

The Child of Five - source unknown

Five has been described by Gesell as a good age, a comfortable age. The child displays calm, friendly attitudes and is more considerate in his relations with others. The five-year-old is not too adventuresome. He would rather stay near home. He is usually content and satisfied with himself and wants to do what is expected of him. (Ilg and Ames, *Child Behavior*, p. 33)

The Physical Self

The five-year-old is a poised and controlled child. His greater motor coordination is revealed in his ability to swing, climb, jump, and even roller-skate with ease. A better sense of equilibrium and rhythm help him to dance and skip with more dexterity and grace. He is an active child; his activity is purposeful. His play is resourceful and imaginative. Wheeled vehicles are his delight.

He is becoming adept with his hands. He loves to paint, draw, color, cut, and paste. He likes to copy designs, letters, and numbers. Many a five-year-old can print his own name. Working with puzzles and tools fascinates him.

The five-year-old is relatively independent and self-sufficient in his daily routines, able to care for his own toilet needs, wash, dress, and feed himself. Familiar routines are necessary for him to promote his sense of security. (Gesell, *The First Five Years of Life*, pp. 52-53; Jenkins et al., *These Are Your Children*, pp. 89, 91, 94)

His Emotional Self

By the time he is five the child has largely overcome some of his "out of bounds" tendencies. He gives an impression of competence and stability because he no longer goes off on wild tangents and is more conservative in his actions. He is gaining a vivid sense of his own identity. Gesell's studies have shown that in uncomplicated situations a five-year-old displays many attractive emotional traits, such as seriousness, patience, persistence, generosity, friendliness, and pride in accomplishment. (op. cit., pp. 56-57)

The five-year-old is much interested in his home. He shows an interest in household routines and likes to help his mother by running errands and the like. Both boys and girls like to play house and dramatize domestic situations.

The five-year-old is interested in babies. This interest may be transferred to dolls. Even five-year-old boys enjoy playing with dolls.

Although this is not an age for fears, the five-year-old is subject to anxieties, one of which may be that his mother may not be at home when he returns from kindergarten. His fears are concrete, down-to-earth ones usually relating to bodily harm. Sometimes he appears calm in situations where older children get excited because he is still too self-centered to understand all the implications. Some five-year-olds may develop abnormal tensions because they are unduly affected by the kind of environment in which they find themselves. (Gesell, ad loc.; Jenkins, op. cit., p. 96)

His Intellectual Self

The thinking of a five-year-old is still factual and literal. His questions are fewer and ask for information, such as "What is it for?" "How does it work?" They also reveal interest in the make-up of the world about him. The child's view of death, however, may be personified and subject to fantasy. (Cf. Nagy, "The Child's Theories Concerning Death")

He likes stories related to the here and now and to answer his questions about the things around him. These stories should be short and full of action. He is not interested in unreal, impossible fairy tales. (Gesell, op. cit., pp. 54-55)

His working patterns are becoming better organized. He is apt to try only what he can accomplish and usually completes what he sets out to do. He may be slow, but he is also persistent. This is the year when he begins to plan his work. He usually has an idea in mind before he draw, and is quite able to make his outlines represent what he intends them to be. The five-year-old is also capable of some appraisal of his own work.

His Interpersonal Relationships

The five-year-old seems to be on friendly and familiar terms with his environment. His world include his parents, the neighbor's children, and perhaps the kindergarten. The center of his world is his mother. He likes best to be at home with her, and tries to please her by being helpful and obedient. (Ilg and Ames, *Child Behavior*, p. 33)

Five-year-olds are shy with strangers but will gradually build up satisfying companionships. He likes best to play with others his own age. His ability to play harmoniously with others is increasing because he is learning now to get along with them. He is developing a consciousness of the differences between sexes and may prefer to play with members of his own sex.

The child of five is ready for larger group experiences, such as found in the kindergarten. Usually he is very eager to attend school and adjusts quite easily to this new experience. He can now enjoy this two- or three-hour period of directed activities away from home. (Jenkins, op. cit., p. 88)

His sense of good and bad is closely allied with his relationships with other persons. He wants to be good in order to please. He cannot always differentiate right from wrong, but when he does something wrong, he is apt to blame the nearest person.

Implications for Christian Education

The calm, friendly five-year-old presents an interesting, interested, and teachable pupil for the Christian educator. He needs teachers who will use

his eagerness to know how to do things to help him find satisfaction in achievement and avoid developing a fear of failure. Studies made by Ilg and Ames reveal that a five-year-old's comprehension of religious matters is restricted and factual. He continues a practical interest in God with reference as to what he looks like and where he lives. He is apt to confuse the names of God and Jesus. Some think of God as two separate Persons, some as one Person with two names. He sometimes puzzles about God's omnipresence and may even become fearful over the fact that God sees whatever he does. (Ilg and Ames, op. cit., pp. 304-305) God should be presented as a loving Father and Jesus as a real and kind person, thus laying a foundation of trust and security. This is important also in view of the child's concept of death. Capitalizing on the child's readiness to respond to stories will make it relatively simple to develop religious concepts with the five-year-old. Stories, therefore, should be presented in such a way that the Christian implications will be applicable to his life. The five-year-old's interest in group activities can be carried into his church-school class, where Christian growth can be fostered through projects, discussions, creative expression, and worship. His interest and conformity will make it simple to discuss his behavior in relations to the Christian ideals of cooperation, kindness, helpfulness, and sharing. He should be helped to feel he is also a part of the congregation as well as of the church school. A visit in the sanctuary with the pastor explaining the symbols and other things there may begin to accomplish this.

