

Toddler and Preschool Characteristics

A Two-year-old . . .

- learns best when all five senses are used.
- likes to feel, pound, pat, and manipulate objects.
- has a short attention span.
- listens to a short story, conversation, or song.
- learns by doing and hearing something over and over.
- enjoys holding the Bible and turning pages.
- is beginning to realize that Jesus is a special person.



A Three-year-old . . .

- has a vivid imagination.
- is imitative.
- asks many questions. The first word in each sentence seems to be *why*, *how*, or *what*.
- has to be told the same thing repeatedly.
- learns through senses.
- is active and seldom still.
- can identify some Bible stories and people.
- understands that God made people, animals, and other things in the world.

A four-year-old . . .

- is a bundle of energy who needs freedom to move.
- tests her world through explosive behavior.
- needs freedom to experiment yet consistent guidance.
- finds security in the very limits she defies.
- is interested in many areas. Her actions, thoughts, and needs are unpredictable because her interests change often.
- is curious; questions begin with *how* or *what*.
- has a strong desire to learn.
- expresses herself well verbally.
- delights in new words, name calling, and silly sentences.
- likes to retell stories in her own words.
- enjoys games that allow her to find verses.

A five-year-old . . .

- is calm, secure, and eager to please.
- relishes adult approval and attention.
- asks “why” questions and grasps ideas quickly.
- prints his name with pride, but may encounter problems when using scissors.
- enjoys planning projects before attempting them.
- participates in group play, but may sometimes prefer one friend.
- begins to ask questions about God.
- expresses love for God and Jesus.



TODDLER - AGES 2 and 3

A child's basic attitude toward life, other people and God develops during the first five years. This is a time for them to develop positive attitudes toward God, his Word and his church. Their first impression of God is formed from the attitudes and actions of the adults in their lives.

2-year-old Characteristics

- Cannot think abstractly
- Need simple and concrete samples
- Often feel small and vulnerable
- Have a fear of separation from parents
- Are curious about everything
- Are physically active
- Have limited motor skills
- Are developing large motor skills
- Have a 200-word vocabulary
- Understand more words than they can use
- Play NEAR others



3-year-old Characteristics

- Cannot think abstractly
- Need simple and concrete examples
- Like to be helpful
- Watch and imitate adults
- Can have sensible conversations
- Can sit a little longer
- Have limited coloring/gluing skills
- Follow simple directions
- Have a 1,500-word vocabulary
- Know some Bible words
- Play WITH others

PRESCHOOL - AGES 4 and 5

You are stepping in to assist parents and the church in nurturing these active 4- and 5-year-olds. You can open up a new world of learning for them by providing a predictable, well-structured and caring atmosphere. Wiggly preschoolers are not too young to develop the skill of quiet listening. As you prepare to tell the Bible story each week, lead your children in simple routines to prepare them to hear the Word of God. Understanding their characteristics and needs, you can teach preschoolers effectively.

What they are like:

- Attention span lasts five to ten minutes
- Play with others
- Literal thinkers
- Curious
- Active
- Imitative
- Do not generalize
- Limited understanding of numbers, time and space
- Growing in independence
- Talkative
- Developing small muscle control
- Expanding vocabulary
- Tire easily
- Want to please
- Formulate ideas through concrete experiences

What they need:

- Opportunity to change activity often
- Social interaction, group games
- Concrete Bible stories, no abstract concepts
- Imaginative activities
- Plenty of opportunities to move around
- Setting that encourages learning by doing
- Opportunities to learn by specific actions
- References to what numbers mean or to geography too abstract
- Freedom within limits — routine and structure
- Opportunities to practice cutting, pasting, drawing and coloring
- Opportunities to learn through language
- Periods of rest
- Tasks to perform
- Encouragement; reasonable praise
- To learn about God in terms of what he does rather than who he is