

## The Child of Nine - source unknown

This is a period of steady growth in physical and mental capacities. Able to do more things easily, nine begins to act more and more independently of adults and wants to be more accepted by them as a responsible person.

Life for him continues to be intensely interesting and absorbing. He does not pause or plan or feel inhibited, but is ready for immediate action. Doing things with people is most satisfying to him and he projects enthusiastic plans.

He is learning better to control his actions for purposes he has accepted himself, but it is to be expected that at times he will revert to less mature actions. He is not yet ready to abandon entirely the ways of a small child.

He needs and readily accepts adult support and guidance for decision-making actions. He begins to look for an ideal person of action, a hero with whom he can identify himself. Enthusiasm, self-confidence, and activity characterize this age.

### His Physical Self

This is a period of slow, steady growth. Girls may be one or two years ahead of boys in growth maturity but not in stature.

(Jenkins et al., *These Are Your Children*, p.166) The child's individuality is more marked and hereditary differences become more apparent at this age.

The nine-year-old needs and enjoys much active, rough-and-tumble play because his muscular and nervous system is growing. The heart is not fully developed, however, and excessive physical strain should be avoided. (Garrison and Gray, *Educational Psychology*, pp, 46,47) Eye-hand coordination is good.

He is physically ready for longer attention span and will work for long periods on self-chosen projects.

### His Emotional Self

He feels confident of himself and friendly toward parents, teachers, and peers. He has few complaints.

His enthusiasm may run ahead of his abilities because he does not fully understand his limitations. He is interested in doing things well and takes satisfaction in this expression of a more independent self. Self-motivation is an important characteristic of this age as he learns to become more independent of adults.

Fair play is of deep concern to him, as well as honesty, property rights, and the rights of others because his status in the group is involved, because he can think things out, and because he is distinguishing more independently between right and wrong.

He has a keen sense of wonder about the unseen world, for example a distant land or age. He has an inquiring curiosity and loves to explore.

He develops a feeling of loyalty and wants to identify himself with a larger group beyond his family.

### His Intellectual Self

The nine-year-old is able to make up his mind and realize that there is likely to be more than one opinion on important questions. He can listen to reason presented by adults. (Jenkins et al., op. cit., p. 171) He is able to take criticism provided he thinks it is fair. He can respond to inner motivation.

There is a five- to seven-year span in individual differences in reading ability, and reading-interest varies greatly. Many are able to read quite well independently, while others need considerable help.

He is entering a more objective and real world. He begins to put aside fairy tales and much of the fantasy and imaginative play of earlier years. (Jenkins et al., op. cit., p. 169) He likes to collect facts and enjoys looking up information.

People are more important than ideas because he is beginning to set standards for himself, forming an image of his ideal self, and is not yet ready to abstract and generalize. He is interested in heroes and in people of action.

He begins to use simple maps, charts, dictionaries and to acquire special vocabularies for specific areas. He has increasing power to remember what he has read and to relate it to previous knowledge. (Havighurst, *Human Development and Education*, p. 82) He has a greater interest in events of history. Memorizing can be made an enjoyable activity for him. In all of this he is stimulated by curiosity, wider community contacts, and the joy of using the basic reading and verbalization skills which he has acquired.

He is more concerned about right and wrong-doing. He is not inclined to question religious teaching. He has a natural sex curiosity which can be satisfied with factual information.

### **His Interpersonal Relationships**

It is increasingly important for the nine-year-old to belong to a peer group, and its influence is strong. Hence he is generally a conformist and copies his peers, e.g., in dress and mannerisms. He gets on well with his playmates and is capable of real co-operative activity. He has an affectionate interest in babies, pets, and animals. (Jenkins et al., op. cit., pp. 172, 173)

The nine-year-old can be more objective about himself - be a good loser or criticize himself. Inclined to be friendly and at ease, his sense of humor is more developed and he can take a joke on himself.

The teacher can be very important and the object of great affection for him, but he can also be critical of her. He wants to be regarded as a boy or girl and not as a child. He likes to be trusted because this gives him status and a feeling of importance as an individual. He responds best to the adult who treats him as an individual and approaches him in an adult way.

He is very dependent on adults for many decisions and needs opportunities of doing things with adults. He needs adult guidance to apply acceptable standards to action and conduct and is responsive to such guidance.

### **Implications for Christian Education**

The nine-year-old is ready to understand God as a spirit in a real, non-arbitrary world.

He is ready for historical understanding of the Bible in terms of specific facts and actions of persons. A real sense of historical perspective, however, does not develop until later. This is a good age for practice using the Bible himself.

He needs help in forming an ideal image of the person he would like to become. Contact with persons of heroic Christian stature will help give that image, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a Christ-like character.

Christian education should take advantage of the nine-year-old's readiness for loyalty to groups beyond his family.

He needs to take a responsible and active part in the life and work of the church and its schools, the Christian family, and the community.

He can appreciate Christian love in terms of serving those who need his help and protection.

He is ready to understand to some extent the program and nature of the church as a whole.

He can relate Christian truths to some of his actions and his relations to others. His more evident tendency to make up rules to govern games and peer activities can be utilized in Christian education for a growing understanding of God's will and an inner motivation to obey. He needs guidance and experience in acting from inner Christian motivation, in making specific choices in matters of right and wrong, and in recognizing sin as displeasing to God.

This is an age when good use can be made of memorization.