply play. Create a summer schedule that includes times for children to play, guided only by their own ideas.

Allow time each day for your child to be creative and use his imagination. Offer items that stimulate creativity, such as large cardboard boxes and craft items. Provide costumes and dress-up clothes. Encourage your child to explore and create.

Investigate the possibility of arranging play dates with other parents of preschoolers in your church or neighborhood. Important social skills come from spending time playing with other children. Interacting with other preschoolers helps expand play experiences and stimulates new thinking and new ideas.

Spend quality time daily reading to your child. The positive effects of children hearing others read aloud cannot be overstated. Reading aloud to children helps develop their interest in reading, promotes language development, builds vocabulary, increases their listening skills, and fosters their awareness of the world around them (building valuable background knowledge). Take advantage of your local public library's summer reading program that often includes a story hour. Be sure to ask if there is a special time reserved just for preschoolers. Choose books that relate to what your preschooler is learning at church; you can help your child apply Bible truths to her life.

In developing your summer plan, limit the amount of time preschoolers spend watching TV or DVDs and playing computer games. Decide how much time you will allow and what programs will be viewed or games will be played. Stick to your plan and engage your preschooler in other activities after the time limit is over.

Summer is a wonderful time for enjoying the outdoors. Take a walk together in the summer evenings. Attend a summer concert at the park while enjoying a picnic supper. Explore your backyard and discover how many different types of animals and birds you can find. Plant flowers or vegetables in a corner and tend your garden diligently. Use these opportunities to thank God for His world or to recall a Bible phrase. You can help your child see how God is a part of all you do.

Take time to have fun together as a family, but don't plan so many activities that summertime is no longer the relaxing time it should be. Discover ways to engage your child in developing his own fun times this summer.

