

THE CHILD OF TWO - *source unknown*

This is an age of curiosity. The two-year-old investigates everything around him and asks many questions in trying to understand his world. It seems to be an age of resistance: a two-year-old's way of expressing a desire to make his own decisions. A two-year-old child's "most numerous and characteristic satisfactions are muscular." (Gesell, *The First Five Years of Life*, p. 34) The child of this age is so interested in other members of his family so his need to assert his individuality is modified by his wish to "belong."

His Physical Self

The child of two seems to be in perpetual motion. He loves to run—a walk is too slow; some twos know how to skip. He is boisterous in rough-and-tumble play but also responds to the rhythm of music. He can walk up and down stairs, one at a time. His finer muscle co-ordination is developing also. He is able to string beads, turn pages in a book, and manage his drinking glass and silverware quite well. (Jenkins et. Al., *These Are Your Children*, pp. 43-44)

His Emotional Self

Anger is the child's first aggressive response. It may be caused by thwarting his desires or interfering with his ongoing activity. Anger reactions in the form of defiance or temper tantrums are sometimes used by the child to get desired results. The two-year-old shows affection spontaneously, and laughs contagiously. He also will display symptoms of pity, sympathy, modesty, and shame. He will pout when scolded and smile when he is praised. (Gesell, op. cit., p. 39) The two-year-old has little inclination to adapt, to give in, or to wait for the sake of others. He is building his self-confidence and independence by testing and exercising his own skills. He experiences frustration when toys and parents won't do what he wants. (Gruenberg, *The Encyclopedia of Child Care and Guidance*, p. 238) One of the most significant developments in this area is the growth of the child's self-awareness. (Russell, *Children's Thinking*, p. 137)

His Intellectual Self

By the time the child is two he likes to talk and is beginning to use more complete sentences. He has discovered that "no" has power. He says "no" and means it, stating his position concerning eating habits, dressing routines, etc. (Hymes, "Early Steps in Growing Up," *The Encyclopedia of Child Care and Guidance*, pp. 793-794) His attention span is becoming longer, and he is beginning to enjoy activity for a longer period of time. The two-year-old can distinguish between one and many but is not able to count meaningfully. He can distinguish between black and white, and can use many color names, but is not able to make color discrimination. He is able to identify many pictures and enjoys matching spoken words with objects. (Gesell, op. cit., pp. 35-37)

His Interpersonal Relationships

The two-year-old is now beginning the transition from a pre-social to a more socialized stage. Even though he has not made complete distinction between himself and others, he is beginning to assert himself as an individual. He likes to be near children in parallel play but still does not play *with* them. While he enjoys being with other members of his family more than before, mother is still a very important part of his life. The two-year-old likes to imitate the expressions and actions of the adults within his acquaintance. (Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 45-46) The word "mine" has taken an important place in his vocabulary. He has strong feelings of ownership and even hides things to maintain possession. He clings to favorite possessions when insecure.

Implications for Christian Education

As is true with all age levels, the family life experiences of a two-year-old are very important. Christian character is best developed by living in a Christian community. The home should be such a community where the children will be participating members who are responsible up to the level of their capacity. Here the child should find acceptance as a person and be made to feel that he has worth. The two-year-old's increased use of language will make it possible to use more direct methods of religious education with him, such as using picture-story books, talking about his experiences. His sentence prayers will soon be added to those of the family during the devotional periods. These family relationships give the child the background of experience with which to begin to understand the love of God the Father. Such home experiences are essential to the ongoing program of Christian education.