



Springtime fun

There's so much outdoors that fascinates children and reminds us of God's love and power too. Show children the wonder of it all with these simple ideas for fresh air and fun.

Whatever the weather, lighter evenings and signs of spring can encourage us to venture outside. It's a time of year when creation is at its busiest; here's how to encourage children to notice God's work all around them.

- If you have a garden, get to know it all over again, and **enjoy all the new growth** that's happening. For little children, winter can seem never-ending, and spring is a genuine surprise. Make the most of it by wondering together at all the new things – bulbs coming up, grass growing, buds on the trees, and blossom – and how life seems to come out of the cold earth and the dark tree branches. It really is a miracle!
- If you have no outdoor space of your own, you could **visit a local park or nature reserve** and give yourself a list of things to find: spring flowers, an interesting pebble, a feather, a dog paw-print.... Or simply 'something beautiful', 'something surprising', 'something growing in a strange place', 'something yellow'... When you find each item, say a little "Thank you God for...." prayer.
- **Read together** the story of creation – it's usually the first story in a children's bible, or, you can find it right at the start of an adult bible, in Genesis chapter 1. Then go for a walk and look for the things it talks about – light and darkness, the sun and moon (and if you go out in the evening, the stars, too), the plants, animals, birds and fish, and people too! You might need more than one walk to find them all....
- If you live in a rural area (or even if you're near a city farm) **find out when lambing takes place**, and arrange to go and see the new born lambs – this is often around Easter time, and a wonderful springtime reminder of new life. You may also see baby bunnies!
- When you get back from your walk, or even as you walk along, **sing a song** about what you've seen – you can make up the words, using the traditional song:

He's got the whole world in his hands,

He's got the whole wide world in his hands,

He's got the whole world in his hands,

He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got the trees and the flowers in his hands...

He's got the sun and the clouds in his hands...

He's got the ducks and the ducklings in his hands...

(if you have a park nearby with a duck pond!)

He's got our family and friends in his hands...

Make up your own verses based on the things you can see around you. God loves the whole of his creation, and he holds us in his hands too.

- Even if you only have a small yard or a front step, **spring cleaning** is a great way to get outside together, and even cleaning the car can be surprisingly fun when small children are involved! Try singing a song as you work, or making the chore into a game. What outdoor tasks can you safely do together as a family?
- If it doesn't feel like spring yet where you are, why not **go for a rainy walk**? Put your wellies on and splash in puddles, look for the trees and houses reflected in the muddy water – say a little thank you to God that ordinary things can be beautiful, and say a prayer for all those who may have suffered from flooding.
- If it's just too wintry still to start growing things outdoors, **how about an indoor garden**? Cress is really easy to grow (just put some seeds on some damp cotton wool) and it grows so quickly that even little children will enjoy seeing the difference each day.

As you watch your cress grow, you could say this prayer for your child:

*God has blessed
our growing cress.
You're growing too,
so God bless you.*

- Find out if your **local church** has any other family activities planned for the spring. There's often a spring fete, and/or Easter displays to look at in church.

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