

First & Second Graders

Spiritual

- likes learning from the Bible
- are interested in God's wonders in nature
- are making conclusions about God and regard Jesus as a friend
- are learning right from wrong
- can take some responsibility for own actions
- understand truth and honesty

Social/Emotional

- can be self-critical
- evaluate own conduct based on the conduct of others
- may cry easily when scolded
- are sensitive to what others think, and want approval
- use own experiences to understand others
- fight with words and like to brag
- need frequent reassurance
- may avoid new or difficult situations
- are often talkative
- need to succeed in challenging situations

Mental

- have a good memory
- cannot think abstractly
- can follow directions
- enjoy reading and being read to
- are creative and enjoy creative play
- frequently ask teachers for help
- want work to be perfect and are afraid to fail
- can become deeply absorbed in activities
- are beginning to understand money and the benefits of an allowance
- want to be independent but do not want to make mistakes
- likes all kinds of games

Physical

- are developing small muscles
- are active using entire body
- have difficulty sitting for long periods of time and may tire easily
- likes using hands
- do not have well-developed eye-hand coordination

Children can sense the greatness, wonder and love of God when given visual and specific examples. The nonphysical nature of God is baffling, but God's presence in every area of life is generally accepted when parents and teachers communicate this both in their attitudes and their actions. Children can think of Jesus as a friend but need specific examples of how Jesus expresses his love and care. Children can comprehend talking to God anywhere, anytime in their own words and need regular opportunities to pray. They can also comprehend that the Old Testament tells what happened before Jesus was born and the New Testament tells of his birth, work on earth, return to heaven and what happened in God's family on earth.

Third & Fourth Graders

Spiritual

- ask serious questions about religion
- are often beginning to feel the need for a Savior
- are developing values
- can be truthful and honest
- are growing conscious of self and of sin
- have difficulty making decisions
- want to do things the right way and may feel ashamed when wrong
- think in terms of right and wrong more than good and evil

Social/Emotional

- need to be able to let off steam and may take out feelings on others
- like peers of the same sex and dislike the opposite sex
- are eager to please and want to be liked by peers and adults
- are interested in own community and country
- are beginning to feel that the group is as important as self
- boys shout; girls giggle and whisper
- are great talkers and need to be allowed to talk
- change moods quickly
- worship heroes
- like to work with others

Mental

- attention spans are lengthening
- vary with peers in reading ability
- values money
- accept carefully worded criticism
- beginning to think abstractly
- eager to learn
- like to experiment and find out how things are made
- are able to be involved in experiences that deal with feelings and thinking

Physical

- have good eye-hand coordination
- may overdo it with physical activities and have trouble calming down
- like to draw and sketch
- have slow, steady growth and good muscle control; girls usually developing more quickly than boys

Children are open to sensing the need for God's continuous help and guidance. The child can recognize the need for a personal Savior. Children are more aware of sin and the consequences surrounding it and may be concerned about being 'good enough.' Give children opportunities to ask questions and communicate with God through prayer. Help them understand the forgiving nature of God. Children at this age begin looking for role models (good and not so good) outside the family unit.

Preteens

Spiritual

- have concepts of love and trust
- have formed concepts of personal worth
- feel deeply about own experiences; can be sensitive to others
- beginning to adopt a religious belief system of their own
- are ready for spiritual answers and directions
- are developing a conscience and a value system
- can make many choices, but may not follow through on long-term commitments

Social/Emotional

- are motivated most by own interest and think of self, using own experiences
- are aware of sex roles; have changing attitudes toward the opposite sex
- can accept rules, organizations, responsibilities, and leader-follower roles
- like acceptance and encouragement; can become easily discouraged
- are easily influenced emotionally and can cope with some feelings
- are ready for responsibilities and opportunities for self-direction
- have deep need for companionship and approval of peers
- can operate comfortably within a group
- like to win and improve on achievements
- recognize and appreciate individual differences

Mental

- are beginning to think abstractly
- are capable of deep thoughts
- are imaginative, creative, and curious
- can distinguish between fact and fiction
- have developed basic reading and writing skills
- can accept and work toward short-term goals
- can cope with success and failure
- can concentrate when interested
- think quickly and memorize easily
- can discern time and space relationships
- can express ideas, understand cause and effect, solve problems, and plan

Physical

- like to use abundant energy and physical skills
- are approaching puberty; girls are usually ahead of boys
- have good coordination and muscle skills

Preteens can have deep feelings of love for God, can share the good news of Jesus with a friend, and are capable of involvement in serving and missions. Preteens this age may seek guidance from God to make every day and long-range decisions. Provide opportunities for preteens to make choices and decisions based on Biblical concepts. Plan times of prayer, Bible reading, and worship experiences as a family as preteens may begin to pull away from family togetherness. Involve preteens in work and service projects.